National Library of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

NL-339 (r. 88/04) c

Canada

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-56052-5

Canada

A Study of the Characters of Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere in Modern Arthurian Literature

Janet Zohorsky

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

February 1990

©Janet Zohorsky, 1990

ABSTRACT

A Study of the Characters of Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere in Modern Arthurian Literature

Janet Zohorsky

Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere, the two main female characters of the Arthurian story, have come to be mostly associated with sorcery and infidelity respectively. This is not surprising when we look to the characterizations ascribed to them from the English chroniclers, to the French romancers through to Malory and on to Victorian writers such as Tennyson. The evolution of each of these female characters is traced in detail in this thesis. However, the subject of this study is their role in modern Arthurian literature. Since 1975, there have been at least forty new Arthurian novels published. Each author writes from a different point of view with a different focus, and a number of them have chosen to make Morgan Le Fay or Guenevere their main focus, and sometimes even the narrator of her story. In this study of the characters of Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere as they appear in a number of modern Arthurian works, new directions for these characters become apparent, as their personalities are developed beyond the stock figures of evil sorceress and adultress to complex women with new roles and personal inner struggles. As such, they

give the Arthurian legend a new depth of character development, add new dimensions to the Arthurian plot lines, and create new heroes. In so doing, they revive interest in an old story. Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere have, with the advent of the modern Arthurian novel, come into their own as important, strong and complex female characters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr. Lewis Poteet, who directed this study, I would like to extend my thanks for his patience and constant encouragement. I also must acknowledge the late Dr. Hugh MacLachlan, who urged me to pursue my love for Arthurian literature in the form of a Master's thesis, and whose passion for Camelot showed in everything that he taught and wrote. Finally, I wish to thank my husband for his continued support and confidence in my work.

Table of Contents

		Page
	Introduction	vii
Chapter 1	The Evolution of Morgan Le Fay's Character	1
Chapter 2	Parke Godwin's Morgana	13
Chapter 3	Marion Zimmer Bradley's Morgaine	25
Chapter 4	Joan Wolf's Morgan	51
Chapter 5	The Evolution of Guenevere's Character	69
Chapter 6	Sharan Newman's Guinevere	88
Chapter 7	Parke Godwin's Guenevere	112
Chapter 8	Persia Woolley's Guinevere	133
Chapter 9	Conclusions	149
	Bibliography	161

INTRODUCTION

The first half of the twentieth century, according to Raymond H. Thompson, in his book entitled The Return From Avalon, "produced less than fifty novels of Arthurian provenance" while "the last thirty years have yielded more than twice that number" (p. 3). Since 1975 alone, more than forty Arthurian novels have been published. Perhaps the writings of T.H. White's The Once and Future King (1958) and Lerner's play Camelot (1960) had something to do with the genre's new popularity that occurred in the 1970's and 1980's, and which still continues. In any case, Thompson's book explains that a distinguishing feature of this period of Arthurian literature is "the sheer variety of the treatment" in which he sees a "rapid growth in popularity of fictional forms such as science fiction and fantasy" (p. 3). Thompson categorizes the fiction into five groups: retellings, realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy.

Retellings are defined as "either translations or modernizations . . . of the medieval versions," while realistic fiction "places events in a contemporary setting" (p. 4). The most obvious difficulty with realistic fiction is the extent of Arthurian material in the story that justifies it being Arthurian (p. 20). Historical fiction, explains Thompson, "endeavor[s] to recreate the spirit of the age of Arthur through attention to authentic

detail" (p. 4) either set in the Dark Ages, or the High Middle Ages. Science fiction "offers a picture of how life might be, provided that certain scientific or societal developments could have taken place" (p. 5). Fantasy subdivides into four groups: low fantasy, heroic fantasy, ironic and mythopoeic. In low fantasy, "inexplicable supernatural occurrences intrude upon our ordinary rational world, where they do not fit" (p. 5). But the next three categories of fantasy provide a "secondary world in which magical or supernatural powers do operate by their own rules" (p. 5). Most Arthurian fantasies fit this description. Heroic fantasy can be defined as the story of one or more heroes, in which the hero is tested. Ironic fantasy, "by contrast, measures the human achievement, not against the high odds, but against the even higher expectations of the characters, to reveal a comical gap" (p. 89). In mythopoeic fantasy, the struggle is at a supernatural level, "between beings wielding awesome powers, yet its outcome often hinges upon the contribution of human protagonists" (p. 88).

The works chosen for consideration in this present study are: Parke Godwin's Firelord (1980) and Beloved Exile (1984), Marion Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon (1982), Joan Wolf's The Road to Avalon (1988), Sharan Newman's Guinevere (1981), The Chessboard Queen (1983), and Guinevere Evermore (1985), and Persia Woolley's Child of the Northern

Spring (1987). As their publication dates indicate, these novels can be placed firmly in the body of modern Arthurian literature for which Thompson provides his categories. There is sometimes a question as to whether popular culture should be seriously studied. I believe that the quality of writing does not, in and of itself, determine what should be of scholarly interest. The sheer volume of works currently being published suggests that there is a large readership of these novels. As such, I would submit that if we do not pay attention to them, we risk missing a potentially significant cultural phenomenon. Thompson perhaps accounts for some of the popularity of these novels when he says that Firelord, for example, "offers the reader one of the most exuberant and enjoyable stories in all Arthurian literature" (p. 132). Modern Arthurian literature represents new interest in a very old story making it more accessible to a new audience.

Although popularity might be sufficient justification for a study of these works, it is not the only justification in this instance. Thompson himself remarks that many of the new Arthurian fantasies have structural weaknesses (p. 136), and may have other faults. A reading of this body of literature does support a critical assessment of this nature. However, the fact that these novels are heroic fantasies leads us to expect well

developed characterization. As such, the works in this genre share an important characteristic with works that are more frequently studied. As well, the heroic venture is one that has its roots in classic literature. The learning process undergone by the protagonist in heroic fantasies, states Thompson, establishes an irrefutable pattern amongst these novels (pp. 36-37). Arthurian heroic fantasies are worthy of study based on popularity, depth of characterization and heroic plot.

Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere have always been the two main female characters in the male world of Arthur and his knights. The works chosen here are included because they offer memorable characterizations of these women. Morgan Le Fay has come to be known mostly as an evil sorceress as a result of the thirteenth century's Vulgate Cycle, in which Morgan displays revenge and becomes Guenevere's adversary. In ensuing works, her deeds darken even further, until her appearance in Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur (1485) makes her irrevocably evil. She tries to have her brother, Arthur, killed, as well as her husband, Uriens, and repeatedly provokes Arthur, Guenevere, Lancelot and others of Arthur's court. By and large, Morgan Le Fay has since appeared in Arthurian literature as an evil fay, that is, until now.

To study her portrayal in Parke Godwin's Firelord, Marion Zimmer

Bradley's The Mists of Avalon, and Joan Wolf's The Road to Avalon, is to study Morgan Le Fay in new roles, new dimensions of character, and in Zimmer Bradley's book, through the female point of view. This fact in itself is a major accomplishment in a genre traditionally about the male hero. While the mood of each work may shift from being heroic in Firelord, to tragic in Mists, to sentimental in The Road to Avalon, the characterizations of Morgan Le Fay offered in these books remain distinctly different from not only her medieval stereotype, but from each other. In Firelord, Morgana is primitive and passionate, while in Mists she is lonely and sympathetic, and in Wolf's book, she appears as a benevolent and caring individual. The main differences between Morgan Le Fay's characterization in the medieval texts and the modern novel is the treatment of her character and the extent of psychological description. Thompson describes this in terms of The Mists of Avalon:

> The author's primary concern is to explore the psychology of her characters as they interact with each other. We share with them the experiences that develop self-awareness and maturity. Moreover, their struggle to reconcile the conflicting elements within their own personalities both influences and mirrors the broader political conflict in which they are involved.
>
> (p. 132)

As heroic fantasies, Mists and The Road to Avalon show the personal struggles of the protagonists, Morgaine and Morgan, within the fantasy

setting. Thompson states that the protagonist must "grow in wisdom and maturity" (p. 137) and that is true of Morgan in these two books. In Godwin's Firelord, however, the protagonist is Arthur, not Morgan Le Fay, but her characterization in this novel is nothing less than unique. In my opinion, of the more than forty novels written since 1975, these three offer the most interesting and divergent characterizations of Morgan Le Fay.

Guenevere's medieval beginnings are linked mostly with an adulterous image, since in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (c. 1136) she is adulterous with Mordred. Her better-known lover, Lancelot, first appears in Chrétien de Troyes' Le Chevalier de la charrette (c. 1178). However, in Chrétien, especially, Guenevere also represents the pattern queen who is "generous, kind, and a source of inspiration to the young knights at court" (Skinner, p. 18). She is consistently described as very beautiful and of Roman lineage, and as Arthur's chosen bride by various writers. It becomes quite clear, after reading the medieval writers, that Guenevere's role was strictly relative to Arthur as his wife and queen, or to Lancelot as his lover. Known as an adultress, Guenevere's name becomes synonymous with the word "sin" by the time the Vulgate Cycle is written (c. 1215-35), and continued to elicit such wicked

implications that by the nineteenth century "it was regarded as an insult to a girl's moral character to call her Guenevere" (Arthurian Encyclopedia, p. 262). Although some writers treat her more sympathetically than others, it is not until the advent of modern Arthurian fiction that we find Guenevere substantially changed.

When we look to Sharan Newman's Guinevere trilogy, Parke Godwin's Beloved Exile, and Persia Woolley's Child of the Northern Spring, we find Guenevere to be the protagonist, and hence, we discover the Arthurian story as it revolves around her. The mood of these novels may be sentimental but the stories are heroic fantasies nonetheless. Guenevere undertakes a struggle for personal growth in each of them, which qualifies her as a "hero." Of Newman's work, it is Harold J. Herman's view that she

> . . . has made an important contribution to the Arthurian legend because of her perceptive emotional and mental development of Guinevere from teenager to mature adult, her unique feminine view of Arthur's world, her wit, and her convincing, sympathetic portrayal of Guinevere.
>
> ("Sharan Newman's Guinevere Trilogy," p. 54)

All three writers contribute to Guenevere's psychological development, and show her growth and maturity.

It has taken eight hundred years since the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth for Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere to become important, multi-dimensional characters in this traditionally male story. And some

might prefer that Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere remain in the background, as the stock evil sorceress and adulterous queen. If the small number of books represented in this study is an indication against the huge number of newly published Arthurian novels, the women will probably continue to remain background characters. However, as Thompson points out, the new wave of Arthurian novels is best known for its endless variations:

> The vision may be heroic, as we admire the triumphs of Arthur and his warriors in their struggle against heavy odds; it may be tragic, as we witness their final failure and defeat; or it may be ironic, as we discover the humorous gap between their aspirations and their actual achievements. Arthur and his followers may be the central subject of the story, or they may play but a minor role in events. These events may take place in post-Roman Britain during the Saxon invasions; or in the timeless world of medieval romance; or even in modern times. (pp. 3-4)

Amongst so many variations, the dominance of female characters, or more thorough character development of female characters is not guaranteed, but is attainable. For the visions of Godwin, Zimmer Bradley, Wolf, Newman and Woolley which focus on the female characters of Arthurian legend are fresh and exciting and welcome in an era in which women struggle for recognition and independence. This is not to say that these are necessarily feminist writings, but that they explore the female psyche and her growth as a person. The development of stock female characters in a male-dominated society into complex, multi-dimensional women

illustrates the breadth of their evolution, and we can but hope more writers will choose this focus as well.

Chapter 1: The Evolution of Morgan Le Fay's Character

A predominant impression amongst modern readers is that Morgan Le Fay has always been cast as an evil sorceress. However, her literary genesis is that of a healer, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Vita Merlini (c. 1150). Geoffrey describes her as one of nine sisters who rule on Insula pomorum, and who is "more skilled in the healing art, and excels her sisters in the beauty of her person" (Vita Merlini, p. 85). He goes on to say that "she has learned what useful properties all the herbs contain, so that she can cure sick bodies" and "knows an art by which to change her shape, and to cleave the air on new wings like Daedalus" (p. 85). A wounded Arthur is brought to her for healing, and,

> in her chamber she placed the king on a golden bed and with her own hand she uncovered his honorable wound and gazed at it for a long time. At length she said that health could be restored to him if he stayed with her for a long time and made use of her healing art. (p. 85)

As a mistress of flight and therapeutic powers, and one of nine sisters living in an "otherworld," Geoffrey's Morgan resembles a goddess-type figure rather than an evil sorceress, for these are the characteristics that are "constantly attributed to the Druidic faith and practices and pagan deities" (Stewart, The Mystic Life of Merlin, p. 128).

Chrétien de Troyes also describes her as a healer in his Erec et Enide (c. 1170):

> The King . . . has a plaster brought which Morgan, his sister, has made. This plaster, which Morgan had given to Arthur, was of such sovereign virtue that no wound, whether on nerve or joint, provided it were treated with the plaster once a day, could fail to be completely cured and healed within a week.
>
> (p. 55)

Here also we see Morgan with superhuman power, if her plaster could heal a wound in one week. Chrétien then refers to Morgan Le Fay as "Morgan the Wise" in Yvain (c. 1177) and to another of her healing ointments (p. 218). What is even more significant in the Erec et Enide passage above, is that Chrétien refers to Morgan as the king's sister. He and Étienne de Rouen are two of the first writers to make this link.

Morgan Le Fay's character somewhat darkens as we enter the Vulgate Cycle.[1] Morgan seeks revenge against the queen for banishing her lover Guiomar, who also happens to be the queen's cousin. Chrétien actually mentions Guigomar, lord of the Isle of Avalon, in Erec et Enide, as being "a friend of Morgan the Fay" (p. 26), so it is not surprising that the Vulgate Cycle elaborates upon this relationship. In her article entitled "Morgain's Role in the Thirteenth-Century French Prose Romances of the Arthurian

[1]The Vulgate Cycle marks a shift from verse to prose, c. 1215-35, comprising an Estoire del Saint Graal, an Estoire de Merlin, and the Prose Lancelot which is composed of a Lancelot Proper, a Queste del Saint Graal, and a Mort Artu, all anonymous.

Cycle," Fanni Bogdanow attempts to trace the gradual blackening of Morgan Le Fay's character. She argues that Morgan's character is "largely determined by the context and structure of each romance," and that "it is not her character, but the changing context which determines the part assigned to her" (pp. 124, 130). Insofar as the Vulgate Cycle is concerned, specifically the Prose Lancelot, she suggests that as "the author is more interested in the struggle between Morgain and the lovers than in Morgain as a person, all Morgain's intrigues are carefully subordinated to the Lancelot-Guenevere theme" (p. 125). It is true that Morgan attempts to expose their love affair, kidnaps Lancelot three times, and attempts to seduce him. If we agree with Bogdanow, then Morgan's new role as troublemaker and foil to Guenevere's love affair germinated from the author's need for dramatic injection in the Guenevere/Lancelot story. Morgan was the logical choice as villainess because she was already angry with Guenevere over Guiomar. This in conjunction with possessing superhuman powers made Morgan Le Fay the perfect opponent.

Her treachery flourishes in the Prose Tristan (c. 1250). She attempts to expose Guenevere and Lancelot's affair by sending an unwitting Tristan to a tournament bearing a shield with an implicating picture on it. When her lover, Huneson, goes after Tristan, he himself is killed, and Morgan

then seeks revenge on Tristan. She also sets up an ambush for Lancelot after he kills another of her lovers. It fails when Tristan disperses the band. The magic drinking horn also makes an appearance in this story. It seems to have originated in Robert Biket's Lai du cor (dated approximately the same period as the Prose Tristan). According to The Arthurian Handbook, it is "an irreverent and humorous anecdote . . . involving a drinking horn that, because it is made to spill its contents on all cuckolds, soaks Arthur" (p. 95). In the Prose Tristan, Morgan sends it to Arthur's court, but it is the ladies who must drink from the horn to prove their chastity.

Morgan is depicted as King Urien's wife, and mother of their son, Yvain, in the Post-Vulgate Cycle,[2] and it is in this romance that Morgan first commits treachery against her brother, King Arthur. Morgan makes a replica of Arthur's magic scabbard,

> intending to give the real thing to one of her *amis*, but she made a mistake and her lover, thinking she wished to deceive him, told Arthur all he knew. Merlin, however, who loved Morgain greatly, warned her,

[2]The Post-Vulgate Cycle is also known as Le Roman du Graal, and is a re-working of the Vulgate Cycle that makes Arthur its main character, c. 1230-40. It is also anonymous, comprising the "Estoire del Saint Graal," "Suite du Merlin," a "Queste del Saint Graal," and the "Mort Artu." Please note that, "the Post-Vulgate Arthuriad has not been preserved in its complete form in any one manuscript, but has to be reconstructed from the scattered fragments that have survived, some of which are still unpublished" (Bogdanow, The Romance of the Grail, p. 11). All information from the Post-Vulgate has, therefore, been found in Bogdanow.

> and to save herself she accused the knight of having stolen the scabbard, whereupon Arthur had him beheaded.
> (Bogdanow, The Romance of the Grail, p. 176)

Killing her lover becomes the source of Morgan's quarrel with Arthur, and she will continue her attempts to kill him. The scabbard's magical power protects its bearer from shedding his own blood, and so Morgan tries to give it to another lover, Accalon de Gaule, so that he might defeat Arthur and become king. He fails, and Arthur banishes Morgan. She flees with the scabbard, discards it into a lake and transforms herself into a statue when Arthur gives pursuit. It is important to note that the necessity of rendering Arthur vulnerable to his final defeat determines Morgan Le Fay's stealing the scabbard. Her action, then, is completely determined by the context of the story.

A relationship between Morgan Le Fay and Merlin takes root in the Vulgate Cycle, in which Morgan seeks Merlin to learn the art of necromancy. By the time of the Post-Vulgate Cycle, Merlin is in love with her, (Bogdanow, Grail, p. 176), and "although she did not return his affection, he helped her to flee after she had stolen Arthur's scabbard, and then did his best to win back Arthur's goodwill towards her by inventing a false story" (Bogdanow, Grail, p. 213).

William Hale, in his article entitled "Morgaine, Morgana, Morgause," is

astute to point out that in the Romances, as opposed to the Chronicles, "an author could feel free to adapt his literary material" (p. 36). He would agree with Bogdanow that Morgan Le Fay's character evolved according to the context of a given romance. Each author molded her into the character he desired, logically expanding her nefarious personality. She is usually retained, however, as one of the three queens who take the fatally wounded Arthur away on a barge in the end, presumably to heal him, as in the Vita Merlini, and the Vulgate Cycle, for example. This contradiction, Hale explains, can be attributed to it being a Chronicle motif, and pre-Romances. He says, "since Morgan had, in various chronicles, been identified as Arthur's sister and companion on his journey to Avalon to be healed, this 'fact' was maintained" (p. 36).

It is well known that the French Romances were Malory's main source for his Le Morte d'Arthur (Aspects of Malory, p. 27). To the Vulgate Cycle, in particular, states Loomis, "Malory owed, more or less directly, much that is best in the design of his masterpiece" (Development of Arthurian Romance, p. 92). Hence, Malory's Morgan Le Fay evolves from each of the Morgans talked about thus far. He then goes on to become a major influence on later writers. Le Morte d'Arthur served as Tennyson's major source for his Idylls of the King (Arthurian Encyclopedia, p. 543) with the

idyll "Morte d'Arthur" being "the poet's most faithful recreation of Malory's structure and language" (A.E. p. 544). T.H. White's main source for his The Once and Future King is also Malory (A.E. p. 626), and White's book becomes the source for Lerner and Loewe's Camelot. Mary Stewart acknowledges indebtedness to Malory in her Author's Note to The Crystal Cave (p. 523). Most writers do acknowledge Malory's work as being somewhat of a source for their own. The plots with which Morgan is consistently associated after Malory are, then, ones that appear in the French Romances as well.

Looking to Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur (1485), we find that Morgan Le Fay is sister to Morgause and Elaine, and schooled in a nunnery. "There she learned so much that she was a great clerk of necromancy, and after she was wedded to King Uriens" (Vol. I, p. 12). Malory adopts the scabbard plot, explaining that Morgan

> loved another knight better than her husband King Uriens or King Arthur, and she would have had Arthur her brother slain, and therefore she let make another scabbard like it by enchantment, and gave the scabbard Excalibur to her love . . . Accolon.
>
> (Vol. I, p. 77)

The plot fails when Arthur regains Excalibur during a fight with Accolon, and Accolon confesses all he knows:

> 'Now, sir,' said Accolon, 'I will tell you: . . . Morgan le Fay, King Uriens' wife, sent it [the sword] me yesterday by a dwarf, to this intent, that I should slay King Arthur, her brother. For ye shall understand King Arthur is the man in the world that she most hateth, because he is

> most of worship and of prowess of any of their blood . . . and if she might bring about to slay Arthur by her crafts, she would slay her husband King Uriens lightly, and then had she me devised to be king in this land, and so to reign, and she to be my queen.'
>
> (Vol. I, p. 134)

While Morgan's original quarrel with Arthur in the Post-Vulgate was his execution of her lover, and here it is because he is the most worshipped in the family, her goal remains the same: to put Accolon on the throne next to her. Arthur swears revenge on her, having previously completely trusted her more than his own wife or any other kin (Vol. I, p. 135). Meanwhile, Morgan attempts to kill Uriens but is caught by Uwain (p. 138). When she discovers Accolon's failure, and that he's been killed, she manages to steal Arthur's scabbard, and as in the Post-Vulgate, when Arthur gives pursuit, she throws the scabbard into a lake and turns herself into stone (pp. 139-40). Again, her theft of the scabbard allows Arthur to be killed in the end.

In anger, Morgan sends a beautiful but deadly mantle to Arthur as a trick peace offering. He is almost charmed enough to try it on, but the Damosel of the Lake warns him against it, and tells him to try it on the messenger first. As a result, "she fell down dead, and never spake word after, and burnt to coals" (p. 142). This mantle plot is a variation on the French Le Mantel mautaillié, or the Lai du cort mantel (c. 1250), in which a lady's chastity is tested by the stretching or shrinking of the mantle (The

Arthurian Handbook, p. 95). The magic drinking horn, the other chastity test, which appeared in the Prose Tristan, is sent to King Arthur by Morgan Le Fay, to challenge his queen's virtue (p. 363).

As in the Vulgate Cycle, Malory's Morgan Le Fay abducts Lancelot and attempts to seduce him (p. 198), although in Malory, it is with the help of three other queens. Much later she tries to set up an ambush for Lancelot with thirty knights, as in the Prose Tristan, but in keeping with the romance, Malory sends Tristan to disperse the waiting culprits (pp. 422-24). Morgan retaliates by attempting to trick Tristan (or Lancelot) into her castle, where they will be met with another ambush, but it fails (p. 429).

Malory retains the episode from the Prose Tristan in which Morgan manages to send an unwitting Tristan to a tournament bearing a shield "with a king and queen therein painted, and a knight standing above them upon the king's head, and the other upon the queen's" (Morte, Vol. I, p. 463). Her plan is to expose Guenevere and Lancelot's affair to King Arthur because she "loved Sir Launcelot best, and ever she desired him, and he would never love her nor do nothing at her request" (p. 464). As in the Prose Tristan, Morgan's lover, Hemison (he's called Huneson in the Prose Tristan), attempts to slay Tristan, and instead is killed himself (p. 466). Once Tristan arrives at the tournament bearing the shield, it isn't long

before "Queen Guenever deemed as it was, wherefore she was heavy," and "King Arthur sad and wroth" (p. 467). Tristan then informs them that he "had it of Queen Morgan Le Fay" (p. 468).

