Transmarine campaigns by the 'historical' Arthur: trends in modern fiction

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Many modern works of Arthurian fiction with an historical (*i.e.* 'dark-age') setting follow the medieval traditions (of myth, folklore, chronicle, and romance) by sending Arthur and his warriors beyond the shores of Britain. Here I consider a corpus of 29 works, from 1898 to 2008, that meet my strict criteria for 'Arthurian historical fiction'. Two clear trends emerge regarding transmarine Arthurian military activity: its prominence of has greatly increased over time; and *The Discovery of King Arthur* by Geoffrey Ashe (1985) has been quite influential. I speculate on the socio-historical and other factors that affected authors' decisions to include, or not, a transmarine campaign. I also identify, and illustrate by examples, the five motivations imputed to Arthur for embarking on such adventures. One of these five, loyalty to Rome, has become common since it first appeared in 1983, largely due to Ashe's book. Finally, I discuss how my own published historical research shaped Arthur's Gallic campaign in my own recently published work of historical fiction.

1. Introduction

There is no suggestion of military expeditions beyond the island of Britain in the earliest records of Arthur, the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae*[1]. This changed as mythological and folkloric material accreted to the figure of Arthur[2]: in *Preideu Annwfyn,* he is given a ship (*Prytwen*) in which he and his men voyage to *Annwfyn*, the underworld; in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, this destination was rationalized to Ireland, and Arthur is also credited, in a light-hearted fashion, with conquests as far away as Greece. Perhaps inspired by such material, or perhaps for other reasons, Geoffrey of Monmouth[3] made transmarine conquests the defining achievements of his pseudohistorical King Arthur. While Arthur's 5th century predecessors in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*HRB*) rule only in Britain, Arthur adds Ireland, Iceland, the Orkneys, Gothland, Norway, Denmark, and Gaul to his Empire. Moreover, his overseas conquests are inextricably linked to his downfall: his nephew Modred seizes the sovereignty of Britain just as Arthur is about to invade Italy. This last feature persisted in the romance tradition, but with the traitor Lancelot as Arthur's adversary on the Continent.

Authored Arthurian fiction – entertaining stories of Arthur and his court from an identified author whose creative input was recognized by the audience – has been produced since at least the mid-12th century[4]. But it has only been since the late 19th century that authors have attempted to write Arthurian *historical* fiction[5] – that is, to create a seemingly realistic dark-age setting, with a plausible story that respects known history. Such works, and their treatment (if any) of transmarine Arthurian military activity (TAMA) are the topic of this paper. My primary conclusion is that there is an "extremely significant" (in a statistical sense) increase, over the years, in the prominence of TAMA in Arthurian historical fiction. My secondary conclusion relates to Geoffrey Ashe's 'Riothamus theory'[6], and more particularly his 1985 book thereon[7]. While Ashe's book is not single-handedly responsible for the primary trend (removing works influenced by Ashe still leaves a "very significant" trend), it has had a noticeable influence on TAMAs. Most interestingly, it is

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[1] Field, 2008, p. 3–32.
[2] Gidlow, 2004, p. 192–203.
[3] Reeve, 2007.
[4] Lupack, 2005, p. 28.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[6] Ashe, 1981, p. 301–323.
[7] Ashe, 1985.

largely responsible for another "significant" change: the appearance of loyalty to the Roman Empire as an intradiegetic motivation for these transmarine campaigns.

This paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I introduce the body of work – 29 books or book series published over the last 120 years – that is the subject of this paper. I explain how I chose them (and explain why certain works had to be omitted), point out some trends that are apparent from a tabulation of data relating to TAMA in these works, and make some observations about untabulated data. In Section 3 I present more data relating to the nature, importance, scale, and range of TAMAs, and establish my primary conclusion. In Section 4 I discuss the (extradiegetic) motivations for authors to include – or not include – a transmarine campaign, and how this may relate to 20th-century history. In Section 5 I discuss the (intradiegetic) motivations authors impute to their Arthurs (or Guineveres or others) for undertaking such campaigns, and how these have changed over time. In Section 6 I discuss the influence of Ashe and other historians on TAMA in works of Arthurian historical fiction (including a 30th work – my own 'quasihistory').

2. Arthurian historical fiction

In this paper I consider a body of 29 works of Arthurian historical fiction, ranging in publication date from 1898 to 2008, as displayed in Table 1. By 'Arthurian historical fiction' I mean works which: (i) contain a significant amount of original fiction (e.g. individual deeds, speech, or thoughts not found in prior works); (ii) cover a significant part of the career of Arthur, military leader of the Britons (*floruit* 450x550 CE); (iii) have reasonable respect for geography and history, as understood at their time of writing; and (iv) date, at least to within a decade or so, either directly or by reference to well (or at least conventionally) dated events, at least one undoubtedly historical event in which, in the work in question, Arthur participates. With regard to the last point, it is worth clarifying that the only events that meet the requirements are these battles: at mount Badon versus the Saxons (as attested by Gildas[8] – this appears in almost all of the works I consider); at Angers versus the Loire Saxons (as attested by Gregory of Tours[9], though without British involvement – this appears in one work); and near Bourges versus the Visigoths (as attested by Jordanes[10] and Gregory[9] – in several works). Most of the works are realistic novels in an historical setting, but some are historical fantasy, historical science fiction, or history with fictional interludes.

