

The Persistence of Myth

*Mythic Sources and Evolution of the Character of
Guinevere in Arthurian Tradition*

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, without whose help and support it would never have been written.

Copyright © 1996 by Kathleen Flanagan Alper

CONTENTS

The Origins and Growth of the Arthurian Literary Tradition	1
The Reasons for Diversity	2
A Reexamination of Guinevere	7
The Persistence of Myth.....	8
Overview	12
The Sources of Arthurian Legend.....	16
The Stories and Legends.....	16
Core Myths	20
The Myth of the White Goddess.....	26
The Function of Myth in an Arthurian Tale	27
The Mythic Origins of the Character of Guinevere	32
Guinevere as The Celtic Goddess	35
Guinevere as the Embodiment of the Mythic Female	42
The Significance of Guinevere’s Mythic Female Persona.....	44
The Puzzle of Guinevere	45
Guinevere Through the Ages	48
The Celtic Period	52
The Medieval Period.....	53
The Victorian Period	59
The Contemporary Period.....	61
Guinevere - The Once and Future Queen.....	67
Sources Consulted.....	69

The Origins and Growth of the Arthurian Literary Tradition

Arthurian literature today is the world's largest extant corpus of literature centered on a single character.¹ The story of Arthur, his knights, and his court has been recounted time after time by numerous authors and incorporates the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of many, often radically diverse, cultures.² This paper offers a literary analysis of the character of Guinevere, Arthur's queen, as she appears in this corpus. It is aimed at an audience that has at least a broad familiarity with the outlines of the Arthurian legend at large, a background safe to assume given the massive exposure the corpus has received. However, the origins and significance of the Guinevere segments of the stories are relatively obscure and may not be as widely known to the typical reader. These origins are well worth a deeper look, a look which may well demand a sifting through more information than the typical reader can bring to the subject. Anything more that such a reader may need to know is developed as the paper proceeds. In particular, Guinevere's character is introduced in Chapter 3 and further delineated throughout the remainder of this work in a treatment which roughly parallels her historic development.

Casual readers probably believe they have a clear vision of the nature of the characterizations and of what happens to the characters in the Arthurian tales. This paper will show that, contrary to this popular notion, change and variety abound when it comes to Arthurian legend. Readers probably see no self-contradictions in Guinevere's persona and quite naturally assume that the

¹Goodrich, Norma Lorre, *Guinevere* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 6.

²Over the centuries, authors of many lands and cultures have contributed to the corpus of Arthurian work and to the growing complexity of Guinevere's character. Because of the great number of authors contributing to the corpus of Arthurian legend, it is impractical to examine them all. Consequently, this paper will treat only a selection of the authors, chosen because they were most influential in the development of Guinevere's character.

Guinevere of today is the Guinevere of the past. On deeper investigation, this turns out not to be the case. A careful analysis of Guinevere past and present reveals that there have been a large number of diverse and contradictory threads running through her persona, and her character changed markedly through the centuries as the tales were written and rewritten. As these changes are traced, we discover that her characterization, having begun simply, grows ever more intricate, subtle, and self-contradictory; correspondingly, it grows ever more elusive and difficult to render simply—there are too many Guineveres for this. Why should the character of Guinevere have received this helter-skelter kind of treatment at the hands of a long line of authors when they gave no such special treatment to Arthur or to some of the other characters in the legend? This paper seeks answers to such questions as a means of unlocking Arthurian legend's most elusive and fundamental secrets—the underlying meanings and messages embedded within the character of Guinevere.

The Reasons for Diversity

As a preliminary step, it helps to refine our appreciation of the nature, extent, and causes of the diversity we are dealing with. As already stated, most readers are already familiar with at least the broad outlines of Arthurian legend; the stories have been popularized throughout Western Civilization for ages. The legend has been told through media including children's books, comic books, cartoons, movies, Broadway musicals, operas, and modern fiction, and in literary forms ranging from prose through drama to poetry. It is easy to see why, after being inundated from so many different sources and exposed on so many levels, almost anyone anywhere is at least broadly familiar with Arthurian lore.

Like the *Mahabharata* of India or the heroic sagas of Iceland, the Arthurian production does not consist of a single story or work of art; nor is it a finished masterpiece from the hands of a single genius like the *Odyssey* of Homer. Rather,

the legend has been told and retold over the centuries by numerous authors at and about different times, places, and cultures. In fact, the legend is still being created today.

As we proceed, it is vital to keep in mind that Arthurian legends are stories. When we realize that Arthurian tales were and still are written mainly to entertain—that first and foremost they are good stories about interesting people—it is easy to see why characterization is placed first and foremost. When we think of an Arthurian legend we think first about Arthur, of course, and then about the other central characters, figures like Lancelot, Gawain, and Guinevere.

Arthurian legends, therefore, are to be distinguished from myths or other literary works with myth-like features. Whereas a myth is a tale that has some moral point to make, a story tends to examine a particular individual or group of individuals and to develop a character. The story is told for the love of it. In contrast, as exemplified by a Greek tragedy, the proper role of a figure in a myth is to think, feel, and act in such a way as to support the moral objective and generate the desired reaction from the spectator. When on occasion a mythic presentation seems a bit stilted for modern tastes, the reason may be that the author has been overzealous in stating his case and has placed the ends of the drama ahead of the requirement to depict a plausible situation and a believable and engaging character as gauged in human terms. In contrast, the proper role of a figure in a story is to think, feel, and act to reveal some elemental aspect of human nature and to entertain while doing so. The focus is on characterization.

In a myth, the story conveys the same message in every retelling; a character tends to be as immutable as the moral lesson of the myth in which it figures. Stability in characterization is an asset. Occasionally, an audience will permit an author who retells a myth to recast setting, costume, or some other incidental component; but woe unto the author who changes fundamental compositional

elements such as the original moral purpose or motive. Since the role of the tale is to support the moral purpose of the myth, the character is locked up tight. In contrast, an author who retells a story, even one whose characters are borrowed from myth like those in Arthurian legend, is relatively free to alter even the most basic aspects of a character to meet his personal or artistic objectives or to express the ideas of the time in which the story is being written.

What has been said about myth applies to a greater or lesser extent to many types of fiction. To one degree or another, any literary work may be focused on action or plot rather than on character, or it may be written to express a theme or idea that reflects the author's view or the viewpoint of a culture. One can find many examples of great characters drawn in world literature who strive for or reach mythic proportions, including legendary or fictional heroes like Homer's Odysseus or Shakespeare's Hamlet and more human and less heroic characters like Mark Twain's Huck Finn or Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. As with *pure* mythic heroes, usually such characters are drawn once and remain the same thereafter no matter how often their stories are retold. In contrast, an Arthurian character is often portrayed differently in different stories. A specific character will be drawn over and over again by different authors throughout history; the character will retain a unique identity and personality, confront similar issues and problems, and will be cast in similar situations; yet the different authors will not hesitate to vary the circumstances in which the character finds himself, his motives, reactions, cultural mannerisms, or world view. Such differences in treatment tend to devolve from differences among the authors' perspectives, values, artistic style, and the cultural milieu in which the pieces were created. Thus, each version³ of an Arthurian

³ In the context of Arthurian legend, a *version* is one author's account of a given tale or adventure that has mythic significance, such as the Chrétien de Troyes version of how Lancelot saves Guinevere from her kidnapper or Geoffrey of Monmouth's version of the competition between

portrayal may differ from the others by virtue of setting, writing style, point of view, literary form (e.g., poetry, prose), tone (e.g., humorous, serious), and so on. Also, each may belong to a different genre, for example history, fantasy, historical fiction, romantic fiction, or a combination. Historically, this great measure of diversity has come about because each author has felt at liberty to add anything he finds pertinent, interesting, or revealing about the characters, the story, or the other elements of the tale. As unconscious agent of his own social milieu, each author has produced a work which mirrors the temper of the times in which it was written; and the author's own interests and prejudices have found their way into the material. Why should Arthurian authors have felt at liberty to exercise literary license to a greater degree than many others? Most likely, this happened because there was never a single, original, definitive version of Arthur's story. Rather, the conglomerate of tales we now call Arthurian legend is the product of a protracted random growth over the centuries. Different stories originating in a variety of sources, languages, and cultures became integrated into a single corpus.

Each Arthurian rendition is a single contribution to literature in its own right and may be analyzed as such. Nevertheless, considering the random growth, it is a singular and at first puzzling fact that the combination of all the renditions may also be analyzed and understood as a collective whole with a single overarching form and purpose. A little reflection, however, quickly yields the reason for this

Mordred and Arthur for control of the throne of England. Among the many terms used here synonymously with *version* are *retelling*, *redaction*, and *relation*. The term *relation* is favored by Lévi-Strauss. (See this use of his term in the discussion in Chapter 3 on the subject of Structural Analysis.)

unity: underneath, the stories have a common basis. Although not myths as such, Arthurian tales are stories founded on a specific set of myths and associated legends that together define the essential and universal nature of humankind. While the majority of Arthurian authors saw the stories they were retelling as merely history or fiction without recognizing the mythic underpinnings of their tales, the authors responded in a natural manner to the underlying mythic substance. These authors probably had no conscious awareness that they were contributing to a coordinated body of quasi-mythic literature, but their corpus of works was shaped with a common form and purpose as if by a single hand because it participated in a common set of principles. So vital, compelling, and powerful were the invariant truths about humanity that were embedded in the ancient original myths, the mythic components survived subtly but forcefully in the stories despite the ignorance of their authors. These mythic underpinnings are the unifying force that makes the many versions of the story a connected composite creation. They make the stories eternally appealing because they reveal what is most human in all of us.

Widely diverse treatment of a related set of stories with common underlying mythic features makes Arthurian legend almost a unique phenomenon in literature. This corpus has grown like a building constructed one stone upon another. It provides a rare opportunity to analyze and understand all the iterations of all the tales in a sprawling legendary work of art accumulated over the centuries, built by many individuals often unaware of some of the other works, in much the same way as we might analyze and understand a single great unified work of literature, one that has been generated at the hands of a master or by a collaborative effort of closely cooperating authors.

A Reexamination of Guinevere

Today there is more interest in the character of Guinevere than ever before. In past centuries, the literary world saw Guinevere more as a foil to Arthur or Lancelot, as a literary device to make the story work, than as an important character in her own right. Now she is seen as a figure of major importance, complete, semi-autonomous, a personality who influences other characters and controls the outcome of events. Something fundamental has changed; something about Guinevere that was overlooked or undervalued in the past has been discovered or has been added today; something about her that appeals to our culture intensely seems to have stepped forward into the light. As a result, many more authors have made Guinevere their central character or have featured her in their works, while readers clamor for stories featuring her character and portraying her in one or another new light. One may well wonder why this is happening, and an attempt will be made to explain this phenomenon later in this paper.

If for no other reason than the rising intensity of contemporary interest in Guinevere, there is ample motivation to analyze Guinevere's role in Arthurian stories, but such an examination should not be limited to today's production. Today as in the past, Arthurian production is built on yesterday's bricks and stones. Examination should extend to Arthurian works as a whole, past and present, in order not to overlook the ancient forces, meanings, and structures. A careful appreciation can be arrived at only after considering the historic origins of her story and analyzing the various treatments Guinevere has received at the hands of different authors in different periods. Ultimately, such an examination will increase understanding of the Arthurian literary corpus in all periods, will add meaning and richness to the literary experience one has when encountering any Arthurian story, and will enlighten us about ourselves.