Malory allows Morgan Le Fay to demonstrate her healing abilities, when she takes a wounded Alisander to her castle and "searched his wounds, and gave such an ointment unto him that he should have died. And on the morn when she came to him he complained him sore; and then she put other ointments upon him, and then he was out of his pain" (Vol. II, p. 73). However, she uses her healing power to control him when she agrees to make him whole if he stays for a year and a day (p. 74). Richard Cavendish says that "in Celtic tradition, [this is] the usual interval between a betrothal and a wedding" (p. 122). Alisander assents, but later regrets his decision, and escapes with the help of a damosel who tells him that "my cousin Queen Morgan le Fay, keepeth you here for none other intent but for to do her pleasure with you when it liked her" (p. 74).

From this point on, Malory's Morgan is only referred to twice and then appears in Arthur's final scene. In the first reference, she is cited along with the Queen of Northgales for torturing a lady for many winters as "she boileth in scalding water" because "she was called the fairest lady of that country" (p. 189). The second reference to her is for imprisoning Lancelot

for six months (p. 195). Malory excludes her from the remaining ten books, but allows her to reappear in the end, as one of the three queens (the other two being the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of the Waste Lands) who take the mortally wounded Arthur away on a barge:

> . . . there received him three queens with great mourning; and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head.
>
> And then that queen said, 'Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold.'
>
> (Vol. II, p. 517)

Henry Morgan argues that <u>Le Morte d'Arthur</u> is structured around three failures that contribute to the destruction of Artnur's kingdom: "failures in love, in loyalty and in religion - the most significant is the failure in loyalty, for loyalty is the underlying foundation of love and religion" ("The Role of Morgan Le Fay in Malory's Morte Darthur," p. 151). He believes that Malory makes his Morgan Le Fay "an exemplar . . . of the disloyalty that is the basic weakness of the society" (p. 153). All of her scenes precipitate evil and mistrust, from the scabbard plot, where trust between blood brother and sister is broken, to sending the magic drinking horn, and the shield to promote distrust, and the various attempts to ambush and kill Arthur's knights (p. 166). She has two scenes in which she shows her healing side, but the first one with Alisander stems from evil motivation. The second one, however, cannot be attributed to evil since it is when

Morgan takes the wounded Arthur away. Henry Morgan has no explanation for this reconciliation between brother and sister, except to suggest that Malory included the scene because it is "an integral part of the tradition" (p. 153). He stands by the statement that "Morgan le Fay is the single character throughout the work whose actions are consistently evil" (p. 168). Like Bogdanow, and Hale, Henry Morgan sees Morgan Le Fay's character as one that is adapted by the author to represent what best suits his plot:

> Morgan le Fay thus becomes at the hands of Malory first of all a symptom of the basic weakness of the society. She is both a logical and a convenient character to put to the use which Malory makes of her. She is the sister of the king and therefore is qualified to portray a violation of blood trust against the person of Arthur. Further, she has traditionally been cast as opposing Arthur since almost the beginnings of her literary history.
>
> (p. 166)

It is only when we look to the modern writers that we see Morgan's evil image changing.

Chapter 2: Parke Godwin's Morgana

Parke Godwin rejects the traditionally evil Morgan Le Fay. He does not look to Malory or Geoffrey as sources or for inspiration for his version of the Arthurian story, Firelord (1980). He says, "Malory's fable wouldn't work for me, nor Monmouth's. One was a lament for a chivalric idea that never really flowered to an actuality; the other was written to flatter and vindicate the Plantagenets" ("Finding Firelord," p. 24). His story takes many departures from the traditional fabula, including his characterization of Morgan Le Fay.

Godwin identifies his Morgana as one of the Prydn People, the First People. As man became more civilized and adept, passing through the Iron Age, the Prydn remained behind, and therein lies the difference between them and the rest of mankind. They remained primitive in tool-making, thought and survival (Firelord, p. 56). Their weapons consist of bronze daggers and poisoned arrows. They herd sheep and cattle, and freely steal to replenish stock (p. 46). They have no land, and therefore do not grow crops. Their situation is one of poverty and isolation. Since the Prydn are not integrated with man's development, they are branded "Faerie" (p. 46), symbolic of their primitive ways. They are feared to have magical powers, when in fact they simply rely on earth's herbs and roots for healing. And

because they choose their successors from the female line, which necessitates several husbands per female, they are deemed unchristian (p. 46).

Arthur is captured by the Prydn when a young soldier. In a unique departure from the traditional Arthurian story, where Arthur and Morgan Le Fay are usually siblings, Parke Godwin joins them as husband and wife. Arthur, narrator of Firelord, tells us that Guenevere "was not the first or the deepest love" (p. 39). Morgana allowed him to be "filled" and experience his "true self" (p. 57). His life with her and the Prydn, the Faerie People, is one of happiness, complete fulfillment, and basic oneness with the earth. He does not want to leave it to return to civilization:

> "There's a wife, a child coming, people who love me, a place where I fit in. I *belong* to something. . ."
> "I've smelled of nothing but sweat and horse and iron since I was fourteen. One friend, . . . lonely as myself, and the rest nothing but roads, barracks and duty. Until she came, I never slept with a woman whose name I could remember. . . you think I'll leave it?"
> (p. 86)

Morgana and the Prydn provide the experiences of love, birth, and family, - all basic to life but lacking in Arthur's.

Morgana is physically described as a tiny woman, under five feet, with copper-coloured skin, grey eyes and voluminous black hair, but not beautiful (pp. 55-56 & 75). She has "eyes too big, nose too long and thin,

mouth too wide" (p. 66), but a taut belly. Even twenty years later, when everyone else has aged, Morgana's body is "still lean and cat-agile" (p. 239). She has the ritual scars of the Prydn on her cheeks (p. 55) and is usually scantily dressed in short skirts and skins, draped by men's cloaks, "overhung and jangling with far too many ornaments looted from God knows where" (p. 239). While she is decidedly not beautiful like Ysoult or Guenevere, her beauty is described in terms of character. Arthur says "there's a beauty in Morgana, strength as well as the wild and mournful sorrow all Prydn have" (p. 61). She had "a strong face that knew sorrow, joy and rage" (p. 56), and her voice "compelled as the music of the flute" (p. 56).

Perhaps her character can best be described as tormented. She is headstrong and fiery, likened to "a pot before boiling, the surface moves just a little to hint of what's heaving and surging below" (p. 65). She has enormous will (p. 81) and drive (p. 75). But she is always troubled. She has troubled dreams (p. 64), and is "livid and raging" within (p. 73). Love-making relaxes her somewhat, but she comes to it clasping, tearing and pulling (p. 67). Arthur says "there's always an anger in it, a darker need to tear at love before accepting it" (p. 66). And yet he becomes so enraptured by her that he forges their souls together:

> . . . for where once I was whole - dim, hard to remember - now I'm only half. Morgana is half, and if something tore us apart, the halves

> would die. I can no longer see her complete or apart any more than myself.
>
> (p. 75)

What she offers to him is raw emotion: untamed, unbridled self. Everything about her is basic and unrefined.

Her troubles can even be considered basic ones, as she yearns to have a child. It is essential that man reproduce in order to perpetuate his species, and the Prydn are acutely aware of their own diminishing numbers. There are "many deaths and fewer births" (p. 59), and Morgana herself has lost a child to disease, and a husband, presumably captured and killed by tallfolk (Britons). She is not only deeply troubled over her need to conceive a child (p. 68) but at the general state of things for her people. She is determined to increase their population, but knows they also have to better their way of life. Hence, her troubles lie between creating life and sustaining it.

Morgana's willful and headstrong character coupled with purpose establish her as the fhain's (family) leader. She urges her fhain to abandon the old ways of nomadic herding, and to get their own land, grow their own food, build houses, make roots in every way (p. 79). Her method for acquiring land is to "trade for it or take it" (p. 79). Then they should increase their numbers by joining with other fhains. The family is not persuaded, but she eventually goes this route, and for twenty years while

Arthur is king of the Britons he receives reports about a horde,

> . . . led by a woman who rides with a small boy . . . When this woman rides, the Picts get out of her way. She leaves nothing alive in the villages . . . there were empty cradles and no dead infants . . . Children are taken to be raised by these demons and become like them.
>
> (p. 200)

Her methods are hard ones and unacceptable in a civilized world. Arthur sadly recognizes this, thinking, "she was no Moses with a tablet of laws to bind her people to purpose" (p. 244). She was as barbaric as the Saxons, whom Arthur spent his entire life fighting against. Morgana knew something was wrong, "the warmth got lost," she said. "Too much running, too much killing. They were all a hard lot" (p. 248). She could lead, and she could have basic survival and growth as her purpose, but her methods were also too basic. Killing and stealing had no place in a Christian land, and so the Prydn continued to be outcast. She wasn't any less tormented as "even in sleep, she said, there was no real peace. So many people now, so much to carry. In her dreams she led them up an endless hill while the sky got darker and darker and she felt lost" (p. 248). She tried only to better life for her people, but at the expense of others, - a price too high.

This portrait of Morgana may be radically different from those of other writers, but she is still recognizable. Godwin retains her skills in healing and with herbs. We are first made aware of this when it is through

her concocted powder that Arthur is rendered unconscious and easily kidnapped (p. 61). (This sort of kidnapping itself is a common motif often associated with Morgan Le Fay, although Lancelot is usually the victim). Fairy magic is notoriously known and feared throughout the land. Morgana cures Brother Lewin from a fever with a "magic drink," in exchange for delivering a message to Arthur (p. 190). "She cured him where none else could" (p. 190). Arthur learns that a Faerie woman midwifed his own mother's birth. Arthur's grandmother had started bleeding, and there was not much hope that the baby would be born alive. The Faerie woman gave her "a draft to induce labor" and later another draft to dull the pain. The baby was born healthy (pp. 261-262). And as mentioned earlier, the Prydn could make lethally poisoned arrows; a swordsman didn't stand a chance.

Godwin also firmly places Morgana amidst Celtic tradition. She and the Prydn worship such Celtic deities as Lugh, and celebrate Celtic festivals such as Lughnassad (p. 58), August 1st, honoring Lugh, Samhain (p. 69) at the beginning of November "at which time any barriers between man and the supernatural were lowered" (Chadwick, The Celts, p. 181), and Bel-tein (Firelord, p. 71), "celebrated on 1 May, a springtime festival of optimism" (The Celts, p. 181). Morgan Le Fay's Celtic connections are argued by some scholars such as Roger S. Loomis and Richard Cavendish.

They believe Morgan Le Fay evolved from the Welsh goddess Modron and the Irish goddess, the Morrigan (Loomis, "Morgain La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses" and Cavendish, King Arthur and the Grail, pp. 117-124). Modron, also known as 'the Mother', was the "daughter of Avallach, the wife of Urien and the mother of Owain" (Cavendish, p. 120). Avallach ruled Avalon, and passed it on to Modron. Similarly, the traditional Morgan Le Fay is linked with Avalon, marries King Urien (in the Post-Vulgate Cycle), their son is called Yvain. The Morrigan has a triple nature as Maiden, Matron and Crone and could change her shape to raven, a heifer, an eel, and a wolf (Stone, Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood, pp. 49-52). Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed his Morgan Le Fay could fly, which connects to the raven. Godwin picks up on these abilities when he writes that the Prydn were feared as shape-changers with "the power of a *boucca* . . . They can look like a goat, a hummock of turf, a rock, a hare . . ." (Firelord, p. 47). The Morrigan becomes enamored with the warrior Cuchulain but he rejects her and she consequently seeks revenge. Richard Cavendish points out that this story "turns on the same tension between action and love, the same temptation to forsake the field of glory and find oblivion in a woman's arms, which is the theme of many Arthurian tales" (p. 119). The Celtic roots seem to be there, but whether Morgan Le Fay originated in literature or in Celtic lore

does not have to be determined: the two sources are not mutually exclusive. The important point is to recognize that writers tap any and all source material for their portraits.

The Cuchulain motif may appear again and again in terms of Morgan Le Fay's attempts to win Lancelot, but Godwin paints it between Morgana and Arthur in Firelord. The rejection comes from Arthur, as it did with Cuchulain, when duty calls. Arthur is destined to be king and must leave Morgana's world. However, his love for Morgana is genuine, unlike any other versions of the tale. Godwin is original in marrying Morgana to Arthur, as well as making the love honest. Morgana never seeks revenge for his abandonment either. She seeks only his help to acquire land, and desires him to meet their son.

Morgana's Prydn world can be compared to Morgan Le Fay's enchanted castles to which knights are regularly lured, or the Insula pomorum or Isle of Avalon to which she is frequently associated. In Firelord, Arthur's episode with the Prydn is presented in a dream-like fashion. He is led in and out of the Prydn world by Merlin. He asks Merlin, "You devil, am I out of time?" and Merlin replies "For a time" (p. 54). Arthur's reality is confused, and it is further confusing for the reader because it is all narrated by Arthur in retrospect. We are unsure as to what is reality and what is not.

Richard Cavendish explains that the enchantresses'

> . . . castles and palaces, their valleys and gardens, are retreats from reality. They are places where no changes occur, no decisions are made, no battles are fought, no challenges are faced. They hold out an illusory promise of ease and peace and pleasure. Ultimately the beautiful fay stands for something in the hero's own nature, the longing which now and again besets him to abandon his quest, to give up the struggle and pursue a false dream of happiness gained through luxury, sensuality and ease.
>
> (pp. 123-124)

To this extent, Godwin's Morgana acts as Arthur's retreat from reality. But the comparison to the evil Morgan Le Fay's castle ends with Godwin's Arthur returning to his world richer, having learned through Morgana, "to love, to care, to be small as well as great, gentle as well as strong" (p. 85).

Godwin retains the hostile relationship between Morgana and Guenevere that is usually drawn between the two. However, we recall from the Vulgate Cycle that it is Morgan Le Fay who seeks revenge against the queen for separating her from her lover Guiomar, and thereafter, Morgan Le Fay is continuously cast as a troublemaker for Guenevere and Lancelot. In Firelord, it is Guenevere who displays the hostility. This is ultimately demonstrated when she orders Morgana's execution. When Godwin made Morgana Arthur's true love and first wife, he was setting up an inevitable conflict between the two women. But even though Arthur had

to leave Morgana, and ends up with Guenevere, Morgana is without jealousy or hostility. Her advice to Arthur when Guenevere stomps out is "do thee go love her. Will be well" (p. 242). Perhaps she knows Arthur always sincerely loved her and had a bigger purpose in life, to be king. She herself is a leader, and can understand his calling. Guenevere was no threat to her, because she'd lost Arthur to the Britons, not Guenevere. She'd also borne Arthur's son, Guenevere had not. Since Morgan Le Fay has never been cast as Arthur's wife before, much less his real love, this is her debut as the victim of Guenevere's treachery. It is a rather interesting change from the Arthurian story because in Firelord, Guenevere is ultimately imprisoned for the murder, and treason against the king (because his life is threatened when Morgana is killed), and not her adultery with Lancelot.

Morgana being mother of Modred is also not uncommon in the Arthurian tales, although it is sometimes Morgan Le Fay's sister, Morgause, who became Arthur's lover and had the child, as in Malory. The difference in Godwin, however, is that because this is the first time Morgana and Arthur have been married, it is the first time Modred has been a legitimate offspring. Traditionally he has been the product of an incestuous coupling between an unwitting Arthur and Morgan Le Fay, or Arthur and Morgause.

The role of sorceress which Morgan Le Fay usually plays lends itself

to an independent and intelligent woman. She always seems to have her own resources, whether it is Avalon, or a castle. At the very least, her healing abilities gave her power of a sort. When she became the evil sister that successfully steals Arthur's scabbard and can outsmart him in his pursuit, she becomes an honourable match for him. She would have to be somewhat his equal to be a challenging foe. While Godwin does not cast his Morgana as Arthur's enemy, he nonetheless paints her as Arthur's equal. They present a future plan to the fhain together but their insight is clearly limited to themselves, as Arthur says, "we are alone in our plain truth" (p. 80). Then they midwife a birth together, and Arthur becomes so emotionally involved that he says "not she but we bear this child" (p. 83). Perhaps the most revealing passage is when Arthur admits they are halves of each other (p. 75). A woman who is equalied with her male counterpart in terms of brains and common sense, is far more impressive than one who is made his equal through sorcery. Godwin himself concedes that "consciously I saw Morgana as the catalyst that brought the transcendent humanity out of a conventional Roman soldier -- or, if you will, patriarchal meets matriarchal, and his growth is the synthesis" (Godwin, "The Road to Camelot," p. 7). Godwin intended his Arthur and Morgana to be partners.

Godwin shows how Morgan Le Fay can be portrayed as a struggling

human being, and not necessarily cast as Arthur's foe, while remaining within the context of the Arthurian story. He presents an in-depth characterization of a woman who is strong, passionate, and fiery, yet troubled, and angry. She gives of herself in a relationship that nurtures Arthur into a caring human being. She has strong maternal instincts as well as leadership capabilities. She is intelligent, but restricted by her primeval society. She is not a stock character; indeed, she is very much like "a pot before boiling, the surface moves just a little to hint of what's heaving and surging below" (p. 65). This is a Morgan who is far more difficult to classify than the evil sorceress Morgan Le Fay. Yet Godwin's Morgana is skilled in the arts of healing and herbalism, and lives in an otherworld, bears Modred, and clashes with Guenevere, all familiar aspects of the traditional Morgan Le Fay. She is given a complete background with the Prydn, which does not stray from the Celtic roots that have come to be associated with Morgan Le Fay. As the French Romancers and Malory manipulated her as they wished, so has Godwin. The evil road which Morgan Le Fay was set upon has taken a turn; Godwin proves that she does not have to remain "the" Arthurian evil fay, and foil to every "good" person to be believable. While the diversity of her character has always been acknowledged, Godwin goes beyond it to really test how diverse she can be.

Chapter 3: Marion Zimmer Bradley's Morgaine

One could not fully study the character of Morgan Le Fay in modern Arthurian fiction without including Marion Zimmer Bardley's portrayal of Morgaine in The Mists of Avalon (1982). This Morgaine is the main narrator, a technique that is appealing, states the Arthurian Handbook, "because it permits the 'humanizing' of characters who are historically remote" (p. 199). Morgaine is also the main character, which is to date a unique approach in Arthurian storytelling. The author explains her fascination with the character in an interview with Parke Godwin:

> The basic image of Morgaine in my mind comes from a little girl nine years old reading Prince Valiant comics, and seeing this strange, elusive figure slipping around behind the doings of the knights, never coming into the day, being regarded as an evil sorceress -- and beginning to wonder. Why, if Malory disapproved of her so much, he didn't just cut her out of the story? And then I started to realize, it must have been that she was so integral to the legend that he couldn't. And I wanted to know what Morgan le Fey had been before the Christians got hold of her. And so, for me, it's this little girl looking at this sorceress . . . watching her brothers playing knight, and realizing that the sorceress in the background is really more interesting to her than the knights.
>
> (Godwin, "The Road to Camelot," p. 9)

Bradley's Morgaine is unquestionably a complex character. Even her physical characteristics are far from simplistic. As a child, Morgaine is described as "small, dark, delicately made, so small-boned it was like handling a little soft bird" (p. 8). Her hair is "so fine and straight that it slipped out into loose elf locks around her shoulders," and "her eyes were

dark and serious" (p. 78). As a woman, she remains relatively small, not tall, with a delicate frame and dark, long hair (p. 138). She is said to resemble Viviane, her aunt and the Lady of the Lake, who is described as "a surprisingly little woman," whose "face was small, swarthy and triangular, the forehead low beneath hair dark." "Her eyes were dark, too, and large in her small face" (p. 9). But Viviane is Lancelet's mother, and he finds the resemblance so strong that it disturbs his making love to Morgaine. So Morgaine's identity is confused because of a physical resemblance to Viviane, and it ruins the intimacy. On another occasion, Morgause claims that no one could call Viviane beautiful, and Morgaine considers this indicative of her own ugliness (p. 216). The smallness and dark features are also associated with fairy folk, Viviane and Igraine's parentage, and when Gwenhwyfar taunts Morgaine as "little and ugly like the fairy people" (p. 158), Morgaine is horrified. "She felt a surge of self-hatred, of loathing for her small, dark body" (p. 158). Since Gwenhwyfar succeeds in winning Lancelet's heart, for which Morgaine yearns, Gwenhwyfar's taunting wounds to the core, and Morgaine continues to feel worthless next to her. When Lancelet rejects her, she thinks, "had she been beautiful as Gwenhwyfar was beautiful . . ." (p. 398). Yet Gwenhwyfar complains to Lancelet that "Morgaine is as young as ever" and he replies, "Never think you are less beautiful than Morgaine . . . it is a

different beauty, that is all" (p. 564). And Kevin protests to Morgause the "beauty is not all in a fair face, but lies within. Morgaine is indeed very beautiful" (p. 466). But even as an old woman, Morgaine's physical attributes continue to dictate her self-worth:

> Morgaine was acutely aware of every grey hair, every line in her face. *In the name of the Goddess, why should I care what Accolon thinks of me?* But she did care and she knew it; she was accustomed to having young men look at her and admire her, and now she was old, ugly, undesirable.
>
> (p. 574)

Morgaine has difficulty seeing her own inner beauty, always convinced that her physical exterior is what gives her worth. Morgaine's physical characteristics, then, become an extension of her personality, and a gauge with which to measure her inner health.

Bradley places Morgaine in her most familiar family tree, as daughter of Igraine and Gorlois, the Duke of Cornwall. Morgause is her aunt, sister of Igraine (while in Malory she was sister of Morgaine), and is married to King Lot of Lothian. Arthur is conceived between Igraine and Uther and becomes Morgaine's step-brother upon Igraine and Uther's marriage.

Amidst this complicated family network, Bradley fittingly draws a lonely and neglected childhood portrait for Morgaine. Typical of his time, Gorlois would have valued a son more, and a step-father couldn't but help be little interested by his wife's daughter by a previous husband, and an

enemy one at that (p. 108). Unloving fathers were compounded by a neglectful mother, as Morgaine tells us, "my mother Igraine cherished me and petted me . . . but when Uther's men were sighted, then I went back into my rooms and was forgotten" (p. 108). The little attention she received from Igraine seemed to disappear with the arrival of Arthur:

> . . . when my brother was born it was worse. For there was this crying thing, all pink and white, at my mother's breast; . . . I hated him with all my heart, for now when I came near her she would pull away and tell me that I was a big girl, too big to be sitting in her lap, too big to bring my ribbons to her for tying, too big to come and lay my head on her knees for comfort.
>
> (p. 109)

Morgaine's loneliness is only alleviated somewhat by becoming a surrogate mother to Arthur. Through Igraine's neglect of both of them, Morgaine must look after her brother. At first she resents the task, saying, "I would have killed the crying thing and thrown him over the cliffs, and run after my mother begging that she should be all mine again" (p. 109), but soon the jealousy wears off as she realizes "Igraine has forgotten both of us, abandoned him as she abandoned me" (p. 110). Being a surrogate mother to Arthur becomes the only source of love in Morgaine's childhood. While the bond with Arthur is established, Morgaine would always remember her mother with disdain, as the mother who "had no thought for her children, only for Uther" (p. 209).