Of the works that satisfy the requirements set out above, the 29 works in Table 1 comprise all of those I have read, and, indeed, almost all of those I know of that appeared, in complete form, in English, up to 2008, are readily available, and have been positively critiqued. It may help the reader to understand how I apply my four criteria if I briefly mention some works that I have deliberately excluded (though some could be excluded by more than one criterion). By criterion (i), the books by Saklatvala (1967) and Turner (1993) were excluded, even though they give imaginative narratives, because the authors achieve this solely by presenting and discussing their sources. By criterion (ii), I excluded Church's 1887 novel *The Count of the Saxon Shore* because Arthur appears only in the final scene, and James's 1969 novel *Men Went to Cattraeth* because it only touches on Arthur's achievements. By criterion (iii), the historical or geographical inaccuracies or implausibilities, were, in my judgement, sufficient to exclude many authors, including Edison Marshall, Marion Zimmer-Bradley, Stephen Lawhead, Persia Woolley, Jack Whyte, and M. K. Hume. Finally, by criterion (iv), I excluded the epic poem by Tolkien *The Fall of Arthur* (Badon is not mentioned), the fantasy novel by Nikolai Tolstoy *The Coming of the King* (Badon is much mentioned, but different characters, in 556, recall it as having taken place in c.500 or in 534!), and the young-adult novels by Phillip Reeve (*Here Lies Arthur*, in which Arthur does fight at Badon, but it is not Gildas's battle of Badon) and Anne McCaffrey (*Black Horses for the King*, in which Badon is mentioned, but there are no firm temporal indications).

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[8] *De Excidio Britanniae* 26.1–2, in Winterbottom, 1978, p.28
[9] *Historia Francorum* 2.18–19, in Krusch and Levison (eds.), 1951, p. 65 (English translation Thorpe, 1974).
[10] *Getica* 45.237, in Mommssen (ed.), 1882, p. 118–119 (English translation in Mierow, 1915).

Author	Pub. Year	Genre	TAMA	Destination	Mission	Motives	Narr. Purp.
Babcock	1898	H.Fi	Absent				
Faraday	1930	H.Fi	Absent				
Frankland	1944	H.Fi	Recruiting	Armorica	Rebuild power	NE	M
Masefield	1947	H.Fi	Absent				
Duggan	1951	H.Fi	Absent				
Treece	1956	H.Fi	None				
Sutcliff	1963	H.Fi	Commercial	Gaul	Buy war horses	N	L
Treece	1966	H.Fa	Recruiting	Armorica	Britain, Italy?	NG	
O'Meara	1966	H.Fi	Absent				
Finkel	1967	H.Fi	Diplomatic	Byzantium	Get war horses	N	L
Turton	1967	H.Fi	Attacking	Armorica	f. Lancelot	G	M
Viney	1975	H.Fi	Commercial	Gaul	Buy war horses	N	
Canning	1976–8	H.Fa	None				
Carmichael	1977	H.Fi	Raiding	Isle of Man	c. Hueil	NG	CL
Gloag	1977	H.Fi	Raiding	Armorica	c. blacksmiths	N	L
Christian	1979	H.Fi	Defending[1]	Armorica	f. Franks	N	
Godwin	1980	H.Fi	None				
Bradshaw	1981–3	H.Fa	Attacking	Armorica	f. Macsen	G	M
Stewart	1983	H.Fa	Attacking	Burgundy	f. L. Hiberus	ND	M
Chant	1983	H.Fa	Attacking	Gaul	f. Franks	GL	M
Wolf	1988	H.Fa	Attacking	Gaul	f. Odovacer	ND	M
Rice	1991	H.Fi	Absent				
Hollick	1994–7	H.Fi	Attacking	Gaul	f. Euric	NDL	
Cornwell	1995–7	H.Fa	Defending[2]	Armorica	f. Franks	DE	MLC
Lees	1996	H.Fi	Attacking[3]	Gaul	f. Euric	LN	
McCormack	1997–*	H.Fi	Attacking	Scot. Isles	f. Hueil	NG	C
Paxson	1999–00	H.Fa	Attacking	Gaul	f. Franks	GLND	M
Baxter	2003	H.SFi	Attacking	Gaul	f. Euric	G?	M
Pace	2008	H&Fi	Attacking	Gaul	f. Euric	EGL	M
Wiseman	*2015*	*QH*	*Attacking*	*Burgundy*	*f. Theuderic*	*EGN*	*M*

