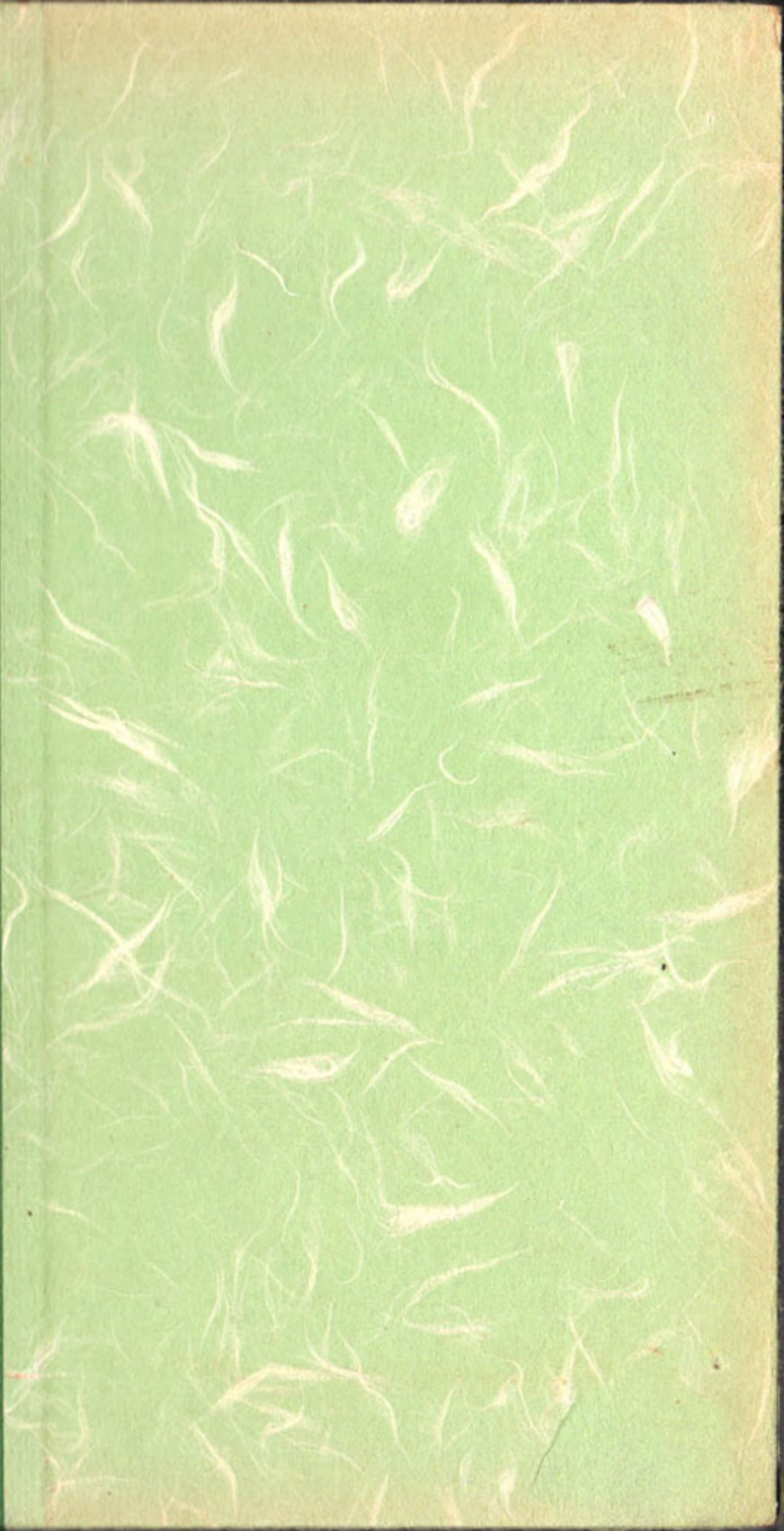


BOOKS ABOUT POICTRESME • KLINCKELTER



Books about POICTESME

An Essay in
Imaginative Bibliography

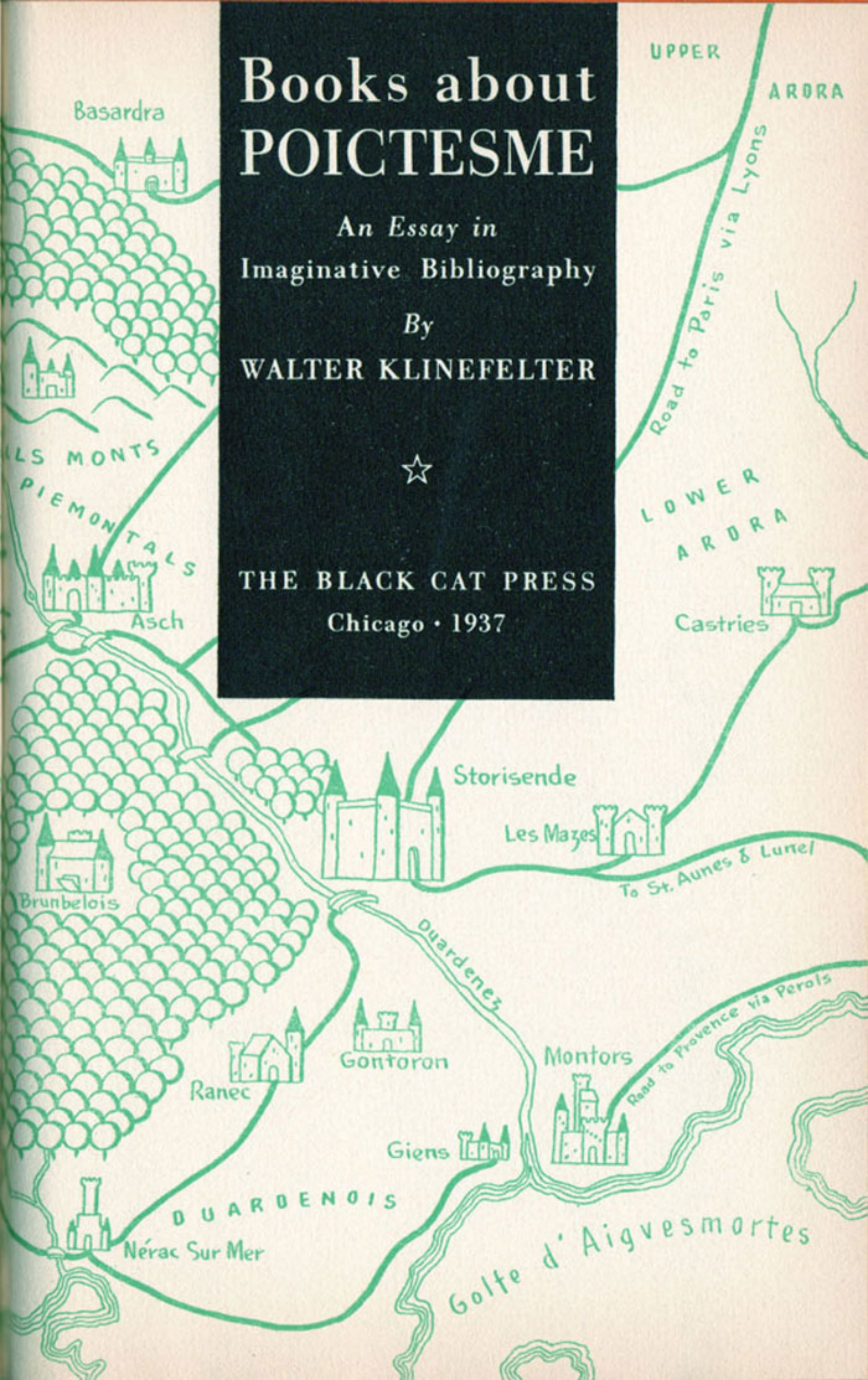
By

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Fathers. Also to be consulted for the same period are Du Maillot's *Hommes Illustres*, d'Auranche's *Ancêtres de la Révolution*, Horace Calverley's *Journal*, and the voluminous pages of Löwe and Hulot.