The Persistence of Myth

The material in later chapters is a description of the origins and historical changes that have taken place in Guinevere's character starting from the earliest times. The description is drawn in light of the changing temper of the times in which she has been portrayed throughout the ages and presents psychological, historical, mythological, and sociological perspectives. The theses developed through these perspectives are as follows:

- Despite the diversity of Arthurian authorship, the body of works has a unity because each author tells the same story in the form of variations on a theme. As with a fugue, which declares a theme and then repeats and develops its variations, each treatment of Arthur's story deals with the same characters and events, but each is told from an original perspective. Thereby there exists a unity in these multiple works that supports literary analysis of the corpus as if it were a single work.
- Today the character of Guinevere is richer than ever before and receives more attention from the literary world. Her evolving character and the causes and sources of this attention are elucidated.
- As to subject, treatment, tone, and, above all in Guinevere's case, as to characterization, virtually all of these Arthurian authors have been influenced by myth, sometimes consciously (notably in the twentieth century), sometimes unconsciously.⁴ When treated on the unconscious level, without realizing it the author somehow seemed to understand that the materials drawn from mythic sources must, by virtue of their very power, be included, for, without these materials, the essence of

⁴The definition of the terms *legend* and *myth* as used in this paper and the precise difference between them will be cleared up in Chapter 2.

the story and characters would be lost. These mythic influences have motivated the authors' approaches and have profoundly determined the treatment of characters, especially that of Guinevere, but also the treatment of other Arthurian characters such as Lancelot, Gawain, Perceval (Parsifal), Galahad, and Morgan Le Fay.⁵

- In particular, the character of Guinevere originated in and evolved from myth, primarily from The Myth of the White Goddess; her character has been strongly affected by various aspects of this myth as well, each of which will be identified and explicated later. An understanding of these mythic influences is essential for a complete understanding of her sometimes confusing character. As an example of confusion, consider that although she is an adulteress, a traitor, and is accused of murder, she is seen by authors and readers alike as a great woman and queen who receives and deserves the respect and adoration of her people. This misty assessment of her character is cleared up and the apparent contradictions resolved bit by bit throughout this paper as the mythic origins and significance of her nature are explained.
- By and large, all the authors treat the characters in the Arthurian story, except for Guinevere, in a consistent and invariant manner. For example, Arthur is consistently seen as both noble and great; Gawain is always brave but foolish; Lancelot is torn between religion, honor, and love. However, the same authors have different, even conflicting, opinions of Guinevere. One author may portray her as guilty of a given misdeed or crime, another as innocent. This confusion over her guilt or

⁵Unfortunately, there are too many such characters to consider them all here. The scope of this paper must be limited to an examination of the character of Guinevere alone, although other characters are treated in their relationship to her.

innocence seems to be widespread and systematic. Some see her as victim and some as a powerful queen; some see her as the cause of Arthur's downfall and others as an innocent bystander. For example, Chrétien de Troyes, emphasizing the idea of Courtly Love, saw her as a manipulator, haughty, controlling, not wanting Lancelot to seem foolish but wanting him to be willing to disgrace himself for her love. On the other hand, Tennyson shows her, in her affair with Lancelot, as a weak, foolish female victimized by fate and the men in her life.

- The pattern of inconsistency, which extends to the other major female Arthurian characters, is a clue to what is going on. Authors' portrayals, not only of Guinevere, but also of other females, have varied while the male characters have been treated consistently by different authors throughout the ages. This is so because society's view of woman and her role has changed with time while the social view of man and his role has remained basically static. Thus the temper of the times has been reflected in the work of each author.
- Notwithstanding all this variety and change, Guinevere exhibits one major invariant characteristic—she is worthy of reverence. No matter who tells her story or how positive or negative the assessment of her character and deeds, the elements in her character that make her worthy do not change because her character is grounded in and shaped by a common set of myths that persevere through the centuries. Described in Chapter 3, in the eyes of the audience these underlying myths and mythic properties make her worthy no matter what the century or culture, and her audience always sees Guinevere in essentially the same light. What are these embodied mythic elements? They are those of Nature and the Eternal Feminine. Further, no

matter what particulars each new author may attribute to Guinevere, whether portraying her in a positive or negative light, the audience expects to find, indeed insists on finding, a mythical Guinevere as well. This audience expectation is similar to the one described earlier in connection with Greek tragedy and has similar causes, namely the need to project a certain moral predisposition. It persists from one era to another because Guinevere's chief role is to support the moral status of the myth; her essential character is locked up tight.

- Yet, as already noted, superficially the treatment Guinevere receives from one author can be quite different from her treatment at the hands of another author. Two authors may respond to her mythical status, but one may respond favorably, another negatively; historical accident may dictate the significance placed on her deeds. The reasons for this variety are natural enough. The myths behind Guinevere's character were not explicit because they had been lost by the time authorship began; there were no rules about how to portray Guinevere passed down from antiquity to guide Arthurian authors. Until one understands the myths behind the character, until they are explicitly delineated, many interpretations of her story are feasible.⁶ However, if one's eyes remain focused on Guinevere's essential nature as derived from myth, only one interpretation is possible. That is, Guinevere is a strong royal personage who always behaves in the best interest of king and kingdom. The key to understanding both Guinevere's character

⁶Because of a number of historic accidents that are beyond the scope of this paper, the myths that are the basis for Guinevere's character were lost to most of the Arthurian authors. In rare cases where the myths were or might have been known to the author, their connection to Guinevere had been lost.

and the mistakes made over the centuries in depicting her character is provided in Chapter 4.

Overview

The points made above will be established, step by step, in the remainder of this paper according to the following plan:

In Chapter 2, *Sources of the Arthurian Legends*, the reader will see how all the Arthurian stories are grounded in ancient legend and myth. This basis is the fundamental glue that allows the stories to be seen as an integrated work.

In Chapter 3, *The Myth of the White Goddess*, the three major aspects of the myth behind the Guinevere character are elucidated. These mythic aspects—the myth of the Hero's Descent into the Underworld, the myth of the Queen as the Symbol of British Sovereignty (and the legend of the Round Table which is related strongly to this myth), and the myth of the Flower Maiden—are all taken from ancient Celtic sources, but also include touches of mythic materials drawn from early Christian legend. The myth of the *Hero's Descent into the Underworld* is the origin of the Guinevere-Lancelot liaison and has had the strongest influence on her character.

Chapter 4, *Guinevere Through the Ages*, shows how the myths discussed in Chapter 3 were incorporated into Guinevere's character in various works and by various authors crucial to her development. The chapter contains four sections, each of which concentrates on a specific time period when the Arthurian legend underwent important development or change. Different aspects of Guinevere's personality during these eras will be examined, as follows:

Guinevere as Traitor

Some of the views of Guinevere show her as a traitor to Arthur and to England. The depictions of her association with Arthur's son-nephew, Mordred, range from the early view of it as a liaison that was planned to wrest the throne from Arthur's hands to a more recent view showing Guinevere as the unwilling pawn in Mordred's plans to overthrow Arthur.

Guinevere's portrayal as the key to ruling England rests on a Celtic myth that represents the queen as the symbol of British sovereignty. By examining her character in the light of this myth, we can see that there is no reason for seeing her behavior as traitorous no matter which version of her story we examine.

Guinevere as Representative of Courtly Love

Guinevere was shown in most versions of the legend as the object of Lancelot's love. Here we discover the contributions to Guinevere's character of Chrétien de Troyes and of the anonymous author of the Prose Lancelot. By trying to please his patron, Marie, Countess of Champagne, and the remainder of his audience, the court of France, Chrétien incorporated the notion of Courtly Love in the story of Lancelot (the Ultimate Hero) and his rescue of Guinevere (the Earth Goddess) from Maleageant (Lord of the Underworld). The story was originally a symbolic version of the mythic Harrowing of Hell theme, as explained in Chapter 3. Ironically, this became the source of the great love story between Lancelot and Guinevere and influenced virtually every later Arthurian author.

Guinevere as Adulteress

Guinevere's adultery with Lancelot is portrayed in a variety of ways by key authors through the ages, from Chrétien's picture of Guinevere as a haughty woman who has Lancelot in the palm of her hand to the view of her as a woman lost in love used by several of the more modern authors. The portrayal of Guinevere's

apparent unfaithfulness, originating in the Celtic myth of the Flower Maiden, is a consequence of changes in viewpoint which reflect the changing temper of the times.

Guinevere as Dependent Woman

Guinevere is shown as a woman with different degrees of dependency or independence by each of the Arthurian authors. Again, the era during which each work is written has a great influence on this aspect of her character. Originally, the myths showed Guinevere's prototype as a powerful goddess or priestess who had great independence and an ability to choose her fate. The view of her nature fluctuated from the independence seen in the earliest Arthurian versions through dependence shown in works from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. The twentieth century has seen a return to the early view that she was an independent woman with a strong nature. The Round Table legend plays an important role in elucidating this aspect of Guinevere's character. It is through the symbol of the Round Table, given to Arthur as Guinevere's only dowry, that Guinevere's equality with Arthur is emphasized and her independence established.

Guinevere as Tragic Figure

Many authors saw Guinevere as a tragic figure—a woman who was unable to avoid the inevitable; yet Guinevere's strong mythic nature will not permit her to renounce her natural rights just to avoid the consequences of her actions. This strength of character is integral in each of the three myths that shaped her original character. This tragic aspect of her personality is possibly the one that is treated most diversely by the many storytellers through the ages.

Guinevere as Representative of Nature

Many modern authors see Guinevere as a personification of the great White Goddess figure as drawn in myth. The connection of Guinevere with the ancient

pagan goddess explains and resolves many of the apparent contradictions in Guinevere's character. All of these apparently self-contradictory aspects of her nature can be understood as mutually consistent when one considers the original model on which it is based.

Chapter 4 shows how and why treatment of Guinevere's persona has evolved through history. There it is demonstrated that today Guinevere's original and proper mythic image as goddess and queen is deliberately being returned to her by modern authors. Because more and more of the ancient mythic origins of the Arthurian legend are being uncovered and established through research, these authors are in a unique position to accomplish this restoration and are motivated to do so.

Chapter 5 serves to summarize and iterate the main ideas proposed and explicated in this work.

The Sources of Arthurian Legend

For centuries, even in the time of the bards, stories of King Arthur and his knights have fascinated listeners and readers. What makes these stories so enduring, so cogent; what draws the audience to the Arthurian characters even in our modern world? Have the stories remained fundamentally the same through the ages or have they been radically adapted in order to retain their appeal? Do the redactors, who separately modify the story to fit the times, retain anything of the original, or, like whispered messages in a child's game, are the original characters and happenings twisted and lost to us forever? As a step toward answers to these questions, this chapter first identifies the sources of the Arthurian stories, then examines the sources of the mythic elements underlying the stories insofar as the character of Guinevere is concerned.

The Stories and Legends

Figure 1 shows the time periods and sources of the versions that contributed most to the Arthurian legend as we know it today.

Arthurian Work	Oral Traditions	500 A.D.	1000 A.D.	1500 A.D.	1800 A.D.	1900 A.D.
1. Celtic Oral Tradition (Irish, Welsh, Scottish)						
2. Christian myth (e.g., Joseph of Aramathea)						
3. Lost written sources						
4. Geoffrey of Monmouth - <i>History of the Kings of England</i>			1136			
5. Chrétien de Troyes - <i>Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart</i>			1150			
6. <i>Le Roman de Lancelot du Lac, Estoire del Graal, Estoire de Merlin</i>			1225-1230			
7. Thomas Malory - <i>Le Morte d'Arthur</i>			1485			
8. Alfred Lord Tennyson - <i>Idylls of the King</i>					1856-1874	
9. T.H. White - <i>The Once and Future King</i>						1939-1958
10. Marion Zimmer Bradley - <i>The Mists of Avalon</i>						1982
11. Wooley - <i>The Guinevere Trilogy</i>						1987-1990

Figure 1 - Major Contributions to Arthurian Legend

The legends concerning Arthur have been drawn from many different sources. The core of these stories is Arthur, who some scholars believe was an actual war leader of the Britons or Celts descended from the leaders of the Roman legions that had once conquered Britain.⁷ Others believe that his character is based on the ancient Celtic gods and magical tales of the supernatural. Over the centuries, many stories and many other characters have been added to this core and have been blended to present a new mythology that is only found in Arthurian lore.

The first mention of Arthur in extant written sources is in the Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* (c. 600). The next allusion to Arthur appears in *Historia Britonum* (c. 850) written by the Welsh historian Nennius. However, Arthur's real fame in written texts started with Geoffrey of Monmouth's portrayal of him in *Historia Regum Britanniae* (The History of the Kings of England) in 1139. After this, Arthur was written of repeatedly by authors from many countries, and his character and the feats attributed to him and to his knights grew more elaborate and wide-ranging. The English poet Layamon, the French Chrétien de Troyes, the German Wolfram von Eschenbach all lent to the popularity and dissemination of the legend. By the twelfth century, Arthurian legend had forged a place in the literature of Europe. In the thirteenth century, the legends began to take on more Christian overtones, especially in the integration of the Grail myth into the legend. Today, both the Celtic pagan and the Christian religious elements survive in interpretive recreations of the story.