Table 1: The body of 29 works of Arthurian fiction considered in this paper, plus a 30th (italicized), which is authored by me and was unpublished at the time of the conference in 2014. This 'quasihistory' (QH) is included here for interest – it is not part of my analysis or statistical tests – as it is discussed in Sec. 6. Shading indicates an author who was (presumably) influenced by Ashe. Bold font is used for those works including a TAMA that is an actual military expedition. Publication dates given as a range indicate a series of books. The '1997–*' for McCormack is because the third in his trilogy, due in 2003, was never published (though it is now freely available online). The abbreviations used under **Genre** are: H.=historical, Fi=fiction, Fa=fantasy, SFi=science fiction, H&Fi=history with fictional interludes. The next three columns refer to the most prominent TAMA in the work. The superscripts in the **TAMA** column indicate: 1) TAMA led by Guinevere; 2) TAMA led by Mordred; 3) TAMA led by Ambrosius, with the return led by Arthur. In the **Mission** column, 'f.' stands for 'fight', 'c.' for 'capture'. Under **Motives**, N=necessity, E=expediency, G=glory, D=duty, L=loyalty. The **Narr. Purp.** (Narrative Purpose) column may refer to all TAMAs in each work, and use the abbreviations M=Mordred, L=Lancelot, C=chalice/cauldron. The dashed line marks the appearance (1985) of Geoffrey Ashe's *The Discovery of King Arthur*.

From Table 1, three trends can be discerned. The most obvious is that TAMA has increased in prominence over time. Some authors (e.g. Carmichael and Cornwell) describe more than one TAMA; for these I have tabulated only the most prominent one. Of the earlier half (up to 1977), only three contain overseas military expeditions, and two of these are merely raids. Of the more recent half, all but two include a substantial expedition (see also Secs. 3 and 4). The second trend is the dramatic influence of Geoffrey Ashe's 1985 book *The Discovery of King Arthur* on the destination and mission of TAMAs (see also Sec. 6). The third trend, for which Ashe is partly responsible, is the appearance, as an intradiegetic motivation, of loyalty (L) to the ideal of Empire (see Sec. 5). But before moving to these more detailed analyses of Table 1, I will make two general observations on untabulated data relating to the theme of this volume, with illustrations.

First, there is, disappointingly, little emphasis on martial drama at sea, or even with ships on shore, and no obvious change in this emphasis occurs over time. Not one of the 29 works has a sea battle, although Stewart[11] has a storm drive Arthur's damaged fleet onto the shore of the West Saxon kingdom, leading to an unintended battle on the shore with Cynric (inspired by the Anglo-Saxon chronicle entry for 527, as Stewart implies[12]). McCormack[13] has Arthur's small fleet wrecked by a storm in the Scottish Isles, leaving only seven survivors (as in *Preiddeu Annwfn*). Carmichael[14] has Arthur's ship-guard hole the beached ships of his enemy, King Diwrnach of Man, to prevent pursuit of the *Prydwen*, in which Arthur makes off with Diwrnach's cauldron (inspired by *Culhwch ac Olwen*).

Second, the size and nature of Arthur's navy varies enormously. In Carmichael's novel, the *Prydwen*, a confiscated merchantman capable of transporting only 20 warriors (p. 181), is Arthur's sole ship. Gloag also has Arthur with a single ship, though a two-masted 'warship' capable (most improbably) of transporting 50 warriors and 400 Armorican captives (p. 126), lent to him by King Marc of Dumnonia (a 'fleet owner', in Brythonic tradition[15]). At the other end of the scale, some authors imply Arthur has a permanent fleet of ships capable of carrying thousands of men. Interestingly, for the expedition by Riothamus against the Visigoths in 469, Hollick[16] has ships supplied by Syagrius, the *Rex Romanorum* in northern Gaul, while Pace[17] has '*cyuls*' supplied by Arthur's Saxon federates in Britain. For the return journey, Lees has Arthur commandeer "all manner of small boats[18]" on the coast of Gaul, perhaps deliberately calling to the reader's mind the evacuation of Dunkirk, 15 centuries later.

3. The growing prominence of transmarine Arthurian military activity

As stated, Table 1 appears to show a clear trend for the growing prominence of TAMA over time, but I think it is worthwhile to quantify this, using statistical methods. The question that can be answered is: how likely is it that the apparent TAMA trend could have arisen by chance, with no underlying trend in authors' preferences? The answer to this question is commonly called a *p*-value[19]. The question actually needs to be made more precise: do we mean how likely is it that the trend of growing prominence could have arisen by chance, or how likely that a comparable trend of either growing or shrinking prominence could have arisen by chance? Since *a priori* there was no

[11] 1983, p. 327–330.
[12] Author's note, p. 367.
[13] 1997, p. 389–390.
[14] 1977, p. 188.
[15] Bromwich, 2006, p. 435.
[16] 1994, p. 19.
[17] 2008, p. 232.
[18] 1996, p. 8.
[19] Motulsky, 2013, p. 123.

reason to expect either trend, I use the latter, 'non-directional[20]', type of *p*-value in this paper. (This makes all the tests *more* stringent.)

To calculate a *p*-value rigorously, first we must try to remove any confounding trends. The only one I have identified is that works of Arthurian fiction have become lengthier and more likely to cover Arthur's full military career. This alone makes it more likely that later works would include an overseas expedition by Arthur. To correct for this bias, in this section I restrict the analysis to those works that cover, at least in outline, the whole of Arthur's military career. This still leaves 20 works, shown in Table 2, and we can immediately see that the TAMA trend is now less obvious. The next step is to quantify the prominence of TAMA in a work. The simplest quantification would be a binary one (whether there is or is not a TAMA), but a more powerful test, which I now detail, uses a graduated measure of the most prominent TAMA.

