

GRAILING ACROSS TIME AND SPACE: METAPHORICAL QUESTS, ACADEMIC PURSUITS AND IRREVERENT VISITATIONS OF CAMELOT

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Abstract: The main focus of this paper is the rewriting of Arthurian and Grail lore in the modern vein, with a particular emphasis on revisitations that explore the metaphorical rather than the literal meaning of the quest and of the Grail itself and favour a less reverent approach (whether merely light-hearted, harshly cynical or downright surreal) over an attitude of awed idealization of the past. The analysis will primarily focus on two prose narratives – Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889) and David Lodge's Small World. An Academic Romance (1984) – a surrealist comedy – Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975) and a twenty-first century animation – Shrek the Third (2007) – but will also entail references to other cinematic and literary works from both the British and the American space, including an action film (Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade), a comedy-drama (The Fisher King), a conspiracy-theory novel (Dan Brown's (in)famous The Da Vinci Code), a musical (Monty Python's Spamalot) and even computer games in an attempt to explore the intertextual complexity of most such endeavours as well as to highlight the wide (and enduring) appeal of the Grail plot.