The stories that have become associated with Arthur and his knights from the Celtic myths and folklore can be traced to the Mabinogion and to other Welsh,

⁷Whether or not the Arthur legend has a basis in historical fact has been debated for centuries and is today still a hotly debated issue. For the practical purposes of this paper, Guinevere's possible basis in history is irrelevant because myth is the predominant factor in the formation of her character. As a working hypothesis, this paper assumes that Guinevere's story and character are based entirely on myth.

Scottish, and Irish tales from the oral tradition that were well known to the people of the British Isles.⁸ Some of those tales center on the sorcerer (sometimes called a druid), Merlin. These include the strange tale of Arthur's conception and birth, the recognition of Arthur as king because he pulled a sword out of a stone, and the acquisition of the magical Round Table as part of Guinevere's dowry. Other stories derive from the myth of the Lady of the Lake, said by some to be, like Guinevere, a personification of the White Goddess⁹. Such items as the magic of the sword Excalibur, the origins of Sir Lancelot du Lac, the Celtic tale of the Green Knight and its associations with Gawain, and Arthur's disappearance to Avalon at the end of his reign before his death, are all associated with the Lady. The many tales of the kidnapping of Guinevere and her rescue, not by Arthur but by either Gawain or Lancelot, are based on a variety of myths and folklore from the Celtic and earlier people of Britain and tied to Arthur.

The later additions from Christian myth were added in the early written versions of the story and soon became an integral part of the growing legend. The Christian myth of the Grail, the cup that was present at the Last Supper, and the story of Joseph of Arimathea who brought the cup to England, are mingled with the ancient Celtic story of the Fisher King and his wound that cannot heal. Galahad, Lancelot's son, was probably created in a late version of the tale so that the Grail quest would not be accomplished by Lancelot himself¹⁰ whose character had been compromised by Chrétien's retelling of his heroic rescue of Guinevere. The Christian ritual that was part of becoming a knight, the Christian symbols, like the

⁸ The exact time and source of these elements of Arthurian legend cannot be determined because of the lack of written sources.

⁹The Myth of the White Goddess is delineated in the next chapter.

¹⁰ Galahad was Lancelot's given name in many of the earliest versions.

cross, that were found on coats of arms, and other Christian mores that influenced the characters were all late arrivals to the legend.

The most important of the different versions of these basic myths in Arthurian redaction, from the ancient Mabinogion through the Medieval Chrétien de Troyes and early Renaissance Malory to Victorian Tennyson and lastly to the modern White and Bradley, are all part of the study necessary to understand fully the reasons for the legend's timelessness.

Literary analysis of these story sources reveals that every time the tales of Arthur were retold something new was added and the characters changed as well, but the basic, underlying truths of the stories did not change. They continued to tell the story of man's search for goodness and ultimate truth in the world around him.

Core Myths

Clearly, the social messages, setting, style, and other details of presentation have varied greatly from one retelling to another, and no doubt these changes are adaptations that in part have helped to make the tales relevant for each generation. But if such items are incidental details that have changed freely from period to period, what is the core that has been left unchanged? What do all the tales have in common that allows them to speak to us as though they were members of a single body of work, a work that compels us? If anything has remained constant, it is the myths behind and within the Arthurian legend; the myths are a common denominator, the ennobling components that animate Arthur, his knights, his queen, and his story. The mythic experience derived from an Arthurian work invigorates and elevates the reader. That is why an Arthurian story is more than casual reading, more than an archaic form of pulp fiction, for audiences both ancient and modern.

The mythic elements in Arthurian legend can be traced to the very beginnings of the corpus. Some of the original stories we currently associate with King Arthur and his knights originated in one or another prehistoric myth. As the story was told and retold and as the culture changed, other myths or folk tales were folded into the legend until today it is difficult to discern which parts are based on myth even after a thorough examination of the legend's evolution.

Before the core mythic sources extant in Arthurian legend can be elucidated, it is necessary to establish that the sprawling stories lumped together in the legend do indeed constitute a single mythos. To do this, first it helps to consider further the general nature of myth.¹¹

Myth, in the context of Arthurian legend, refers not to fantastic tales of gods and goddesses or to stories that are only fictional but rather to those ancient tales that reveal something about man's inner self and his place in the universe. A myth recounts a deep mystery; it is a reaching out to learn and to grow, to touch something that is profound yet, at base, unexplainable. Myths offer a tremendous range of inspiration, situation, incident, or setting, but always they appeal to what is basic in us, to what we all have experienced in our inner and outer lives. A myth may rouse the gentlest of human emotions or it may harrow; it may express violent feelings or it may soothe; it may treat what is vulgar or subtle; it may speak with a loud rasp or it may murmur. But always it will reach inside, tug subtly or obviously at our guts, shock or calm us with the mystery and majesty of our existence, so that what it tells us about our never-changing nature and about the essential nature of our world and our life in it is always relevant and profound, important or cogent, forever and everywhere, often for reasons we cannot fully fathom.

¹¹ Joseph Campbell in *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* defines myth as "the revelation to waking consciousness of the powers of its own sustaining source."

Myths endure for two seemingly-contradictory reasons. Myths are, at one and the same time, ever-constant and ever-changing: ever-constant—myths deal with themes and sing stories that circulate at the bedrock of human sensibility; ever-changing—myths that endure are refreshed generation after generation. They go on living because their appeal is perennial, their eternal life is derived from the continuity in the succeeding generations of their audience. Such myths will accommodate the changing circumstances of new times, places, or societies because they resonate with all of them.

This ever-constant and ever-changing phenomenon was observed by the cultural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss. In his works defining structural anthropology he explains that myth, man's method for explaining the unknown and what is inherently unexplainable, is an integral part of human culture. As a culture matures and changes, so do the stories it tells about its myths. To demonstrate his observation, Lévi-Strauss compiled similar mythological tales that had been assembled and related over long periods of time from many groups of Western Hemisphere native peoples. His examination and comparison of these stories led him to conclude that the variety of redaction in myth results from the impact of the changes in the culture over time.

In Lévi-Strauss' usage, myth has no location in chronological time, but it does have certain characteristics which it shares with dreams and fairy tales. In particular, the distinction between nature and culture which dominates normal human experience largely disappears.¹²

Lévi-Strauss saw that the important stories belonging to a culture do not change their essential nature or meaning but only change in structure or approach to suit the character of the evolving culture. He distinguishes between the nature of a myth—the unchanging truth underlying the story and the culture of a myth—the

¹²Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss* (New York, The Viking Press, 1974), 59.

social mores and beliefs that change in each redaction. In other words, the myth behind the story that teaches us about the natural world and the forces behind it is always the same. Only the way in which situations and characters are used to reveal those truths changes.

The differences in the Arthurian tales from the earliest versions to the modern can be seen as a reflection of variety in the cultures in which they were written and the audiences for whom they were designed. As Lévi-Strauss wrote:

On the one hand, a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.¹³

As with the other mythic productions of mankind, the origins of the Arthurian collection in ancient legend or folklore make these stories timeless. The status of Arthurian legend as a fairy tale (not a child's story but a tale about magical and fantastical occurrences in the land of faery) also helps to explain the almost universal appeal and timelessness of the Arthurian works:

The wealth of material from myth and folklore at the disposal of the story-teller (or modern fantasy novelist) has been described as a giant cauldron of soup into which each generation throws new bits of fancy and history, new imaginings, new ideas, to simmer along with the old. The story-teller is the cook who serves up the common ingredients in his or her own individual way, to suit the tastes of a new audience.¹⁴

Because many of the stories that went into the Arthurian melting pot were based on myth, this statement gains special significance when applied to the Arthurian corpus and to Guinevere's place within it.

¹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1963), 209.

¹⁴ Terri Windling, editor, in the introduction to *The Fairy Tale Series* (New York, Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1991).

Lévi-Strauss also stressed the importance of looking at all versions which retell a myth in order to understand the complete relevance and underlying truths of a myth. He called this method of examining the entire body of related myths

Structural Analysis:

The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning.¹⁵

Our method thus eliminates a problem which has, so far, been one of the main obstacles to the progress of mythological studies, namely, the quest for the *true* version, or the *earlier* one. On the contrary, we define the myth as consisting of all its versions...¹⁶

Structural analysis is the examination of a myth by considering as many versions as possible; given that a myth is made up of all its variants, a structural analysis should take all of them into account.¹⁷ Seen from the perspective of structural analysis, the multiple myths incorporated within the Arthurian body of literature are among the common denominators that allow it to be investigated as a single entity even though historically the corpus is a collection of loosely-joined tales brought together from many sources over a long period of time. Applied to a corpus like Arthurian legend, an important consequence of Lévi-Strauss' conclusion is that a structural analysis of a character like Guinevere should take into account all variants of the relevant myths embedded therein. This is the approach taken in the material that follows. Since the Arthurian corpus is a collection of loosely-joined renditions brought together from disparate sources over a long period of time, the task of analyzing the multiple myths that underlie the Guinevere character might seem formidable. Fortunately, only a few myths are operative in Guinevere's

¹⁵ Lévi-Strauss, 211.

¹⁶ Ibid., 216-217.

¹⁷ Ibid., 217.

persona, making an analysis of the sources and evolution of her mythic character a reachable objective. This task of analysis begins in the next chapter where the small number of myths behind Guinevere's personality are identified. From the perspective of structural analysis, each of these myths will be seen to be a constituent of a single conglomerate myth. The conglomerate myth will be identified as The Myth of the White Goddess. As a consequence, in the next chapter each of the individual myths is called a *sub-myth*, a term that emphasizes that it stands in a subordinate relationship to the whole and, further, that it is one aspect of The White Goddess, the single myth of overriding importance that personifies Guinevere's essential mythic character.

The Myth of the White Goddess

Arthurian stories are a strong demonstration that myth is an ever-present and changeless window into man's essential nature. Indeed, the mythic component in Arthurian stories is one of the attributes that has made them so appealing and enduring in so many diverse cultures. This chapter will:

- continue the general examination of the nature of myth begun in earlier chapters, here making specific application to Arthurian legend and Guinevere;
- trace the mythic origins of Guinevere's character;
- introduce the myth of the White Goddess, which is the central myth underlying the character of Guinevere;
- show that the Myth of the White Goddess may be regarded as a composite of multiple "sub-myths," each emphasizing a different aspect of the central White Goddess myth;
- identify and analyze the major mythic statements made by each of these sub-myths;
- explain how the mythic issues raised by the Guinevere character are a prominent subset of more numerous mythic issues addressed by the Arthurian corpus as a whole. Guinevere's mythic issues will be seen to be those having to do with the feminine aspects of human nature, where the feminine aspects that are indicated are not uniquely possessed by females but are a set of attributes found in all complete humans regardless of sex;
- through examination of the female mythic, show that the tales of Arthur demonstrate that myth has been a factor not only in primitive cultures, such as in the stories studied by Lévi-Strauss, but also in more developed cultures such as our own. The tales of Arthur are a

demonstration of his view that all versions of a myth must be taken into account to fully explain the underlying truths contained therein.

The Function of Myth in an Arthurian Tale

A myth is celebration of a mystery, a construct about human nature, the world, and what it means to be human; it depicts what can happen when a person (or anthropomorphic god) is confronted by a stressful situation. A myth is a metaphor whose purpose is to explain human nature, to help define one's role in life, to lend meaning to existence, and to reveal or unravel a mystery of one sort or another pertaining to one's nature or the universe in which one finds oneself. Seen as a work of art, a myth is a statement of a culture's experience with the mystery of man's self and the cosmos. From the point of view of the audience, a myth is an acting out, a reenactment, a happening, an experience about an experience, in which the spectator/participant feels all the joy and sorrow projected by the myth. No matter how light or dark the tone, a myth always deals with an omnipresent and fundamental mystery—one that may well have puzzled humankind since the dawn of time—and man's reaction to it. Among the types of questions addressed by myths are, "What is man and why is he alive?" "Is there such a thing as freedom and what is it?" "What are Right and Wrong?" "What is the nature of life and death?" "Why do we feel and think the way we do?" "What is the meaning of experience and is experience valid?" "What is truth?" "What gives life meaning?" "Where did the world come from?" "How does the universe work and why does it work that way?" and "What is humanity's relationship to the natural world or the world of the mind and spirit?"