When eleven years of age, Morgaine is recruited by Viviane for

fostering in Avalon. Igraine was well aware of how she neglected Morgaine and thought Avalon would be an alternative for her to living unhappily at Uther's court (p. 258), but she also sent her there to avoid Christian teachings that "would teach her to think that she was evil because she was a woman" (p. 359). And indeed, as a priestess of the Goddess, Morgaine learns a great deal.

She arrives at Avalon inexplicably feeling she has come home (p. 132), and she very eagerly goes about learning various skills and abilities. Her inherent "sight" is refined, and she learns how to "call the fire and raise it at command, to call the mists, to bring rain" (p. 137). She is taught "herb lore, and the lore of healing" and how to "play upon the harp" (p. 137). She is educated in Latin (p. 582), taught how "to read and write in Greek characters" (p. 185), and proper penmanship (p. 286). She learns how to summon the mantle of a priestess, which can make her look tall and imposing (p. 159), and how to be physically strong and resilient (p. 141). She becomes "strong and hardy from much running and walking" (p. 149). She is skilled in the "housewifely arts too - she could spin and weave and do fine embroideries, and dyeing and brewing" (p. 440). Most importantly, it is the priestess's duty to learn self-control: "she had been taught to control her emotions as she controlled her words and even her thoughts" (p. 141). At the same time she is told "a priestess of Avalon does

not lie" (p. 550). It is a happy time for Morgaine, substituting the Goddess and fellow priestesses for her own lacking family (p. 148). "Here in the Island," she says, "life had soared into the free spaces of the spirit and she had known exaltation and the delights of power as well as the suffering and struggle of the pain and the ordeals" (p. 154).

However, the robes of the priestess do more harm than good to the real child underneath, because she has to wear the mask of the priestess and ignore her own self. Viviane knew Morgaine came to Avalon "a lonely child" (p. 140), and her training as a priestess provided her with a purpose and a sense of belonging. But when it comes time for executing orders, it is the priestess whom she calls, not Morgaine. Viviane warns her, saying, "I must use you for her [the Goddess] purposes as I was myself used" (p. 136), but Morgaine's trust and love for Viviane (pp. 121-2), prevent her from doubting her.

Morgaine, a virgin priestess, is called to play the part of the Maiden Huntress in the Great Marriage. Viviane describes the ritual as a sexual submission of a virgin to the Horned One, after he has successfully run with the deer, adorned with "antlers of the deer, and . . . a robe of untanned deerskin" (p. 170). The Maiden Huntress enchants the deer so that the Horned One may run with them, but if they smell a stranger, he could die. If he successfully runs with them, he must slay the King Stag, his blood to

be a "sacrifice spilled to the Mother that life should feed on her blood" (p. 176). The tribes consider the ritual an ancient testing of a potential leader. Morgaine seems awed that she has been chosen to be the Virgin Huntress, as she responds to Viviane: "My body and my soul belong to her [the Goddess], to do with as she will" (p. 171). However, what Viviane does not share with her is that the Horned One is Arthur, her step-brother, and what they commit upon copulation, in fact, is incest. Unknowing, Morgaine welcomes the Horned One "nameless, priestess and maiden and mother" (p. 177) and they join together as Goddess and the Horned One. Later, in the night, Morgaine awakes as "Morgaine again, not the shadow of the Great Mother" (p. 179), and they make love as man and woman:

> This time in full awareness she could savor it, the softness and hardness, the strong young hands and the surprising gentleness behind his bold approach. She laughed in delight at the unexpected pleasure, fully open to him, sensing his enjoyment as her own. She had never been so happy in her life.
>
> (p. 180)

But once Arthur and Morgaine recognize each other and realize they have committed incest, the happiness is obliterated, and shame takes its place. Morgaine finds herself thinking,

> *And I never knew you again. My brother, my baby, the one who lay on my breast like a little child. Morgaine, Morgaine, I told you to take care of the baby, as she went away and left us, and he cried himself to sleep in my arms. And I did not know.*
>
> (p. 181)

Morgaine feels shame not only because of her incest, but because she has failed to take proper care of her brother. Viviane sees their Great Marriage only as a match between two of the royal line of Avalon and tells Morgaine, "at this moment the hope of Britain is more important than your feelings" (p. 191). Morgaine's grief becomes twofold: she cannot cope with the shame, and she feels betrayed by Viviane:

> . . . all her rage melted into sorrow so great that for a moment she thought she would break into the fiercest weeping. For herself, for the changes in herself . . . and for something which had gone from her, irrevocably. Not virginity alone, but a trust and belief she would never know again.
>
> (p. 186)

The love that she thought she and Viviane shared, that had filled the loneliness in her, was no more. She asks Viviane, "Why did you use me this way? I thought you loved me!" (p. 228). Morgaine feels like a pawn in Viviane's grand design (p. 230) instead of a loved kinswoman.

With this apparent rejection by Viviane for her as a person, and knowledge that Viviane would use her, added to the shame of the incest and resulting pregnancy, Morgaine turns angry and bitter. She attempts to meet with Viviane "feeling the beginnings of anger" (p. 182), and then "anger surged in Morgaine so great that she came near to shoving the woman" (p. 183). When Viviane tries to boast that Morgaine will be the next Lady of the Lake, "anger drowned out her [Morgaine's] rush of

gratification" (p. 184). When she realized she was pregnant "Morgaine could only rage in silent bitterness against the God who had taken the form of her unknown brother" (p. 211). When thinking of the events that befell her "again bitter anger overcame her, like choking" (p. 212). She thinks with a newfound cynicism (p. 190), and feels rebellion great within her (p. 182). The only positive repercussion from this whole tragic situation is that the anger and shame drive Morgaine to become more independent and self-reliant in renouncing Avalon.

Morgaine spends the next four years at Lothian, her Aunt Morgause's court, mainly in order to secretly bear her child. The self-control she had been taught in Avalon prevents her from working out her anxieties and hurts, as she keeps to herself, revealing "nothing of her reasons for leaving the temple, and of her child" (p. 246), but Morgause notes that "there were great dark circles under her eyes, and the lids were red as if sore with long weeping" (p. 235). Morgaine has no love for the baby she is carrying, attempting an abortion, and after changing her mind, proceeds to make herself physically miserable for the duration of the pregnancy, not eating properly and complaining of back aches. The birth is a difficult one, but when Morgaine sees her baby, a wave of maternal instincts and love penetrate her anger and she yearns to hold him:

> Tears were sliding weakly down Morgaine's face. She begged, "Give me my baby, Morgause, let me hold my baby, I want him - "
>
> (p. 251)

The reader senses that had she been allowed to bond with her son, she might have learned how to love, and the loneliness she had always felt would dissipate. But Bradley's characterization of Morgaine is one that gradually darkens, and so, here, the chance at bonding between mother and son is relinquished, as Morgause "carried the child out of the room" (p. 251), leaving Morgaine sobbing and holding out her arms for her baby.

In the ensuing years, Morgaine strives to find a place for herself and someone to love, but fails continuously on both accounts. After leaving Lothian, she lives in Caerleon for a time but never quite fits into the role of one of the Queen's ladies. She hopelessly pursues Lancelet, since he is her first love, but his heart is given to Gwenhwyfar. But she continues to pursue a lost cause, convincing herself that she would be helping the kingdom by seducing Lancelet away from Gwenhwyfar:

> . . . in a moment of passion he might desire her indeed, but no more. And for a moment of passion, would she entrap him into a lifelong pledge? . . . She felt, for his own sake, and Arthur's, and even for Gwenhwyfar's, it would be best to remove him from the court.
>
> (p. 323)

But as they begin to caress each other, the political justification means little as she feels "dizzy with his closeness . . . he wanted her; there was not, now, in his heart, any thought of Gwenhwyfar or anyone but

herself" (p. 323). But after much foreplay, he refuses to have sexual intercourse, and she angrily feels "he was making her love for him a mockery and a game" (p. 324). Deeply frustrated "through the ache and hunger of her love, a faint strain of contempt was threading, and it was the greatest agony of all - that she loved him no less" (p. 325). She flees Caerleon, once again "angry and shamed" (p. 327), determined to return to Avalon.

Instead, she ends up at Castle Chariot in fairy country for five years. It is an "otherworld," where time does not pass, aging does not occur, and everything is "as it is in a dream, where strange things seem wholly possible" (p. 405). There is much feasting, drinking and dancing, and Morgaine forgets her problems. She finds herself having sex with a woman and without her normal inhibitions and conscience here in the enchanted land: she returned the kisses without surprise or shame" (p. 405). She also encounters a male lover and equally freely "her whole body welcomed him as hungrily as a virgin; she moved with him and she felt the rhythm of the pulsing tides of the earth around her" (p. 406). When she leaves, however, and

> . . . she thought of those nights she was frightened and ashamed, trembling with the memory of a pleasure she had never known . . . and yet now she was away from the enchantment it seemed like something shameful . . .
>
> (p. 409)

It seems, then, that the only way Morgaine can live without shame is under enchantment. Castle Chariot allows Morgaine to be free: free of guilt and shame, and free of consequences, but it is also like living in a vacuum. She affects no one, and is affected by no one. She has no real relationship with anything or anyone. Apart from revealing Morgaine's inability to live without shame, Castle Chariot later serves as her "enchanted otherworld" to which she lures Arthur in order to rob him of his sword (pp. 730-34). Much differently than the Prydn world of Godwin's Morgana from which Arthur exits happier, the Castle Chariot forces Arthur to cry, "Jesus and Mary defend me from all evil. This is some wicked enchantment wrought by my sister and her witchcraft" (p. 734). Castle Chariot operates very much like that which Richard Cavendish describes in King Arthur and the Grail, as a place where the hero leaves his responsibilities behind and gets caught up in the "illusory promise of ease and peace and pleasure" (p. 124).

In keeping with the Vulgate Cycle, Bradley develops a relationship between Morgaine and the Merlin, and similarly paints a picture of an adoring Merlin to a less enthusiastic Morgaine. They endure a power struggle over Avalon's importance in the onset of the new Christian religion, and hence their personal feelings are trampled in the fight. But for the first time, Morgaine gives herself to someone of her own free will and she finds that "it healed something in her" (p. 417). From the first

time she met Kevin in Avalon, "he understood something of her rage" (p. 185), but while for Kevin "the sun rises and sets where [she goes]" (p. 476), Morgaine cannot love him back with the same fervour. It is always Lancelet she thinks about (p. 477). She finally finds someone who loves her for herself, and she throws him away:

> *It seemed to me now that he [Kevin] was the one person alive who knew me as I was; before every other person alive, even Arthur, I had worn a different face, seeking always to appear other and better than I was . . . For Kevin I was Morgaine, thus and no other.*
>
> (p. 754)

Sinking deeper and deeper into darkness, Morgaine becomes a victim again when she is unwittingly given in marriage to King Uriens of North Wales. Uriens is an old man and her fifteen years of marriage with him becomes a series of lies as she grows to hate him. She endures a sexual rapport, but admits to herself that she has become a whore (p. 625). When she meets Uriens' son, Accolon, who believes her to be the Goddess herself, Morgaine secretly transforms from being the wife of an old man to being the Goddess. She also transforms from being "used" to becoming the "user" by getting Accolon to steal Arthur's sword, Excalibur, and sending Accolon to kill Arthur. She conspires to replace Arthur, who has betrayed Avalon, with herself and Accolon (p. 676). She is briefly torn that "one of them must die, brother or lover" (p. 734), but she proceeds with the plan

anyway. She had already instigated Avalloch's death when he interfered with her plans (p. 672), and three days later causes herself to abort Accolon's child in her (p. 737). She lies without hesitation, thinking to herself, "*If I can kill, lying is no sin so great*" (p. 735).

In keeping with the Post-Vulgate, Accolon fails in his fight against Arthur, and Arthur realizes his sister has betrayed him. Then, as in Malory, she also attempts to kill Uriens but is stopped by Uwaine (p. 744). Bradley then keeps to the scabbard plot familiar to us from the Post-Vulgate and Malory's Morte, in which Morgaine steals the scabbard, and upon pursuit by Arthur, she "flung it, with all her strength, far out into the Lake" and "drew herself into silence, a part of shadow and tree" (p. 750).

In the aftermath of all of these events, Morgaine, very ill, feels global failure and that eternal loneliness:

> *No one left. No one. I mourned without ceasing for Accolon, and for the child whose life had barely begun before it was ended, cast aside like offal. I mourned too for Arthur, lost to me now, and my enemy, and, unbelievably, even for Uriens, and for the wreck of my life in Wales, the only peace I had ever known.*
>
> *I had killed or thrust from me or lost to death everyone in this world I had ever loved. Igraine was gone, and Viviane lost to death . . . Accolon was gone . . . Arthur was my enemy; Lancelet had learned to hate and fear me . . . Gwenhwyfar feared and loathed me . . . and Uwaine, who had been as my own son, hated me too.*
>
> (p. 752)

But because of her incessant belief in Avalon and the Goddess, she proceeds to exact revenge from Kevin for betraying Avalon, seeing him to

his death, and destroys the fellowship of the round table by scattering the knights in search of the Holy Chalice, which she has stored "safely into Avalon, never again to be touched or profaned by mortal men . . . or by priests of a narrow God who would deny all other truths" (p. 772).

She absolves herself of the responsibility for her actions by insisting, "I had no power to do other than I have done" (p. 810). She believes she is an instrument of the Goddess. When both Arthur and Mordred tell her it was Morgaine they had both needed and wanted all along, not a goddess, she tries to cry out, "I had no choice! I did not choose" (p. 866). Yet she had rebelled all her life against being used by mortal men (and women), and fought against Christian priests who used men, but ironically, when Morgaine does make her own decisions and choices, she is resigned in believing that the Goddess made them through her. Despite her lonely childhood, she could have overcome the shame between Arthur and herself and allowed him to love her as a sister and friend; she could have insisted on bringing up her own son instead of abandoning him to Morgause; she could have loved Kevin and enjoyed a close companionship with him instead of judging his acceptance of Christianity as a betrayal of Avalon; and she could have refused to marry Uriens: Arthur would certainly have allowed her to choose. And she could have, like Lancelet, succumbed to the Christian religion which preached "that man has the power to know the

right, to choose between good and evil and know that his choice has made a difference" (p. 810). But her choices are consistently malevolent, and whether she simply cannot accept responsibility for them and blames the Goddess, or she really is an instrument of the Goddess, is never really at issue. Because essentially, "the Goddess" cleverly operates as an excuse for a degenerating Morgaine, providing Bradley with a method through which to create a basically good character who must become basically destructive. While each individual tragic episode of Morgaine's life contributes to her overall deterioration, her belief in fate is what prevents her from overcoming them. Like Godwin's Morgana, Bradley's Morgaine is intelligent and a leader in her own right, but the cause, like Morgana's, leads her to kill and to destroy.

Bradley's Morgaine is more familiar to the reader than Godwin's Morgana for example, because she is Arthur's half-sister, daughter of Igraine and Gorlois, skilled in herbs and healing, involved in the familiar plots of incest, the "otherworld" of Avalon (as well as a new one, Castle Chariot), the birth of an illegitimate son, Mordred, the pursuit of Lancelot, marriage to Uriens, Accolon and the sword, the scabbard plot, and accompanying a dying Arthur by barge to Avalon. The use of the Goddess also places Bradley's Morgaine more firmly amidst Celtic tradition. Like the Morrigan of Irish lore, Bradley attributes her Morgaine with the triple

nature of Maiden, Mother and Crone, and with the ability to change her shape to a sow and a raven. Morgaine says:

> *I stood in the barge alone, and yet I knew there were others standing there with me, robed and crowned, Morgaine the Maiden, who had summoned Arthur to the running of the deer and the challenge of the King Stag, and Morgaine the Mother who had been torn asunder when Gwydion was born, and the Queen of North Wales, summoning the eclipse to send Accolon raging against Arthur, and the Dark Queen of Fairy*
> *. . . or was it the Death-crone who stood at my side?*
> (p. 867)

It is explained that "the Mother ever renews herself, Mother and Crone and again the Maiden" (p. 599). Morgaine becomes the Maiden Huntress twice: once with Arthur, and then with Accolon, after they both run with the deer and become the Horned One. As Mother, she is the Mother of all, for indeed, she embodies the Goddess when she passes the Holy Chalice amongst the court and thinks to herself when facing Mordred, "*I am not your mother, I am the Mother of All*" (p. 771). As Crone, Morgaine is the deliverer of death. Viviane tells Morgaine that the Great Mother "is not only the Great Mother of Love and Birth, she is also the Lady of Darkness and Death" (p. 136).

Bradley also associates the Goddess with yet another Celtic Mother figure: Cerridwen. Merlin Stone describes Cerridwen in Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood as "one imbued with great wisdom, prophetic foresight and magical shapeshifting abilities" (p. 58). The ancient Cerridwen concocts a

"Cauldron of the Deep" for her son, which contains these magical powers, but it is stolen. She hunts down the culprit and swallows him (Ancient, pp. 58-60). When mentioned in Mists, Cerridwen is the part of the Mother who demands the return of something, usually life. In three instances she is mentioned immediately preceding the deaths of Viviane (p. 498), Avalloch (p. 671), and the Raven (p. 765).

Morgaine changes into the sow when she desires Avalloch's death:

> . . . behind her she heard the squeals of frenzied piglings and suddenly the life of the Great Goddess rushed through her, not knowing whether she was Morgaine or the Great Sow. . .
>
> (pp. 671-2)

And Avalloch is brought home dead, "slain by the sow" (p. 672). Morgaine actually suffers pain for several hours because Avalloch had "in turn . . . slain the sow" (p. 672). She is associated with the raven because the Great Mother "is also the Morrigán, the messenger of strife, the Great Raven" (p. 136). Her own ability to fly is suggested when, while offering the Holy Chalice, "she heard a sound as of many wings" (p. 771), and when it is time to remove the Chalice she invokes the Raven, and "great wings" flap around and the Chalice is gone (p. 772). Earlier in the book, Igraine, also reared in Avalon, felt "suddenly like a moth spreading its wings over the cocoon, [and] something in Igraine that was greater than herself opened and spread its wings" (p.93).

Other symbols used in Mists that are closely associated with the Goddess are the serpent and the moon. According to Merlin Stone in her book, When God Was a Woman, the serpent's association with the woman pre-dates the biblical view, as "appearing in the worship of the female deity" from as early as 4000 B.C. in Sumer, and appears intertwined with goddesses in Babylonian texts, Cretan artifacts and in the Egyptian goddess Ua Zit (the Cobra Goddess), and the Greek goddess Athena (When God Was a Woman, pp. 199-202). The serpent was understood to represent "wisdom and prophetic counsel" (When God Was a Woman, p. 199). In Mists, tattoed serpents twine about the arms of Uther, Arthur, Kevin, Accolon, Uriens and Mordred, all men sworn to uphold the Goddess. The serpent, or dragon, is also the emblem on the Pendragon banner, and Uther acknowledges its importance against "the Christian priests [driving] all such serpents from our isles" (Mists, p. 104). Merlin Stone comments that the Christians

> intended in the Paradise myth . . . that the serpent, as the familiar counselor of women, be seen as a source of evil and be placed in such a menacing and villainous role that to listen to the prophetesses of the female deity would be to violate the religion of the male deity. (p. 221)

In her lengthy tale, then, about the old matriarchal religion of the Goddess being driven out by the new patriarchal Christianity, Bradley cleverly uses the serpent as a symbol of one religion to the other, but which is

transformed from representing good for the Goddess, to representing evil for the Christians.

The moon, which is also associated with the Morrigan, some saying "She was the three phases of the silver moon, waxing, full and waning" (Stone, Ancient, p. 49), is used throughout Mists as a symbol of the goddess. Viviane explains to Morgaine that the blue crescent moon tattooed on priestesses' foreheads between their brows "is a sign that they are vowed to the service of the Goddess, to live and die at her will" (Mists, p. 134). A full moon is present at the first King-making ritual and an solar eclipse happens at Accolon's. We are also told that "in Avalon the priestesses secluded themselves at moon-dark, and all magic was suspended" (Mists, p. 794). It is just before a new moon appears that Nimue is at her most powerful and she bewitches Kevin (Mists, p. 797).

The Celtic celebrations of Samhain and Beltane are constantly acknowledged, and the Celtic Morrigan/Cuchulain story is played out in Bradley between Morgaine and Lancelet. When he rejects her, she remembers "an old tale of the Goddess surprised and refused by a man and how the Goddess had had him torn to shreds" (p. 326). Bradley's Morgaine, then, is strongly characterized within a Celtic context through the theme of the Goddess and her triple nature of Maiden, Mother and Crone, the

symbolism of the serpent and the moon, the Cuchulain story and the celebrations of Celtic festivals and rituals, and shapechanging to a sow and a raven.

