

## Enemy of God

*Bernard Cornwell*

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The balance of King Arthur's unified kingdom is threatened by Merlin's quest for the last of Britain's 13 Treasures; by the conflict between the ancient religion and the new Christianity; and by Britain's war with the Saxons. A master storyteller continues his retelling of the Arthurian legend.

## Enemy of God Details


Date : Published March 15th 1998 by St. Martin's Griffin (first published 1996)

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Author : Bernard Cornwell

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## From Reader Review Enemy of God for online ebook

### Ensiform says

The second book in the Arthur series, this book tells of how Arthur's fragile peace was broken by Lancelot's deal with Cerdic, the Saxon raider, and how Arthur discovered Lancelot's treachery with Guinevere. The narrator Derfel's story is also fraught with drama; Cornwell knows how to make the reader hate villains (treachery is the trick, it seems, judging from this and the Sharpe series) and yearn for their comeuppance.

Again, this is a very expertly realized historical guess at "Camelot" (a word not even coined until the 12th century, according to Cornwell). The Christians are spreading like wildfire, denying all other gods. Merlin, Morgan and Nimue (Vivien) are all here, but the magic is not transformations or enchantments, but sprigs of hair and bone, spitting, bits of iron and ritual. The combat is not courtly jousting by "knights," but savage attacks with shield, sword and spear. Cornwell makes the Arthurian romances real and human; it's a delightful escapist book.

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### Patrick says

So, an escape from more formal literary pursuits. Cornwell is a consummate storyteller. He distills history, religion, myth, legend, magic and fable. This predates Game of Thrones but is a marvellous re-imagining of the Arthurian legends. This is a story of Britain with religious persecution and invasion and immigration and clashes of Kings and clans. A version of the Arthurian saga was filmed in Ireland in or about 1980 by John Boorman. Two of my classmates had small parts so from then the legends always interested me. The movie was called Excalibur and while modern technology and special effects were not as advanced then I think it nonetheless still endures. Tolkien decrees that the architecture of the fantasy genre should be set out in a trilogy so I am moving on to the final book. Pure escapism but in parts a little tedious and repetitive and too many unpronounceable Welsh names.

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### Scott Hitchcock says

Book 1: 3\*

Book 2: 3.5\*'s

This darker and less romanticized view of Camelot picked up speed in book two. I've grown to enjoy more and more this version of the characters and especially the view of Lancelot and Guinevere who definitely don't come out smelling like roses.

The clash between the Britons and the Saxons also escalates as does the pagans vs the Christians which in some ways the story starts to form if not a prelude at least a precursor to the Saxon Stories series.

This series is being done on audio and I've enjoyed the narrator and look forward to the conclusion in book 3.

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## Petrik says

### 4.5/5 Stars

**Enemy of God, the second book in 'The Warlord Chronicles' trilogy by Bernard Cornwell, and the series so far, has truly been serendipity for me.**

As I mentioned in my previous review, I've never bothered to start Cornwell's work, it brings me joy when someone, a friend (*even better again when it's from one of your favorite authors*) recommended a book/series to you and you loved it. That's truly how I feel about the trilogy so far, Cornwell again compelled me with his original and haunting retelling of an Arthurian saga full of heroism and tragedy.

The now monk and Christian, Derfel Cadarn continues telling his tale to Igraine, his current Queen about his time as a Pagan, a time when he was called Lord Derfel Cadarn, Derfel the Mighty, Champion of Dumnonia and the beloved friend of Arthur. Derfel's tale in *Enemy of God* begins in the year 495 AD, 15 years after the beginning of his tale in *The Winter King* and continues immediately from the aftermath of the last battle in the previous book. Most of the plot in the book focused on Merlin's hunt for the Cauldron of Clyddno Eiddyn (or in modern names, the Holy Grail), driving back the Saxon, Camelot (*Arthur's glorious years of rule*) and eventually, why Arthur earned the title 'The Enemy of God, all told masterfully from Derfel's 1st person omniscient-ish narrative.