Surely, in the brief span that humanity has trod this earth, time has not resolved any of the largest questions concerning the human experience; probably none of these questions will ever be answered in an ultimate way. Even (and

perhaps especially) with regard to religion, mysteries abound. Time has only served to add new questions to the list. Yet man continues to examine such questions and to hold them dear, perhaps because of a connection he feels to those *intimations of immortality* Wordsworth wrote about. In the words of a contemporary song writer: “It’s in everyone of us to be wise,/Find your heart, open up both your eyes;/We can all know everything without ever knowing why;/It’s in every one of us, by and by, by and by.”¹⁸

Mythologies are extant in all cultures regardless of time or place. Because the issues raised by myth persist and are of fundamental importance to humankind everywhere, new mythologies continue to be created today. Whatever art form a myth may take—song, oral story, written story, play, film, children’s storybook, comic book—the job of myth wherever it appears—in primitive society, in society at large, and, most notably in this paper, in Arthurian legend—is to raise questions about such universal mysteries and attempt to answer them; questions about a cosmos that is seen at its core to be awesome, dangerous, frightening, thrilling, inspiring, and fundamentally incomprehensible.

As noted in the first chapter, strictly speaking, from a literary point of view, an Arthurian tale is first and foremost an oral or written account, a story; it is not a myth. An Arthurian tale differs from a myth in a variety of ways. Written primarily for amusement, entertainment, excitement, or sheer delight, it often has no special moral or didactic purpose and is most often not meant to edify. It does not deal with gods at all. Neither does it explicitly employ the form, tone, style, types of situation, or many other literary elements that have come to be associated with pure myth. By contrast, character development is vital in an Arthurian story but normally does not occur in a myth, which artistically is little more than a vehicle, a device for

¹⁸ Pomeranz, BMI/ASCAP.

presenting a philosophical or religious message. Pandora is the personification of Curiosity, for example; her feelings and opinions do not change and make no difference to what happens. An Arthurian tale's characters are not static; things happen to make them change.

Although an Arthurian adventure is not a myth in the strict literary sense of the term, neither is it a pure story. There is synergy between the story and the myth. The stars of the story are people driven by non-mythic motives and forced to grapple with ordinary life challenges; thus the Arthurian tale sometimes depicts people acting in real-world, everyday situations, enhancing empathy. Such characters do not themselves recognize the mythic values at work within their own context, yet the mythic elements are projected to the reader by plot and through the characters' speech and actions by means of symbolism, allegory, or by analogy. Thus the myth resides within and behind the panoply of the story, instilling feelings of mystery and awe and striking a chord that resonates deeply and ever more intensely because the audience identifies handily with the spectacle. Also, compared with a pure myth, especially a simple myth like Pandora's Box, an Arthurian story can bring to bear a richer variety of literary techniques, devices such as setting, plot, and description, techniques that add to the dynamic.

The Mythical Presence of Guinevere

Arthurian authors were captivated by the adventures of Arthur and his knights and saw themselves primarily as story tellers, as providers of good entertainment, not as myth makers. Secondly, the goal they set for themselves was to convey social messages or set up models for personal growth on which readers could base their lives. For example, some Arthurian passages amount to a marriage manual, others a travelogue, still others a guide book on courtly

manners.¹⁹ The variety of non-mythic objectives that have motivated Arthurian authors is still growing, even today. In a recent development, some Arthurian authors have invented totally new Arthurian materials to portray a picture of post-Roman England, as in Woolley's Guinevere trilogy or of Celtic life before the intrusion of Christianity as in Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*. Such non-mythic goals that Arthurian authors set for themselves have significantly influenced the way Arthurian characters have evolved through the centuries.

Arthurian works do not explicitly focus on myth, and myth is not a conscious objective of the typical Arthurian author. Yet, undeniably, Guinevere's character displays many important attributes typical of a mythic heroine and contributes a strong mythic presence not only to the tales in which her character appears but also to the corpus as a whole. At first glance, the bare existence of a mythic dimension in Guinevere's character may seem inconsistent with the haphazard historical development of her story. Why and how does mythic content and atmosphere come to figure so prominently and forcefully in Arthurian works at large? Also puzzling is the fact that Guinevere displays many important attributes typical of a mythic heroine, yet she is much more than the one-dimensional symbol of an idea or an ideal such as we might expect to find in a pure myth; she is a complex character showing many sides of human nature. Clearly, she is a full-fledged member of the cast of characters in a raging drama. What are the mythical roots of the literary Guinevere and how did this blend of story heroine and mythic heroine originate and evolve?

Much information about the written and oral sources of Arthurian lore has been lost in the mists of antiquity. Scholars have surmised that the earliest

¹⁹ The prose renditions of the Arthurian story written anonymously in the thirteenth century are good examples of this.

Arthurian authors heard and read a variety of folk tales that related the adventures of a king called Arthur; some of these tales probably were mythical and some simply legends or stories. It is clear that early Arthurian authors were influenced by these germinal folk tales, some of whose power and attraction may have stemmed in part from their mythic messages. Further, it can be surmised that the earliest of these Arthurian authors incorporated these folk tales in their own writings, probably to save them for posterity or simply because they made good telling. Scholars speculate that much of the material used by the very first Arthurian authors was contained in the lost document, *The Northern Annals* of Scotland, which was most likely given to English churchmen in the seventeenth century during a reorganization of the Church of Scotland. This original document may actually have found its way into the hands of such writers as Chrétien de Troyes and Geoffrey of Monmouth.²⁰

While the earliest Arthurian authors did not intentionally write myth, it is likely that they were influenced by the mythic content in the original folk tales they heard and read. Later authors embellished, augmented, developed, integrated, improved, distorted, and otherwise altered and revised the works of their predecessors. As in the earliest works, the literary forms associated with pure storytelling dominated those associated with pure myth. Disguised as part of an ordinary story and embedded within the story line, the mythic feeling and messages that had been incorporated within the original folk tales were retained as each author embellished, reshaped, and retold his version of a tale. Possibly attracted by the mythic content, probably without even knowing why, later authors retained the mythic messages that had become integrated within the story-line. The synergy between myth and pure story inevitably heightened the emotional impact and

²⁰Goodrich, 128.

intensified the treatment they gave to the subject matter. The underlying myth, virtually indistinguishable from the tale, went masquerading as story with the end result that the story was more intense and compelling.

When Myth Goes Masquerading as Story

Because myth can be masquerading as story in an Arthurian tale, the reader usually is not consciously aware that profound questions of a mythical nature have been addressed. Often the reader is left with a sense of awe or wonderment or excitement without knowing precisely why, sometimes feeling exasperation with an inability to pinpoint the source of this compulsion. When this happens, the reader may well be experiencing the combined impact of the story and the underlying mythical message. For example, as shall soon be explained in greater detail, the love affair between Guinevere and Lancelot, possibly the most compelling tale in which Guinevere plays a major role, is, in its entirety, a corruption of the myth of the descent of the hero into the underworld. By saving Guinevere, a personification of the Earth Goddess, Lancelot symbolically saved the feminine part of his human nature, which, together with the masculine part, represents the soul of all humankind. Thus Lancelot becomes a hero, who, by extension, saves the soul in all of us. Without knowing why, some will read the many different versions of such an Arthurian story over and over again without losing interest because they are searching for the *je ne sais quois* that is speaking to them silently but, oh! so forcefully, between the lines.

The Mythic Origins of the Character of Guinevere

If the literary roots of the mythical Guinevere are to be found in the folk tales that predated the first Arthurian authors, there remains the question of where these myth-laden folk tales themselves may have originated. As will be seen below,

there is considerable evidence that the mythic side of Guinevere's persona originated in a collection of goddess myths that predate Arthurian legend. Norma Lorre Goodrich (in *Guinevere*) and John and Caitlin Matthews (in *Ladies of the Lake*), all well-known authorities on the mythologies behind the Arthurian tradition, trace the Guinevere character back to the Goddess in Celtic myth. The precise origins of these goddess myths are still being debated among mythologists and anthropologists, but there is general agreement that they emerged from ancient Indian, Egyptian, and Babylonian sources involved in a tradition of goddess worship. The worshipped deities included goddesses such as Isis, Ceres, and Venus. Although the details of worship differed among the cultures, the central mythological statement made by all forms of these goddesses, that of the holiness of fertility and the oneness of creation, was basically identical everywhere. This goddess worship traveled west with the Celtic waves that surged across Europe from the Far East at least as long ago as 1200 BCE and ended in the British Isles around the third century BCE.²¹ This migration seems to explain not only the existence of these myths in British tradition but also their prevalence and vitality in Celtic lore from earliest times until today.

Historically, it has been established that a number of variations on the goddess myth found their way to England and Ireland as part of the Celtic migration. Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* was one of the first (and finest) books to popularize the notion that the goddess of ancient times had a great influence on the Celtic peoples of England and Ireland and especially on their poetry. In *Women of the Celts*, Jean Markale examines the traces of the myths in Celtic societies throughout Europe. These myths have contributed much to the rich traditions of

²¹Barry Cunliffe, *The Celtic World* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990, 15.

these cultures, having directly or indirectly influenced many literary works and art forms.

In large measure, too, the existence of these books and the power of the myths they treat explain today's resurgence of interest in goddess worship and in Celtic tradition. By the same token, the emphasis in today's society on ecology and the need for cooperation among all of nature's creation has resulted in a renewed interest in the importance of the feminine side of human nature, the nurturing, cooperating source of all life. The pull many feel to be a part of the natural order instead of being an outside controller brings a new interest in natural ways of relating to one another and to all aspects of nature. Ultimately, it is because of a renewed interest in goddess worship and Celtic tradition that many people today see the ancient pagan approach to life as a way to express these beliefs and to reconnect with the natural world.

Understandably, since they were products of different cultures, the original goddess myths differed from one another in certain respects. New forms of goddess worship were devised when one group of cultists split off from another. Germinal beliefs and practices became corrupted and were altered as the migrating emigrants met challenges, adapted to new circumstances and environments, and changed their culture. As a result, the goddess myth is not monolithic; it is not a single myth but appears in many aspects and variations. But no matter how the details of worship may vary, the different goddesses, who are aspects of the one goddess, have so much in common that, whenever convenient, scholars have not hesitated to make them synonymous and to refer to all goddess manifestations as a single deity known

variously as *The White Goddess*, *The Earth Goddess*, *Gaia*, *Erda*, *Great Mother*, or simply, *The Goddess*.²²

With the mythic symbolism in mind, it can be seen that the core aspects of Guinevere's persona are perennial because her character addresses mythic issues that touch upon the same fundamental aspects of human nature as those represented by The Goddess. For example, aspects of Guinevere's character evolved from goddess myths dealing with fertility of the land. The British probably place so great a value on the institution of royalty and have so difficult a time letting go of it because they connect the idea of royalty with the idea of their homeland. To illustrate, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet refers to Claudius, the King, as *Denmark* and the king of Norway as *Norway*. Elsewhere, expressing some of his countrymen's most profound feelings, Shakespeare personified England as royalty in Act II of *Richard II*: "This **royal throne** of kings, this **sceptered** isle, this **earth of majesty**...This blessed **plot**, this **earth**, this **realm**, this **England**," For the British, this connection of their country and land with royal personages is so ingrained that the king and queen have become incarnations of the land; the English see kings and queens as a personification of the fertility of the earth (a female characteristic) whereas many other nations see their monarch as the top of a ruling hierarchy (a male characteristic) and nothing more.

Guinevere as The Celtic Goddess

Three of the Celtic goddess myths that found their way into England and Ireland were incorporated into Arthurian legend and directly influenced

²²Janet & Stewart Farrar, *The Witches' Goddess* (Custer, WA, Phoenix Publishing, Inc., 1987, 29-24.

Guinevere's character. Each of the three myths is an aspect of the White Goddess myth that has defined one or more aspects of Guinevere's persona.²³

All receive detailed treatment in the material that follows. They are:

- The Myth of the Hero's Descent into the Underworld²⁴
- The Myth of the Queen as the Symbol of British Sovereignty²⁵
- The Myth of the Flower Maiden²⁶.