Morgaine's familiarity is also evident through her hostile relationship with Gwenhwyfar. The reasons for the hostility have grown more complex, however, and Bradley has also paid close attention to the intertwining of the two characters. For example, it is quite clear that Morgaine represents the Goddess, and that Gwenhwyfar is representative of Christianity. This parallel is made evident through their similar methods of labour in creating the scabbard and the banner, which will respectively represent Arthur's allegiance to Avalon, and later to Christianity. Morgaine fashions the scabbard with the

> . . . horned moon, so that the Goddess should always watch over the sword . . . followed the horned moon with the full moon, and then with the dark moon, for all things must follow in season . . . she worked in the symbol of Christian and Druid in friendship . . . She worked into the crimson velvet the magical elements, of earth and air and water and fire . . . serpent of healing and wings of wisdom and the flaming sword of power . . . each marked with her blood and with the Water of the Holy Well. Three days in all she worked, sleeping little, eating only a few bites of dried fruit, drinking only the water of the Well . . . the spells wove themselves, blood and bone of the land, blood of her maidenhood . . .
>
> (p. 198)

Gwenhwyfar, disgusted with Arthur's loyalty to pagan ways, weaves him a Christian banner to replace the Pendragon one:

> It was most beautiful as she planned it - blue, with gold thread, and her priceless crimson-dyed silks for the mantle of the Virgin. She had no other occupation, so she sewed at it from morning to night . . . *and into every stitch of this banner shall I weave my prayers that Arthur shall be safe, and this a Christian land . . .*
>
> (pp. 383-4)

Merlin equates the two gifts, showing the continuity from the Goddess to the Father when he says to Gwenhwyfar, "Prayer is never wasted, Gwenhwyfar. Do you think we know nothing of prayer? When Arthur was given his great sword Excalibur, it was sheathed in a scabbard into which a priestess worked prayers and spells for safety and protection" (p. 385). The two women are also pregnant with children by Arthur at the time of making these gifts, further linking them to Arthur, and to each other. They are compared and contrasted as we have seen by their physical attributes, and while both become adultresses, Morgaine commits incest with Arthur and Gwen is part of a ménage-à-trois involving Arthur. Gwen wishes at times that "she had some of Morgaine's sorcery" (p. 516), and Morgaine, saddened that she is not as beautiful as Gwen, is proud that she can sing better (p. 288). Their lives are constantly intertwined since both love Lancelet; Morgaine has Arthur's son and Gwen wants to have Arthur's son; and Gwen is jealous of Arthur's love for Morgaine while Morgaine is jealous of Lancelet's love for Gwen, and yet, they both end up alone. This complex love web is the basis for their hostility towards each other, although it is

Arthur's betrayal of Avalon due to Gwen's insistence that drives the wedge between them for good. Ironically, Gwen envies the fact that Morgaine is able to exercise her own will (pp. 375 & 385), but condemns the pagan religion of the Goddess that allows her to do so. She is not satisfied until she gets Morgaine married off to Uriens and out of her court. Perhaps the characters of Morgaine and Gwenhwyfar are respectively meant to represent women who are independent and suppressed. The two religions at conflict in the book provide the cultures by which the two women are influenced. One respects and upholds the woman while the other represses her. Bradley explains:

> I made my Guinivere a conventional woman, and of course, influenced by the medieval view, I made her the perfect Christian woman. And probably she could just barely read and write -- the Christians didn't think too much learning was good for anyone, especially women. She was intended as a foil for Morgaine; the educated pagan woman against the perfect Christian queen.
>
> (Godwin, "The Road to Camelot," p. 8)

Bradley's Morgaine is really more interesting than any other character in The Mists of Avalon, and she would have it so. Her intention to create a Morgan Le Fay who is in the foreground as opposed to being that "elusive figure slipping around behind the doings of the knights" has been successful. However, even though this book is Morgaine's story, it remains a story about an evil sorceress. But the roles she plays as a priestess and

at times the Goddess, are different than that of a sorceress. In fact, she insists that she is "no village wise-woman, to meddle with birth charms and love potions and foretellings and spells. I am a priestess, not a witch" (p. 306). And she certainly meets R.J. Stewart's criteria of the goddess figure who can heal, fly, change her shape, and is from an "otherworld" (The Mystic Life of Merlin, p. 128). But Bradley doesn't restrict her from also being known as a witch (Mists, pp. 335, 408, 559, 770 & 767) and a sorceress (pp. 440, 523, 544, 637 & 752). In fact, it is precisely because of Morgaine's association with Avalon, and her knowledge of healing herbs that people label her a sorceress. The other reasons include her worship of a pagan deity, and her sexual promiscuity. Perhaps what Bradley is implying is that in a righteous, patriarchal society, a woman who does not fit into the accepted role can be labelled a witch or a sorceress. In fact, one character comments that "there are ignorant priests and ignorant people, who are all too ready to cry sorcery if a woman is only a little wiser than *they* are" (Mists, p. 874). So Bradley does not turn Morgaine into a character radically different from her traditional background of being an evil foe to be reckoned with, but what she adds through Morgaine's association with the Goddess is a plot through which the evil Morgaine is developed.

Bradley provides a childhood for Morgaine, describing a lonely and neglected little girl. Her reliance on the Goddess explains Morgaine's association with Avalon, and becomes the source of conflict between the Christianized King Arthur and pagan Morgaine: Morgaine is not just acting maliciously for the sake of evil; she believes in a cause and is committed to upholding it. In addition, Bradley elaborates on a number of tragic events in Morgaine's adult life which contribute to her anger and cynicism, such as the incest, the fostering of her son by Morgause, rejection by Lancelet, the one man she truly loved, and her oppressive marriage to Uriens. And like Godwin, Bradley sees Morgaine's passion as an integral part of her character, and Morgaine's sexual relationships become rather important to the development of her bitterness and frustration, because as a medieval woman, Morgaine's freedom of sexuality is tabooed by a variety of moral laws. Morgaine specifically deals with her feelings of shame as a result of incest and lesbianism, and frustration from being left unsatisfied by Lancelet. This is an area of characterization that has only become permissable in modern fiction, and Bradley obviously considers it an important aspect of her Morgaine. Catharine Tipton calls the book "a feminist morality tale" in which "the women . . . are . . . complex beings of courage and spirit who attempt to come to terms with themselves and with other men and women who populate a world changing from the Old

Religion to the new Christian Faith" ("Bradley's New Woman," pp. 1-2). However, it should be noted that while the Great Goddess offers women more scope than the Christian priests, Morgaine wasn't any less a victim. She was an instrument of a Goddess that would see her educated and the leader of her people, but would also have her kill. If the Mother Goddess acted as an agent of birth, life and death in her roles as Maiden, Mother and Crone, and we are to see the cyclical aspect of nature through her, that is one thing. But when a human being kills other human beings to uphold this "faith," the feminine triumph is lost. So while the Goddess may have provided Bradley with a vehicle through which to steer her protagonist's downfall, part of what she has done by using it, is absolve Morgaine of the responsibility for this downfall, and somewhat confuse the reader as to which religion offers women a better chance. Bradley's Morgaine is portrayed as a multi-dimensional character who is faced with many challenges and painful struggles throughout her life, but who eventually finds peace for herself. Bradley has created a Morgaine with a complexity of inner strengths and weaknesses but she is a tragic figure because she comes to terms with herself very late in life. What is offered in Bradley's portrayal is a Morgan Le Fay who remains essentially evil, but by providing a psychologically fully developed character, Bradley establishes reasons for Morgaine's evilness.

Chapter 4: Joan Wolf's Morgan

In The Road to Avalon (1988), Joan Wolf dispenses with the evil Morgan Le Fay altogether. Her Morgan is portrayed as a kind and unselfish, caring woman. And like Godwin's Morgana, Wolf's Morgan is Arthur's first and true love. The Road to Avalon is mainly a love story between Arthur and Morgan and as such, offers Morgan a major role to play.

Wolf's Morgan is raised in Avalon, her most familiar environment. Wolf modifies Morgan's family tree somewhat when she makes Merlin and Nimue her parents instead of Gorlois and Igraine. In addition, Wolf makes Igraine and Morgause Merlin's daughters by another mother, hence Morgan is step-sister to Igraine and Morgause, and becomes Arthur's step-aunt when Igraine gives birth to Arthur. The two are most often cast as step-brother and sister, precipitating the incest motif, and so, by further removing their blood relationship, the question of incest becomes debatable.

Physically, Morgan is described as a "small, fragile woman" (p. 284), with a "small, delicate face" (p. 343). "Her feet were small and narrow, with high-arched insteps" (p. 41), and her hands are described as small with fragile wrists (p. 15). From her youth until her later adult years she has long, straight, brown hair to her waist (pp. 13 & 343). Perhaps her most frequently mentioned feature are her "large eyes" (p. 343), which at

other times are called "remarkable" (p. 28), "great" (p. 284), and "luminous brown eyes" (p. 13). Interestingly, what we can now see from all three authors is that they each chose to depict Morgan as a small woman, with long hair, and big eyes.

Her personality, described by Wolf, is one that displays only good character traits such as unselfishness, kindness, perceptiveness, intelligence, emotional strength, and playful defiance. There is no dark side to this Morgan, as she is portrayed as Arthur's love, companion and confidante, and a rational, compassionate woman. Her unselfishness is demonstrated mostly in times of sending Arthur away from her to do his duty as King of Britain. Arthur is ready to commit suicide over this switch in priorities but then realizes that,

> If he did this, Morgan would know it was because of her.
> He stopped. She had done this as a great act of unselfishness, to save him for Britain. If he walked into this river now, he would be throwing her gift back into her face . . . He could not do that to her. (p. 87)

Even after he has been forced into a political marriage with Gwenhwyfar, and Morgan is free to marry, she tells Cai that she couldn't marry anyone else because "he [Arthur] couldn't bear it" (p. 170). She is not thinking of herself, but of how Arthur would feel. Morgan's reason for keeping the birth of their illegitimate and incestuously begotten son a secret, explains

Arthur, is because

> . . . she knew if I found out, nothing would stop my claiming her . . . Duty to her country is bred into her bones . . . She would not step between me and the kingship she believed I was born to hold.
>
> (p. 266)

And yet she finds a void in her life once he is gone:

> She had sacrificed her happiness to make him high king. It was necessary for her to hear that he was succeeding in his new life. She was not succeeding very well, she thought dully, in her own.
>
> (p. 93)

But she perseveres, showing only kindness to those around her. She is kind to Cai when she rejects his marriage proposal, telling him, "if I were to marry anyone at all, it would be you" (p. 169). She is kind to Gwenhwyfar when she finds an excuse to skip a festival at which everyone is in attendance, because she "thought it would be more comfortable for everyone if she stayed away" (p. 277). And finally, even though Mordred is angry with her for keeping his parentage a secret, he can't help but relent a little when he remembers

> . . . all the long summer days of his childhood that he had spent in her company. It was Morgan who had roamed the hills and burns of Lothian with him, Morgan who had lain beside him in the grass and watched birds, who had helped him return frightened babies to their nests. It was Morgan who had given him his harp.
>
> (p. 302)

Her kindness is also evident in her role as a healer, as she nurtures birds with broken wings, and cats with cut paws (p. 15), caring for "her

collection of wounded, orphaned animals" (p. 28). She becomes "famous throughout Britain for her healing arts" and Arthur sends his soldiers to her for medical care (p. 133). It seems that healing becomes Morgan's livelihood, as Arthur explains to Gwenhwyfar that Morgan is so dedicated to her work that "she has begun to write a compendium of herbal medicine" (p. 235).

She is portrayed as a perceptive woman as Cai believes that "no one looked at you like Morgan . . . she saw right through to your soul" (p. 168). She is able to discern that her son is in need of "escaping" from his rigorous training at Camelot, after only moments with him (p. 302), and is adept enough to recognize that Mordred blames her and Arthur for Gwenhwyfar's affair with Bedwyr, even though he never says so. Morgan's perceptiveness of Arthur, however, is described as akin to a telekinetic ability. Gwenhwyfar asks Arthur, "Are you saying that you can talk together with your *minds* ?" and he replies "Yes" (p. 317). Morgan demonstrates this communication when she leaves a besieged Camelot:

> . . . She pulled the pony up and closed her eyes. She sent the message out urgently in their own private signal: *Arthur. You must come home. Now. Immediately. Leave the army and come yourself. Danger. You must come home!*
>
> (p. 336)

Thus, Morgan is equipped with a "sight" of a kind, and while her

perceptiveness is aided by it, it is also her compassion which allows her to "know" Arthur best. When she tells Cai that she can't marry him because Arthur couldn't bear it, Cai responds that "Arthur would never grudge you happiness, Morgan" (p. 170). But Morgan persists that she "knows" Arthur, and that he would be miserable. Merlin, too, concedes that Morgan knows Arthur best (p. 48). Her perceptiveness is shown in her understanding Arthur, above reading his thoughts. When Merlin tries to convince his pregnant daughter to marry Cai, she says that Arthur

> . . . would feel I had betrayed him . . . and he would be right . . . I know him better than anyone living . . . and I know that if I did that to him, you would lose him. Britain would lose him.
>
> (p. 100)

Morgan shows herself to be an intelligent woman through her comprehension of battle plans and political conspiracies. She had sat in on Arthur's classes with Merlin as a child (p. 22), and knew how to read and write (p. 235), and is complimented by Arthur as being more Merlin's pupil than himself (p. 255). She tells him how important it is for him to marry and beget heirs because, she says, "if you do not leave an heir by right of birth, we will be back to chaos and dissension and the tribal kings fighting among themselves" (p. 146). When she is informed of Agravaine's declaration that Arthur and Bedwyr are dead, knowing it to be false, she immediately realizes why Agravaine lied:

> Time. Time was what Agravine hoped to gain. The answer came almost as quickly as the question. It would give him time to organize the north against Arthur.
>
> (p. 329)

Further, when she is faced with the conspirator, she knows exactly how to play her hand, by refusing to impart any information to him, and by sending a message to Arthur immediately. Morgan's intelligence and understanding of Britain's need for a king to unite her, are the pillars of her emotional strength. Her love for Arthur is overwhelming, but while Arthur says to her, "I would rather be a nameless mercenary with you at my side, than High King of Britain without you" (p. 85), Morgan "from somewhere deep within . . . found the courage to say what must be said, to do what must be done" (pp. 85-6). She recognizes him as a man born to be king, and cannot stand in the way of his uniting Britain. She tells him, "You are too precious a commodity for me, Arthur . . . you were meant for greater things" (p. 86). After Arthur is married to Gwenhwyfar, Morgan again demonstrates her emotional strength when she asks Cai how Arthur is. Cai tells her, "I think this marriage has been a good thing for him," and Morgan replies "Thank God . . . I have been so worried" (p. 169). We expect jealousy, or at the very least, sadness that Arthur is well enough without her. But Cai thinks "there was no mistaking her sincerity" (p. 169). She really cares about

Britain and Arthur's welfare, and is able to be strong in light of these circumstances.

Perhaps it is the combination of Morgan's intelligence and perceptiveness that lead her to be defiant. She obviously relinquishes her desires in situations that warrant it, but she equally displays defiance when Merlin tries to oust her from his class to go do "women's work" (p. 17), and when he tries to convince her to marry Cai (p. 99), and when Arthur tries to marry her off to a begging Urien (p. 231). She knows herself too well, and is too smart to allow others to make decisions about her welfare.

Morgan's relationship with Arthur begins when they become childhood companions at ages eight and nine. Morgan lives in Avalon with her father, Merlin, and he brings Arthur to Avalon for tutelage, but in secrecy as to his royal parentage. Morgan and Arthur develop a close friendship, unaware that they are blood-related. They have a "usual place by the river" (p. 20), and "walk hand in hand" (p. 22). They are comfortable with each other, confide in each other, and eventually come to love each other. Merlin describes their relationship to Igraine:

> Arthur has been attached to Morgan ever since he first came to Avalon. They have been inseparable since childhood. I would say that Arthur loves Morgan more than anything else in the world.
>
> (p. 80)

Arthur himself tells Merlin, "I cannot live without Morgan" (p. 79). He feels

that "the touch of her hand, the expression of her eyes, the feel and smell of her hair, the sound of her voice, all these were as necessary to him as the air he breathed" (p. 84). Their first sexual encounter is when Morgan is fourteen and Arthur is fifteen:

> He touched her with wonder. Her skin was like silk under his rough, callused fingers. Passion came up in him, stroke after stroke, undeniable . . . she was so soft . . . the force within him so irresistible. He leaned over her and looked into her face. She put her arms around his neck and his heart blazed up in a flame of joy. She was so lovely, she was such a bliss of release . . . she was his love.
>
> (p. 43)

Shortly after the consummation of their love, they decide they want to be married (p. 45). However, they then learn the truth about Arthur's parentage, and that Arthur is destined to succeed Uther as king, and are refused permission to marry because their distant blood relationship could be viewed as incest. Upon Arthur's protest that they are no closer than cousins, Merlin insists to him that even if Morgan was

> . . . Half-sister or full sister [of Igraine], it would still be seen as incest. You cannot marry your mother's sister. The church would not permit it . . . [and] your title is not secure. There are men . . . who would be glad to see the end of you . . . You cannot give them a lever to use against you! And that is exactly what such a marriage would be.
>
> (p. 79)

So sadly, the lovers are kept from marrying, and Arthur goes off to be king while Morgan lives at Avalon. But it is not the end of their love. Ten years later when Arthur's position with the tribal kings is secure, he asks

Morgan to marry him. She refuses on the basis that she cannot bear children (p. 146) and he would need an heir. She conceals the fact that she bore him a son ten years earlier because she believes that he must "leave an heir by right of birth" (p. 146). Mordred is illegitimate and arguably a product of an incestuous coupling. She knows Arthur must marry properly. Nonetheless, they cannot keep away from one another:

> No one ever said her name as he did. She heard him move and then he was holding her against him, holding her and kissing her as if she were life itself to him. She swayed against him, every part of her being, body and soul, responding to that kiss.
>
> (p. 147)

Their passion is overwhelming, and "there was still the one thing that they had always found with one another and with no one else. Peace" (p. 147).

At the beginning of Arthur's marriage to Gwenhwyfar, Morgan and Arthur try to abstain from being together, until he is wounded and gives up his will to live. He is ready to die, "so weary of being alone" (p. 198). He is married, but alone without Morgan. Later he will come to describe these years without her as a time when "the deepest part of him had been dead and dry, like a tidal pool that has been cut off from the sea" (p. 323). After reviving Arthur from his deathbed by telekinetically assuring him she would stay in his life (pp. 198-9), Morgan finally concedes that they need each other. And with the realization that Gwenhwyfar is barren, Morgan

cannot justify separation from Arthur any longer. They begin to see each other discreetly, on a regular basis, and their relationship grows stronger, and deeper. Their times together are described as being with "perfect peace, such infinite happiness . . . to be simply and wholly together" (p. 147), and "complete, as they could be only with each other and with no one else" (p. 308).

Soon Gwenhwyfar realizes that her relationship to Arthur had never quite worked, because "he had belonged to Morgan long before she came into his life" (p. 317). Morgan and Arthur never marry, nor publicly declare their love for one another, but they share a true love that refuses to die, even when Arthur is fatally wounded and is brought to her at Avalon. On his deathbed, Arthur proclaims undying love for her:

> *We will be together . . . Believe that. This is only for a little while. We were always meant to be together, you and I.*
>
> (p. 358)

And Morgan believes him "and some of his peace crept into her own heart" (p. 358). While Morgan traditionally escorts a dying Arthur by barge to Avalon, Wolf fittingly applies this motif to their final scene together, although they are lovers here, not siblings. It is not a tragic ending to a love story because their struggle to stay apart had been resolved, and they were able to have a relationship. And while Morgan realizes that this time

Arthur wasn't choosing to die, that "he did not want to be here now, and he fought it" (p. 357), his yearning for her is met with a great light and "there was great peace in what it said to him, and Arthur felt the peace seeping into his spirit" (p. 357). As Arthur dies, there is no sense that their relationship must end, but that it will continue in an afterlife.

In keeping with the benevolent characterization of Morgan in this work, Wolf also portrays her as a loving mother with strong maternal instincts. Unlike Bradley's Morgaine, who considers aborting her first child and does abort her second, Wolf's Morgan adamantly refuses to consider such an alternative when Morgause suggests it:

> "You know the use of herbs," Morgause was saying. "Perhaps you could get rid of it."
> Get rid of it: Kill it. Her child and Arthur's.
> "No! I can't do that!"
>
> (p. 95)

Morgause points out to Merlin that Morgan must love the father, or else she wouldn't care about an abortion (p. 97). And therein lies the difference between Morgaine and Morgan. Morgaine couldn't live with the shame of committing incest, and the child manifested that shame. Wolf's Morgan, in contrast, loves Arthur, and any child of theirs manifested that love. The love between Morgan and Arthur becomes the basis of Morgan's love for the child. And, only too aware of the physical abuse suffered by Arthur when a

young boy, Morgan is very selective about who is to rear Mordred. She insists to Merlin: "If I give my child up, it must be to someone I can trust to take care of it. And I must be able to verify that for myself. I will not have Arthur's child brought up as he was" (p. 100). Between Merlin and Morgan, they choose Morgause, because in this story, she is a "good mother" (p. 100). Morgan visits Lothian every summer (p. 142), and is convinced of his happiness (p. 253). Later, when defending her actions to Arthur, she explains that "it was better for Mordred to stay in Lothian. He was happy. At least I could give him that, a happy childhood" (p. 253). Mordred's existence is the only matter about which Morgan lies, and even then it is only to keep Arthur from claiming them both. Her reasons are not malicious ones, or caused by shame, but concern that he have a legitimate heir by a proper wife. However, her separation from her son is described as not without pain, as she prepares to tell Mordred the truth:

> How did you face a child you had given way at birth? What did you say to him?
>
> Igraine had done it, but Igraine had not cared about her son. Morgan cared, cared desperately. How could she tell him that she had yearned for him all these years? That her arms had ached for him? That leaving him to Morgause each year had been like a little death to her? (p. 278)

And it would seem that Mordred is brought up in a healthy environment since he does not become the evil-bent, revenge-seeking son against whom

Arthur must eventually fight. He is not an aggressive boy at all, for Bedwyr describes him as "a dreamer," not a leader or a follower (p. 296). He enjoys horses and music, and Gwenhwyfar calls him "a very sweet boy" (p. 296). Wolf chooses Agravaine instead to commit treason against the king, leaving Mordred to work out his feelings towards his mother. In the end, Morgan succeeds in gaining his trust, and love. And Mordred is not Arthur's murderer, but the man in front of whom Arthur leaps to avert a lance intended for Mordred. The son of Morgan and Arthur is, unique to this story, a good human being, and that has everything to do with his having happy and loving parents.

As in Firelord, Wolf's Gwenhwyfar is jealous of Arthur's love for Morgan. Since both Godwin and Wolf choose to depict true love between these two, it is only logical that Gwenhwyfar struggle with it. In Bradley, Gwenhwyfar is jealous over the love Arthur has for his half-sister as well as his allegiance to Morgaine's Goddess, but Morgaine is shown to return this jealousy over Lancelet's love for Gwenhwyfar. In Wolf's book, Morgan has no jealousy, no hostility and no ill feelings whatsoever towards Gwenhwyfar. Morgan urges Arthur to marry her, and makes a valiant effort to keep her distance. Perhaps the fact that she knows Arthur truly loves her enables her to live peacefully, and without jealousy. Gwenhwyfar, on

the other hand, has every reason to be jealous, and is so. While other authors portray Gwenhwyfar's true love as Lancelot, Wolf uses his character more as a distraction for a queen who really wants her husband's love. She is even angrier that Arthur accepts her affair with Bedwyr (the Lancelot character):

> He [Arthur] would never let anyone marry Morgan. But she . . . He had been happy enough to hand her over to Bedwyr.
>
> She felt a dark understirring of jealous hatred and tried desperately to push it away.
>
> (p. 236)

The two women do not spend much time together since Morgan remains in Avalon and her meetings with Arthur are confined to Avalon. Thus, Gwenhwyfar's hostility is never vented towards Morgan, and there is no physical confrontation between them of any kind. There is a small degree of intertwining of the two female characters, in the general sense that they are both in love with Arthur. They are compared by Arthur when he realizes that the first time he made love to Morgan she had been unafraid, while Gwenhwyfar is "apprehensive" (p. 165). He also sees the frustrating irony behind his refraining from marrying a barren Morgan only to discover that his wife is barren also (p. 186). He also expects the two women to behave similarly in terms of putting Britain's needs before their own. Arthur thinks to himself:

> Morgan had put country first, and at a far greater cost than that he was asking of Gwenhwyfar. She would have to accept Mordred. Britain needed an heir.
>
> (p. 260)

But he only allows Morgan to love him:

> She [Gwenhwyfar] couldn't love him. She did not know him well enough to love him. Only one person knew him well enough for that.
>
> (p. 188)

So, there is no friendship here, as is the traditional treatment between Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere, but as in Godwin, the hostility stems from Gwenhwyfar only, since in both works she is reacting to her husband's true and unchangeable love for Morgan.