In these imaginary works Poictesme has a Nephelococcygian bibliography of its *ana* comprising more titles than the total number of books about all other make-believe lands of Cockaigne; and, indeed, about some lands more actual in their existence. Here is embodied its literature: epics such as have never been written celebrating glorious deeds such as were never performed by heroes never yet encountered anywhere; lyrics liltingly and breath-takingly beautiful; tales in prose hauntingly glamorous; history, a little of it sacred, and a great deal of it earthily profane; folklore and demonology; a vast body of critical and appreciative commentary, and exhaustive bibliographical information—nothing has been omitted. Everything pertaining to the province of Poictesme is here on this bookshelf of the imagination, from the tome informed with the profoundest scholarship to the humble chapbook.

Even though the cartography of the province has not been overlooked, the three maps which show the land in different stages of its civilization have only recently been brought to light. Mr. Cabell published in 1925 a map which he had copied from the frontispiece in his privately imagined copy of John Frederick Lewistam's *Popular Tales of Poictesme*. Regarding this map, which Lewistam appears to have redrawn from Bülg's Chart of 1792, Mr. Cabell has this to say:

“This map, be it noted, omits the Bas-Taunenois region (Val-Ardray), which in the thirteenth century formed the northern and eastern frontier of Poictesme. In Val-Ardray were the old Forest of Bovion (now, like a great part of Acaire, cleared ground) and the plains of the Ardre River, then defended (as is shown) by Aradol and, further east, by the fortresses of Nointel, Basardra, Yair, and Upper Ardra.

“This district would appear to have been, somewhat naively, left out by Lewistam so as to make room for his map’s title. A similar awkwardness in cartographic art has, one deduces, led to the omission of Lorcha, so often mentioned in the text of the *Popular Tales*,—that evil tower which stood, of course, in Acaire, about midway between Asch and the Château des Roches. It is noteworthy, for the rest, that this map retains the old name Beauvillage for the little town more ambitiously entitled, since the seventeenth century, Beauséant. Bülg, doubtless, is followed here.”¹³

This map, it should be said, (though artlessly direct in conception,) is trustworthy in all respects. Its publication seems to have inspired others on a jaunt into antiquarian byways in search of further cartographical records, for in the next year Frank C. Papé resurrected, and published in the first edition of *The Silver Stallion*, a map long lost to historical scholars. Attributed to Philip Borsdale and supposedly drawn *circa* 1679, this map is very accurate and comprehensive in its draughtsmanship, although somewhat ornately made after the mediaeval manner; it gives detailed presentment of the curious fauna

then indigenous to the Forests of Bovion and Acaire and of the outre supernatural denizens of Morven and Amneran Heaths. In all ways it is a strikingly original document. Peter Koch's map,¹⁴ which is rather cryptically and confusingly dated 28, seems to present Poictesme at some time later than Bülg's Chart of 1792, since the outlines of the Forest of Acaire show little change from their configuration as delineated in that map. For other details Koch follows Borsdale and Bülg; and while he contributes nothing new topographically, he is more illustrative of detail than either of the other map-makers, especially as concerns the places of important events in Manuel's youth.

Mr. Cabell writes no more of Poictesme, as has been said, and the province is no more. When the land passed out of the historical and geographical scheme has never been definitely determined. The concensus of opinion among antiquarians seems to point to the latter years of the eighteen hundreds as the time when Poictesme ceased to exist, as abruptly perhaps as it had been created. It was a land where one would like to have lived; but having been denied that pleasure, one has recourse to the stories of the glorious deeds of its heroes as they are recounted in *Jurgen*, *Figures of Earth*, *The High Place*, and elsewhere in the works of James Branch Cabell.