Enemy of God (The Arthur Books #2)
by Bernard Cornwell

Embattled, honorable executive Arthur faces revolt by Lancelot and betrayal by Guinevere. King Mordred comes of age, but should he be king? Arthur is faced with more than one dilemma as quests and plots, treachery, lies, and mysteries proliferate. Adultery and violent revenge strain Arthur's alliances, horrifying even war-hardened narrator Derfel Cadarn and endangering his beloved family. Little faults plague this book and its prequel. Bernard Cornwell insults Welsh princes with the Saxon title Edling, and someone should tell him what gold weighs—he has a gigantic gold cauldron carried on one man's back and generally throws gold bars around like wood chips. However, his rearrangements of the well-known tale are ingenious and plausible, and these books are very entertaining.

My Personal Review:
This is my first encounter with Richard Cornwell. It has definitely piqued my interest to read the other two volumes in the trilogy and to investigate other books by this author.
If you are familiar with Grail literature and with such classics as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Le Morte d'Arthur, etc., you will have certain preconceptions about the major characters that are here transmogrified by Cornwell. The chivalrous Arthur is transformed into a more human, too-trusting, well-meaning leader of a tribe. Guenivere is a scheming, conceited megalomaniac, who mellows somewhat as the story progresses. The narrators (Derfels) harshest judgment is reserved for Lancelot. He is definitely not the same Lancelot-du-lac that we have come to know from Mallory. He is more like the 5th century version of a matinee idol. He's all image, no substance. He's not someone to be counted on in the heat of battle. Merlin is a rascally magus whose main concern lies in stemming the tide of Christianity that he views as an invasion of the old order. Cornwell is obviously making judgement calls here, but he's not doing it purely for the sake of novelty. This is a thoroughly-researched, as well as an eminently well-written work.
Tolkien fans who have been turned-off by the pale imitators that have attempted to emulate the masters style will no doubt find many parallels in Cornwell. That’s not to imply that Cornwell is imitative by any means. He just handles prose almost as adroitly as his predecessor. If there were a worthy Tolkien successor writing today, though in a slightly different genre, it would have to be Cornwell. Cornwell has created a truly heroic saga, and has left this reader looking forward eagerly to the other two volumes in the trilogy. Enemy of God is definitely several cuts above the mass of historical fiction being churned out today. The man can write!

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