Avalon once again operates as an "otherworld," to which Arthur does indeed retreat not only from his regular duties as king, but from his role as husband. It is a pleasant place for Morgan and Arthur, where they love and grow together, and are relaxed together, that "they might have been the only two living in the world" (p. 308). This is where Morgan "reigns," as the Lady of Avalon, healing those who come to her. There is no evil here, nor pagan worship, or mists barring entrance, or a dream-like state to transcend. It is but a few miles from Camelot, and easily accessible, however "without Arthur's weekly visits . . . Avalon was cut off from the world, a quiet little island of peace" (p. 328). So it may not be as ominous as the Avalon of Mists, or intangible as Firelord's Prydn nomads, but it is

still set apart from the mainstream of bustling Camelot. What is rather interesting about this Avalon is that it is not only Morgan's home, but Arthur's as well. He is brought up here, and every time he visits, it is a trip "home" (p. 228). In this regard, Avalon is almost like returning to the womb for Arthur. It is a familiar place where he can be himself, freely love, and forget his responsibilities, whereas in other works, the "otherworld" operates mostly as Morgan's retreat. While this apparent "illusory ease and peace" (Cavendish, p. 124) is typical of the "otherworld" for the hero, in this case, Arthur is very conscious of where he is and what he is doing. He has not been enchanted or drugged in any way. Hence, this Avalon has been stripped of any nefarious associations.

Wolf has essentially taken the Arthurian matter and concentrated on a love story between Morgan and Arthur. To accomplish this, she has stripped Morgan of any evil characterization traditionally associated with her, and portrayed her as an unselfish, kind, perceptive, intelligent and emotionally strong woman. While she <u>is</u> called a "witch" on three occasions, it is once by herself in a playful tone (p. 144), and twice by Gwenhwyfar as an adjective chosen by a jealous woman (pp. 236 & 249). And while Wolf retains the healer side of Morgan's traditional background, there is nothing evil or malevolent about her ability. It is referred to as

"magic" three times, but each time in jest (pp. 134, 139 & 201). Morgan herself says, "I don't believe in magic, of course, but God did give me a special power to heal" (p. 201). Wolf has rejected the evil sorceress entirely, to provide a loving, caring human being in her place. Morgan's childhood develops healthily, alongside Arthur's, and while Morgan feels she must give up their illegitimate child, it is shown to be done for Arthur's sake, and Morgan's maternal feelings are nonetheless strong and healthy. Interestingly, Mordred, for the first time, is portrayed as a sweet young man who does not end up betraying his father. Wolf retains Morgan's association with Avalon, making her its ruler, but it is a place equally associated with Arthur and described as a safe and happy place where the lovers meet. Avalon, as an "otherworld," is an appropriate location for Wolf to have chosen as a bower because both an otherworld and a pair of lovers are absent from the mainstream of life. In order for their love to be valid, Wolf further removes their blood relationship so that the incest becomes debatable, but unlike Godwin, Wolf does not remove the relationship altogether for without it, there would be no obstacle creating tension in the love story plot. The hostility usually portrayed between Morgan and Gwenhwyfar is shown to emanate entirely from Gwenhwyfar, as a result of Arthur and Morgan's love for each other. What Wolf has done,

then, is chosen Arthur and Morgan to be the protaganists of a love story, and selected and modified other Arthurian elements to subordinate this plot. In light of her role as Arthur's true love, Wolf apparently felt that Morgan could not be portrayed as a wicked sorceress, and so we have a virtuous Morgan Le Fay, who may not be without her problems, struggling with loneliness of her lover and her son, but who does not instigate any evil plots or massacres or deaths. There is no scabbard plot here, not attempts to snare Lancelot, or abductions of sundry knights. These episodes would not be in keeping with Wolf's characterization of Morgan, thus they are deleted. Wolf's Morgan isn't any less believable than Godwin's or Bradley's; Morgan Le Fay's character is appropriately cast relative to the context of each of their stories. What Wolf has done is logically relax the incest motif into a love story, and in so doing, offers Morgan in the role of a lover rather than evil sorceress.

Chapter 5: The Evolution of Guenevere's Character

As Morgan Le Fay's character has come to be associated with that of an evil sorceress, "Guenevere" too has taken on a label, that of the "adultress." Paula Swilling has determined that "by the Middle Ages, the conventions of chivalry and the ubiquitous Church had taken their toll on the women of the Arthurian legend" and so Morgan Le Fay "became identified as an evil sorceress, Guenevere as an adultress; between them lay the responsibility for the shattering of Arthur's dream" (p. 27). While Guenevere's adultery with her traditional lover, Lancelot, does not appear until Chrétien (c. 1178), she is nonetheless adulterous in the earlier English Chronicle, <u>Historia Regum Britanniae</u> (c. 1136), written by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Geoffrey introduces her as the woman Arthur marries:

> . . . he married a woman called [illegible]re. She was descended from a noble Roman family and had been brought up in the household of Duke Cador. She was the most beautiful woman in the entire island.
>
> (p. 221)

Arthur entrusts the kingdom to her and his nephew Mordred while he goes off to fight the Romans (p. 237), and later receives word that Mordred has usurped the crown and was "living adulterously and out of wedlock with Queen Guinevere, who had broken the vows of her earlier marriage" (p. 257). Guinevere ends up fleeing to "the City of Legions and there, in the church of Julius the Martyr, she took her vows among the nuns, promising to lead a

chaste life" (p. 259). In her exhaustive dissertation entitled "Guinevere, A Study in the Arthurian Legend," Veronica Skinner points out that "Geoffrey does not elaborate on her [Guenevere's] emotions" (p. 9), and that there is "no reference to love or affection . . . neither between Arthur and Guenevere nor . . . Mordred and Guenevere" (p. 9). In the Norman poet, Wace's Chronicle, Le Roman de Brut (c. 1155), however, Guenevere's feelings and her effect on others are better revealed. Wace tells us that Arthur

> . . . took to wife a certain fresh and noble maiden, named Guenevere, making her his queen. This damsel was passing fair of face and courteous, very gracious of manner, and come of a noble Roman house . . . Marvellously dainty was the maiden in person and vesture; right queenly of bearing; passing sweet and ready of tongue. Arthur cherished her dearly, for his love as wonderfully set upon the damsel, yet never had they a child together.
>
> (pp. 115-116)

As in Geoffrey, Arthur entrusts the realm to Guenevere and his nephew, Mordred, while he goes to Rome, but in contrast to Geoffrey, Wace has Mordred marry the queen. Further, we are given to understand that Guenevere actually loves Mordred:

> The queen was lodged at York, in doubt and sadness. She called to mind her sin, and remembered that for Mordred her name was a hissing. Her lord she had shamed, and set her love on her husband's sister's son.
>
> (p. 126)

And then, similar to Geoffrey, the queen flees to Caerleon and enters "a convent of nuns, and took the veil" (p. 126).

In Layamon's Chronicle, Brut (c. 1205), it seems that Guenevere is as guilty of treason as Mordred, since Arthur's men inform him that Mordred

> . . . is king, she is queen; of thy coming they no longer ween,
> For they believe never that thou wilt return from Rome ever.
>
> (p. 139)

Arthur vows to slay Mordred and burn Guenevere in revenge. Further to Guenevere's newfound treachery and guilt, Arthur dreams of their betrayal before the event, and tells his men,

> There I saw Wenhaver also, the woman dearest to me;
> All that mighty hallroof with her hands she pulled apart.
> The hall began to fall . . .
> And the queen I cut to pieces with my dear sword,
> And I then put her down in a dark pit.
>
> (p. 137)

The queen, however, manages to flee to an abbey, which Skinner notes, "in Geoffrey is due to an unspecified desperation and in Wace, to shame, in Layamon seems due purely to fear of Arthur" (p. 13). The violent threats which Arthur makes against Guenevere in Layamon, can be explained, states Roger Loomis, by a "streak of ruthlessness and cruelty in Layamon" (Development of Arthurian Romance, p. 43). There is a "strain of ferocity which is absent from Wace" (p. 43). While Guenevere is present as Arthur's beautiful queen of Roman lineage, and adultress with Mordred (whether forcibly or willingly) in all of the Chronicles, Skinner maintains that Guenevere "remains little more than a stock character -- the unfaithful

and treacherous wife -- but, corresponding to the increase of Arthur's love for her, becoming blacker and blacker in her infidelity" (p. 17). The Chronicles tended to "emphasize wars, intrigues, and political maneuvering -- relegating women, including Guenevere, to the background" (p. 8).

Guenevere's character becomes more central to the plot in Chrétien de Troyes' french romance Le Chevalier de la charrette (c. 1178). It is in this romance where we are first introduced to Lancelot, and his role as the queen's lover. However, in the other three Arthurian romances offered by Chrétien, the queen remains a background figure, and is a faithful wife. For example, in Erec et Enide (c. 1170) Skinner calls her a "pattern queen: generous, kind, and a source of inspiration to the young knights at court" (p. 18). Peter Noble, in his article entitled "The Character of Guinevere in the Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," shares this view, describing the queen as a "model consort and an inspiration to the young knights of the court" (p. 524). Guenevere appears at the beginning of the romance as an observer of a white stag hunt, inspiring gallant and courteous behaviour in Erec, when she is insulted by a rude dwarf and an arrogant knight (pp. 3-4). When Erec defeats the knight in battle and sends the culprit to the queen for his punishment, she demonstrates kindness and a sense of justice, telling him, "Friend, since thou hast thrown thyself upon my mercy, thy

confinement shall be less harsh; for I have no desire to seek thy harm" (p. 16). Her generosity is even more apparent when she bedecks Erec's bride, Enide, in a

> . . . fresh tunic and the greenish-purple mantle, embroidered with little crosses, which had been made for herself . . . The mantle was very rich and fine: laid about the neck were two sable skins, and in the tassels there was more than an ounce of gold . . .
>
> (p. 21)

The queen gives this dress to Enide because "she liked her and was glad that she was beautiful and had such gentle manners" (p. 22). We are also told that on their wedding night, the queen "herself took charge of their preparations . . . for both of them were dear to her" (p. 27). In addition to being kind, and inspiring courtesy amongst the knights, Guenevere serves in an advisory role to the king. She advises him to postpone the bestowing of a traditional kiss upon the, as yet, undesignated fairest maid chosen after the white stag hunt, until Erec returns (p. 5). Enide turns out to be the fairest maid, and upon their appearance Guenevere says to Arthur, "It was well we waited for Erec; for now you can bestow the kiss upon the fairest of the court. I should think none would find fault with you!" (p. 23). The romance is, however, a tale essentially about Erec and Enide; therefore, while Guenevere's disposition at court seems to have improved to being a model queen, and as Peter Noble puts it, "a mature, active woman, full of

sense and ingenuity whose advice is listened to and respected" (p. 528), she is not a major player in the romance.

In Chrétien's Cligés (c. 1176), Guenevere is instrumental in bringing the lovers, Alexander and Soredamors, together. Not only does she perceive their love for one another, she speaks formally on the seriousness of it:

> 'Now I wish to instruct you in the lore of love; for I know well that Love is tormenting you . . . I counsel you to exercise no tyranny, and to seek no passing gratification in your love; but to be honourably joined together in marriage. So, I believe, your love shall long endure.'
> (p. 121)

Apart from operating "in relation to the lovers" (Noble, p. 530), Guenevere's appearance in this romance is less frequent than in Erec et Enide. While she continues to display kindness and mercy since Alexander "courteously presents the victims of his first conquest to the Queen, not wishing them to fall into the hands of the King, who would have had them all hanged" (Cligés, p. 108), her power has somewhat decreased because the prisoners are nonetheless surrendered to Arthur.

In Yvain (c. 1177), apart from a couple of references to her abduction by "a knight from a strange land" (p. 231) that will be the main focus in Le Chevalier de la charrette, Guenevere's only action in the romance is to chastise Kay for "evil speech" (p. 181). She tells him,

> 'The devil, Sir Kay . . . are you beside yourself that your tongue always runs on so? Cursed be your tongue which is so full of bitterness!

> Surely your tongue must hate you, for it says the worst it knows to every man.'
>
> (p. 188)

Skinner makes an interesting point that Guenevere's "traditional romance role as promoter of courtesy is here inverted; rather than encouraging courtesy by praise and example, she is forced by Kay's rudeness to become a rebuker of discourtesy" (p. 23).

In Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la charrette (c. 1178), Guenevere is, for the first time, a main character in that she is the object of an abduction by Meleagant and rescue by Lancelot, and the source of inspiration to Lancelot because of their love for one another. While the romance is mostly about Lancelot's exploits in his attempt to rescue her, and ensuing battles for her, she is, above all else, the "one creature he has in mind, and for her his thought is so occupied that he neither sees nor hears aught else" (p. 279). At times, Guenevere's responses to Lancelot's actions seem haughty and cold. When he defeats Meleagant in battle for her release, she does not show gratitude but instead "she looked displeased with clouded brow" and refuses to speak with him (p. 320). As a result of her unexplained coldness, Lancelot leaves in sorrow and is easily captured by enemies because he is unarmed. When a rumour reaches her that he is dead she "is so beside herself that she repeatedly grasps her throat with the desire to kill herself" (p. 323). She feels completely responsible for his capture and

death because although she intended her cruelty "as a jest . . . he did not take it so" (p. 323), and it rendered him without "his heart and life" (p. 323). He then hears a rumour that she has died, and so he considers killing himself. When they are finally reunited and he is bold enough to ask her why she had rejected him, suspecting it was because he mounted a cart to rescue her (carts of this sort are used to transport convicted criminals), she replies that it was not the fact that he mounted one, but that he "hesitated for two whole steps" (p. 327) in doing so. Guenevere later puts Lancelot through physical anguish when she bids him "do his 'worst'" at a tournament (p. 341), but it seems more of an identity test than a test of her lover's obedience, for when he complies with the command, she then "knows full well . . . that this is surely Lancelot" (p. 342).

If it appears that Guenevere exhibits power or control over Lancelot and that he is willingly subservient to her, then this romance is successful in its depiction of courtly love. Countess Marie de Champagne, for whom Chrétien wrote the romance and, as he tells us at the beginning of it, who furnished him with "the material and treatment" for it (p. 270), also retained Andreas Capellanus to write a book on courtly love. In this book, The Art of Courtly Love, Andreas specifies that "a lover should always offer his services and obedience freely . . . and he ought to root out all his

pride and be very humble" (p. 152). Therefore, the very nature of courtly love is subservience to the lady. Andreas also tells us that love "causes a rough and uncouth man to be distinguished . . . it can endow a man even of the humblest birth with nobility of character; it blesses the proud with humility" (p. 31). In other words, a lover who humbles himself to his beloved rises to greater heights. The whole episode about the cart is perfectly in line with this reasoning. Guenevere is supposed to inspire complete obedience and devotion in Lancelot, and his hesitation is correctly interpreted by Guenevere as problematic. Andreas also teaches that "love increases, too, if one of the lovers shows that he is angry at the other; for the lover falls at once into a great fear that this feeling which has arisen in his beloved may last forever" (p. 153). Indeed, the ensuing suicidal ping-pong between Guenevere and Lancelot because of her anger results in a strong confession of their love and consummation of it. They are closer than ever before.

The sexual relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere is described as "agreeable and sweet, as they kiss and fondle each other" (p. 329), so we know they actually commit adultery, and that Lancelot's devotion to his beloved goes beyond pure worship. This is the first time Guenevere is described in any clearly passionate way, but at the same time, it is with a

man other than her husband. C.S. Lewis explains that part of the popularity of the courtly love tradition was in response to the arranged marriages in feudal society (Allegory of Love, p. 13). Hence, "any idealization of sexual love, in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian," he says, "must begin by being an idealization of adultery" (p. 13). Norma Lorre Goodrich's research confirms that "at the court of Marie de Champagne, plain, ordinary married love was condemned. Adultery was all the rage" (King Arthur, p. 140). It becomes quite understandable, then, that if Guenevere was to be depicted in a romantic way in the courtly love form, she would have to be shown as intimate with a man other than her husband.

Chrétien attributed more importance to Guenevere in Le Chevalier de la charrette than in his other romances and the Chroniclers before him. It is possible that since Marie de Champagne furnished him with the material for the romance this development of Guenevere's character is actually owed to Marie. Left to his own choice, as evidenced in his other romances, it is possible that Chrétien "preferred to treat Guinevere as a secondary character, fulfilling her role of Queen . . . unsullied by any hint of adultery" (Noble, p. 535). Whether relegated to the background or seen as a protagonist, I agree with Skinner that these romances collectively portray

Guenevere "as a positive force, as the object of love or as its representative" (Skinner, p. 41).

The Guenevere-Lancelot relationship is carried over to the Vulgate Cycle's Prose Lancelot (c. 1215-35), which apparently used Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la charrette as its source. Like La charrette, the Prose Lancelot is mainly about Lancelot and so "the picture of Guenevere is developed primarily through her relationship to him" (Skinner, p. 49). In order for their love to flourish, the author offers an adulterous Arthur, which may not excuse Guenevere's adultery, but gives her opportunity to deepen her relationship with Lancelot. A false Guenevere, who is Guenevere's half-sister, appears in this story, and is one of the women with whom Arthur has an affair. The result of this relationship is that Arthur exiles the real Guenevere, and she spends two and a half years in Sorlois. However, her kind nature is apparent when she later forgives Arthur for his actions. Hence, Guenevere's growing love for Lancelot may be explained by a degenerating Arthur.

As Lancelot becomes involved in the quest for the grail in the Vulgate Cycle's Queste del Saint Graal, and the pursuit of spiritual excellence takes precedence, Lancelot's physical relationship with Guenevere necessarily becomes sinful and condemned, but it is she who "receives by

far the greater share of the condemnation" (Skinner, p. 69). From the idolization of women in the courtly love tradition, they were now being interpreted quite differently as man's lure into sin. In the Queste del Saint Graal, the characterization of Guenevere manifests this view towards women, when the "hermit judges her to be not simply a fellow sinner, but to be a cause of sin" (Skinner, p. 69).

In the Vulgate Cycle's Mort Artu, Guenevere and Lancelot drift further apart over her misunderstanding of his relationship with the Maid of Escalot. Finally, they are publicly humiliated by Mordred. Mordred's betrayal of Arthur and pursuit of Guenevere, and her subsequent flight to an abbey, found in the Chronicles, is then incorporated into the Mort Artu. The fact that Guenevere meets her end in a convent, remarks Skinner, "exemplifies the lesson of the Queste: that lasting happiness and security does not come from earthly loves, but from retreat from the world and loving service of God" (p. 77). We've come a long way from courtly love's glorification of worshipping one's mistress.

In Le Morte d'Arthur (1485), Malory offers a Guenevere that seems to incorporate much of the material discussed thus far. She continues to be regarded as "one of the fairest alive" (Vol. I, p. 92), and she is "chosen" by Arthur for his bride. As daughter of King Leodegrance of Camelerd, she

comes with a dowry of the round table and one hundred knights. While Arthur says he loves Guenevere, he also clearly loves her dowry, inasmuch as he exclaims upon their arrival:

> 'This fair lady is passing welcome unto me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so leve to me. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches.'
>
> (Vol. I, p. 93)

While her role as a model queen is very much part of Malory's characterization, when she praises Kay's courageous behaviour, for example (p. 121), and presides over tournaments, her main function seems to be that of Lancelot's beloved. Skinner goes so far as to say that Guenevere gains "a separate existence through being Lancelot's love" and that it is "because of her relationship with Lancelot [that] she becomes an important figure in Le Morte Darthur" (p. 122). Malory incorporates most of what is found in Chrétien's La charrette and the Vulgate Prose Lancelot concerning Guenevere and Lancelot. For example, he includes her abduction by Meliagaunt and rescue by Lancelot, although he excludes her rejection of Lancelot upon his rescue for hesitating in mounting the cart. The lack of communication between the two over the cart in La charrette is, however, maintained in Morte through other misunderstandings. Lancelot also attends a tournament in disguise as in La charrette (Morte, Vol. II, p. 389),

but it is not an identity test, rather, a bit of wit by Lancelot played on his fellow knights.

The sexual aspect of their relationship, as commented on by Skinner, is shown "by implication: through occasional references by other characters and through implied parallels to Tristram and Isode's affair" (p. 129). The only instance in which their sexual relationship is clear is, as in La charrette, when Lancelot sneaks into Guenevere's chamber in Meliagaunt's castle:

> Sir Launcelot went unto bed with the queen . . . took his pleasance and his liking until it was in the dawning of the day.
>
> (Vol. II, p. 438)

Their love becomes, as in the Vulgate Cycle, a sinful obstacle barring Lancelot from attaining the grail,[3] but in Malory, the hermit chastises Lancelot for his own lechery (Vol. II, p. 273). Lancelot himself confesses that

> . . . all my great deeds of arms that I have done, I did for the most part for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle were it right

[3] According to the Arthurian Encyclopedia, the grail appears in Arthurian Literature as a sacred vessel that "assumes many forms and functions, although in all cases it retains its basic power as a food provider" (p. 259). By the time of Malory's writing, the grail "becomes synonymous with the beatific vision and is the object of a quest" (p. 260). It is worth noting that the official Church has never approved or condemned the grail's "many and shifting fictions" (p. 260) in the Arthurian legend.

> or wrong; and never did I battle all only for God's sake, but for to win worship and to cause me to be the better beloved.
>
> (Vol. II, p. 272)

Malory is pointing to Lancelot's own vanity here, and in contrast to the Vulgate, seems to be shifting the blame for Lancelot's sinfulness from Guenevere to Lancelot himself. Lancelot's responsibility for his own behaviour is reiterated when he is warned of his "vain glory" and "pride" and the "many times erred against [his] Maker" (Vol. II, p. 300). Also in contrast to the Vulgate, after the sangrail quest Lancelot "began to resort unto Queen Guenever again, and forgat the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest" (Vol. II, p. 373). Malory tells us that "ever his thoughts were privily on the queen, and so they loved together more hotter than they did toforehand" (p. 373).

Their relationship is exposed by Mordred, similarly to the Vulgate, and Malory includes the Chronicle motif of Mordred's usurping Arthur's crown and attempt to wed Guenevere. She takes refuge in the Tower of London, defiantly claiming "she had lever slay herself than to be married with him" (Vol. II, p. 506). Her familiar flight to an abbey and seeking of penance is shown sympathetically at the hands of Malory:

> 'Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain . . . Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee . . . for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I command thee, on

> God's behalf, that thou forsake my company . . . for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed.'
>
> (p. 523)

Guenevere shows here her awareness of the "nation-wide scale [of] the effects of her and Lancelot's divided loyalties" (Skinner, p. 142), and her decision to seek the veil is clearly a result of her change from choosing personal indulgence to doing penance for the effects of that indulgence. Malory has unquestionably developed Guenevere's character from what he found in the Chronicles and French Romances to a woman who displays a gamut of emotions.

Guenevere's emotional personality is displayed when she hears about Elaine's pregnancy by Lancelot. Malory tells us that she was "wroth, and gave many rebukes to Sir Launcelot, and called him false knight" (Vol. II, p. 199). She will display anger and jealousy frequently towards Lancelot, but Malory balances this outrage by equipping her with the ability to forgive and admit herself wrong:

> The queen sent for Sir Launcelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why that she had been wroth with him causeless.
>
> (Vol. II, p. 416)

She shows her love for Lancelot when she is willing to be caught and slain for him to escape (p. 462). And that love is extended to motherly concern for her knights when, at the hands of Meliagaunt, she allows herself to be

abducted to save them from being killed (p. 430). She shows intelligence, defiance and courage during her captures by both Meliagaunt and Mordred, as in the former she sends a child to Lancelot for help, and scorns Meliagaunt thus:

> 'Traitor knight . . . what cast thou for to do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a king's son; and knight of the Table Round, and thou to be about to dishonour the noble king that made thee knight; thou shamest all knighthood and thyself.'
>
> (p. 429)

Facing Mordred, Guenevere contrives false reasons to go to London and, once there, locks herself in the Tower of London, refusing to speak with him (pp. 505-6).