"To hear the tales told at night-time hearths you would think we had made a whole new country in Britain, named it Camelot and peopled it with shining heroes, but the truth is that we simply ruled Dumnonia as best we could, we ruled it justly and we never called it Camelot"

A lot of heavy realistic topics were brought upon in this book. One of the most memorable moments being the complication to choose friendships or to uphold law and oath in the name of peace, even when you know the decision is wrong. On instincts, I'll always choose friendship but what if, by choosing to save that friend, you risk killing millions of people? Will you still go through with it? Or will you follow the law, saving millions of people's lives that you don't know in exchange of your loyal friend's existence?

"Arthur did try to change the world and his instrument was love"

That topic is very well written but imo, the best part of the book lies on another realistic topic and definitely the factor with the strongest emphasis, religion, specifically on Christianity, Pagan and the mystery of the Goddess, Isis.

"It's only when you're lost and frightened and in the dark that you call on the Gods, and they like us to call on them. It makes them feel powerful, and that's why they like us to live in chaos."

The entire discussion and conflict on religions are very thought provoking. It made me think a lot on faith

and afterlife, which honestly, unsettled me a bit. This goes to show just how well written this book is. There is a sense of hope, glory, friendship, and loss that were told. While the first half is still slow paced, the pacing is much more balanced now compared to the previous book where the first half was so dense with descriptions and minim dialogues. The second half has faster paced, the last two chapters (*more or less the last 60 pages of the book*), in particular, were damn thrilling despite having only a small amount of actions.

I honestly don't know how I can tell you just how well written this book is. It's simple, beautiful, haunting, and vivid. Although every chapter is still very long, with 13 chapters out of 470 pages, it never felt like a slog going through it because Cornwell's prose worked so well for me.

The only minor con I had with the book is that I find myself a bit disappointed by the lack of battle scenes in it. It's the second book already and I still haven't seen any of Cornwell's supposedly memorable battle scenes. This doesn't mean the book isn't thrilling or filled with suspense at all, the second half of the book was so addictive and thrilling despite having minimum actions as I mentioned. However, I came into this series expecting to see a lot of war scenes but haven't seen any yet aside from the climax in book 1, which was still too short for my taste. Do note that this is just a minor con due to my expectation, for the quality of the storytelling solely never fails to captivate me.

Enemy of God is a fantastic sequel to bridge the gap towards the final book in the trilogy, 'Excalibur.' I love the previous book, love this one even more and I hope the last one will continue the same tradition. I totally recommend this for any lover of historical fiction and Arthurian saga.

*You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest*

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### StoryTellerShannon says

Per my review of WINTER KING, this is a different take on Arthur, focusing on the legend and the times. And those times were when Briton was desperately fighting itself and trying to hold back the Saxon invasions. The ruins of Roman occupation still remain.

In the second novel there is a great deal of more focus in how the Saxon problem will be solved. Lancelot shows his true colors to other people. Guinevere betrays Arthur. Merlin is questing for relics that will bring the Old Gods to Britain, push out the Christian God and help Britain against the many invaders. The main character, Derfel, achieves more status, fights in more battles, discovers his father is a Saxon leader and creates a rift with his childhood female friend, Merlin's apprentice.

Expect the gritty shield walls brought to life with Cornwell's amazing literary skills.

Evocative, bittersweet and even thought provoking.

Enjoy!

**STORY/PLOTTING: B plus to A minus; CHARACTERS/DIALOGUE: A minus ACTION SCENES: B plus to A minus; HISTORICAL FOCUSES/ACCURACY: B plus to A minus; OVERALL GRADE: B plus to A minus; WHEN READ: 2005 (read three times) (revised review 1/30/13)**

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## Rob Bradford says

I have yet to read a really good book by Bernard Cornwell; but he's never failed to entertain me, either.

Every book of his that I've read could fit into this one generic Cornwell review:

Characters: good, but curiously blind in the places where the plot calls for them to miss something.

Historical Detail: excellent, immersive, impressive.