The Myth of the Hero's Descent into the Underworld

The first of the three aspects of the White Goddess myth and the most important myth in the creation of Guinevere's character, *The Myth of the Hero's Descent into the Underworld*, is a version of the great hero myth and is associated with the myth of the White Goddess or Earth Goddess. It is related to the myths of Gilgamesh and of Orpheus and, in some ways, to the story of Christ's descent into Hell. The myth can even be traced to Dante's *Inferno*, telling of his descent into Hell in search of the perfect Beatrice.

In Arthurian tradition, this tale, found in a variety of forms in many mythologies, relates Lancelot's rescue of Guinevere from the kingdom of the evil Maleageant. This myth was later corrupted to become the basis for the love affair between Guinevere and Lancelot.²⁷ The myth is based on one of the most powerful generic mythic themes, the descent of the hero into the underworld in search of the transformation that will allow him to enter a new world of understanding, to free his self from the evils of the past, and to help others find that freedom as well.

²³Caitlín and John Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake* (San Francisco, The Aquarian Press, 1992).

²⁴Heinrich Zimmer, *The King and the Corpse* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971), 170.

²⁵Caitlín Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain* (New York, Arkana, 1989).

²⁶Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 31-40.

²⁷Goodrich, 134-135.

In *The King and the Corpse*, Heinrich Zimmer, a well-known authority on Indian philosophy and mythology and an expert on the relationship of that philosophy to Arthurian legend, compares the story of Lancelot and Guinevere as first told in Chrétien's *Knight of the Cart* to the ancient myth of the hero's descent into the underworld to save the Goddess and, with her, the souls of mankind. In his words:

Sir Lancelot, this harrower of the kingdom of death, is a mythical savior. Instead of the "Two Worlds" of Life and Death we have. . .feudal kingdoms and their quarrels; in the place of the dead we have abducted hostages; and as the supreme representative of the soul we have the queen. And so, by releasing Guinevere, the feminine life-giving principle, the highest symbol of the chivalrous love and life of the Round Table, life force in its visible human incarnation, the knight, Sir Lancelot, would break the hold of death upon the soul, that is, would be the restorer of our immortality.²⁸

In the Arthurian version, Lancelot is the great Hero who performs impossible deeds to rescue the world from death. In most versions of the Arthurian story, Guinevere, the personification of the Earth Goddess, is kidnapped on May 1, the great Celtic holiday of Beltane (the first day of summer in Celtic tradition) that is sacred to the White Goddess, who is the symbol of fertility and representative of the feminine life-giving principle.²⁹ Beltane, the summer festival of fertility and life, is one of the two major religious observances of the ancient people of Europe. It counter-balanced the feast of Samhain, the winter festival of the dead. At both times, the *door between the worlds* opened between earth and the otherworld. Guinevere is taken through this door to the otherworld by the King of that other country. As the personification of the Earth Goddess, she shares the fate of the world as a captive to death until she (and her subjects) are rescued. Maleageant, her kidnapper, is

²⁸Zimmer, 170.

²⁹Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 35-36.

Death, or in some versions the Son of Death, who rules the underworld and keeps man from the recognition of his higher self.

When the relationship between Lancelot and Guinevere is seen in the light of these origins in myth, the innocence and purity of both parties is obvious and no carnal insinuations can have any effect on their characters. However, Chrétien, writing to please a sensation-seeking audience, did insinuate that Lancelot rescued Guinevere because of his adulterous attachment to the queen. This insinuation has besmirched both characters to this day, but, because of the basis of the story in myth, readers and audiences, sensing the higher truth behind the tale, subconsciously hold both Guinevere and Lancelot in high favor and even in awe as characterizations of a holy love that is not subject to carnal needs and desires.

This myth continues to influence the retelling of Arthurian stories today. Most of the books described in the next chapter include the tale in one way or another. Even a recent film made to please the taste of the general public uses this myth as the central point of its story. In *First Knight*, a Columbia Pictures film released in July 1995, Malagant—of course, Chrétien's Maleageant—is the evil king of a country that borders Camelot who kidnaps Guinevere in an attempt to gain power over Arthur and become the supreme ruler of the land. The film writers may have been unaware of the deep significance of the original myth but saw instead a powerful evil character in Malagant and a subplot that would add to the appeal of the film. Much of the original Arthurian story was distorted or left out in the film version, leaving only the adventure and danger of Lancelot's rescue, but enough was preserved to retain some of the feeling of the original.

As we will see in the next chapter, Guinevere's reputation as an adulteress, based almost entirely on this episode, is an unwarranted and incorrect perversion of the original mythic story, a perversion which was introduced by Chrétien. Most authors respond strongly to the mythic interpretation of Guinevere and Lancelot

rather than to the one instigated by Chrétien. They see her honor and her love for Arthur as essential, and they emphasize these personality traits rather than those that exhibit her supposed lust and infidelity. So cogent is the mythic nature of Guinevere that even some of the storytellers who accept Chrétien's perverted interpretation and show her as committing adultery reject the idea that she has dishonored herself; they treat her honor and love for Arthur as preeminent attributes which overcome her supposed adultery.

The Myth of the Queen as the Symbol of British Sovereignty

The second of the three aspects of the White Goddess myth, *The Myth of the Queen as the Symbol of British Sovereignty*, expresses the sovereignty of the Nature Goddess over the land. Because Guinevere is identified with this aspect of the Goddess in the tales that incorporate this myth, Guinevere's character comes to symbolize the exclusively feminine qualities of birth, fertility, and death. Since fertility, birth, and death can be associated not only with the female, but also the land, the female principle is equated with and given power over the land; land and the female are each a source of fecundity and survival in a cycle in which birth (life) inevitably is followed by death and rebirth. These ever-constant, unchanging aspects of the goddess myth are symbolic of what is essentially feminine and fixed within the human framework, reaching as it does back to the distant past, to the most archaic images of the White Goddess, images of Ishtar and Diana.

Because of Guinevere's identification with the Goddess and what she represented, whoever possessed Guinevere had a claim to the throne and the prosperity of Britain. Without the blessing of the Goddess (Guinevere), no ruler could stay in power because the land would not flourish under his rule. As one authority has written,

Arthur himself has already wed Sovereignty as king. . . by wedding Guinevere, who acts as Sovereignty's representative in the earthly realm. . .³⁰

Thus anyone who can take the queen from the king steals his sovereignty over the land. Many of the stories of Guinevere include tales of her abduction to express just this point.

The most important of the abduction tales is the one in which Maleageant is the abductor, which we have already seen. Next in importance is Guinevere's abduction by Mordred. As Arthur's sister's son and, in most versions, Arthur's son as well, Mordred already has a dual claim to the British throne. Spurred to claim his rightful place by his belief that the kingdom should be his, in both Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of England* and in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Mordred tries to win the land by kidnapping and wooing Guinevere. By abducting and winning Guinevere, he feels he will justify and solidify his claim and earn the right to overthrow his uncle/father and rule in Arthur's place.

In many versions of the Arthurian stories, Lancelot is also an abductor of Guinevere. Toward the end of the story, when Arthur has become mired in affairs of state and weakened by the loss of so many knights in the Grail Quest, Arthur acquiesces to the insinuations of Agravaine about the queen's adultery and agrees to burn her at the stake as a traitor. By giving in to the demands of Agravaine and doubting the sovereignty of the Queen, he has given up his right to British sovereignty. Lancelot abducts Guinevere by saving her from burning and taking her to his own country. While doing this, he kills Gareth, Gawain's brother, starting the blood feud that eventually destroys the kingdom. By now the mythic significance of this tale should be evident.

³⁰Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain*, 124.

It should be noted that Guinevere's acceptance of her captivity and willingness to accept her captor as husband was originally essential to the success of her abductor. She was not merely a pawn in these attempts to win Britain.

There are many different abduction tales in the Arthurian corpus and many versions of each tale, all of which are symbolic of this aspect of the White Goddess myth. The myth's power stems from its topic, possession of and authority over the land, an especially vital question in Celtic tradition, where folk had wandered over the land for so many centuries before settling; it explains why there are so many abduction stories that surround Guinevere. Many of the abduction tales contain details derived from Celtic tradition. This fact is an index of the great importance attached to this notion by the Celts and a substantiation of its Celtic origins.

The Myth of the Flower Maiden

The third of the three aspects of the White Goddess myth, the aspect of woman known as the Flower Maiden (or Flower Bride), is particularly important in pre-Celtic matriarchal societies. It is extant in the Arthurian stories as an explanation for Guinevere's seemingly illicit love affair with Lancelot and also helps explain her liaison with Mordred. The Flower Maiden was the aspect of the goddess most responsible for the fertility and success of the kingdom. It was traditional that two men fight for possession of the Flower Maiden, usually one of these men represented summer and the other, winter. Arthur, as the reigning king, has an established relationship with the Flower Maiden and is involved with the affairs of state to the point where he is powerless to act on his own behalf (personifying winter) and must allow others to champion the Queen. Both Lancelot and Mordred represent the stronger, younger, virile aspect of manhood, personifying summer.

As Arthurian commentators have stated, Guinevere's true nature as the Flower Maiden is:

. . .based on the mores of the Otherworld, which permit 'all acts of love and pleasure' without guile. This Celtic basis underlies the later texts which, where they are not painting Guinevere as an adulterous woman, usually stress her ability to move smoothly in the field of courtly love.³¹

The law of the Goddess of the Land is that she must be guarded by the most worthy knight and by he [sic] alone. When the man whom she has made king fails in his duty, she is at liberty to find another, more worthy champion.³²

She is the eternal May Queen with all the privileges this role entails. This role also explains Guinevere's childlessness. Because she is a goddess, she has no need of children to further humanize her and bring her to reality. The king needs her, not to provide an heir (that was the duty of the king's sister) but to link him to the land.

Guinevere as the Embodiment of the Mythic Female

The collection of myths referred to as the Goddess Myth stems from ancient worship of what was thought to be a major aspect of all life, that is, the female aspect. As established above, through Celtic traditions and myth, Guinevere's personality has come to represent the female characteristics that were venerated by the peoples who gave birth to the legend. A definitive account of the myth of the White Goddess can be found in many places, including *The White Goddess* by Graves and *The Myth of the Goddess* by Baring and Cashford. From these accounts, it is clear that those who worship the female aspect of life venerate the fertility of the earth and of living things, whether human, animal, or plant. All living things are considered to be different forms of the same thing, all of equal worth. This emphasis on equality is at heart cursive, uncategorized, and unstructured. It is contradistinguished from an emphasis on hierarchy that is found in male worship, which is at heart discursive, categorized, and structured. For example, in

³¹Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 38.

³²*Ibid.*, 40.

matriarchal societies that worshipped the Goddess, royal succession was passed to the king's sister's son rather than to his wife's son. Descent was traced through the female because, in her role as giver of life, there was no question about the child's parentage; the mother was the legitimizer of the lineage. On the other hand, power, a hierarchical aspect of human nature, was held in the hands of the king, a male figure.

The goddess myth incorporates a concept of *maleness* as well as a concept of *femaleness*. Both maleness and femaleness are considered to be complementary aspects of the same thing—universal human nature, aspects that are inherent in both men and women. Possession of maleness and femaleness together make a person whole.³³ Femaleness consists of qualities such as togetherness of spirit, solidarity, steadfastness in the sense that the land (earth) is perennial; commonality of goals; sharing; and empathy for other living things and for nature at large. Maleness evinces such qualities as separateness, power and control, striving and accomplishment, acquisition, combat, egocentricity, and the authority of one being over another. Women are associated with nature; their role is simply to be, to nurture being, to grow fertile, to procreate—in other words, to *let nature take its course*. Men are associated with society, daily affairs, *making the world go 'round*. The Goddess myth, which promulgates this idea of femaleness, is centered on the values of the giving of life and the sacredness of life. God myths, on the other hand, perpetuate the values of maleness and are centered on the idea of regulation of everyday worldly matters. In other contexts, these female characteristics have sometimes been associated with the right hemisphere of the brain; these male characteristics have sometimes been associated with the left hemisphere.

³³ Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1955), 24-25.