Author	Pub. Year	Importance to story (I)	Might (M)	Reach (R)	Bellicosity (B)	TAMA Prominence = Bx(I+M+R)
Frankland	1944	2.5	0	2	1	4.5
Treece	1956					0
Sutcliff	1963	1.5	1	4	0.5	3.25
Finkel	1967	5	1.5	6	0.5	6.25
Turton	**1967**	**3.5**	**5**	**2**	**2**	**21**
Viney	1975	0	0	3	0.5	1.5
Canning	1976					0
Gloag	**1977**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**10**
Christian	**1979**	**1**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**14**
Godwin	1980					0
Bradshaw	**1981**	**4.5**	**4.5**	**2**	**2**	**22**
Stewart	**1983**	**5**	**5.5**	**4**	**2**	**29**
Chant	**1983**	**3**	**4.5**	**2**	**2**	**19**
Wolf	**1988**	**5**	**5.5**	**3**	**2**	**27**
Hollick	**1994**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**24**
Cornwell	**1995**	**4**	**3.5**	**2**	**2**	**19**
Lees	**1996**	**4**	**5.5**	**3**	**2**	**25**
McCormack	**1997**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**20**
Paxson	**1999**	**5**	**4.5**	**2**	**2**	**23**
Pace	**2008**	**5**	**6**	**3**	**2**	**28**
Wiseman	*in prep.*	*6*	*5.5*	*4*	*2*	*31*

Table 2: The subsample of 20 works from Table 1 that outline Arthur's full military career. Once again, the final work (here number 21, italicized) is presented for comparison only. As in Table 1, shading indicates influence by Ashe, and bold font indicates a TAMA that is an actual military expedition (i.e. it has a score of 2 for Bellicosity). The publication dates used for ordering are, for series, those of the first book published. The text explains how the scores for I, M, R, and B were obtained.

In Table 2 I have quantified TAMA Prominence by summing three scores, each of which ranges from 0 to 6, and then multiplying by a fourth score which takes the values 0.5, 1, or 2. The three additive scores are: **Importance** of the TAMA to the story; **Might** (how large is the force?); and **Reach** (how far do they travel from Britain?). **Importance** is rather subjective, and includes

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[20] Sheskin, 2003, p. 55.

both the amount of space in the work devoted to the TAMA and how much the plot would have to change if it were omitted. The score for **Might** is calculated as $[\log_2(m/3)]/2$, where $\log_2$ means logarithm base 2, the square brackets mean rounded to the nearest integer, and m is my best estimate of the number of warriors who cross the sea (in either direction) in the TAMA in question. (The smallest number of soldiers is three – Arthur, Cai, and Bedwyr – in Frankland's book[21]; the largest is 12,000 in Pace's[22] – verbatim from the 6th century historian Jordanes.) The score for **Reach** is not based on a calculation, but is reasonably objective: 1 for the coasts of Armorica or the Isle of Man; 2 for the interior of Armorica or the Scottish Isles; 3 for Gaul beyond Armorica; 4 for Burgundia; 5 for Italy (hypothetically); and 6 for beyond Italy. Finally, the multiplying factor is **Bellicosity**, defined as 2 if the TAMA is to campaign overseas, 1 if it is to bring reinforcements to Britain, and 0.5 if it is merely to obtain matériel by diplomatic or commercial means. The resultant measure of Prominence has a maximum theoretical value of 36, but the largest value in my sample is 29.

Finally, we must choose a statistical test for the correlation between the two variables: the publication year, and the TAMA Prominence (plotted in Fig. 1). A convenient test for this situation is based on the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient r[23]. As the name implies, this entails rank-ordering the sample first by one variable and then by the other, and then comparing how close the two ranked lists are. The coefficient r measures the *strength* of correlation, which is 1 if the ranked lists are the same, and close to 0 if there is no relation between the two lists. The strength of a correlation should not be confused with its *significance*, measured by the *p*-value. The latter depends upon n, the size of the sample (here 20), as well as r[24], because even a weak correlation persisting over a large enough sample would be significant.
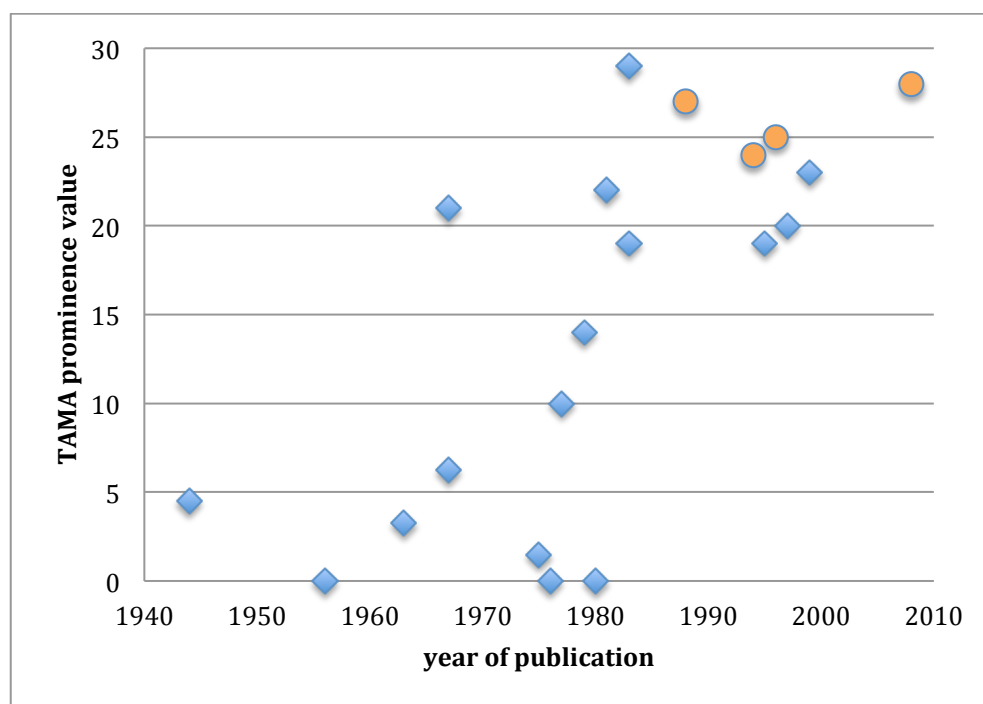

