

CATHERINE FISHER

Where were you born and brought up?
Newport, Gwent.

Where did you go to school?
St Joseph's, Newport.

What did you particularly like and dislike about school?
I liked art and disliked needlework.

What did you want to be, as a child?
A cowboy.

What was your favourite book as a child?
Alice Through the Looking Glass,
Lewis Carroll.

Do you have any hobbies?
Fencing, drawing, walking,
gardening, exploring old castles.

What makes you happy?
Chocolate, woods in autumn, a
good book.

What makes you angry?
Trees being chopped down.

When did you start to write?
Aged eleven.

Which one was your first book?
The Conjuror's Game (Red Fox).

Do you find it easy to write?
No. It's always an effort, like
pushing a car, but once the thing's
moving it's easier.

Where do you write?
In my study.

From where do you get your ideas?
Anywhere. Places, myths, books...

**What advice would you give
someone who is starting to write?**
Read everything you can.

**Are some of your characters based
on yourself?**
No.

**Which of your books is your
favourite?**

Corbenic – my most recent book
(Red Fox, July 2002). It's a
retelling of the Grail Legend.

Which is your favourite character?
Cal from *Corbenic*.

**Is there something you would like
to change about yourself?**
I wouldn't mind being taller and I'd
like it if my hands were warm.

**Which are your favourite television
programmes?**
Star Trek and anything about
archaeology.

What is your favourite food?
Chocolate.

What makes you laugh?
Dad's Army.

My web address is
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I live in Gwent, which is a county full of legends. Arthur hunted the Twrch Trwyth, the great boar, into the sea here, and the magical sow, Hen Wen, dropped an ear of wheat and a honey bee under Wentwood. It was here at Caerleon that some writers place Camelot, Arthur's court; it was here that Caradoc made his valiant hopeless stand against the legions.

When I decided to re-write the story of the Holy Grail in a modern context, it was obvious that the Welsh borderlands was the place to set the book. Cal's quest moves between Caerleon and the string of castles that guard the border: Ludlow, Abergavenny, down to the enchanted city of Bath and the mystical Glastonbury, always searching to find again the Grail Castle, which, as Merlin tells him, is not really a place in this world at all. In *Corbenic*, Arthur is the Welsh Arthur, the leader of a group of grotesque and fabulous warriors, each with his or her own special power, led by the fearsome Kai, in all the Welsh sources the greatest knight of them all.

We can never calculate the power places have on us, or how they influence the shape stories take. In *The Candle Man* the river Severn, or Hafren, is herself a character, a vindictive elemental spirit that hungers to flood the land she knows is hers. The flat, marshy Gwent levels, subject to flooding, controlled by ancient sluices and intricate reens, haunted by herons and pollarded willows, becomes both the scene of the story and the motive behind it.

As a Welsh writer I know that our landscape and the legends we have preserved of our own past still have great power, and can be rewritten again and again, always becoming new, fresh and relevant for the twenty-first century.

Catherine Fisher's books include the following:

Fintan's Tower

The Candle Man (winner of the 1995 Tir na n-Og Award, now out of print)

Belin's Hill £3.99

The Relic Master £3.99

The Interrex £3.99

Flain's Coronet £10.99

The Margrave £3.99

Corbenic £4.99

The Snow-walker trilogy:

The Snow-walker's Son

The Empty Hand

The Soul Thieves

(These will appear as a one-volume omnibus in April 2003, £5.99) *Red Fox*

The Hare and Other Stories £4.95 *Pont*

Darkwater Hall £4.99

The Lammas Field £4.99

The Oracle £5.99 *Hodder*