Given an awareness of the mythic sources of Arthurian legend, it is easy to discern the Goddess myth at work in the character of Guinevere; in turn, her characterization as the Goddess helps to condition the other Arthurian characterizations. For example, Arthur, Lancelot, the Knights of the Round Table, and other male authority figures characterize such factors as solidarity, leadership, strength of character, physical strength, power, authority, all of which are factors in the tradition of the warrior-leader. Guinevere's character and those of the Lady of the Lake and Igraine as well, who also display attributes of the goddess, embody factors such as equality, fertility, steadfastness, and the life-giving principle. These female characters play the role of foil to the male characters, and *vice-versa*; they provide contrast and achieve balance.

The Significance of Guinevere's Mythic Female Persona

As already noted, the goddess myth is an expression of the so-called "female principle"; it is a statement about female nature, about what it takes to be female. However, by implication it also makes a general statement that applies to all humans regardless of sex or sexual preference, namely the necessity of achieving a balance in one's human nature in order to lead a valid and happy life. Of course, this balance is one that is to be maintained between the female traits and their complement, the male ones.

In the Arthurian world as in the mythos, Guinevere's female traits balance those of the male. *Balance* should not be understood simply as *opposition*. Guinevere does not work *against* the male figures; she *enhances* their efforts, commingling her female approach and style with those of the male. Her character and acts infuse the story with a greater purpose and meaning, lift it to a higher plane; because she is present, one has the sense that something much more important and noble is going on than only rape and pillage; without Guinevere,

most of the story would be one-dimensional, little more than a simple flat tale of violence, with one power struggle following another. Guinevere adds an everyday, personal dimension to these struggles, dealing with concerns like marriage, feeding the people, and caring for the children. The people of Camelot relate to her better than to Arthur because Arthur is a symbol of power, and power is feared; they use her as a benign channel to the King. The knights, too, use her good offices as a means to gain access to Arthur. For example, they ask Guinevere to intercede with Arthur on their behalf when they seek Arthur's permission to go on the Grail Quest or when they want to wed. Knowing that her feminine status assured that he would be forced to respond on her behalf, evil knights could insult or harm Guinevere to provoke a reaction from Arthur.

Moreover, Guinevere helps conduct affairs of state from the feminine point of view; she resolves conflicts with a kinder, gentler hand. For example, the Round Table, symbol of the equality of all in Arthur's rule, comes to Arthur as Guinevere's dowry. Protocols employed by the knights at the table emphasize the equal importance of all people and things. The circumferential physical arrangement of seated knights stands in sharp contrast to the more typical hierarchical arrangement wherein a king seated on his throne before his disciples dictates his decisions, the typical approach taken by monarchs wishing to project their masculine authority. As another example of balance, Merlin's use of magic power to help Arthur win battles is balanced by the Lady of the Lake's use of power to promote fertility and prosperity among Arthur's people. In part, Arthurian stories appeal to us as do other stories because they achieve this kind of balance.

The Puzzle of Guinevere

As noted earlier, the different ways Guinevere has been characterized over the centuries have produced a collection of paradoxes. In different versions—and

even in the same version written by a single author—Guinevere has been drawn as a weak and foolish woman, a powerful queen, a down-to-earth person, and a mysterious and haughty otherworldly character; she has been sketched as both a beloved queen and a threat to Arthur's sovereignty: as an adulteress, a betrayer of her husband and king, and as the destroyer of Arthur's dream of a united Britain. These obviously self-contradictory portrayals reveal a remarkable and fascinating ambivalence on the part of authors; and the fact that audiences have loved and revered Guinevere, remaining steadfast despite her treacheries, exposes a strange but admirable loyalty on their part. Explaining why these evident contradictions are manifest poses one of the most interesting challenges to anyone who would analyze and rationalize the corpus; and no exegesis would be complete without detailing how the many contradictory versions of the tales can appear rational to the readership and can seem to retain a fundamental literary unity and integrity in the face of these many glaring contradictions.

Once Guinevere's mythic character is illuminated, it becomes apparent that her god-like persona is the source of author and audience esteem. She is venerated because she is The Goddess. Her exalted status excuses her from responsibility for mortal failings, for negative motives and deeds; her female hypostasis places her above and beyond the rules and regulations that govern her readers, ordinary mortals who depend on and worship her for spiritual sustenance. In short, the Goddess within Guinevere is above judgment.

Significantly, the next chapter shows that authors by and large have accepted the White Goddess in Guinevere's character and have incorporated her mythology into their versions without important alteration. But Guinevere's status as Goddess has not placed her beyond the reach of their critical faculty; many authors have chosen to kick her off her pedestal. They treat her as human while accepting her as divine. Oddly, this admixture of White Goddess status and human

aspirations has helped render her character more appealing to readers. As a divine-human, real-world, down-to-earth female she is more approachable and empathic than she would be as Goddess only.

The next chapter will examine the causes of this anti-apotheosis and will provide a systematic review of the way in which the mythic and human aspects of her persona have been intermingled by a representative cross-section of Arthurian authors drawn from different cultures and eras. There it will be seen that all of the authors have not hesitated to modify incidental aspects of Guinevere's character to meet their own special and *ad hoc* needs, have made personal value judgments about Guinevere's character and voiced their own reactions to her; that each has yielded to social pressure, adopted current mores, or otherwise reflected the temper of the times. The review will draw conclusions about the impact of myth on Guinevere's characterization and the way *ad hoc* considerations have affected her status and have molded her to the needs of the audience from ancient to modern times.

Guinevere Through the Ages

Beginning with Celtic oral tradition, Arthurian legend has been recounted by some of the world's most distinguished artists, both men and women, among them Celtic, English, French, and American. Interest in Guinevere has persisted in every age, but today more is being written about her than ever before. Seen as a group, the bards and authors who contributed to the corpus are non-homogeneous, products of radically different periods, cultures, personal backgrounds, social class, religion, economic class, and other circumstances. One of the few attributes they have in common is a demonstrated willingness to bend their treatment of Guinevere's character to fit their own viewpoints and the tastes and predispositions of their contemporaries. Current authors are adapting her character to modern tastes and issues and are featuring her in their works to an extent unrivaled by the past. Yet the core of Guinevere's character—her mythos—receives surprisingly constant and consistent treatment in every instance. Why?

Chapter 3 showed that the important stories belonging to a culture do not change their essential nature or meaning but only change in structure or approach to suit the character of the evolving culture. The nature of a myth—the unchanging truth underlying the story—was distinguished from the culture of a myth—the social mores and beliefs that change in each redaction. The myth behind a story that teaches us about the natural world and the forces behind it is always the same; only the way in which situations and characters are used to reveal those truths changes. The preceding chapter showed that the myth underlying Guinevere's story is The Myth of the White Goddess. The essential nature of this myth (as embodied in Guinevere's persona) has not been lost by the succession of writers and poets who have retold the important story, although they have not hesitated to change the way in which situations and her character have been used to reveal those truths and have on numerous occasions drifted from the mythological core. Another way to

express this idea is to note that authors have not hesitated to alter the culture of the myth. The social mores and beliefs of successive generations have changed in each redaction; each author, who is, of course, a product of his generation, has revised the circumstances of the tale and reinterpreted Guinevere's mythic character to suit his own ends and *ad hoc* needs. These reinterpretations of Guinevere's character—from the mythic point of view perhaps they justly may be called misinterpretations—have sullied her mythic character and have introduced distortions into the versions; the distortions have caused the paradoxes cited at the end of the preceding chapter.

This chapter traces Guinevere's characterization through the ages. It consists of a brief review of the work of a representative sample of important Arthurian authors. Each is chosen because he or she has been greatly influential in shaping Guinevere's character in a given period. The periods represented are those in which the legend has been most popular. Each of the authors mirrors the culture, the milieu in which he worked—the temper of the times—and therefore is typical of the audience as well as of contemporaneous Arthurian authors. Figure 2 summarizes this information. It shows the aspect of the goddess myth most closely affecting the story told by each author, the cultural attitude toward women at the time of composition, and the way the culture saw Guinevere. Thus the chart depicts how the social mores and beliefs of that period shaped her mythic and non-mythic characterization. Overall, one sees a quite reasonable correspondence between entries in the last two columns. For example, in row two, it is not surprising to find that Geoffrey gives the Guinevere of Medieval England little characterization and that she is of interest to him and his peers chiefly as a pawn by which to gain control of land. After all, her society was one in which women were controlled by male relatives. In row six, one would expect Tennyson to see Guinevere as passive and colorless and to show her used as a pawn because Victorian England was a

society in which women were kept at home and sheltered. The analysis gives a sweeping perspective spanning centuries up to the present. It reveals a still-developing pattern in Guinevere's characterization, which began in Celtic times as a mythic female, gradually became twisted into part goddess-part creature of society, and currently is returning her to the ancient and original conception.

Period	Arthurian Legend	Author	Date	Mythical Reference	Cultural Attitude toward Women	How Reflected in Guinevere's Character
Celtic	The Triads, The Mabinogion	Traditional	Oral	Brit. Sov.	Women as equals in most ways	Symbol of priestess/goddess
Medieval	History of the Kings of England	Geoffrey of Monmouth	c. 1136	Brit. Sov. (Round Table)	Women controlled by fathers, brothers, etc.	Not much characterization, used to gain control of land
	Knight of the Cart	Chrétien de Troyes	1150	Hero's Descent to Underworld	Women as ideal in romantic love	Haughty, demanding, aloof
	Prose Lancelot	Unknown	c. 1225	Hero's Descent to Underworld Flower Maiden Brit. Sov.	Women as possessions	Possessive, jealous, treasonous to Arthur
	Morte d'Arthur	Malory	1485			
Victorian	Idylls of the King	Tennyson	1859	Flower Maiden	Women kept at home, sheltered	Passive, used as pawn, colorless
Contemporary	The Once and Future King	White	1958	Flower Maiden	Women beginning to emerge into society again	Easily swayed by love, somewhat silly
	Mists of Avalon	Bradley	1982	Hero's Descent to Underworld	Revival of myth of the goddess in Celtic legend	Stronger, more influential than before, able to rule efficiently at Arthur's side
	Guinevere trilogy	Woolley	1980's	Flower Maiden Brit. Sov.	Women regaining status of equality	
	The Child Queen The High Queen	McKenzie	1990's	Brit. Sov.		

Figure 2 - Overview of Arthurian Legend and Its Eras of Prevalence

The Celtic Period

Celtic tradition is oral, ancient, and obscure, and as a result much knowledge about Arthur's origins has been lost in the mists of time. Written references to Guinevere are particularly rare. Some noteworthy mention of Guinevere can be found in the Triads, a collection of summaries of Welsh Bardic lore, so named because they are grouped in sets of three. About a dozen of these triads relate to Arthurian tales, but most of the stories to which the triads refer have been lost.

Triadic references to Guinevere in these short summaries are cryptic and tantalizing as well as informative. Guinevere (as Gwenhwyfar) is mentioned five times.³⁴ The triad of most interest to the idea of Guinevere as a personification of the Goddess is Triad 56 which tells of Three Great Queens at Arthur's court, all named Gwenhwyfar. One critic suggests:

This may be a case of multiple personality such as is found here and there in Celtic legend, being derived, it seems, from ancient representations of deities (notably the Great Mother) in triple form.³⁵

If this is truly the reason for the triple Gwenhwyfar, it is a strong link between Guinevere and the Great Mother or White Goddess myth.

The only extant records of the tale of Arthur and his queen from the Celtic period are contained in a variety of stories originally written down in two Welsh collections, *The White Book of Rhydderch* and *The Red Book of Hergest*. These collections of tales were committed to paper between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The stories were not widely read until the nineteenth century when Lady Charlotte Guest collected them under the present title of *The Mabinogion*. The stories retold in these works may have a much more ancient origin:

³⁴ Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 27.

³⁵ Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 565.

. . .no one doubts that much of the subject matter of these stories is very old indeed, coeval maybe with the dawn of the Celtic world.³⁶

Guinevere is mentioned prominently in three stories of *The Mabinogion*. In each case, she is gravely insulted so that the knights of Arthur will be called on to punish the person who has caused the insult. An insult to Guinevere is an insult to the king and to the country and cannot go unpunished. In each case, a knight makes his fame and fortune by avenging her honor. Guinevere's characterization is thin; she is not much more than a symbol for that which must be protected and preserved, a representative of the land and the sovereignty of the king. These tales are precursors of the many stories extant in the Arthurian corpus that tell of Guinevere being hurt or insulted or abducted and requiring the assistance of a knight to restore her to her rightful place of honor.