Figure 1: Plot of TAMA Prominence, for the most prominent TAMA in a work, versus its year of publication, for the 20 works in Table 2. Those influenced by Ashe's 'Riothamus theory' are circles.

[21] 1944, p. 324.
[22] 2008, p. 232.
[23] Sheskin, 2003, p. 1061–1065.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 1065.

Using a public statistics package[25], I calculated the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient as $r=0.72$, and the p-value as $p=0.00033$. The correlation is quite strong, and, with p less than 1 in 1000, is *extremely* significant[26]. Thus we can be extremely confident that there is a genuine trend relating to the prominence of transmarine military activity in Arthurian historical fiction. As can be seen in Table 2, four of the top five most prominent instances of TAMAs are in works influenced by Geoffrey Ashe's 1985 book (see Sec. 6). These four works are all recent, so one might wonder whether the trend is due to Ashe's influence. The answer is no. Removing these four works gives a somewhat lower correlation coefficient of $r=0.63$. This, and the reduced sample size of 16, means that the result is no longer "extremely" significant, but with $p=0.0085$ (less than 1 in 100), it is still *very* significant[27].

4. The authors' motivations

One might have expected that the generations that grew up when Britain was a great maritime power, with a vast overseas Empire, and that saw, in the First and Second World Wars, major British expeditions to the Continent, would have been inspired to write of similar expeditions for Arthur. In fact, the trend is the exact reverse – it is the more recent authors who have chosen to give greater prominence to TAMA. Why is this? I have no definite answers, but I can offer some hypotheses and observations.

Perhaps the loss of life and the fatal weakening of the British Empire through the two World Wars left a negative impact on those generations. Catherine Christian published *The Pendragon* in 1978, around the middle of my full sample of 29 works, but she was born in 1901. She says in an Author's Note: "Disintegration [of Roman Britain] began (as in this century) with the loss of two generations of young men, going overseas in expeditionary forces (one under the general Maximus, one under Constantine III) to fight and die in wars in Europe[28]." Furthermore, she has one Roman Briton, talking of the older 'colonials', say, "They've given up hope of another Emperor of the West from Britain. ... They've at last got it into their heads [that Arthur is] not likely to lead a war host overseas to try his luck for the Purple. That was what they were hoping for after Badon. ... They're disappointed in the king[29]." All of this is to Arthur's credit in Christian's eyes, and the only TAMA in her work is led by Guinevere, to aid Lancelot in Armorica against the Franks.

Perhaps, for the generations schooled during the heyday of the British Empire, the idea of Britain aloof from Europe made sense. Rosemary Sutcliff, who published *Sword at Sunset* in 1963, has Arthur say after his acclamation at Badon, "After forty years there is an Emperor in the West again. It is in my heart that few beyond our shores will know of this night's crowning ...; but what matters that? The Island of Britain is all that still stands of Rome-in-the-West and therefore it is enough that we in Britain know that the light still burns[30]." Thus, it may be that the increasing economic and political integration of post-Imperial Britain into Europe since 1973, and the fading of negative emotions about the World Wars, created a culture more accepting of military 'intervention' by Arthur on the continent. Indeed, the growing loyalty of Arthur to Rome's 'European project' is a trend I will discuss in Sec. 5.

There are some obvious reasons for an author to include an overseas military expedition by Arthur. First, authors convinced by Ashe's identification of Riothamus with Arthur are compelled to include his Gallic campaign. But this really only applies to Edwin Pace. (See Sec. 6.) Even Helen Hollick, who says in her final Author's Note that "Geoffrey Ashe's book *The Discovery of King Arthur* put the idea of a campaign in Gaul in my mind" is agnostic about his theory, and ultimately

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[25] Available at: http://www.vassarstats.net/corr_rank.html

[26] Motulsky, 2013, p. 139

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Christian, 1978, p. 461.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 319–320.

