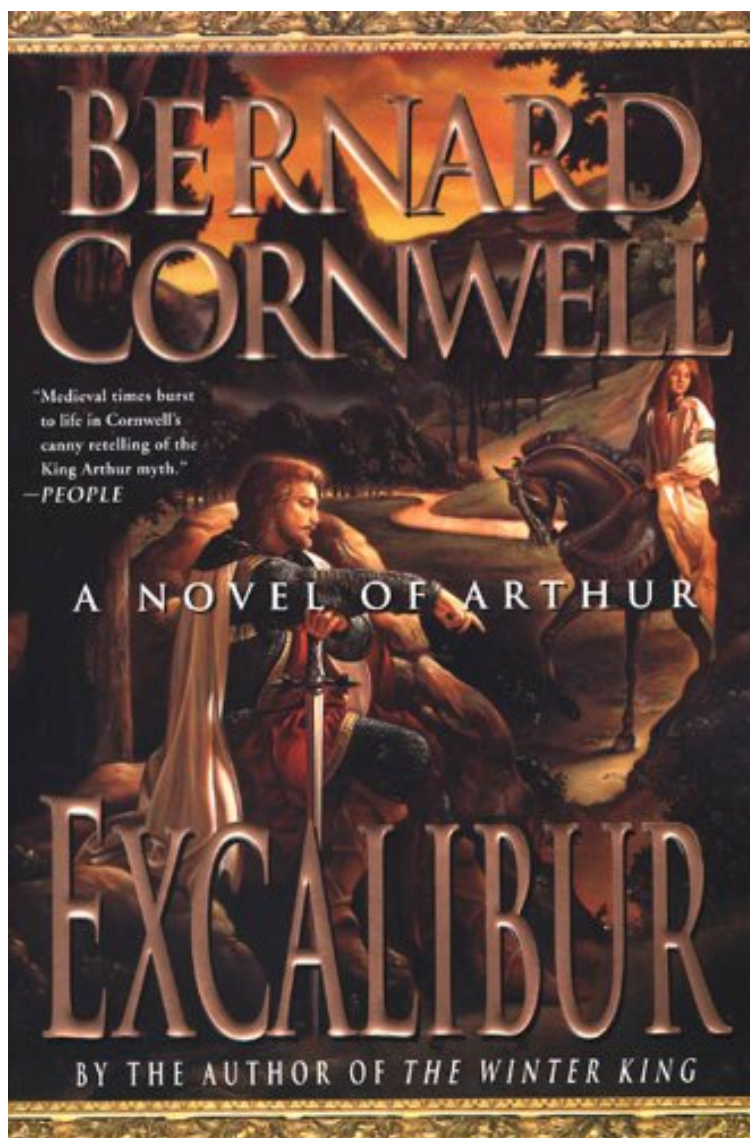


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# Excalibur: A Novel of Arthur



*Par Bernard Cornwell*  
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**Par Bernard Cornwell : Excalibur: A Novel of Arthur** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Excalibur: A Novel of Arthur:

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**Description :** Description du produitIn The Winter King and Enemy of God Bernard Cornwell demonstrated his astonishing ability to make the oft-told legend of King Arthur fresh and new for our time. Now, in this riveting final volume of The Warlord Chronicles, Cornwell tells the unforgettable tale of Arthur's final struggles against the Saxons and his last attempts to triumph over a ruined marriage and ravaged dreams. This is the tale not only of a broken love remade, but also of forces both earthly and unearthly that threaten everything Arthur stands for. Peopled by princesses and bards, by warriors and magicians, Excalibur is the story of love, war, loyalty, and betrayal-the work of a magnificent storyteller at the height of his powers.

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The third novel in the Warlords Chronicle, Excalibur: A Novel of Arthur immerses the reader in the Britain of the Dark Ages. Merlin, the greatest of the Druids, believes that the ancient gods are deserting Britain, and that the invading Saxons can't be defeated without the gods' help. Mordred reigns with a brutal hand, and Arthur sees his dreams of peace evaporate. The author provides exciting descriptions of swordplay and battles, interspersed with somewhat gruesome depictions of ordinary life in those days--greasy, waist-length beards serving as napkins, lambs bloodily sacrificed before festivals, and rampant lice. But at the heart of Excalibur--what makes the Arthurian legends eternally fascinating--is the larger-than-life company of heroes, from Sagramor the warrior to Taliesin the bard, Guinevere, Lancelot, and Arturus Rex himself. Cornwell treats them all with warmth and dignity, revealing their human qualities without unnecessarily reinventing them. This three-part saga of magic and bloodshed will grip readers from the first page of The Winter King, through Enemy of God, to the last page of Excalibur.

--Blaise Selby From Publishers Weekly

Readers of Mallory and other sources of Arthurian lore may be struck by their conflation of bloody savagery and Christian pieties. In his new Arthurian novel, Cornwell (The Winter King) dramatizes the confrontation of Christianity--here depicted as the political tool of self-righteous brutes, opportunists and hypocrites--with the old religion of the Druids. Chief among the Druids are Merlin and his nemesis, Nimue, who cast spells and preside over rituals of fire and human sacrifice in order to bring about a return of the old gods, saving Britain from the Saxons. Priestess Nimue wants to sacrifice Arthur's son Gwydre to this end, but Merlin resists, as do Arthur and his warrior friend Derfel: for this they suffer terribly. The tale is told by Derfel, now an old monk in the service of an illiterate and sadistic bishop who would punish Derfel if he knew what he were writing. This frame works well to flavor and deepen the whole. The book is a military tale--alliances, strategies, battles, betrayals--and is stirringly told as Arthur routs the treacherous Lancelot and his Saxon backers. It is also the tale of the reconciliation of Arthur, honest to a fault and tortured by his wife's betrayal, with Guinevere, extraordinary in her bravery, wisdom and forthrightness. Equally central is Derfel's devotion to his mate, Ceinwyn, for whose life he sacrifices his shield hand, averting Nimue's curse. The action is gripping and skillfully paced, cadenced by passages in which the characters reveal themselves in conversation and thought, convincingly evoking the spirit of the time. Ways of ancient ritual, battle and daily life are laid out in surprising detail. One feels the element of fantasy only in the incredible integrity of Derfel and Arthur, men who sacrifice all for a vow--but our reluctance to believe may be only a sign of our times. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.