Plot: frustratingly obvious.

Pacing: excellent, if predictable.

Style: solid, literate, unchallenging.

I guess it's the way it's going to be, if you write as many books as Cornwell does. Who am I to complain? I keep buying them.

Enemy of God is the middle book of his Arthur series. I loved the narrator, Derfel. The action is, as always, great. I felt like I was living in 6th century Britain; the book did a great job of transporting me.

I thought the whole trilogy did a wonderful job of reimagining the traditional characters in a way which made sense of them in a historical context. The changes to Merlin and Lancelot, especially, are just awesome.

Unfortunately, it's very hard to understand why Arthur seems surprised by any of the events that overtake him. The character of Arthur is central to the Arthur trilogy. When his reactions are inexplicable to the reader, the whole book suffers. Maybe it would have made more sense to me if I had a firmer idea of how Cornwell envisioned Arthur. But, although he gets plenty of page time, I left each book of the series much more convinced by everyone else who appeared than by Arthur.

Of all the Cornwell books I've read, I came closest to giving this one four stars. I can't say why I liked it more than the first or third books in the trilogy, but I did.

I just can't say that it was really good. I absolutely did like it, though.

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## Megan says

I'm fluctuating between a solid 4 and a 4.5 stars with this one. It was better than *The Winter King* for the simple fact that you didn't have to force yourself through 100 pages of dense world-building at the beginning. But at the same time, it was *just* that tiny bit shy of a 5 star read. (I'm hoping that *Excalibur* is going to be worthy of a 5 star rating, though. \*crosses fingers\*)

Cornwell picks right up where he left off previously in *The Winter King* - perhaps a day or so after the battle of Lugg Vale. From there, the novel's events take place over a span of around 15 years or so, although the time-jump is done quite quickly around the middle of the novel, with brief explanations of the more important events that occurred. Not only does Derfel continue to cement his position as one of Arthur's most respected warriors, but he also gains a family, one which provides peaceful interludes every now and then between battles and 5th century English politics.

Cornwell also takes the opportunity to include his own version of some of the more famous Arthurian myths. Not only do we get the Guinevere-Lancelot revelation at the end of the novel, but the Tristan-Iseult tragedy

plays out as well. I must say though, it was portrayed a whole lot less romantically than it's often depicted (to the best of my limited knowledge). I know that marriages were conducted quite differently back then, with women often marrying men up to three-times their own age, but it's hard to read about a 'real romance' between a 40 year old man and a 15 year old girl and not think squeamishly about the standards of modern society.

Basically though, most of the novel can be summed up as follows:

Hi, my name is Lancelot and my hobbies include stealing your girl and your kingdom.

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### **Lucia says**

Bernard Cornwell does not disappoint and once again I enjoyed his book immensely. The way he connects myth and fiction in this book is astonishing. **I applaud his singular storytelling skills** and I cannot wait for next (and unfortunately final) book in this series!

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### **Kate Quinn says**

Cornwell's splendid trilogy of King Arthur continues in the second novel, "Enemy of God" - and it's altogether a darker, dirtier, more brutal world than the Arthur myths most of us remember growing up, with new twists to many familiar characters. Lancelot in this setting is a preening poser, Merlin is a teasing prankster as well as a powerful wizard, and the seasoned Derfel is Arthur's greatest warrior. Arthur now rules as regent for the child king Mordred, his enemies subdued - but chaos is always hovering in the chaotic fifth century. Derfel, his right-hand man, has problems of his own: he is hopelessly in love with Ceinwyn, the princess Arthur spurned for Guinevere, and who is now promised to the detestable Lancelot. Derfel makes a desperate bid to claim Ceinwyn, but finds himself on a journey with the mysterious Merlin to find an artifact Merlin claims will bring the old gods back to Britain. Arthur believes none of this mystical nonsense, and is up to his elbows just trying to keep the Saxons from invading Britain. Between quests, epic battles, and internal strife, Arthur is blind to the danger that may destroy him from within - the passion growing between his beloved Guinevere and Lancelot. Derfel will suffer his own heartbreak in the violence coming from Guinevere's betrayal, and shocking bloodshed ensues. Merlin is a ray of acerbic humor, stealing every scene he appears in, and his witchy apprentice Nimue is ever more disquieting. Many trilogies have problems with Book 2, but not this one.