In his article called "Malory's Guinevere: Epic Queen, Romance Heroine and Tragic Mistress," Pasquale DiPasquale argues that Malory's Guenevere comprises the characteristics of this triple role. He says that in her role as epic queen, "it would not be difficult to multiply the number of episodes in which Guinevere exemplifies 'epic dignity'" (p. 91). As a romance heroine, she inspires Lancelot and plays "his true and loyal lover" (p. 93), displaying tenderness, repentance, pettiness, rage, jealousy, anger and a changeable mind. As a tragic mistress, "there is no doubt that she has lost a place of greatness at the end" (DiPasquale, p. 98). Her failings include partial responsibility for the breakdown of the Round Table; barrenness,

for since Arthur and Guenevere never have a child, an heir to the throne, "that lack is at least a contributing fact to Guinevere's tragic significance" (p. 990) and "she is central to the tragic action, for Launcelot kills Gareth and Gaheris in rescuing her" (p. 100). Finally, DiPasquale suggests that her "self-imposed penance . . . must certainly be noted in any consideration of the tragic qualities of her character" (p. 100).

What we seem to have here then, is a Guenevere who has substantially grown from the earlier portrayals of her, as a stock character of the unfaithful and treacherous wife. However, the fact remains that her role still seems to be that of an adultress. Her status as Arthur's "fair lady," in fact, diminishes in the end to being an expendable commodity as Arthur announces:

> '. . . much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company.'
>
> (Vol. II, p. 473)

And most of her action is in relation to her adultery. Yet Malory makes a point of telling us that Guenevere "was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end" (Vol. II, p. 426). If the courtly love tradition fused Guenevere's character with an adulterous love (with Lancelot) because it wanted to see a romantically involved feudal queen, then Malory has tried to provide some scope to that relationship to create a more complex queen than what we

find in the Vulgate Cycle. The portrayal of Guenevere before Lancelot came into the story, as an adultress and traitor with Mordred, may have originated with Geoffrey, but we can only speculate as to his reasons. Perhaps if we can look to the context and structure of each romance for creating a darker and darker Morgan Le Fay, as she evolved from being a healer to an evil sorceress, we can attribute Guenevere's adulterous nature to the essence of courtly love (in relation to Lancelot). It is only through the modern writers that Guenevere begins to lose her adulterous image, and gain a more multi-dimensional character.

Chapter 6: Sharan Newman's Guinevere

Sharan Newman's Guinevere trilogy, consisting of Guinevere (1981), The Chessboard Queen (1983), and Guinevere Evermore (1985),[4] offers a sympathetic and thoroughly developed characterization of Guinevere. Far from the English chroniclers, French romancers and Malory, Newman's Guinevere is anything but a stock figure known mostly for her adultery. This is not to say that Guinevere's adulterous relationship with Lancelot has been omitted; indeed their love is a central focus of the trilogy. But it has changed. It is accepted. Guinevere is no longer condemned solely for her adultery and Arthur ventures to accept some of the responsibility for it himself. In addition, Newman introduces a new motif, that of a magical unicorn, which seems to operate much like "destiny" in terms of bringing the lovers together in the first place. Under these terms, the lovers are behaving less as human beings, and more like puppets being manipulated on a fantastical stage. Newman's trilogy, perhaps obvious from the titles of the three books, also makes Guinevere its main character. While Guinevere has traditionally functioned in relation to the other Arthurian characters, this is the Arthurian story told as it relates to Guinevere. Harold Herman points out that while other writers "have shown the human development of

[4]The three works will henceforth be referred to as (G), (CQ), and (GE).

Guinevere, Newman is the first writer to make it her major focus" ("Sharan Newman's Guinevere Trilogy," p. 48).

In order to fully show this human development, Newman creates a childhood for Guinevere. Much like the result in Marion Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon, in which Morgaine is the main character, creating a childhood for Guinevere allows a greater understanding of her adult personality, and monitoring of her emotional growth. The familiar is also here, for Newman's Guinevere has a Roman lineage, with Leodegrance as her father, is brought up at Cameliard, and later fostered at Cador's castle. She does create, however, a mother for Guinevere, named Guenlian, and three brothers, Mark, John and Matthew. Merlin is related to her by being her mother's second cousin. Newman retains Guinevere's traditional beauty, which is evident even at twelve years of age. Her hair is described as "true gold, burnished like a shield, red in the firelight" (G 4), and as "rich gold tresses" (G 161), and her green eyes as "remarkable . . . the color of the first spring leaves" (G 4). She is tall and "finely built" (G 208) with "long, brown legs" (G 56). Her only physical flaw seems to be "short, unaristocratic fingers" (G 57). Her beauty is constantly acknowledged and eventually becomes "legendary in Britain" (CQ 154). However, both her beauty and her newly created childhood, in Newman's hands, contribute to

an "otherworldly" peculiarity about her that will play a major theme in the trilogy.

As a child, Guinevere is clearly adored by her family, but overly so, to the point of being overprotected from the "real" world. She is kept oblivious of the warring Saxons, unaware "that [her] quiet, ordered, civilized way of life was already an anachronism" (G 4). This in itself is not an unusual demonstration of parental love, but in Guinevere's case, it would set a pattern that she would follow as Queen of Britain. She would always expect to be protected, and consequently experiences little personal growth. "The effect of this insulated world," remarks Herman, "is that Guinevere is emotionally stunted" (p. 40).

As a child, she is considered to be spoiled, naive, and irresponsible, all by-products of her parents' overprotection. While Guenlian chastises her, saying, "you are old enough now to know what you should and should not do" (G 12), she then contrarily sends an unwilling Guinevere off to live in a secluded forest hut with Timon and Gaia for her "safety" at the first visit from soldiers. Despite Guinevere's arguments and protests, she is overruled, and once again decisions are made for her. She rages inward, but "not tears nor temper nor pitiable sorrow" (G 55) changed her situation. Some time later she is similarly sent off to Cador's castle for fostering

because her parents believe they must send her from Cameliard, where there are now "too many memories and too many horrors" (G 141). Again she "protested bitterly" but the decision is made for her. Decision-making becomes a handicap in her personal growth as an adult since she learns at this young age that others seem to make decisions for her, including her marriage to Arthur. When she responds to his proposal, she does not say "yes," but that she will be his wife because "everyone says so" (G 233).

Given her sheltered life at Cameliard and isolated time at Timon and Gaia's hermitage, it is not surprising that Guinevere becomes withdrawn, and less in touch with reality. She is also constantly observed by others as being "otherworldly." "She is not like the others," a nurse comments, "there is a light about her, a divine aura" (G 37). Her brothers admit that she seemed like "some sort of fairy child who would never change" (G 41), and Merlin thinks to himself that she gave an impression "of being not quite of this earth" (G 45). She is even believed by Flora, to be destined as a sacrifice to Epona, the horse goddess. Guinevere also demonstrates a unique ability to "see" Geraldus' choir that is invisible to everyone else, and noiseless to everyone else but Geraldus. "That Guinevere can see them," remarks Herman, "indicates that she is already moving into the otherworld" (40). Guinevere's "otherworldliness" and lack of interest in

reality, remembering also that she had been sheltered from "the real world," set the stage for her encounter and ensuing relationship with the unicorn, and then Lancelot because they, too, are "otherworldly."

Guinevere is first drawn to the unicorn when "she heard a call, far away, from someone who wanted her desperately" (G 31) and that left the "feeling of great speed and freedom" (G 69). When they finally meet, and he lays his head in her lap, she is filled with incredible happiness, as "her mind and soul were linked to those of the unicorn" (G 90). She instinctively tells him that she has been looking for him for a long time, and he replies, "Not as long as I have hunted you" (G 90). We are told that the unicorn "had been truly created for her, as she must have been for him" (G 91). They continue to meet periodically, Guinevere finding that "being with the unicorn soothed her without questions or demands" (G 117). He provides her with great comfort in the midst of the unpleasant surroundings of Cador's castle (G 149). We are led to believe that Guinevere's relationship with the unicorn has something to do with her virgin state, since when the unicorn rejects Rhianna (who is pregnant), she tells Guinevere that "a unicorn can only be tamed by a virgin" (G 122). Further, their link is described as one in which "she was bound by the wisdom in his mind and he by the innocence in her heart" (G 91). And the relationship

ceases immediately after the consummation of her marriage, when she can no longer "feel" his presence. Harold Herman believes it is possible that the unicorn "represents her later ego" (p. 42). The unicorn does specifically call Guinevere "my other self" on two occasions (G 150 & 174). And, as Herman points out, the unicorn is tormented with questions about his nature, his mortality and destiny. In contrast, Guinevere "never questioned anything herself [and] did not know what it was to be torn and consumed by the need to know *why*" (G 151). Perhaps there is something to this since the main result of Guinevere's relationship with the unicorn is that she alienates the people around her, and a teenager in search of self may do exactly that. We are told that since "her thoughts were all of her unicorn . . . she had little communication with the others" (G 105), and that she "had occupied her early years with her unicorn and needed no one else" (G 161). When she feels her friendship with Geraldus lessening, she comforts herself by thinking of her unicorn, knowing "she needed no one else as long as she had him" (G 169). While these multiple functions of the unicorn are integrated with Guinevere's character, in that he emphasizes her virginity, provides great comfort while alienating her from human interaction, and acts as her other self or alter-ego, his most important function is that he links her to an otherworld, in which she will find Lancelot.

To parallel Guinevere's "otherworldliness," Newman's Lancelot du lac is literally brought up in a fairy kingdom underneath a lake. Its normal inhabitants seem to be immortal, but he is abducted from the real world when a baby, by the Lady of the Lake, and upon entering manhood, feels he must leave this enchanted world to offer his services to mankind. The first event to befall him is an encounter with the unicorn. The animal is dying but after closely looking at Lancelot declares,

> You are the one! . . . At last! I give to you my place in her heart, but have no fear, for you will find your own way there.
>
> (CQ 31)

This transfer of Guinevere's love for the unicorn to Lancelot becomes evident the first time Guinevere and Lancelot meet:

> Lancelot had been staring at her since he entered the room. He had not been prepared for this. Who would have thought that this man had married a goddess? He touched the hand offered to him and bowed over it. He raised his eyes to hers.
>
> Guinevere caught her breath. She nearly cried out. His eyes! Something about them was familiar. But that was nonsense. She had never seen him before. She controlled herself and greeted him civilly.
>
> (CQ 85)

Guinevere tries to ignore the magnetism between them, possibly because she had never experienced such a bond with another human being before. At Cador's castle, before her marriage, she had felt uncomfortable around other people "having to deal with their emotions and desires" because "strong feelings frightened her" (G 173). Her childhood fantasy worlds and

the unicorn clearly interfered with her emotional development and human relationships (Herman, p. 41). It can be no coincidence here that her spirit is awakened by Lancelot, a spirit that at the departure of the unicorn, was crushed as she "felt a shattering of something in her heart, like crystal smashing on a stone" (G 256). Newman has obviously given Lancelot the unicorn's place in Guinevere's heart. The bond between the three becomes unmistakeable when Guinevere and Lancelot make love in a clearing in the woods that used to be her meeting place with the unicorn. While her memory of the unicorn is all but gone, she feels the familiarity of this place, remembering that she was "waiting for someone" (GE 46). When Lancelot appears, she acknowledges him by saying, "You heard me calling" (GE 47). She would similarly call the unicorn through her mind and he would appear. As Guinevere's beloved unicorn has been replaced by her lover, Lancelot, she too has transformed in relation to each of them, from virgin to passionate lover.

That Lancelot is also linked with Guinevere through their respective "otherworldly" peculiarities is unquestionable. His eyes are a source of uneasiness for Guinevere alone, described as "haunting" and "dangerous" (CQ 114) and containing "sorcery" from which she must protect herself (CQ 177). While Guinevere is mistaken for "the holy Virgin" by Arthur

(G 93), Lancelot's character parallels that of Jesus when he drives "a nail into his . . . palm" (CQ 25), and sees himself as the savior to mankind to the point that he is even called "Lancelot the Savior" (CQ 265). Guinevere and Lancelot are equally uncomfortable and unused to the "real world," having come from respectively a sheltered Cameliard and a world under the lake. This becomes apparent when, after Lancelot asks Guinevere how to be behave like a human, she thinks to herself that she "knew as little about being human as he did" (CQ 227). The horse goddess, Epona, an extension of the unicorn motif, also appears to link Lancelot and Guinevere together. When Lancelot rescues Guinevere from Meleagant's clutches, and comes to her bleeding from wounds he suffered crossing the sword bridge, Guinevere reacts crazily to his blood that has been left on her clothing. She seems to confuse it with the blood that had splattered on her from Flora's body, when Flora had tried to kill her as a sacrifice to Epona some years before. Unaware of this earlier history, Meleagant responds to Guinevere's out-burst by exclaiming, "By the blood of Epona's mare!" (CQ 171). Hence, through two allusions, one indirect and one direct, Lancelot's blood is clearly related to Epona. The unicorn too is linked with Epona, since most simplistically, he is a horse, but more importantly because he is identified as a servant to Epona by Flora, and a "renegade" in the wake of his rescue

of Guinevere from the sacrifice (G 136).

The significance of these "otherworldly" connections between Guinevere and Lancelot (the unicorn and Epona, their biblical identities, his sorceress eyes to which she only is drawn, and their respective lack of experience in the "real world" and with human relationships) is that they do establish connections between the two. More specifically, they establish "extraordinary" connections that contribute to their relationship's intensity and inevitability. I have no doubt that Newman intentionally introduced these "otherworldly" connections between Guinevere and Lancelot in order to lessen the human responsibility of their adulterous relationship. To delete their illicit love affair from a new reworking of the Arthurian story would be to delete a major portion of its charm and tension, but the guilt associated with Guinevere's part in it can be altered or absolved. Newman is offering Guinevere and Lancelot's relationship as a love that is "destined" to exist. The word "destiny" is, in fact, used a number of times in the trilogy, not only in reference to Guinevere and Lancelot, but to Arthur as well in terms of his future as King (CA 64). In reference to Guinevere and Lancelot, Guinevere states that while it is her duty to love her husband and King, it is her "destiny" to love Lancelot (CQ 293). We cannot but help be convinced that the fantastical

elements in Newman's trilogy do have some bearing on her characters, and in terms of Guinevere, these elements allow her to be less responsible for her love for Lancelot and less guilty for the adultery.

In keeping with Chrétien de Troyes, Newman's Guinevere initially rejects Lancelot, but for quite different reasons. The cart motif and Guinevere's abduction by Meleagant are incorporated in Newman's reworking, and while Chrétien's Guinevere scorned Lancelot not for mounting the cart, but for hesitating in doing so, Newman's Guinevere feels "sick" that he could do "such a shameful thing" (CQ 165). But Newman's young Guinevere is selfish, shallow and, above all, afraid of what Lancelot may mean to her. This isn't a Guinevere testing her lover's obedience, but a Guinevere who by being shown as lacking in character, can then be shown to evolve to new heights. Newman isn't interested in portraying Guinevere and Lancelot in the courtly love tradition, as mistress and humble lover, but as partners, equally lost in life, destined for each other. Lancelot goes mad after her rejection, losing his will to live, not unlike Chrétien's Lancelot. But in Newman, it is Guinevere who finds him. It is at this point that she succumbs to their bond, having seen the magnitude of his sorrow when she rejected him. She overcomes her fear to deal with her feelings for him when she pleads,

> Lancelot, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do this to you. Please forgive me! Come back! I'm not afraid anymore. Look at me! I won't ever deny it again.
>
> (CQ 217)

Once she accepts his love, she soon finds herself thinking about him all the time. But she also finds herself more relaxed when he is gone, knowing he wasn't there watching her. "She did not walk into any rooms with trembling anticipation, wondering if he would be there, waiting" (CQ 252).

Guinevere and Lancelot come to declare their love for one another in the aftermath of the Elaine plot. Lancelot's one night with Elaine (as a result of trickery) became a source of conflict between Guinevere and Lancelot in the Vulgate Cycle and Malory. But Newman uses it as a means to demonstrate to Guinevere the hunger Lancelot feels for her. He was drugged and made to believe Elaine was Guinevere, and Guinevere realizes that she wishes it had indeed been her (CQ 266):

> Lancelot . . . was like an unexpected brilliant flash of light, showing her all the shapes and corners once decently shadowed. She did not want to look. But it was etched there before her. She loved him. She wanted him with her now and forever. She needed him to be with her and touch her and to hold him as she had never needed anyone before.
>
> (CQ 271)

When Elaine tries to trick Lancelot a second time, and Guinevere walks in on them, her instincts scream betrayal and anger. But she reaches deep within herself to ignore the situation, and insists that she believes in Lancelot's innocence (CQ 288). They consummate their love shortly

afterwards, but in contrast to Chrétien and Malory, it is not Lancelot who goes to Guinevere, but Guinevere who goes to Lancelot. And for her, their lovemaking is more than love, it is pure joy (CQ 291). Their closeness is evident when Lancelot says "you are more a part of me than my soul" (GE 15), and she declares, "as long as my soul wanders the universe, it will search for yours" (GE 143).

Newman's trilogy presents Guinevere and Lancelot's love as one that is natural and wonderful, and fulfilling to them both. She has taken great care to add elements that suggest the love is destined to exist, and therefore larger than both of them. In a story in which there has traditionally been enormous guilt laid upon the adulterers, and their adultery has typically been a cause, if not <u>the</u> cause, of the destruction of the Round Table, Newman's sympathetic portrayal of Guinevere causes a redirection of the guilt. As already discussed, there can be little doubt that the unicorn and the various "otherworldly" connections between Guinevere and Lancelot play a significant new role by claiming the reponsibility for their attraction to one another, which in turn lessens the responsibility of the lovers. But the adultery is virtually excused by Arthur, who, infuriated by the public accusation of Guinevere's adultery, insists, "whatever Lancelot and Guinevere have done is no one's business but mine" (GE 155). In fact, he

confesses to Guinevere that his own selfishness led to all the chaos:

> The things that have been done to you, Guinevere, have been because you were my wife. Men who wanted to destroy me used you and your . . . association with Lancelot.
>
> . . . .
>
> I knew about Lancelot for years. I could have let you go, but I was too selfish. I didn't want to give you up. You are my weakness; my enemies know it. This was my fault, you were not to blame.
>
> (GE 203)

Therefore, Arthur knew about his wife's adultery, but chose to overlook it, blaming his own selfishness for the disaster. He clearly sees the destruction of the Round Table and his dreams to be his own responsibility. But Newman doesn't leave Arthur with the blame. Guinevere shows her own maturity and sense of responsibility by insisting to Arthur,

> I won't let you take it all upon yourself. I'm to blame for loving Lancelot; you're to blame for loving me. Lancelot is to blame for every sin since Cain killed Abel as far as he can see. We're wallowing in it. It's enough.
>
> (GE 204)

These sentiments could be describing the earlier portrayals of Guinevere when the blame was black and white. The difference between those portrayals and Newman's is as Guinevere continues to declare:

> I won't let you waste away or throw yourself on your sword because you're a human being.
>
> (GE 204)

Newman's Guinevere is not "blameless," but she is more "human" than her medieval predecessors who were all too simply persecuted for adultery,

and ended up in a nunnery. Newman shows Guinevere's guilt to be complex because human beings are complex. Newman reminds us of the condemnation Guinevere received in the Vulgate Cycle (because women alone were viewed as the cause of sin), when St. Illtud tries to convince Lancelot that his lust for Guinevere obstructs him "from finding God" (GE 111). He insists that Guinevere is evil, and later at her trial, agrees that if burning her would "save a man's soul" (GE 173), then he would agree to it. But Lancelot accepts his own responsibility because he knows she will always be in his heart and asks St. Illtud, "How can you renounce your own heart?" (GE 111). Guinevere tells Lancelot, "my guilt is as great as yours, greater, because I do not repent . . . I can never be sorry for loving you" (GE 184). And she rationalizes that they "could not be evil and be loved by Galahad" (GE 196). In the end, she and Arthur equally admit to each other that while he sacrificed her for his dreams, she sacrificed him to her desires (GE 239). The guilt, by being absorbed by more characters, is less an issue in Newman than it has been by earlier writers, and that makes Guinevere a more interesting and thought-provoking character.

Guinevere's emotional development continues to be a major theme as she matures over the years. Her reaction to the deaths of people around her is an interesting gauge by which to measure her emotional growth.

When her brothers were reported dead, she, then a teenager, "couldn't sense the finality of their lives, only the ending of something in hers" (G 117). She wept for herself, not her brothers. Her behaviour here is not out of character for a spoiled and selfish teenager. Some ten years later, when she is telling her niece, Letitia, about Letitia's father (Guinevere's brother), she becomes very sad, and finally weeps for him. She acknowledges that now she felt for what _he_ had lost (CQ 142). However, some time after this, when Leodegrance dies, Guinevere reacts selfishly again, believing that "no one had the right to die while she still needed him" (GE 33). It is Geraldus' death, along with Sidra's, that prompts intense sorrow and rare humility in Guinevere. For them, "she wept out her sorrow, her guilt, and her forgetfulness" (CQ 214). She realizes that

> she had never told Sidra how she felt, had never thanked her, never apologized for all the thoughtless, snobbish things she had done, for her total selfish absorption in her own very special person. (CQ 214)

Through Sidra's death especially, it seems that Guinevere sees herself as others perceive her, and that is growth. "Guinevere had never before doubted her own wondrous worth . . . but the question now existed" (CQ 214). The death of her foster son, Galahad, touches her even more profoundly, and she meets it honestly. She tells Lydia,

> It hurts very deeply. Lots of people I loved have died, but it never hurt this much. I think I need to lie here and cry for a long, long time. (GE 149)

Perhaps because Galahad had filled an emptiness in her life and given her such happiness, his death triggers enormous emotion within her. Finally, in her later years, after Arthur's death, when she is trying to discover what "Guinevere could do" (GE 249), she shows selflessness and compassion as "she cared for her mother in her slow decline and final illness and knew the peace of letting someone she loved go gently" (GE 249). And she reveals regret at Caet's death, holding him a long time, because "he had always been like a shadow to her" (GE 261). Each death, while removing a loving person from her life, leaving her to stand more on her own, also allows her to gain some insight into herself and become more emotionally mature.