[30] Cited from p. 404 of the 1987 edition.

she is grateful because it was the "inspiration behind … a good story[31]". This last is the second obvious reason: giving Arthur an overseas expedition opens up more possibilities for original story lines, which may have become a more pressing need as the number of historical Arthurian novels increased. Third, as discussed in the Introduction, overseas expeditions are an integral part of the Arthur of myth, folklore, pseudohistory, and romance.

There are three main narrative purposes served by TAMA in the Arthurian traditions: to put space between Arthur and Mordred, allowing the latter to seize the kingdom; to bring Lancelot, or a Lancelot-character, into the story; or to include a quest for a mystical cauldron or chalice. These three, designated M, L, and C respectively, account for 15 of the 20 Arthurian TAMAs shown in Table 1. (When I indicate multiple narrative purposes, as for Carmichael and Cornwell, they refer to different TAMAs, with the first referring to the same TAMA as the rest of the row.) There are only three overseas military expeditions not accounted for by these narrative imperatives: Christian's TAMA creates the Arthur–Guinevere–Lancelot rift which must be healed; Hollick's TAMA takes the wounded Arthur to Morgaine in Avallon, though here it is Avallon in Burgundy and Arthur eventually returns; and Lees's TAMA brings Arthur to power and brings into the world his bastard son, Lees's narrator, Cadfan.

5. The Arthurs' motivations

Distinct from, but related to, the authors' motivations for sending their Arthurs on overseas campaigns are their Arthurs' motivations for undertaking them. I have identified five broad motivations, which frequently occur in conjunction, as shown in Table 1. They are:

- **Duty** (D) to protect fellow Britons, wherever they are.
- **Loyalty** (L) to the Roman Empire, or the idea of it.
- **Necessity** (N) of defending his kingdom against a present or potential threat.
- **Glory** (G), including its negative aspect, saving face.
- **Expediency** (E), that is, for political or personal reasons.

The most common motivations are **Necessity** (in 12 of the 20 TAMAs in Table 1) and **Glory** (in 9 of them).

The terms I have used for the first three motivations come directly from Helen Hollick, where "Ambrosius, guiding the council, insisted that Arthur give aid to Roman Gaul [against the Visigoths], out of duty, out of loyalty, out of necessity[32]." I interpret these three as above because earlier (on p. 5) Arthur says, "I need to give aid to Less Britain, for Armorica is also of my kingdom" (**Necessity**) and "do I turn my back on British people because their land happens to lie across the sea?" (**Duty**), and "The Roman Emperor himself is pleading for my help – personally asking for my Artoriani to join with his loyal allies against the barbarians" (**Loyalty**).

Another example of a three-fold motivation is from Edwin Pace, who also identified Arthur with Riothamus. As well as **Loyalty** (as would be expected), his Arthur's motivations cover the remaining two of my categories[33]:

As Arthur sipped his wine by the fire, he felt a pang of regret. The heroic days were gone. … He had created a state organized for war – and there was no war. But strife, yes there was plenty of that. … This was not peace, but slow decay. Unless something was done, his great creation would collapse. [=**Expediency**] …

A smile crossed his lips. There was a solution to the problem. The [federate] Saxons wanted booty? Fine, let them look for it not in Britain but across the sea. [=**Expediency**] The Britons hated the Saxons? Fine, let them pay for a fleet to carry the *furciferi* far away, beyond the horizon. [=**Expediency**] Let soldiers from Britain cross the Gallican Straits just as Constantine the Great had.

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[31] Hollick, 1997 p. 561.
[32] *Ibid.* p. 8.
[33] Pace, 2008, p. 217–218.

But *not* as Maxmius or the last Constantine had done. This time it would be different. Britain's soldiers would be crossing Ocean as Rome's friends, not her enemies. [=**Loyalty**] ...

Arthur called for more wine, then drank deeply. Already he was planning his last, greatest campaign. Once again he would harness all Britain's resources. But this time it would not be for mere survival, but for empire. [=**Glory**]

Loyalty to the idea of Rome can also be a motivation for writers who do not equate Arthur with the Riothamus of 469. For example, Diana Paxson has Rutilius, a Roman from Armorica, appeal to Artor in the year 502[34]:

"... I see that you, my lord, ... hold to the spirit of Rome. ... The last strength of the West lies here, lord, in Britannia. ... Bring [your soldiers] to Gallia, *princeps*, and ... we will make you Emperor!"

The old dream reborn! Struggling to keep his face impassive, Artor sat back in his chair. ... Constantine himself had been proclaimed in Eboracum before marching south to his destiny. Aegidius and his son Syagrius had tried to restore the Western Empire in Gallia, but without the resources of Britannia they could not endure. ... But with the power of Britannia ... behind him, Artor might well succeed where no other man could. ... He blinked, dazzled at the prospect. Oh what a noble dream!