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### **Aaron Dembski-Bowden says**

Everything I said in my much longer review of The Winter King (<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>) applies to Enemy of God, as well, except ramped up to 11.

The story was tighter, Christianity and Druidism both came across as more sinister and yet somehow more pitiable, and the characters plunged into that old truth of how everything goes wrong in Act II, when things are darkest before the dawn.

My only criticism (of a book as close to flawless as humanly possible) is that towards the end, Arthur's naivety started to strain credulity. But then, love is blind. We've all said and believed idiotic things while feeling the same way.

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### Mike says

Enemy of God is a solid 4 stars, maybe even 5 stars. I took a little away because I wanted Arthur to be a little more cunning and realistic. He comes across too naïve in areas where he should not be. The portrayal of Christianity and how it spreads conflict is a major theme and isn't pretty. But it is probably realistic. While this Arthurian tale is not like any others, if you are looking for a "Grail" quest, you will find it here...kind of. This part of the tale is told in the warm summertime, when Arthur is at his greatest power. Yet the politics and betrayals abound. Cornwell covers a lot of ground in this second part of the trilogy. The battles and adventures are very good. The characters become people you know and you care for. Or hate them as the case may be. Read it.

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### Chris says

Want an Arthurian legend with grit? With raw human emotion? With unexpected betrayals and intrigue? Here you go.

This is the second in the Arthur/Warlord trilogy and keeps the same momentum started in *The Winter King*.

It could almost have ended here. You could stop after this and have a satisfying saga.

But who would want to? There's still one book to go.

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### Vagner Stefanello says

Review in Portuguese from Desbravando Livros:

Uma obra-prima da literatura estrangeira! Um dos melhores livros já lidos na minha vida! Uma obra sem comparação! Esse é o único jeito possível de começar a resenhar esse livro magnífico de Bernard Cornwell. Com uma narrativa absurdamente leal aos fatos descobertos pelo autor, somos transportados novamente para a Britânia de antigamente, onde seus habitantes tentam defender suas terras dos invasores saxões.

Dessa vez, além dos problemáticos saxões, nosso protagonista também terá que lidar, junto a Artur, com o rápido crescimento do cristianismo na Britânia. Esses cristãos, além de serem fervorosos, procuram acabar com a "magia" dos antigos deuses que sempre estiveram presentes nas orações dos habitantes dessa terra. Para que isso não aconteça, Merlin empreende uma busca por um caldeirão mágico que tem tudo para dar errado, pois o território a ser desbravado é controlado por inimigos sedentos por sangue.

"- Você é um idiota, Derfel. Mas é um idiota bom em usar uma espada, e é por isso que preciso de você se formos andar pela Estrada Escura. – Ele se levantou. – Agora a escolha é sua." Merlin

*"Fiquei imóvel quando acordei. Não houvera sonho, mas eu sabia o que queria. Queria pegar o osso e parti-lo em dois, e se esse gesto significasse andar na Estrada Escura até o reino de Diwrnach, que assim fosse. Mas também queria que a Britânia de Artur fosse íntegra, boa e verdadeira. E queria que meus homens tivessem ouro, terras, escravos e posto. Queria expulsar os saxões de Lloegyr. Queria ouvir os gritos de uma parede de escudos rompida e o toque das trombetas de guerra enquanto um exército vitorioso perseguia até a ruína um inimigo espalhado. Queria marchar com meus escudos estrelados na terra lisa do leste que nenhum britânico livre vira em uma geração. E queria Ceinwyn."*

A narrativa, assim como no livro anterior, continua sendo em primeira pessoa, o que é importantíssimo para fazer com que o leitor se sinta na pele do personagem em questão. Derfel, agora já velho e cristão, está contando e transcrevendo a história de Artur para a sua atual rainha Igraine, e não há ninguém melhor do que ele para fazer isso, pois lutou ao lado do herói por quase toda a vida.