Lancelot's son, Galahad, enables Guinevere to experience maternal love, and a bonding that is shared between a mother and a child, allowing her to more fully develop. Before Galahad came into her life, Guinevere's barrenness causes her great embarrassment, anger and guilt (CQ 9). Her lack of offspring also contributes to Guinevere's exclusion from the female circles in her court (CQ 39-40). It also obviously lessens her self worth as she apologizes to Arthur for not having given him any children, and says that she would not object to his taking a mistress, willing to love any

subsequent children as her own (CQ 190). As DiPasquale points out, Guinevere's barrenness is part of her "tragic significance" (p. 990) because a queen's prime role, different from other women, is to provide an heir. However, Newman also shows Guinevere's personal feelings of emptiness for her lack of children. When Galahad becomes her foster son, Guinevere begins to find that "the world became less important than the golden boy encircled in her arms" (GE 33). The women's group opens to her, and she feels like she belongs because she shares so much more with them now (GE 51). Because of motherhood, Guinevere's selfishness begins to fade. Loving Galahad enables her to experience a wonderful human relationship, and relate more to others as well. Typically, Guinevere is rarely given the chance to experience motherhood, and certainly not to the extent that we see in Newman. Newman even risks depicting Guinevere's love for Galahad to be greater than her love for Lancelot. She tells Risa, "Galahad is all I have . . . all I'll ever have" (GE 77), and Lancelot realizes that she is more "concerned with Galahad's departure than his own" (GE 78). Herman points out that "the fulfillment that she experiences as Galahad's foster mother is different from the frustration that characterizes the childless Guinevere in the Arthurian works of White, Stewart, and Bradley" (p. 45).

Perhaps the most singular turning point in Guinevere's emotional

growth comes when she is imprisoned by the Bishops in Cirencester for sorcery. Newman invents this sorceress plot to incarcerate Guinevere for a crime other than adultery. Her renowned beauty comes into play here as a reason to believe her a witch, because "her beauty is a temptation to any man who dares look at her" (GE 158-9), and she has strangely shown no signs of aging. Unknown to her persecutors, however, Guinevere's "youthful" appearance was caused by a spell put on her by Flora to keep her undamaged before sacrificing her to Epona. Since Guinevere escaped the ordeal, the youth spell had stayed with her (GE 82). She is accused of treason by use of her sorceress beauty and youth because she is perceived to be controlling Arthur and Lancelot, and people in general. Plain courtesy on her part is interpreted as bewitching people. The plot is engineered by Modred, who hopes that the removal of Guinevere will be "the final blow to Arthur" (GE 82). But during this solitary and anxious time for Guinevere, she comes to make the first major decision for herself. Geraldus and Merlin, presumably ghost-like entities, offer her an afterlife with them, but she refuses, saying,

> There would always be talk that Arthur or Lancelot had freed me and that I was still alive somewhere, brewing horrible potions, no doubt, to destroy my enemies. No, I won't go with you. I'll stay here, and if the tribunal says I'm guilty, then I'll die.
>
> (GE 162)

She shows courage and unselfishness in this decision. This newfound unselfishness is repeated only a few days later when Lancelot rescues her from the buring pyre, and she witnesses Lancelot unintentionally kill Gareth, who is on their side. She cries, "Gareth! Oh no! Dear Lord, not for me!" (GE 182). From both of these scenes, we see a Guinevere who is thinking of others before herself. During the escape, she is accidently injured when a "flaming brand lands on her foot" (GE 182), and it leaves her with a permanent limp. Her perfect beauty is now marred, perhaps symbolic of her inner self becoming less guarded, and more in tune with the reality of life and human relationships.

Guinevere again makes a decision for herself that is unselfish and courageous when she agrees to return to Camelot if "Lancelot fights Arthur's champion and wins" (GE 195). She wants the fighting to end, and even though it means leaving Lancelot, she is prepared to sacrifice her own desires for the sake of others. She makes an even larger sacrifice when she agrees to marry Modred in exchange for his release of the women and children from Camelot (GE 215). Further, not seeking praise, she tells no one except Risa of the deal. Acting on her own, separated from Lancelot and believing Arthur dead, Guinevere then discovers a strength within herself that she never had to call on before, because she had always been

protected and cared for. She confesses to Risa, "Always, I waited for someone else to come and get me, like a parcel . . . [and] this time no one is going to come, and I have to survive the best I can" (GE 218). She asks Risa to "teach [her] how to take care of [her]self" (GE 223), and she seeks beyond her beauty for a Guinevere who is "more than [her] looks" (GE 225). So she refuses to submit to Modred when he rapes and physically abuses her. It takes all the courage and strength she can muster, but finally, a frustrated Modred "knew there was nothing he could do to her that could reach what she was . . . and he knew she had won" (GE 225). Guinevere, in reaction to an horrendous situation, has finally claimed responsibility for herself. It is interesting that Newman has incorporated a rape and physical abuse sequence, a current women's issue, although it is perfectly within character of the traditionally evil Mordred's attempt to wed and bed Guinevere. And Newman fittingly chooses these personal violations against Guinevere as a means through which to discover her strength and capabilities because mankind is known to rise to great heights after great sufferings. Guinevere continues to take responsibility for herself when she engineers her escape with Risa, and reunites with Arthur. While he blames himself for having trusted Modred and sees this stupidity on his part as being directly responsible for the abuse done to her body, she

refuses to lay guilt on him (GE 234). She has come a long way.

In a startling contrast to the traditional nunnery as Guinevere's end, Newman takes her back to Cameliard, where, on her own, she sets about to discover herself. She tells Lancelot,

> All my life, I've waited patiently for someone to come along and rescue me. But with Modred I knew no one could. And I stopped waiting. After all these years, I finally rescued myself! . . . I want so much to find out what else I can do, all alone.
>
> (GE 248)

She learns how to run Cameliard, and care for the sick, using her education to read medical books and understand treatments (GE 251). She lives through the plague, saving some lives, and leads Cameliard into a new age that blends the Britons with Saxons. When Lancelot returns she tells him she discovered

> I can help in a sickroom and play with children and, maybe, I can hold people together. I never knew that was a talent before, but I've worked all these years to keep Cameliard . . . safe and well.
>
> (GE 271)

She has become her own mistress, capable of decision-making, caring for others and most of all believing in herself. Symbolically, Guinevere has finally aged, showing wrinkles and veins and faded skin. Paralleling her own search for self, Lancelot's search discovered only more questions. But just as they were destined to love each other in their youth, Newman reunites them in the end, but in a more mature and less urgent love. Their

deaths occur within a week of each other, and their bones are buried together.

Sharan Newman's Guinevere is familiar to us because she is beautiful, Roman, a kind and generous queen, abducted by Meliagant, manipulated by Mordred, and especially, married to King Arthur and in love with Lancelot. However, in contrast to the earlier portrayals of her as a stock figure known mostly for her adultery, Newman's reworking of the Arthurian story is a presentation of a woman's struggle with herself and her circumstances. She has also been recruited from the background to center stage, as the main character of a trilogy in her name, around which all of the other characters revolve. In order to create a thoroughly developed characterization of Guinevere, Newman shows her development and growth from childhood to old age. She invents a childhood for Guinevere that is shown to be overprotective, causing her to become spoiled, naive, and irresponsible, and which leaves her incapable of making any decisions for herself. She shares her withdrawn childhood with a unicorn who alienates her more from human interaction and connects her with an equally withdrawn Lancelot. Their adulterous love affair is less emphasized as Guinevere's major role and a source of sin and guilt, and more incorporated into her life's scheme. She encounters new experiences such as mother-

hood, persecution, rape and physical abuse, all of which contribute to her growth to becoming less selfish, more giving, courageous, sociable, and, most importantly, capable of making decisions for herself and taking responsibility for her own life. Appropriately. Newman deletes the nunnery ending, and instead invents a situation in which Guinevere can show leadership and search for her own identity. Evidently Newman does not consider retreating from the world to necessarily be the answer to finding happiness. In Newman's hands, Guinevere is no longer a tragic figure because the dramatic action of the trilogy has changed from its partially being a story of her downfall, to its being Guinevere's search for personal strength and freedom, and she finds them.

Chapter 7: Parke Godwin's Guenevere

It is in Parke Godwin's Firelord (1980) and Beloved Exile (1984)[5] that we find the most dramatically changed Guenevere. Raymond Thompson comments that Godwin's Guenevere "is surely one of the most dynamic and admirable characterizations in all Arthurian literature" ("Firelord and Beloved Exile," p. 14). Perhaps the main reason for this notable difference in her portrayal is the fact that Godwin casts her as ruler of the Northern Parisi in her own right, and co-ruler of Britain with Arthur. She is, in fact, named by Arthur as his successor upon his death, which is unique in Arthurian literature. Godwin appropriately, then, depicts his Guenevere as one with leadership capabilities, knowledge of government, intelligence, and even the emotional strength to kill with her own hands. Godwin says that since he chose to set his reworking of the Arthurian story in the late Roman period, he took his "authority for Guenevere as an educated woman from the period." He further elaborates:

> Beginning with the high place women had in Celtic society, she had at her disposal the entire learning of her time. She and Arthur thought in Latin; this gave them a precision of thought and speech. They had a Roman sense of organization. They were professional rulers. They had to be.
>
> ("The Road to Camelot," p. 8)

In an interview with Karen Garthright, he further comments on the Celtic

---

[5] Firelord and Beloved Exile will henceforth be referred to as (F) and (BE).

background as a more female-dominant society, claiming that "the Celts had a very different attitude toward women than the medieval period [which was] patriarchal and very repressive" (p. 16). Hence, Godwin's portrayal of Guenevere is one that is strong, and capable of rule. However, he does not create a flawless Guenevere, but one with an abundance of pride, vanity, and lack of compassion. She abuses power, and acts wrongly on feelings of jealousy. Hence, much like Newman's Guinevere, Godwin's Guenevere also undergoes a struggle of personal growth. While Firelord is mostly Arthur's story, Beloved Exile is only about Guenevere, and is newly created material about her life after Arthur's death. Her main struggle occurs in Beloved Exile while enslaved by an English (Saxon) thegn for ten years. In the same way that Arthur's time with Morgana and the Prydn in Firelord humanized him, Guenevere's slavery under the Saxons ironically frees her from herself. Her traditional adulterous association with Lancelot is downplayed, virtually excused as insignificant, and instead it is her ordering the execution of Arthur's Prydn family that causes her to be charged with treason. Therefore, Godwin's characterization of Guenevere is one that least resembles earlier Gueneveres, since he is mainly concerned with her role as co-ruler and then successor, and her humanizing journey.

Godwin attributes Guenevere with her traditional beauty as Arthur says, "men praised her beauty even in age" (F 123). Her only competition is Yseult, who is actually hailed as "the most beautiful woman in Britain" (F 204). However, the two women together, comments Gareth, cause "the poor sun [to] hide for jealousy" (F 205). Of her family tree, Godwin names Cador as Guenevere's father instead of Leodegrance. Cador is not the lord of a Cornish castle in Godwin, but the prince of the Northern Parisi, stationed at the "old forum of Eburacum" (BE 73). Guenevere tells us that "for the last hundred years and more my own family had been the tribal crown and Roman magistracy combined" (BE 73). Hence, in Godwin, her traditional Roman lineage is a direct result of her family's duty as Roman magistracy. Guenevere's mother and her predecessors were from Gaul (BE 80), and celtics at heart (BE 77). The result of the two influences was that Guenevere "at sixteen . . . knew the machinery of government," and as the female of the Parisi tribe "represent[ing] fortune and fertility," she knew men (BE 80). Since Guenevere's brother, Peredur, seemed destined more for the Church than succeeding his father, Guenevere becomes her father's intended successor. Consequently, she is taught government, tribal policy and, Roman magistracy, and schooled in Latin, Cumbric, Greek, mathematics and history (BE 76). It is interesting to note that in Godwin,

while Arthur has to prove his worthiness of the crown, Guenevere is brought up to rule. She is, perhaps, even better equipped to rule than Arthur in this characterization. Arthur himself recognizes her capabilities:

> Guenevere was raised on Latin. Its precision ordered her thoughts. She had her father's undeniable gift for government . . . 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.
>
> (F 136)

Therefore, Godwin's intention to draw a Guenevere from Roman and Celtic influences is manifested in her mixed upbringing between Roman magistracy and Celtic tribal lore. Roman magistracy educates her, and Celtic tribal lore while praising her womanhood, teaches her about men. The combination endows her with the leadership characteristics necessary to rule in an essentially male-dominated society.

Traditionally, Guenevere is chosen by Arthur for his wife, but because of her birthright to rule the Parisi, Arthur must claim Britain's crown before Cador considers him worthy of his daughter. Interestingly, Cador's patriarchal dominance over Guenevere's future husband renders her less powerful than one would expect. However, she does not dispute her father's logic, telling Arthur that a marriage with Brude, allying the Parisi with Orkney and the Picts, would be a profitable one (F 148). Because of

her upbringing, she comes to Arthur as a woman with her own mind, and consequently, from the beginning of their relationship, Guenevere and Arthur rationalize and organize together. She advises him on how to rally support from a troublesome Agrivaine (F 135), and how to get the better of Cador (F 161). After they're married, Arthur tells us that "the late evenings Guenevere and I kept for ourselves, but even by the rude bed where we slept and played . . . there were piles of tax tables, maps and dispatches" (F 187). She is part of council meetings and Arthur's partner in decision-making. And quite opposite from Newman's Guinevere who is constantly protected and rescued when endangered, Godwin's Guenevere proves her courage, self-reliance and emotional strength when she kills a Pict in self-defence. At first, "she was huddled on the edge of the bed, ashen, knuckles white around the hilt of the smeared dagger" (F 122), but when Arthur informs her that the Picts will probably always be a threat, she quickly rationalizes that she must get used to it (F 123). She then goes out to help the wounded. She is a woman who is not afraid to deal with reality, no matter how difficult or demanding it may be.

In addition to Guenevere's new role as co-ruler of Britain with Arthur, she is also shown to be his partner in marriage. She is the one who initiates pre-marital sex with Arthur, telling him, "Today I'm not sure of

anything, whether I want you or just not to sleep alone in the bed where I almost died" (F 135). There is no dominance by one over the other but instead they "clasped together, mirror to mirror . . . [which] sent reflections into infinity" (F 135). The first years of their marriage are good ones, as they are happy companions, and even bring Britain's problems into the intimacy of their bed. After Arthur condemns Guenevere for treason, she still feels that she and Arthur are inseparable:

> What manglers we are, Arthur. The lives we've stretched and pummeled and twisted to our own shapes. People that never really lived except through us. We're creatures of a kind, hatched from the same egg. That's why . . . you're the best friend I ever had.
>
> (F 311)

Yet Arthur was intrinsically committed to Morgana. As discussed in Chapter 2, Godwin shows Morgana to be Arthur's first wife and true love. It is she whom Arthur calls the fruit of the earth, while Guenevere is but a flower (F 160). Morgana could sustain him, while Guenevere has but a decorative quality. When he is dying, it is Morgana whom he looks to joining in eternity, and the hollow place in him is filled (F 369). A further change is Guenevere's true love for Arthur instead of Lancelot. Where we usually see a hopelessly adoring Arthur in love with a Guenevere who is in love with Lancelot, Godwin shows Guenevere in pursuit of Arthur. The result of this reversal is that Guenevere is afflicted with a range of

dangerous emotions such as hurt, jealousy and loneliness that she must contend with. Her new-fashioned independence is offset by an emotional dependence on a man who needs someone else. This angers and frustrates Guenevere when she admits through the first-person narrative of Beloved Exile that men

> . . . came as I chose them, crude or sensitive, devious or honorable, but I learned to ration my heart. Arthur was the first to whom I went myself, telling my pride he needed me. That lapse of independence was the first thorn in our crowns. I never forgave Arthur my need of him.
>
> (BE 85)

Because she loves and needs Arthur more than he does her, it is Guenevere, not Arthur, who is hurt in the relationship. Once Arthur allows Morgana to come to Camelot, Guenevere all too clearly sees to whom his heart is dedicated. This hurt is compounded by the fact that Morgana and Arthur share a son while her own baby is stillborn. Her inability to bear a healthy child is the singlemost failure of her life which will always haunt her. She tells Arthur, "I'd never failed before and I didn't know what to do. My soul can pray, but what do I do with this empty, useless body?" (F 311). The pregnancy had given her a feeling of completeness and proven her womanhood to her. She tells us, "not once, till this miracle grew and moved in my womb, had I ever for one day lived for myself alone" (BE 88). After she loses the baby, she couldn't bear for Arthur to touch her and they

grow apart (BE 47). The combination of seeing "the sum of [their] beauty come out . . . dead" (BE 51), and opening herself up too much to Arthur activates jealousy and hostility toward Morgana which change Guenevere's marriage and royal status forever.

Guenevere's power of rule enables her to order the execution of Morgana and her family while her prejudice against the Picts and people that appear to be like them, such as the Prydn, allows her to show absolutely no compassion or remorse. Arthur's bringing Morgana to Camelot hurt Guenevere to such a degree that she says, "I had to strike him back where it would hurt the most" (BE 91). Of that, she shows certain knowledge, for Arthur is hurt to the core of his very being upon the death of his family. Guenevere then discovers exactly how much he loved Morgana because he has her put in chains, and pushes her down to Morgana's body to rub her face in the blood spilled by her command. He names her "filthy pride" and "impersonal" killing as two of her faults (F 254). Arthur does not see the hurt from which Guenevere's actions are motivated, only that she is "rotten with the power [he] gave [her]" (F 313). She is condemned for treason, since Arthur's person could have been injured at the time of attack, hence, she is imprisoned.

While adultery is the traditional cause for Guenevere's condemnation,

Godwin's reversals of love matches make adultery on Guenevere's part less plausible. She still commits adultery with Lancelot, but she goes to him out of loneliness after losing her baby. He is the only one who seems to understand her pain (BE 196). But in frank admission of her minimal commitment to Lancelot, Guenevere says to Arthur, "What does it matter who, when, where? He got so little . . ." (F 312). She remembers in her later years that Lancelot was "in love with me enough to dull the pain for a time" (BE 251). This is no great love affair, for Guenevere's heart was always with Arthur. When she has a chance to reconcile with Arthur, she sends Lancelot home to Eleyne, admitting to him that she uses people, and goes so far as to call herself a "whore" (F 347). Arthur himself does not feel particularly betrayed that Guenevere and Lancelot had an affair since his deep love for Morgana prevents him from denying Guenevere someone to love. He admits to Lancelot, "I owed her something. Someone. You or something else" (F 292). He also recognizes that if she had been condemned for adultery, he would have lost the north, as well as "the Church that's always favored Guen more" (F 292). However, Arthur does condemn Guenevere for murder and treason. Godwin chose to condemn her for a violation more serious than adultery, which better suits his characterization of her.

Guenevere engineers her own escape with the help of Agrivaine and Lancelot, and in marked distinction from any other version, raises the north against Arthur on her own command. She is not whisked away to Lancelot's holdings and used as a pawn between Lancelot's and Arthur's armies as is usual. Instead, Guenevere rides out herself alongside her forces, dressed in chain-mail and wearing the Parisi crown, demanding Parisi sovereignty under her rule (F 338-9). Arthur praises her intelligence, thinking to himself, "a good move, since Gwen assumed I would never restore her as queen" (F 339). But Arthur outsmarts her by offering her a total pardon and all her power restored at Camelot in order to secure the north and keep a personal eye on her. The two reconcile, making love for the first time in a long time, and Guenevere returns to Camelot to await her husband's arrival. But he never comes, for he is killed by Mordred. Arthur's death would usually signal the closing of the story, but Godwin makes it the beginning of Beloved Exile and Guenevere's struggle.

Arthur names Guenevere as his successor and the imperial sword is delivered to her by his request. However, Guenever knows that "the naming of a new ruler demanded the Council of Princes and a ritual choosing by the people" (BE 3). Consequently, she thrusts herself into the race with cold determination, full of boasts, over-confidence and very little compassion

for anyone. As she tries, in vain, to secure Bedivere's loyalty, she tells him, "there will come that day when you swear to me as you did to [Arthur] and for the same reason. I am the best" (BE 6). She discovers that Arthur's combrogi are not quick to jump to her service, and she is frustrated because she believes herself to be a better ruler than Arthur:

> What mantle did you wear, Arthur, that I never fit? My authority was as unquestioned, my common sense sharper, my sentiment certainly more restrained. When we played the game together, was I not wagered as deeply as you? Art is instinctive, but craft is learned. I mastered the discipline of rule when you were a mere centurion of horse . . .
>
> (BE 6)

She equates herself with God when thinking upon Lancelot's loyalty. She says, "reaching for God, he found me. It was a lovely need, and I filled it more practically than heaven ever could" (BE 30). She then calls herself "the wickedest bitch in Britain" (BE 44) and continues to call herself this on at least three more occasions (BE 47, 192, 252). When a priest asks her if she wants a confessor, she is cocky in her thoughts as she boasts to herself, "*For what, overconfidence?*" (BE 46) As she desperately tries to beat other contenders for the throne, she constantly shows poor judgement and lack of caring. She knocks down a woman holding a baby and claims, "I've no time to be subtle" (BE 52). She falsely accuses Bedivere of betraying her, as well as Bl[illegible]wen and her son Emrys (without conclusive

evidence). She proves herself to be extremely capable of killing, lashing out on several occasions at attackers. Finally, Bedivere accuses her, as Arthur once did, of being "rotten with power" and of acting purely on her pride. She may have been intelligent, as she demonstrates in bluffing Constantine (BE 19), but her vices prevent her from gaining loyal support, and finally, she is defeated at Eburacum, and in her flight is ironically captured by Saxon slave traders. Her capture imposes a welcome end to her desperate climb for absolute power. Thompson states that as "the aging Guenevere struggles to maintain a central rule . . . she is foiled by treachery and the limitations of her own character" ("Firelord and Beloved Exile," p. 13).

Guenevere's first experience with humility occurs when her captors beat her up for trying to stab one of them. They leave her "doubled over . . . mouth bleeding and breath short" (BE 138), and put her feet in irons. However, her stubbornness has not been dissipated for she engages in a cat fight with Rat, a fellow slave, because the woman refuses her "order" to return stolen food. As a slave collar is prepared for her, she "hung back, pulled away" (BE 147), still trying to fight against a futile situation in which she is completely powerless. She is purchased by Thegn Gunnar Eanboldson and immediately establishes a reputation for stubborness and

pride. After another cat fight with Rat, she is choked to submission and silence by her mistress, Elfgifu (BE 158). She tries to talk back to Elfgifu only to find "her fist caught me on the jaw and knocked me against the stall gate" (BE 163). Rat warns her, "Yer gonner learn or yer gonner die" (BE 163). And somehow, this truth strikes a chord in Guenevere, and she "wilted to the straw on the floor, letting the helpless, beaten tears flow at will" (BE 163). And Rat continues to educate her by identifying Guenevere as one of "them" that are powerless to fight back. For the first time Guenevere sees what the lowest class of people, slaves, have to live with. And her humanizing journey begins.

