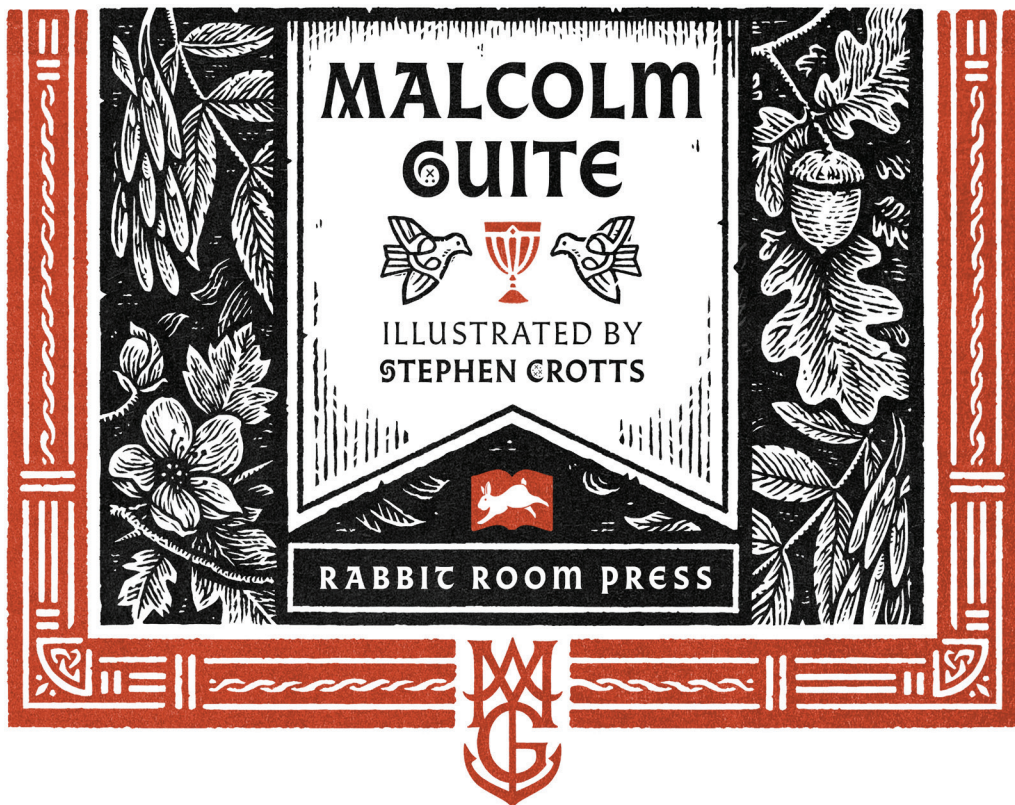




+ MERLIN'S ISLE: AN ARTHURIAD +

GALAHAD AND THE GRAIL



MALCOLM
GUITE



ILLUSTRATED BY
STEPHEN CROTTS



RABBIT ROOM PRESS



◉ALABAD and the ◉RAIL

Copyright © 2026
by MALCOLM GUTE

Published by
RABBIT ROOM PRESS
3321 Stephens Hill Lane
Nashville, TN 37013
info@rabbitroom.com

ISBN 9781951872700

First Edition

Illustrations by Stephen Crotts © 2026
Edited by A. S. Peterson

All rights are reserved. Except for brief quotations in epic ballad cycles, critical reviews, or articles, no portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, drawn from a stone, illuminated by a monastic order, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, prophetic vision, recording, scanning, or other—without the prior written permission of the publisher (or the publisher's licensed bard).

A NOTE from the POET

This POEM is WRITTEN in the ringing, singing, rhythmic form of the English ballad. Ballads were made to be sung or chanted out loud long before they were ever written down. It's when read aloud that a ballad comes to life, and so I suggest that the best experience of this poem is to be had when it is read out loud, heard in the ear and tasted on the tongue, rather than merely gazed at upon the page—because that physicality of sound and breath and speech is what it's made for.

Reading a ballad out loud is easy. You read it for the sense, for the sentence, for the meaning that runs on across the lines and between the rhymes. The rhythm and rhyme will take care of themselves—ideally you should be almost unconscious of them—and they will gradually take up their own backbeat and melody and carry you along whilst you surge forward with the story itself. So don't worry about pausing at the end of the line or emphasising the rhyme. Read each stave as though you were yourself telling the story around a campfire.

And above all, enjoy it. Poetry is meant to give pleasure.

PRELUDE



Take Up the Tale



SI WALKED
OUT ONE
MORNING,

all in the soft fine rain,
it seemed as though a silver veil
was shining over hill and vale,
as though some lovely long-lost spell
had made all new again.

5

And through that shimmer in the air
I seemed to hear a sound,
as though a distant horn were blown
in some lost land that I had known,
that seemed to speak from tree and stone
and echo all around.

10

And with the music came these words:
“Poet, take up the tale!
Take up the tale this land still keeps,
in earth and water magic sleeps,
the dryad sighs, the naiad weeps,
but you can lift the veil.

15

20 From where the waves wash Cornwall's caves
out to the white horse vale,
the lands still hold the tale of old
like hidden treasure, buried gold.
Once more the story must be told.
Poet, take up the tale.

25 Tell of the king who will return,
tell of the Holy Grail,
tell of old knights and chivalry,
tell of the pristine mystery,
of Merlin's Isle of Gramarye.
30 Poet, take up the tale.

Take up the tale of courtesy,
take up the tale of grace.
Revive the land's long memory,
summon the fair folk, let them be.
35 Something of Faerie, wild and free
still lingers in this place.

Lift up your eyes to see the light
on Glastonbury Tor.
Then come down from that far green hill
40 to where the sacred waters spill
and shine within the chalice well
and listen to their lore.

Yea, listen well before you start,
be still ere you begin.
45 See through the surface round about—
the noise, the rush, the fear, the doubt.
Though Modern Britain lies without,
fair Logres lives within.

You may yet walk through Merlin's Isle,
by Oak and Ash and Thorn.
The ancient hills do not forget,
and you might wake their wisdom yet.
Who knows what wonders might be met
on this midsummer morn."

50

So I have taken up the tale
to tell it full and free.
The tale that makes my heart rejoice,
I tell it, for I have no choice—
I tell it till another voice
takes up the tale from me.

55

60