Seduced by this dream of **Glory**, and **Loyal** to the Romans who want an Emperor, Artor convinces himself that the expedition is one of **Necessity** and **Duty**, telling one of his under-kings "The Franks have proved themselves a warlike people. If they are not controlled now, your son's sons may see them at your gates. And there are men of our blood in Gallia who will certainly be overrun[35]."

The increasing occurrence of **Loyalty** is the only obvious trend in the motivations in Table 1. It can indeed be shown to be a significant trend, in this case using a Fisher Exact Probability Test[36]. Of the 20 TAMAs in Table 1, none of the 10 before 1983 has **Loyalty** as a motivation, while 5 of the 10 since 1983 do. The probability of an asymmetry of this magnitude (or greater) arising by chance, again calculated using a public statistics package[37], is $p = 0.033$, which is considered significant[38]. However, if the 5 TAMAs influenced by Ashe's hypothesis (all post-1985) are removed, we now have **Loyalty** in only 2 of the remaining 5 TAMAs since 1983. This gives $p = 0.095$ which is not considered significant[39].

6. The influence of modern historians

As has been mentioned several times, *The Discovery of King Arthur*, the 1985 nonfiction book by Geoffrey Ashe, has had a dramatic impact on Arthurian historical fiction. This was the book that brought to popular attention the remarkable fact that a veritable King of the Britons, Riothamus, came to Bourges, in central Gaul, "by way of the ocean" in c.469, reputedly at the head of 12,000 men. He came at the invitation of the western Emperor Anthemius, to protect what remained of Roman Gaul from the Visigoths under their king Euric. He corresponded on friendly terms with at least one Romano-Gallic noble (Sidonius), but another of them, Arvandus, the Prefect of Gaul, was working secretly on the side of the Visigoths. Before his Roman allies could join him, Riothamus was routed by Euric near Bourges, and fled east to Burgundia never to be heard of again. Too late, an army of Romans and Franks under a certain Count Paul arrived, and defeated the Visigoths. Around this time the Romans and Franks also fought the Saxons under a certain Adovacer on the Loire.

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[34] Paxson, 2000, p. 13–14.

[35] *Ibid.,* p. 32.

[36] Sheskin, 2003, p. 505–511.

[37] See: http://vassarstats.net/tab2x2.html

[38] Motulsky, 2013, p. 139.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 139; Sheskin, p. 57

Ashe's book also brought to popular attention the speculation, already 800 years old[40], that Riothamus (a name that means "high king") was actually King Arthur. Ashe has several arguments for this claim, but the fundamental one, which he introduced in 1981 (p. 304), is that we should "take seriously" the fact that in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *HRB*, Arthur "is more a Gallic conqueror than anything else". Ashe goes so far as to produce an imagined 'historical abstract' which is "based fairly on recognized records" (p. 318) and which could, in Geoffrey's hands, have inspired this part of his Arthur's career. As I argue elsewhere[41], Ashe's theory fails even on its own terms since the abstract as hypothetically transmitted to (or understood by) Geoffrey does not actually mention any battles or territorial acquisitions by Arthur in Gaul.

Leaving aside this criticism of Ashe's 'Riothamus theory', its influence on writers of historical fiction is undeniable. Hollick, Baxter, and Pace adopt many aspects of Ashe's theory. Lees and Wolf reject his central thesis, but my presumption is that both were influenced by Ashe's book, because they both have an Arthurian army in Bourges in 469, which no Arthurian fiction prior to 1985 did, as far as I know. Lees identifies Riothamus with Ambrosius, but has Arthur as one of his captains who rallied the Britons after their defeat, and brilliantly led the remnant army back to Britain. Wolf has Arthur lead an army to Gaul to fight Odovacar (the Saxon) in 469, but ends perplexingly: Arthur returns amid apparently false rumours of a defeat in Gaul by a combined army of Saxons and Visigoths, and is mortally wounded at Camlann while defending his innocent son Mordred, whom he sends (for Mordred's own safety) to join the army at Bourges in Gaul, under a certain Valerius. None of Wolf's characters are explicitly identified with Riothamus, and it remains a mystery as to whether any of these three are intended to be.

Appearing at the end of Tables 1 and 2 (but not included in my sample of 29 works, and not hitherto discussed) is another work of Arthurian historical fiction that has been influenced by modern historical research at least as much as those of Hollick and Pace. This is my own work (published subsequent to the conference at which this paper was presented), a 'quasihistory'. I use this term to describe an alloy of reliable history, new fictions (by me), and old fictions (legends, etc.), written as a medieval-style narrative history. It is distinguished from '*pseudo*history', such as the *HRB*, only in that it respects known history and geography. One inspiration for my most prominent TAMA is Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudohistory, in particular Arthur's conquest of Roman Gaul around 530, and his return there in 541 to fight the Emperor Lucius, who had demanded tribute from Britain. Gidlow[42] has pointed out the similarities between events in the *HRB* and real events in Gaul at around this time. Much of Geoffrey's action in 541 pivots around Autun in northern Burgundia, and later in that year Arthur subdues the whole of Burgundia. In real history, there was a siege of Autun in 533–534 by the western Frankish Kings, Childebert and Lothar, and they went on to conquer Burgundia in 534[43].