E também acredito que não só eu, mas todas as pessoas que já leram As Crônicas de Artur, começaram a nutrir um ódio imenso pelo personagem Lancelot. Apesar de ser exaltado como um exímio e leal guerreiro nas canções dos bardos (e em praticamente todos os livros que falam da lenda de Artur) e todos saberem que o mesmo nunca esteve nem mesmo em uma parede de escudos, ele ainda assim não possui miolo algum em sua cabeça e faz de tudo para prejudicar os outros, inclusive Derfel. Prestem bastante atenção nesse personagem, pois ele será imprescindível para o andamento da história.

*"Nós comemoramos. E como comemoramos. Porque agora parecia que tínhamos algo por que lutar. Não por Mordred, aquele sapo desgraçado, mas por Artur, porque apesar de toda a sua bela conversa sobre o Conselho governar Dumnonia no lugar de Mordred, todos sabíamos o que as palavras significavam. Significavam que Artur seria o rei de Dumnonia em todos os sentidos, menos no nome, e por este bom objetivo levaríamos nossas lanças à guerra. Comemoramos porque agora tínhamos uma causa pela qual lutar e morrer. Tínhamos Artur."*

Quem ainda não deu uma chance para As Crônicas de Artur ou qualquer outro livro desse autor precisa desesperadamente rever os seus conceitos e as suas prioridades de leitura. Vale a pena investir cada centavo do seu bolso e cada minuto do seu tempo em séries dessa magnitude!

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## Truncarlos says

Empiezo a pensar que Bernard Cornwell no tiene comparación a la hora de escribir ficción histórica. No es sólo que no haya bajado un ápice la calidad de esta novela respecto de la primera entrega de la trilogía, sino que logra un efecto que muchas novelas prometen y luego no logro experimentar en casi ninguna: empatizas profundamente con los personajes, quieres que triunfen, quieres que fracasen, quieres que se recuperen cuando se encuentran mal.

Me flipa esa sensación tan fuerte que experimentas cuando sabes con certeza que una narración te va a atrapar y que, sea cuando sea, narre lo que narre, te va a entretener y retener. Este libro lo logra sin duda. Puedes planearte una tarde de leer esta novela sin temor a aburrirte y acabes mirando Twitter.

Ahora ya sé lo que es una cota maclada, un soldado de leva, una barrera de escudos, el conflicto druídico-cristiano en Britania durante las guerras con los sajones, el culto a Isis en la Britania romana, los nombres antiguos de ciudades británicas actuales, y también sé más de la visión de la mujer en estos tiempos. Ninguno de los temas que trata Cornwell con agilidad y pluralidad pasan desapercibidos.

¡Que lo leáis!

## Rob says

Number two in the Warlord series.

This is the warts and all story of Arthur, Guinevere, Sir Lancelot and the rest of the round table knights.

There is nothing cosy and romantic about this tale. Lancelot is a narcissistic pig. Guinevere has delusions of grandeur and Arthur wants nothing more than to be a farmer.

The usual suspects, greed, power, sex, revenge and religion, keep getting in the way of Arthur's aspirations of becoming a farmer.

The game's afoot so unleash the dogs of war. And nobody does this better than Arthur.

Bernard Cornwell never fails to entertain. He takes a thread of known history and a bit of mythology, adds some literary licence and creates a book you can't put down.

If you are looking for characters that will elicit emotional responses from you, you will find them all here.

Highly recommended for lovers of historical fiction.

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## Richard says

8/10

A slight improvement on the previous novel but definitely a feel of a second book in a trilogy. I enjoyed the first book but it took some time to get into and there were a hell of a lot of names to take on board (only for the majority of them to die or no longer be involved after 50 pages). This one was a little slow at the start and it took me a while to get back into the flow of the style and era but when things got going then the pages flew by.

