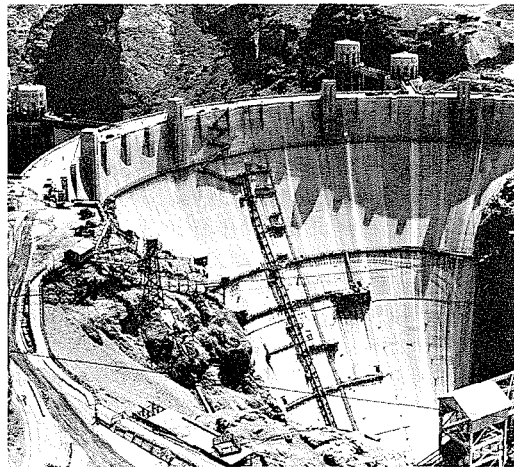


nance), she sites the Arthurian realm in present-day southwestern Scotland and northern Wales rather than in the southern England or Normandy of conventional lore. Throughout her investigation, Goodrich finds a reality behind the legend that is downright unsettling.

Science & Technology

HOOVER DAM: An American Adventure by Joseph E. Stevens. Univ. of Oklahoma. 1988. 326 pp. \$24.95

"In a sense, the Hoover Dam project is not only a construction job but also a sociological venture," wrote an American magazine writer in the early 1930s. Taking five years (1931-36) and involving up to five thousand laborers working around the clock, the construction of the huge concrete barrier on the Colorado



River between Arizona and Nevada provides grist for many another tale as well. It is a Depression story complete with quickly assembled shanty towns and desperately poor men willing to slave in temperatures up to 119 degrees in order to bring home a paycheck. It is a labor story featuring the Wobblies in one of their last great campaigns, a failed effort to unionize the dam workers. It is a political story involving Arizona's futile attempt to defeat a project its residents were sure would divert much-needed water to California. But above

all, it is a saga of remarkable individuals, including risk-taking contractors such as the Mormon brothers, W. H. and E. O. Wattis, construction chief Frank T. Crowe (a rugged, on-the-site engineer whose motto was "Never My Belly to a Desk"), and tunnel superintendent Red McCabe, who would "fire a man for even looking like he was going to slow down." Against all odds of meeting deadlines, the men dug diversion tunnels, threw up temporary barriers, built four intake towers, and slowly brought the great concrete dam up to its full height of 726.4 feet. "Like some forbidding futuristic metropolis, the asymmetrical concrete columns of the dam reared up from the canyon bottoms," writes Stevens. Lyrical yet precise, his narrative style is well suited to his subject: the poetry of making, the poetry at which Americans have often excelled.

THE WORLD THROUGH BLUNTED

SIGHT by Patrick Trevor-Roper. Viking Penguin. 1989. 207 pp. \$24.95

"Man is a visual animal," writes English ophthalmologist Trevor-Roper. And the various optical afflictions suffered by talented men and women have profoundly influenced the sum of artifacts that we call culture. Proceeding by large categories of visual disorder (unfocused image, color irregularities, encroachments on the field of vision, blindness itself), Trevor-Roper documents such phenomena as the effects of myopia on James Joyce's fiction and the influence of double cataracts on Monet's colors. His book is packed with incidental observations, ranging from the therapeutic use of color to the connection between personality and visual impairments to the question of eye dominance in different societies. In Western countries, where people are trained to read from left to right, "our right eye is the master." Thus in paintings, Trevor-Roper explains, "to convey a feeling of tension or movement, we place our principal subject to the left-hand side of the canvas; but if we place it to the right, the picture becomes calmer and more static." This is a revised and updated edition of the book that Trevor-Roper first published 18 years ago to wide acclaim.