Neither of Gidlow's parallels in real history involves Britons, but in this context there is an arresting piece of evidence, a recent analysis[44] of the *Vita Sancti Dalmatii* from c.800[45]. The *Vita* is open to different interpretations[46], but one of them situates a Brittonic 'legion' around the northern border of Burgundia, in 534x41. At the *terminus post quem*, not only were Childebert and Clothar besieging the Burgundian King in Autun; they also "did what they could" to prevent the succession of their nephew Theudebert to the throne of the eastern Frankish kingdom, Austrasia[47]. It may have been the presence of their armies in northern Burgundia that made this attempt feasible[48], but in any case Theudebert bought them off. Now it is intriguing that one of the Kings of Austrasia

[40] Fletcher, 1906, p. 172 and 185.
[41] Wiseman, forthcoming.
[42] 2004, p. 295.
[43] For details, see Wiseman, 2011, p. 22–23.
[44] *Ibid.*, 2011.
[45] Ed. Krusch, 1896, p. 544.
[46] Wiseman, 2011, p. 24–29.
[47] Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 3.23, in Ed. Krusch and Levison, MCHSSrer.Merov, 1/1.123.
[48] Wiseman, 2011, p. 30.

around this time (either Theudebert or his father, Theuderic, or his son Theudebald) claimed overlordship of the 'island of Brittia[49]'. The Britons of Armorica, meanwhile, seem to have maintained good relations with the neighbouring Franks under Childebert[50], and at least one group of Frankish ecclesiastics around this time regarded the Britons literally as a brother nation[51].

Putting all of this together still falls well short of compelling evidence for military activity by Britons in Gaul beyond Armorica, let alone military expeditions from Britain, in 534x41. But a writer of Arthurian quasihistory does not require proof, only suggestions from which a tenable story, fleshed out by old Arthurian fictions, can be suspended. In my quasihistory, it is Theuderic who, in 533, claims overlordship of, and demands tribute from, Britain. Arthur refuses and, as a matter of honour, takes an army to Armorica to raid Austrasia, with covert support from Childebert. But when Theuderic dies, Arthur ends up joining with the western Frankish kings in northern Burgundia to oppose the succession of Theudebert in 534, and then to conquer Burgundia. All of this gives my book a larger value assigned (Table 2) for prominence of TAMA than any of the books in my sample. And, as a final note, unlike any of those other books, it *does* include a sea battle, albeit briefly described, between Arthur and Cynric, on the former's return from Gaul.

7. Discussion

The overseas expeditions of the legendary Arthur exert a powerful pull on the modern writer of historical Arthurian fiction. Moreover, the pull has very clearly grown stronger over the last several decades (or resistance to it has grown weaker). It could be that the increasing integration of Britain into Europe, following the loss of Empire and the success of the 'European project', has made overseas military 'interventions' by Arthur more acceptable, especially those in the service of Rome. Alternatively it may simply be that as the amount of Arthurian fiction grows, authors are driven to look beyond Britain to come up with original story lines.

As an author of a recently published work of Arthurian historical fiction (see Sec. 6), I can testify to the importance of the transmarine military expeditions by Arthur in my creative process. In fact, if not for Barbieri's e-book (2002), which convinced me in 2003 that an Arthurian expedition into central Gaul in the 530s was plausible, I would never have undertaken to turn my 'heap' of primary sources into a quasihistory. For it is expeditions like this which can give Arthur's story many of its attractive aspects (in my view): grandeur, by making Arthur a player on the European stage; variety, by involving nations other than the Anglo-Saxons and Britons; historical context, by tying it to more firmly established Continental events; and traditional context, by allowing much of Geoffrey's story to be reincorporated.

In any case, the present trend towards more prominent transmarine military activity shows no sign of abating. This has been especially marked in the last 30 years as authors have taken up historical research that supports the idea of an interventionist Arthur on the Continent. In addition to the five works influenced by the 'Riothamus theory' of Geoffrey Ashe, my quasihistory has been informed by my own published research. I do not expect my paper to have anything like the impact of Ashe's book[52]. That said, the future is hard to predict. I have no doubt that Arthurian historical fiction will continue to be written, and that new trends will eventually emerge. I hope to

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[49] Procopius, *De bello Gothico* 4.20.7–10, in Haury (ed.), 1905, p. 590–591 (English translation in Dewing, 1919).

[50] Wiseman, 2011, p. 21–22.

[51] Barbieri, 2002. See appendix 12, "More evidence for direct contact between Franks and Celtic Britons, ca. 535"; but see also "'The supposedly Frankish Table of Nations: An Edition and Study", in Goffart, 1989, p. 133–164.

[52] My research is, I think, more suggestive of a genuine source, however meager, behind Arthur's Gallic wars in the *HRB*. But it lacks the romance of the Ashe's "discovery of King Arthur" as a real person (Riothamus) whose personality can perhaps be glimpsed through the surviving letter written to him by Sidonius (Adams, 1993, p. 157–164).

be able to look back in a few decades' time to see whether the historical Arthur is still heading out on overseas military expeditions, and, if so, where, how, when, and why.

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