Derfel and Arthur are two very well rounded characters, add into that some of the side characters (if you can call Merlin a side character) the ensemble make for a great read. Lancelot is a dick but to stir those emotions means he's written well.

Other than the slow start one thing that lowered the overall rating was the weak ending. It's a bridge from this novel to the next but the climax sort of felt like a wet fart. No point in jumping the gun as there is one more novel to go so let's hope for a great finale and move past how it ended.

Overall a very good read but a few minor flaws making it lose a little rating overall but looking forward to the finale and how things come together.

If you like this try: "Argincourt" by Bernard Cornwell

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## Bookdragon Sean says

After reading this, I have decided I don't want to read the third book in the series because if I do, it will end. But no seriously, I will read it but I won't be happy to finish it; it's just one of those epic series' that you come across every so often that is that good you don't want to read it because when you have you can never read it again for a first time.

This novel is fantastic, the character development strong and the plot action packed. It's just great! For fans of Arthur and his knights, this is a unique take upon the tale that stands out from the crowd.

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### **Nate says**

Allow me to open this review by apologizing to my friends on Goodreads for spamming so many reviews of Cornwell stuff lately, I don't know what my problem is. I hate to be that guy but the man's stuff is entertaining. Anyways...this book was a very pleasant departure for Cornwell. It's less about stuff like gathering levies, shield walls, and efficient military maneuvering and more about the struggle between paganism and Christianity, the relationships of the characters in the book and how they effect Cornwell's Britain and the author's vision of the story of Arthur.

And I really love Arthur in these books. You can really tell that Cornwell did his best to imbue him with that magic that the charismatic leaders and heroes of real life are possessed with. People in these books are being overwhelmingly deceitful and self-possessed and sadistic and then there's this kind of odd-looking guy on a huge horse with this gentle and warm demeanor, a rock-solid and utterly benevolent (and pagan!) moral code who also has an indisputable gift at killing people. Any human being with that kind of contradiction in their nature is bound to be a complex person and Arthur is undoubtedly that. One second he's a caring and kind husband and father and then he's completely insane with anger and laying about with Caledfwlch (Excalibur's Welsh and way cooler name). He's kind of like that friend some people have who everyone likes a lot and is totally friendly but is prone to intense rages brought about by specific stimuli that make the room unbearably awkward. The point I'm trying to make with this is that you can see Arthur simultaneously occupying the positions of human being and living legend and it's understandably weird and fascinating. The rest of the characters, although not as particularly shiny as Arthur all have their own unique personalities and motives, something I always look for and like.

That potent mix of pagan magic, Christian ritual, the intense cast of characters and pervasively creepy, cold and dark setting all really made me love this book. The climax was particularly intense and in a way even moreso than some of the climactic battles in other Cornwell books. Just the horrible suspense of the webs of deceit spun in the book and the fate of Dumnonia hanging in those webs...gripping stuff. I almost don't want to finish the series.

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### **Perry Gough says**

Arguably the worst Cornwell book I have read to date. Characters became boring and really lacked the edge they had in the first book in the series. I still go think Nimue is excellent and I do like this interpretation of Guinevere who is arguably the most dangerous character in the series.

However the main character I find gets more dumb as the book goes on and Arthur seems to become more pathetic each time he appears.

I am a fan of Cornwell but found this one to be boring with a lacklustre ending. I did enjoy the first half of the book, although The Dark Road was arguably the most disturbing chapter I have read of Cornwells.

Not sure I will revisit this series, I do have the third in the series but I honestly don't care what happens next so might be there for a while.

## Terri says

This was a reread for me after having read it first over a decade ago. Wow time flies.

I couldn't really remember the book and as I read it, it didn't look familiar. only had the occasional de ja vu. I am wondering if that is because it can be a little boring at times and therefore it never stuck in my head all those years ago.

A 4 star rating for it. I dropped a star because while at times it was a 5 star read, there were other times when Bernard Cornwell needed to stop over writing and get on with it.

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