These preliterate Celtic tales relate only these stories of Arthur and Guinevere, but an indirect link exists to many of the other tales of the ancient Celts through a study of their traditions and ideas that have left their traces in Arthurian lore. The later works described in the rest of this chapter show some of these traces.

The Medieval Period

The Medieval Period is clearly the time of an explosion of interest in Arthur. Not only was Arthurian literature generated in great quantity, but many stories about other subjects, characters, and deeds were incorporated into the Arthurian corpus during this period.

³⁶ Jones, Gwyn and Thomas Jones, *The Mabinogion Revised Edition* (Rutland, Vermont, Everyman's Library, 1989), ix.

Geoffrey of Monmouth

In his preface to his *The History of the Kings of England*, Geoffrey states categorically that Walter, the Arch Deacon, presented him with “a certain very ancient book written in the British language” and that he then proceeded to translate the book into plain straightforward Latin.³⁷ Although we are tantalized by this obscure reference, no one knows the name of this book or its sources. Thus Geoffrey of Monmouth came to offer one of the first popular versions of Arthur’s story in his *History of the Kings of England*, which, as he stated, was a translation of an ancient book written in the British language (Welsh). As part of his translation, Geoffrey no doubt emphasized Arthur’s Roman connections rather than the less familiar Celtic. Although probably ignorant of the mythic nature of his source material, he retained images and ideas drawn from Celtic myth that portrayed the queen as the symbol of British sovereignty. Thus, without his realizing it, his work was imbued with a mythical symbolism that is universal in Arthurian legend today.

Geoffrey’s work, which introduced Guinevere’s mythic characterization to literature, contains two major elements relating to Guinevere’s character that were drawn from the Celtic myths. First, it contains the notion that the famous Round Table came to Arthur as Guinevere’s dowry. Strangely, we discover that, by a circuitous route linked to the myth of the Queen as the Symbol of British Sovereignty, this notion validates her characterization as Arthur’s equal. It is the Round Table that symbolizes equality of all in Arthur’s kingdom. The Round Table is also a symbol of the land, land that is given to Arthur to protect as a part of his

³⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (New York, Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1966), 14.

marriage to Guinevere, now his queen and the Symbol of British Sovereignty.³⁸ Second, Geoffrey tells the story of Guinevere's traitorous association with Mordred, thereby popularizing the idea that Guinevere is traitor to England. When Arthur travels to the continent to fight the Romans, he leaves his nephew, Mordred, in charge. Mordred is chosen because, in Celtic tradition, the king's sister's son is the next in line for the throne. Intending to take Guinevere as his wife, during Arthur's absence Mordred abducts her, thus giving him an even stronger claim to sovereignty.

The point underlying this abduction is that the queen is the sovereignty-bestowing woman; by marrying her, Mordred strengthens his claim a hundredfold among the Celtic tribes.³⁹

Again, the modern reader sees the tie between Guinevere and the possession of the British throne. What we see as a traitorous act on the part of Guinevere may have been no more than a symbol of the transition of the throne from one king to the next.

Chrétien's The Knight of the Cart and the Prose Lancelot

The picture of Guinevere as a traitor was picked up from Geoffrey and promulgated by the French versions of the story, although for them it was not a key factor. One of the major French additions to Arthurian legend is Chrétien de Troye's *Lancelot or The Knight of the Cart*, which is a retelling of the previously extant story, probably derived from texts in their original British form, of Lancelot's rescue of Guinevere from Maleageant's underworld kingdom. Chrétien did not consciously realize that this story is a symbolic version of the mythic *Harrowing of Hell* theme,

³⁸ The Round Table has been linked to the land that came to Arthur when he married Guinevere in Goodrich's *Guinevere*, p. 33.

³⁹ Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 37.

as explained in Chapter 3 in the section about the *Descent of the Hero into the Underworld*. This tale was corrupted by Chrétien to incorporate the notion of Courtly Love as a concession to his patron, Marie, Countess of Champagne, and the remainder of his audience, the court of France. Ironically, this corruption became the source of the great love story between Lancelot and Guinevere and influenced every later Arthurian author.

In Chrétien's version, Guinevere is a haughty, demanding woman who knows about everything that is happening without being present. She is angry at Lancelot when he arrives to save her from Maleageant, even though he has literally gone through Hell to rescue her. We learn that she is angry because he hesitated the least bit before getting into the cart of a dwarf who promised to take him to the place where Guinevere was being held captive. This hesitation to enter the cart, a symbol of degradation and death, lowered her esteem of Lancelot and caused her to deny him the triumph he felt he deserved when he rescued her.

This attitude of haughtiness was not only a good representation of the ideal woman of the troubadours of courtly love but also was an indication of the Goddess stature of Guinevere in the more ancient source of this tale. Chrétien translated the tale into one that would be more palatable and amusing for his audience, but he could not quite avoid the elements that link this story to the older one of the Harrowing of Hell.

The prose Lancelot, also written in the Medieval period by an anonymous author or perhaps a group of authors and used by Malory as a source for his Arthurian writing, continued in the same vein as Chrétien but softened the view of Guinevere, making her more honorable and acceptable to the audience. The prose Lancelot elaborated the story of Lancelot and Guinevere and gave us many more indications that Guinevere's character had been originally that of The Goddess. For instance, when Lancelot first saw the queen:

The queen looked at the youth a great deal, and he at her, whenever he was able to do so discreetly. He wondered where such great beauty as that which he saw in her could come from. The beauty of the Lady of the Lake, he thought, or of any other woman he had ever seen, could not compare with this. . .When he felt her touch, he started as though from sleep, for he was so engrossed in thinking about her that he did not hear what she said.⁴⁰

This is the first, but not the last, time that Lancelot loses track of reality when thinking of Guinevere. It has been likened to a religious trance. His reaction to her beauty also has an otherworldly quality to it that continues throughout their relationship.

This story also establishes Lancelot as the Queen's knight and protector, not the King's:

Tell her (Guinevere) that I send her word that, to win me to her for ever, she should make me a knight, and send me a sword that I may be her knight. . .⁴¹

Lancelot was Guinevere's from that moment; as worshipper and protector, he gave homage to the priestess and the Goddess in Guinevere.

Lancelot underwent many additional adventures in this version of the story, including finding his own grave and defeating the captors of the castle, Dolorous Guard. He is established later in the story as Guinevere's lover and helps her prove her identity to Arthur when a false Guinevere enchants the king and attempts to take Guinevere's place as Queen.

The story of this false Guinevere can also be traced to the character's origin in myth. This story, in which the real Guinevere is kidnapped by her sister and impersonated to fool Arthur into condemning the real Guinevere, demonstrates once again that Guinevere represented the sovereignty of the king. By taking her from Arthur, the impostors hoped to deny him the right to the throne and take back

⁴⁰ Corin Corley, trans., *Lancelot of the Lake* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), 71.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

what would then by right belong to her sister. It has been speculated that this story is founded in the tale referenced in two of the triads in which Gwenhwyfar and her sister Gwenhwyfach quarrel and cause the battle of Camlan, that was Arthur's defeat.⁴²

Sir Thomas Malory

In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory related stories that show Guinevere in roles that link her to all three aspects of the myth of the Goddess. He retells the story of Guinevere's kidnapping by Meliagaunt (Maleageant) on May Day and her rescue by Lancelot. His frequent references to "as the French book saith," probably signify that he was using Chrétien's *Knight of the Cart* as his authority, although we cannot be sure because he never named his sources. Here, however, Malory plays down many of the more mystical occurrences from the original and emphasizes the adultery between Lancelot and Guinevere. Despite their constant denial of this deed throughout the rest of his work, Malory has left his reader with the impression that a sin was committed.

In Malory's retelling, Guinevere is the central pawn in the battles that destroy Arthur's kingdom, linking her again to the sovereignty of the land. When Arthur learns of her adultery with Lancelot, he condemns her to burn at the stake. Lancelot rescues her and mistakenly kills Gawain's brother, Gareth. This starts a blood feud between Lancelot and Gawain, who are Arthur's greatest knights. Even though Arthur forgives Lancelot and takes Guinevere back (through the intercession of the Pope), Gawain will not make peace with Lancelot. In this story, Arthur returns to France to do battle once again with Lancelot at Gawain's insistence, leaving the kingdom and Guinevere in Mordred's hands. When Mordred

⁴² Matthews, *Ladies of the Lake*, 27.

attacks Arthur on his return, Arthur's forces have been weakened by this split between Gawain and Lancelot. As a result, Arthur is mortally wounded. Thus Malory reinforced Geoffrey of Monmouth's allegation that Guinevere was the cause of Arthur's downfall.

Malory does not emphasize Guinevere's role as the Flower Maiden, but this aspect of the Goddess is hinted at when she seems to acquiesce to Mordred's demand that she become his wife. However, Malory retreats from this mythic projection when he asserts that Guinevere had no real intention of following through with this plan to marry Mordred. She instead retires to a convent.

The Victorian Period

With a bang, the Victorian Age rediscovered the Arthurian mythos which had lain almost dormant since the Medieval period, a lapse of several hundred years. The legend was again explored in poetry, art, and drama and caught fire in the imagination of the people. Victorian society loved the story of Arthur and Guinevere and responded to the new productions with enthusiasm.

No single legend could suffice to speak to the diverse Victorian public. There was an official version for the queen and the state, celebrating monarchy and heritage. A heroic version confirmed masculine power and position, playing an essential role in the construction of Victorian manhood. The legend for women taught them their place in society as well, defining patterns to follow and paths to avoid.⁴³

This quotation accurately describes how the legend, the characters, and the mythos were redefined to suit the temper of the Victorian times. Victorian authors did their best to convert Guinevere to their idea of what a Victorian female should be. She was held to be a bad example for the Victorian woman, who was expected to be chaste and moral and to place her husband's needs above all else. She was

⁴³ Debra N. Mancoff. *The Return of King Arthur, The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995), 8.

portrayed by Tennyson and others as an earthy woman, one who wanted a partner from whom she could draw strength and support; she was not a lord and master in her own right, as was her husband, nor was she a self-possessed goddess. However, despite the best efforts of the authors to the contrary, the fundamental basis of her character was not changed, the essentials of the story were maintained, and the hidden mythic significance of Guinevere was perpetuated, albeit not always in an obvious way.⁴⁴

The most famous of the Arthurian revivals was *The Idylls of the King*, a twelve-part saga written by Sir Alfred Lord Tennyson, the first part of which was published in 1842 and the rest continued throughout his life. Tennyson used the saga to convey what he saw to be a universal and timeless code, a standard for proper social conduct. His Guinevere was meant to be an example to the Victorian ladies of the evils that result from unfaithfulness. It is here that Guinevere is first shown to be the main cause of the fall of Arthur's reign. In Tennyson's version of the plot, she lures Lancelot into their illicit affair. Thus she is shown to be an unfaithful wife long before Agravaine exposes her as an adulteress. Unlike the Guinevere of the earlier tales, this Guinevere is guilty and admits her guilt; she bears the brunt of her deeds and Arthur blames the disruption of his kingdom entirely on her. "Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,/That I the King should greatly care to live;/Thou has spoilt the purpose of my life,"⁴⁵ he tells her. According to Tennyson, because Guinevere did not adhere to society's mores, society itself is destroyed.

Given the mores of the times, Victorians found it difficult to reconcile the adultery of Guinevere with Lancelot with the wondrous tales of the knight's prowess and his constant defense of ladies. Consequently, all of the responsibility

⁴⁴ Mancoff, 56.

⁴⁵ Alfred, Lord Tennyson. *Idylls of the King* (New York, Penguin Classics, 1983), 281.

for the affair was shifted to Guinevere; her role as the goddess or priestess who inspired Lancelot's awe was glossed over, almost lost in the shadows. But in many important ways she did not lose her status as goddess. For example, try as they might, Victorians could not ignore the tale of the Knight of the Cart; and the Harrowing of Hell story continued to be part of Guinevere's legend, although it was now Lancelot's role that was emphasized in these incidents. The Victorian characterization of Guinevere retained many other aspects of the Goddess as well. Tennyson for one could not resist the impulse to link her to the Goddess: When Lancelot reminds her of her duty toward Arthur, she replies, "Arthur, my Lord, Arthur, the faultless King,/That passionate perfection, my good lord -/But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?"⁴⁶ Because of Arthur's distance from her, she felt it was her right to choose another lover. Tennyson's elegant poetry bestows on her the status of the Flower Maiden, a major aspect of the Goddess, who bestows her favors upon those whom she will.

The Contemporary Period

The Victorians used the story of Arthur and his queen to exhibit to people their proper roles in society and to teach moral lessons that were favored at the time. For his part, T.H. White used the same characters and story to teach a lesson of a far different kind. Originally published as a whole in 1958, his four part work, *The Once and Future King*, probably more than any other contribution, brought the Arthurian world to the attention of the twentieth-century public. The first part, *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), employed a whimsical style to tell the story of Arthur's upbringing, introducing humor and lightheartedness into the legend.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁴⁷ Walt Disney saw this story as a children's tale and produced it as a full-length cartoon in 1963.

The Witch in the Wood,⁴⁸ the second part of *The Once and Future King*, set the stage for understanding the tragedy of Arthur's death as the work of his half-sister, Morgause, and her son, not of Guinevere. This version of Arthur's downfall releases Guinevere from the responsibility for the fall of Britain that was so heavily placed upon her by the Victorians. The fault is wholly laid on Morgause who, before Arthur knew she was his sister, deliberately seduced him into an incestuous encounter. She taught their son, Mordred, to hate his father and to ultimately destroy both Arthur and his kingdom. In White's version, both Arthur and Guinevere, and perhaps Mordred as well, are innocent pawns of fate and the malevolence of Morgause.

Guinevere's character is most fully explored in the third book of White's four-part series, *The Ill-Made Knight* (1940).⁴⁹ Although this third book centers on Lancelot's constant self-examination and reproach, White gives us a very human picture of Guinevere as a woman who wants, more than anything else, to be loved. This view of Guinevere is probably a reaction to the staid and harsh Victorian opinion of a woman's place in society. It also serves to distance Guinevere more than ever before from her mythic history. In fact, White does his best to keep mystery and paganism out of the story entirely. When he retells the story of the Knight of the Cart, it becomes simply a rescue of a kidnapped woman by her lover, nothing more; the sexual prerogatives of the Flower Maiden become only the lovesick yearning of a schoolgirl for a man she can't resist; and the idea of this Guinevere as the symbol of British Sovereignty becomes almost incongruous. Guinevere is now a female who has no power, no ability or will to command, and no strength to hold the British throne in her hands.

⁴⁸ This section was retitled *The Queen of Air and Darkness* in 1939.

⁴⁹ This book and the one that followed, *The Candle in the Wind*, became the basis for the Broadway musical, *Camelot*, which so stimulated the imagination of the public.

In the 1970's, there began in Western society a revival of interest in the idea that mankind is connected with and dependent upon the natural world. As a result of this revival, there was an upsurge of interest in the old European nature cults that worshipped the land and The Goddess; her dark and ancient mysteries, once all but lost, took on new life in the modern psyche. Discoveries by modern scholars brought breakthroughs in our understanding of Celtic tradition; and Flower Children stimulated serious thinking about Celtic lore and new ways of looking at these old traditions by artists and their public. Although White's version of Arthur's story completely lacks the ancient legendary air of mystery and loses all connection with a mythic past, ironically White indirectly made a significant contribution to reviving Guinevere's pagan nature by reawakening so much interest in the legend. The baton of redefining the new Guinevere was passed from White to other modern authors for whom links to the past had by now become vitally important.

In 1982, Marion Zimmer Bradley published her immensely popular Arthurian novel, *The Mists of Avalon*. Here all connections to the ancient Celtic world that had subtly influenced so many of the earlier Arthurian writers were consciously reestablished. At that same time other authors with a grounding in Celtic tradition, like Parke Godwin and Gillian Bradshaw, were also rewriting the Arthurian stories with a revised concept of the past. This linkage with the ancient traditions restored Guinevere to her rightful place as the woman-Goddess she originally represented. Once again, as in ancient times the new authorship portrayed Guinevere as a strong, self-confident character with power equal to that of Arthur; their subjects hold her in awe, love her, and see her as a channel by which to gain access to the king and his power. Authors began to use the ancient names for the characters, like Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere) in Bradley's work and Gwalchmai (Gawain) in Bradshaw's. Godwin went so far as to explicitly remind the

reader of Guinevere's connection to the Goddess and her priestesses. His Arthur says:

Guenevere possessed the art. When I built a seat of power, she was the silken cord that bound the vital north to me. She knew command because she knew males.⁵⁰

and also:

Christian she was, but of the ancient Parisi, whose royal women were always associated with fertility goddesses in times not far removed.⁵¹

This overt connection of Guinevere to the Flower Maiden and to the Celtic Goddess illustrates the renewal and fruition of interest in the historic and mythic origins of the Arthurian story that started in the 1980's.

Perhaps the author who most strongly revived modern interest in Guinevere's mythical background was Sharan Newman. In Newman's trilogy of Arthurian novels, Guinevere becomes the central character. The entire first book, dealing with Guinevere's childhood, depicts Guinevere as enchanted and under the guardianship of an ancient one, a crone⁵², who wants to sacrifice Guinevere as the purest possible gift to the old gods. She also is under guardianship of a unicorn, a symbol of the purity of nature. Guinevere's upbringing by one of The Old Ones helps Newman put distance between Guinevere and the Romans, who earlier had occupied Britain and left their mark on British religion and progeny. Newman takes great care to eliminate any such non-Celtic elements from Guinevere's personality to show that the Queen and Arthur are fundamentally different characters. His characterization is shaped by the male virtues and vices associated with Rome whereas her character represents the female attributes associated with the Celtic

⁵⁰ Parke Godwin, *Firelord* (New York, Avon Books, 1980), 149.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁵²The crone is one aspect of the Goddess.

Goddess. Guinevere's non-Roman upbringing in a culture once dominated by Rome provides rationale for the link between the ancient Celtic culture and the Romanized Arthur that is required in order to fuse the pagan and Christian elements of the story.

The authors of the 1990's continued this trend of casting Guinevere as a central figure in Arthurian Legend and explored ways to correlate her image with the ancient myths even more strongly. Between 1987 and 1991, Persia Woolley constructed a trilogy devoted to the character of Guinevere. Again, as in Newman's stories, Guinevere is an outcast from Roman tradition, a member of one of the old families of Britain, a Welsh family of the Cumbri tribes. Woolly presents her as Arthur's equal, reigning with him over the many and varied Celtic tribes and the Roman descendants who inhabited England and fought against the invasion of the Saxon hordes. Guinevere is deliberately and repeatedly associated with ancient ritual and festivals throughout the trilogy, most notably in her abduction on May Day by Maelgwn, who believed that by abducting and bedding the queen he would gain power and wrest the throne from Arthur.

Two among the most recent of the novels that examine the Arthurian tales from Guinevere's point of view were written by Nancy McKenzie. The first, *The Child Queen*, was written in 1994 and the other, *The High Queen*, was written in 1995. In these novels Arthur's saga is told by Guinevere, entirely from her point of view. Again she is a child of the older races in Britain. She is named Gwenhwyfar, translated as *The White Shadow*, and is cursed from birth by a prophesy that she will betray the kingdom and that she herself will be betrayed. Again she is a powerful queen who looks after the interests of her subjects and serves as a channel and a link between them and the king. Her betrayal (and Arthur's) results from love—her love for Arthur, her love for Lancelot, and, as a new twist, her love for Mordred as the son she could never give Arthur. This is the latest representation of

Guinevere as the Goddess by emphasizing the feminine aspect of togetherness and love as an essential part of the eternal female.

Guinevere - The Once and Future Queen

This paper has shown that Guinevere's persona derives in part from her status as an archetype of the Woman-Goddess. As such, her character is a fusion of attributes drawn from two sources, one cultural, the other mythic.

The cultural component of her persona changes as society changes. First, society creates standards and sets expectations; second, it makes value judgments about the proper role of women, judgments consistent with the culture's mores; third, it defines a code of conduct that sets forth womanly characteristics and conduct considered to be proper or improper. Changes in these societal elements generate changes in Guinevere's womanly characterization—her virtues and vices. An author acting on behalf of society may review her character as it was drawn in previous versions of the legend and apply value judgments that are consistent with current societal codes. An author also may haphazardly introduce extraneous or random character attributes that reflect nothing special about her previous characterization but instead originate from the author's own accidental and transitory interests or opinions. Thus, Guinevere's womanly character attributes are established in an *ad hoc* manner, are ephemeral, and change with each author and culture that produces a revision of the legend. Therefore, her womanly characterization changes with a revision's author, the locale, and the temper of the times.

Here a distinction is made between Guinevere's womanly nature and her feminine nature. Whereas the defining source of Guinevere's womanly nature is culture, the defining source of Guinevere's feminine nature is myth. In Arthurian Legend, the mythic Guinevere embodies the character attributes of the White Goddess and has always done so. The Goddess is a never-changing racial archetype that has emerged from out of the dawn of time; her character defines the quintessence of feminine nature—the core of what it means to be female and the

essence of all that is truly feminine in the human psyche, regardless of sex. Consequently, although they may be suppressed or distorted, her core feminine character attributes do not change regardless of the impact of culture.

The essential Arthur is not only King, he personifies a higher morality—everything that is good and right about society. In like manner, not only is Guinevere Queen, she is the personification of everything that is sacred and spiritual in the natural world. Arthur was once King and is expected to return to Britain as King when he is most needed, but Guinevere, in her role as Queen and Goddess, has never left. Guinevere is truly the Once and Future Queen.

Sources Consulted

Baring, Anne and Jules Cashford. *The Myth of the Goddess, Evolution of an Image*, New York: Arkana, 1991.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *The Mists of Avalon*, New York: Knopf, 1982.

Bradshaw, Gillian. *Hawk of May*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

Bradshaw, Gillian. *Kingdom of Summer*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

Bradshaw, Gillian. *In Winter's Shadow*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

Chant, Joy. *The High Kings*, illus. George Sharp, New York: Bantam, 1983.

Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, "Lancelot," London: Everyman Classic, 1991.

Corley, Corin, Trans. *Lancelot of the Lake*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Cunliffe, Barry. *The Celtic World*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Farrar, Janet and Stewart. *The Witches' Goddess, The Feminine Principle of Divinity*, Custer, WA: Phoenix Publishing, Inc., 1987.

Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*, New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1966.

Godwin, Parke. *Eternal Beloved*, New York: Avon Books, 1984.

Godwin, Parke. *Firelord*, New York: Avon Books, 1980.

Goodrich, Norma Lorre. *Guinevere*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

- Graves, Robert. *The White Goddess, A historical grammar of poetic myth*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.
- Lacy, Norris J., et al. *The Arthurian Encyclopedia*, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986.
- Leach, Edmund. *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, New York: The Viking Press, 1974.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*, New York: Schocken Books, 1979.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman. *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1967.
- Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Vols. I and II, New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1986.
- Markale, Jean. *Women of the Celts*, Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, Ltd., 1986.
- Mancoff, Debra N. *The Return of King Arthur The Legend through Victorian Eyes*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995.
- Matthews, Caitlín. *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain, King and Goddess in the Mabinogion*, London: Arkana, 1989.
- Matthews, Caitlín and John. *Ladies of the Lake*, London: The Aquarian Press, 1992.
- Matthews, John. *The Elements of the Arthurian Tradition*, Rockport, MA: Element, Inc., 1993.
- Neumann, Erich, *The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype*, Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955.

- Newman, Sharan. *Guinevere*, New York, St. Martin, 1981.
- Newman, Sharan. *The Chessboard Queen*, New York, St. Martin, 1984.
- Newman, Sharan. *Guinevere Evermore*, New York, St. Martin, 1985.
- Thompson, Raymond H. *The Return from Avalon: A Study of Modern Arthurian Fiction*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985.
- Weston, Jessie L. *From Ritual to Romance*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Windling, Terri, ed. *The Fairy Tale Series*, New York: Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1991.
- Woolley, Persia. *Child of the Northern Spring*, New York: Pocket Books, 1987.
- Woolley, Persia. *The Legend in Autumn*, New York: Pocket Books, 1991.
- Woolley, Persia. *Queen of the Summer Stars*, New York: Pocket Books, 1990.
- Zimmer, Heinrich. *The King and the Corpse*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.