Gradually, Guenevere begins to accept her situation, and makes a place for herself at Gunnarsburh. She participates in midwifing Nilse's baby, showing concern for the woman's pain (BE 175). At a feast hosted by Gunnar for his political adversaries, she becomes interested in the dynamics of the situation, and warns Gunnar to be wary of one of his guests (BE 182). She then takes it upon herself to drug Oslac's draft with lavender and camomile which causes him to fall asleep. Gunnar is impressed with her help, and heeds her advice to let the bear-sarks "be the ones to break the peace" (BE 191). To show his appreciation he gives her some land with which to make a garden. Growing flowers proves to be of

symbolic importance to Guenevere, representing fertility and a proximity to the earth and her Celtic ancestry that she fails to achieve through childbearing. To her, one flower's health means she created something of her own. As she strives to grow a healthy garden, witnessing some failures, she only sees that one cutting "withered and died in the rich soil as [her] own child in [her] body" (BE 196). Part of her even seems to recognize the wildness and freedom of Morgana as desirable. Perhaps being reduced to a powerless slave and working the earth begins to open up a part of her that she had always denied, the part that feels and shares with other human beings. She makes one last rebellious attempt to grasp at her past when she tries to escape. She is determined to get back into the leadership race for Britain's crown. But she is hunted down by Gunnar and his wolfhound. Still unable to give up her flight, she wrestles with the dog, perhaps symbolic of the struggle within herself. After managing to stab the dog to death, she tries to run again while but a few feet from Gunnar. She says, "still I ran, by sheer will and desperation now" (BE 200). As she is whipped tied to a tree she reaches the bottom of the abyss as she thinks, "so I'd descended all the way from the day Bedivere brought me news of Arthur's death, through all the loves and loss and betrayal to this tree" (BE 200). When she discovers that Rat betrayed her escape out of

friendship for her, Guenevere shows a turn toward becoming a healthier person:

> Somewhere in misery I found the wisdom not to say anything . . . Rat was more giving . . . than many women I've known. She called me friend, and if I couldn't be more, at least I no longer had the arrogance and stupidity to despise her reaching. That part of me that Arthur always fought was wearing away of itself.
>
> (BE 202)

Guenevere begins to feel love for Gunnar, and his trust in her changes their relationship from master and slave to a secret partnership. She recognizes she has "less of a need to possess and more to know [and] if still a fool, then one less imperious" (BE 215). When she and Gunnar make love for the first time, she marvels at how healthy and strong her body is compared to how it felt in Camelot, and allows herself to revel in the youth she feels once more with Gunnar (BE 224). Her biggest lesson seems to come from tilling the earth, which marks the difference between the proud and vain queen who, like all conquerors, would just take land, and the woman who now owns a piece of it because she's worked it, and earned it. She witnesses one of Gunnar's enemies approaching and her new wealth of understanding speaks:

> . . . you stupid, greedy old man. Because you won't think, only grab. Because taking and killing's easier and somehow more honorable, and you can set your arrogant rump in a hall and listen to a wheezy skald drone out what a true son of the gods you are. That's the illusion, the tottering vanity that makes pride cheaper than common sense,

> speaking from experience . . . You can burn the earth, but you won't take it. You never sweated over it to make it yours. You haven't earned it.
>
> (BE 228)

She now understands the peasant lives of the Prydn, and the error on her part in looking down on them and the mother and baby she pushed down without an ounce of apology. Guenevere truly merges with Gunnar's family when she unselfishly risks her own life while Gunnarsburh is under attack, by voluntarily carrying arrows up a tower to the archer. She is then hit by an enemy arrow and spends weeks suffering from the wound and prepares herself to die. She insists on making a confession to clear her soul, and in so doing, sees herself realistically:

> Lying was the cleanest of my sins. Murder, adultery, fornication, deceit, manipulation of men lay and clerical, the worship of heathen gods . . . lack of charity, outright cruelty, vanity, pride, lust - all on my soul . . .
>
> (BE 241-2)

In an ensuing delirium, she reviews her past, and when she finally recovers and Gunnar has news of a battle in the west, she finds herself caring very little about it, thinking it so "far away and nothing to do with me now" (BE 253). She has finally let go of her previous life, as well as the woman who was drifting through it.

She continues to share herself and her talents with Gunnar's family when she uses her ability to read and write to be Gunnar's scribe in

matters of politics (BE 263). She is entrusted to advise young Edytha about sexuality and marriage (BE 274). She unselfishly pleads for mercy on behalf of Rat, convincing Gunnar that a better punishment for Rat's stealing than losing a hand would be to confiscate her money and give her a whipping (BE 292). And when Rat is dying, Guenevere nurses her, and engages in a fist-fight with Elfgifu to keep her from burning Rat's body when Rat wanted to be buried (BE 301). When she inherits Rat's hidden two pounds, she keeps one but gives the other pound to Gunnar (BE 303). As poverty sets in and a sickness infects the household, Gunnar and Guenevere are the only remaining healthy people to plow the fields for spring planting. They exhaust themselves, but when the ox becomes useless, Gunnar pulls the plow himself. When he becomes physically unable to continue, Guenevere takes it on:

> I threw myself against the weight of the plow, felt Gunnar's strength push it free, and we went on like the other animals . . . My shoulders ached, then chafed but I pushed on through the half-done field, not thinking of the rest to be done, not praying now, not thinking at all.
>
> (BE 313)

Finally, invoking the goddess within her, from her Celtic ancestry, she gives herself to Gunnar in the barren field, so that she may become "the field and the furrow, the man the plow and the seed" (BE 317). While this fertility magic does not plow the fields overnight, two hundred Teutons

arrive the next day eager to join their community, and as Gunnar's family and the Teutons prepare to settle in the Midlands, Guenevere is freed to choose her own path. She decides to return to her own people, but tells Gunnar, "this collar has taught me more freedom than I ever knew before" (BE 327).

As Guenevere travels home she thinks, "if there was no hope of regaining my crown, there was no desire for it either" (BE 335). She is freed from her cold ambitions and pride, and cares little about herself, and mostly for the people. She returns to a Britain still divided by rival princes, and laid waste in the process. Thousands of dispossessed people wander from town to town. She does her best to educate the people to take care of themselves and commissions a blacksmith to make an iron plow such as the Saxons had, to teach the people how to plow more effectively. However, she is chastised for disregarding classes, and labelled an ostentatious reformer. Where once she was clearly against Constantine becoming king, and supported Emrys, she now believes "Emrys at his best could do little more than Constantine at his worst" (BE 373). She tells Emrys,

> . . . all you learned was my ignorance, my own prejudices, my mistakes and what I called cleverness. Power was the game.
>
> (BE 373)

Guenevere recognizes that Emrys doesn't care about the peasants, only power, just as she had. But she had learned from Gunnar that the secret to good leadership is to be such a lord that "each man sees in him the best of themselves and the best of what they could be" (BE 320). Arthur did that and Guenevere saw it in Gunnar. In a last attempt to bring in a caring leader for the people, Guenevere welcomes Gunnar, to whom she has willed all of her holdings, including Eburacum and Britain's imperial sword (BE 411), and then she leaves for her exile in Constantinople. Interestingly, Godwin chose the Saxons to humanize Guenevere because he wanted "to show why the Saxons eventually prevailed" (Interview, p. 20). While the Celts were divided clans, the Saxons put family first, and built a society from the bottom up. This is what they taught Guenevere, but she is left powerless with the knowledge.

Parke Godwin's Guenevere is physically a beautiful woman, brought up under Roman influence and married to Arthur, and has an adulterous affair with Lancelot. But this is where the familiarity ends, because Godwin makes his Guenevere a ruler of the Parisi and co-ruler of Britain, and she takes on a character suitable for these roles. She is portrayed as a woman brought up and educated specifically to rule, a wife who is her husband's equal, sexually uninhibited before, during and after her marriage, but who

also has an insatiable hunger for power which causes her to overlook compassion. Her own personal pride is clearly her most emphasized trait, which turns emotional insecurity and hurt into hatred. Her barrenness, a traditional aspect of Guenevere, is shown to be a particularly difficult obstacle for her to overcome, but is neatly linked with the fertility goddess of her Celtic background, so that Guenevere's fertility is manifested in a somewhat more universal way: with the earth itself. Her treasonable murder of Arthur's family is perhaps more fitting of such a strong and independent Guenevere than adultery. The relationship with Lancelot is here, but Godwin, while recognizing Lancelot to be a "medieval addition to the older legends" (Interview, p. 7), makes Lancelot a contrasting character to his Roman/Celtic Guenevere. She openly admits that she has manipulated and used Lancelot, perhaps better suited to a stronger Guenevere of Roman/Celtic stock than one of the medieval versions. However, her dominance over Lancelot here is somewhat reminiscent of the courtly love mistress/subservient lover relationship. The difference mainly lies in Guenevere's true feelings for Lancelot. In Godwin, she loves Arthur while Lancelot fills a void at a lonely time of her life. By contrast, in Chrétien, she truly loves Lancelot. Since Godwin's Guenevere is more in love with Arthur than with Lancelot, her desperation

for Arthur's love becomes a major issue, and we witness a Guenevere who can ruthlessly murder out of spite and jealousy. Guenevere's faults prompt a journey of self-discovery, and at the hands of Saxons, she learns humility, compassion and caring. It is only through this reduction to slavery accompanied by beatings and whippings that she learns to overcome her imperious nature. As Newman's Guinevere struggled through rape and beatings to realize the strength within her, Godwin's Guenevere gradually sheds her strength and determination through every beating. But Newman's Guenevere began as a vulnerable, weak, dependent wife, while Godwin's begins as a proud, self-righteous, unfeeling ruler. The middle ground they each achieve is a comfortable point where both are able to know who they are as people, and extend their help unselfishly to others, and die peacefully reconciled with their earlier selves. For all the changes, omissions and additions Godwin has made, Guenevere's humanizing journey makes her one of the most intriguing Gueneveres ever created.

Chapter 8: Persia Woolley's Guinevere

Persia Woolley's Arthurian reworking, Child of the Northern Spring (1987), is the first book of a forthcoming trilogy. As such, Child of the Northern Spring tells an incomplete story, ending with Guinevere's marriage to Arthur. However, what is offered in this first book is an introduction to Guinevere, recounting her spiritual journey as she travels to her wedding, with flashbacks to her childhood. Therefore, much like Newman's approach in creating a fully developed characterization of Guinevere, Woolley also takes the time to explore Guinevere's growth as a child, showing the influences and experiences which shape her adult personality. However, in contrast to the spoiled and detached child Newman describes, Woolley's Guinevere is depicted as a happy, caring and sociable child. And much like Godwin's decision to derive his strong Guenevere from the Roman/Celtic influences, Woolley also felt that since Celtic kings had "a long tradition of queens who were co-rulers with their husbands . . . any daughter of theirs was likely to be an independent and remarkable person in her own right" (Spring, p. x). Thus, through the combination of a healthy childhood and the Celtic tradition of female independence, Woolley's Guinevere becomes a remarkable woman. In her introduction, Woolley suggests that Guinevere was too often cast as

"either the shadow substance of a king's ill-made choice or the willful and spoiled beauty who ruins the kingdom without compunction" (Spring, p. x). In Child of the Northern Spring, we are introduced to a Guinevere who craves personal freedom and is fully capable of ruling her father's kingdom of Rheged, but who must come to terms with the fact that she is to be married for political gain. She is also a woman who is sincerely kind, gracious, unpretentious and diplomatic. We can only wait for the ensuing volumes to learn the outcome Woolley chooses for her Guinevere, but the groundwork laid in Child of the Northern Spring promises a stronger adult queen than any before.

Like Godwin, Woolley places Guinevere's roots and kingdom in the north, naming her the Celtic Princess of Rheged. Woolley retains the familiar Leodegrance as Guinevere's father but has removed any Roman lineage. Instead, Guinevere's family is strongly committed to the "Old Ways," such as worshipping Epona, the Horse Goddess, while Guinevere in fact considers Roman Christianity to be a Church of "self-denial and withdrawal from the world" (p. 66). The two religions are of thematic importance in the novel as they represent the changing fabric of British society in post-Roman Britain, and are clearly manifested in Guinevere's affiliation with Celtic paganism versus Arthur's Roman court of Caerleon.

Woolley endows Guinevere with her traditional beauty, describing the color of her hair as "the red gold of the hawthorn in autumn" (p. 188), while Leodegrance tells his daughter that she is a "strong, beautiful young woman" (p. 8).

The childhood which Woolley fabricates for Guinevere differs quite sharply from that which we find in Newman's work. While Woolley's Guinevere adores her parents and it is clear that they love her as well, she is neither spoiled nor sheltered in the way that we find in Newman. Perhaps the most influential advice Guinevere gains from her mother is "to understand what needs to be done, and then do it" (p. 57). Hence, she learns responsibility early. A terrible sickness infects their household, from which many die, and Guinevere, witnessing her mother's commitment to caring for others, follows her example (p. 58). When her mother dies, Guinevere recalls her mother's voice saying, ". . . No matter how hard it is . . . " (p. 60), and she finds the strength to go on. Her love and respect for her father's wishes are also apparent when she agrees to marry Arthur for his sake, accepting her duty despite her own desire to remain in Rheged and choose her own husband (p. 6). From a young age, Guinevere becomes accustomed to respecting and helping those around her, such as the stable hands and the kitchen staff. Although she clearly prefers being with the

horses and stable workers, she accepts her responsibilities in the household. She is educated at home by Cathbad the Druid, who teaches her the Iliad, and about the "ancient gods and heroes of Greece" (p. 48), and she is particularly interested in Helen. She also goes on to learn Latin and mathematics (p. 248). Informally, she is privy to her father's military thinking, although to a much lesser degree than Godwin's Guenevere, who is specifically trained to rule the Parisi. Woolley's Guinevere has private aspirations to rule Rheged and choose her own husband but is deprived of the opportunity to do so. Woolley apparently views Guinevere's station to be queen by marriage and not by her own right. Generally, Guinevere's childhood is a happy one, always filled with adventures such as "climbing through the tall apple trees," and "milking the cows as they grazed in the field" (p. 34). Even after her mother's death, Guinevere naturally finds happiness at home with their new Irish family, Brigit and Kevin, as she says of them, "Surely . . . one could not ask for a dearer family, or a more pleasant way of life" (p. 96).

The Irish implant into Guinevere's family offers a new opportunity to develop a childhood romance for Guinevere. Apart from her traditional marriage to Arthur and love affair with Lancelot, Guinevere is rarely depicted in love with any men. In this case, her relationship with Kevin

stems from teenage companionship until one day Guinevere finds herself "dazzled by . . . love" (p. 223). She realizes "there was something unutterably sweet about being enfolded within the protective circle of his care" (p. 221), and she decides it is Kevin whom she wishes to marry. Her heart is broken, however, when Kevin runs away, unable to face the reality that Guinevere's husband would be chosen for her. Guinevere does not accept his absence and continues to hold a torch for him throughout the winter:

> The only solace I found was in the belief that Kevin would return when the winter had passed. I lived and relived our last ride together, endowing every comment, every action, every nuance with worlds of meaning that only he and I could understand. In my mind, we had sworn our love and promised our devotion; I had no doubt but that . . . his love for me would bring him back.
>
> (p. 239)

But he does not come back, and the knowledge that he never will numbs her heart. The introduction of the character Kevin could serve several purposes. First of all, puppy love makes Guinevere more ordinary and easier to identify with since we have all undoubtedly experienced young love. Secondly, loving Kevin shows that Guinevere develops as a normal teenager, and should have the capacity to love as an adult. Finally, it is not impossible that Woolley's Kevin may re-surface in an ensuing volume to play the part of Lancelot. The seeds of love have been planted here, and it is entirely conceivable that this early experience of Guinevere's may make

Kevin an irresistible love force in her future. Whatever role Kevin may or may not play, Guinevere's teenage years are made all the sweeter because of his companionship.

Guinevere's love for horses and obvious attraction to the outdoors (as opposed to the housebound domesticity, which typically characterizes the limitations of a woman's life) suggests that this is a Guinevere who gravitates towards freedom and the lures that are usually associated with the man's world. Riding becomes a metaphor for her love of freedom, as she thinks, "how nice it would be to be grown up and able to ride free against the wind" (p. 21). The womanly chores found within the household leave her feeling "cooped up inside" (p. 44). Instead, she prefers to spend much of her time riding the countryside with Kevin, sometimes on an errand, sometimes for pure pleasure, but mostly for the joy of having the "freedom to come and go as [she] wished" (p. 168). And not surprisingly, her horsemanship equals that of most men, and indeed better than some. She envies the freedom of wildlife as she observes an otter swimming about "like a rook tumbling about in the currents of the sky," and she thinks, "Oh . . . to have such freedom" (p. 214). Craving freedom becomes the singlemost obstacle to her potential happiness because she <u>is</u> expected to marry for political gain, and that means giving up control over her life and the power

to make her own choices. As she looks at her reflection she thinks,

> . . . someday I'll look in the mirror and see the face of a woman and be willing to take up the duties that will be demanded of me . . . but not yet. There's still too much to do and see before I give up my freedom! (p. 190)

As she embarks on her journey to become Arthur's wife, at the will of her father, Guinevere's real quest is to reconcile her own desires with the demands of duty.

Guinevere is not pleased that she is to be married to King Arthur, even after rejecting other undesirable suitors such as Maelgwn, King Mark, Uwain and Gildas. He is, in a sense, the lesser of worse evils, and Guinevere reluctantly agrees to become his wife. She grumbles to her father, "I have no other reason than politics to accept him. It is not what one would call a love match" (p. 254). And she is disgusted that she is to be "traded off like a piece of cheese for political advantage" (p. 238). Her own mother and father had eloped in the face of an arranged marriage for her mother, and Guinevere wants nothing less than to marry a man she loves as well. Mostly, however, she interprets this husband as "the man who from here on would control [her] life" (p. 258). Love and romance are one thing but control over her own life is Guinevere's main objective. While it is over this arranged marriage that Guinevere shows examples of defiant and stubborn behaviour, she also demonstrates the ability to accept

her duty and respect the honorable way of things, and especially to show enormous love and respect for her father's wishes. Woolley's Guinevere is similarly matched with Arthur in Newman's trilogy, but unlike Newman's wishy-washy Guinevere, who is unable to even form an opinion about the marriage, Woolley's Guinevere has very definite opinions, but little power to do anything about them.

It is through Guinevere's wedding journey that she comes to terms with her situation, and that we become better acquainted with her. Under the physical stress of a long journey, Guinevere demonstrates diplomacy, unselfishness, thoughtfulness, courteous and gracious behaviour, honesty, perceptiveness, discretion, and a casualness that protects her from being pretentious. Perhaps it is because of these characteristics that Guinevere is able to look at her situation in a new perspective, and decides to make the best of her marriage and new position. She reacts diplomatically to King Mark's marriage interest in her by saying, "I'm afraid my Pagan ways made me unsuitable for your court" (p. 383), when the real truth is that she is absolutely repulsed by him. And to avoid further banter, she decides to withdraw from the conversation altogether. A further instance of diplomacy is when she tries to avoid offending Arthur's religious affiliation by responding to his question of a Christian wedding ceremony with

"Ceremonies must be structured to meet the needs of the people" (p. 313). Thus she neither offends nor embraces either Christianity or Pagan ways. And perhaps most notably, she diplomatically handles a potentially explosive situation at Arthur's table when Maelgwn, a rather precarious ally, puts his hand between her thighs. Instead of reacting angrily and risking political repercussions, Guinevere discreetly pushes his hand away and glares at him, thinking that her future solution will be to seat someone in between them.

We became aware of Guinevere's caring for others and unselfishness during her childhood and teenage years, but it is on her wedding journey that this quality in Guinevere is reaffirmed when Bedivere notes that she seems to "keep an eye on everything," and goes on to say, "A queen who thinks only about herself is easy enough to find, but one who is concerned about the welfare and whereabouts of her party is much more to be admired" (p. 101). She also shows thoughtfulness for an hospitable farm woman as she compliments the quilt that made up part of her bedding (p. 158), reminding us of the opposite scorn Godwin's Guenevere showed a peasant woman for simply being in her path. Woolley's Guinevere also goes out of her way when meeting Arthur's mother, Igraine, by bringing her fresh lilies from Amesbury (p. 360). As she munches her way through an

unknown type of biscuit over tea with Igraine, she questions her own courtesy, hoping that eating it cautiously "was the proper thing to do" (p. 362). On another occasion, she is praised for her manners by Igraine (p. 408). Guinevere's graciousness is displayed frequently and sincerely to all types of people, regardless of rank or relationship to her.

Guinevere also strives to be an honest person. When Arthur surprises the wedding party on the road, Guinevere is very aware that she should be dressed like a "fancy queen" to greet her bridegroom. But time prevents her from doing so, and it is her belief that her stable-boy garb tells more about her real character anyway, and that Arthur "may as well know what he's getting from the start" (p. 259). When a Saxon girl asks her what the High King is like, she tries to respond with the same frankness, replying, "He's loyal and fair and always, always thinks of his people first" (p. 377). She is a perceptive individual, knowing immediately that Bedivere has feelings for Brigit (p. 335), and that young Palomides needed reassurance from her before proceeding with a demonstration of stirrup use before a crowd of people. She also perceives Morgan as an "arrogant, insecure and egocentric" woman "threatened by anything that might interfere with her ability to control the world" (p. 447). Her respect for others' privacy is made apparent by her decision to keep Nimue's feelings for Merlin (p. 398),

as well as Morgan's sexual antics with Accolon (p. 445) discreetly to herself. In other words, she understands the fine line between honesty and discretion.

As we come to know this Guinevere of great caring and thoughtfulness for others, honesty, and kindness of discretion, we begin to see a woman who is easy with people, and casual about life. She is as unpretentious as Godwin's Guenevere is pretentious. She prefers to have conversations with people unaware of her "position" (p. 157), and rejects the idea of her family "calling [her] by a title instead of [her] name" (p. 297). When she meets a young woman wearing a "homespun skirt dragging in the dirt" she thinks to herself, "that . . . is real dignity" (p. 303). In the company of a similar woman, who has dropped her tray of buns and biscuits, Guinevere gets down to her hands and knees to help pick them up, "deciding that true dignity lay in continuing to help [her] subject without question" (p. 419). Igraine tells her,

> . . . there's no pretense or falseness about you; you are exactly what you are. And people like that.
>
> (p. 364)

As Guinevere finds out more about herself on this journey, and meets Arthur and his countrymen, "the more interesting they seemed," she thinks, and she "ran up the stairs . . . with the happy conviction that being High

Queen of Britain was going to be much more enjoyable than [she] had imagined" (p. 378).

Guinevere's initial rejection of an arranged marriage to Arthur leaves much room for a disastrous first meeting and hostile relationship. But since Guinevere possesses such a rational and benevolent nature, the opposite happens. By the time she meets Arthur, she has had plenty of time to overcome her initial frustration, and is now intent on making everything work out. And to her surprise, she finds herself delighted by Arthur's "cheerful attitude" (p. 275), and soon discovers that her heart beats faster in his presence (p. 284). Perhaps it is her Celtic independence that prompts her to tell him that she considers her role as queen to mean she is part of a team, and Arthur does not reject this idea. In fact, "a slow, rich smile welled up from some inner relief of his own" (p. 265). Desire for him awakens within her, and she feels so close to him that she thinks, "I had never felt anything so powerful before, and while I didn't understand what it meant, it was clear our moiras were intertwined for a lifetime" (p. 306). She approaches her wedding finally reconciled that her duty has become her desire for she says,

> somewhere on the Road to Sarum my desire had shifted from a longing for freedom to the meeting of a challenge. And though I was awed by the magnitude of the change that was taking place . . . there was nowhere I wanted to run to, nothing I wanted to avoid . . . I smiled

> sleepily . . . I would marry Arthur because I was meant to be his wife . . . it really was as simple as that.
>
> (p. 350)

As Guinevere's love for Arthur continues to flourish, and she makes declarations such as, "It is you I am marrying, not the setting" (p. 356), it becomes increasingly disappointing to her that Arthur does not seem to return the same profundity of feelings. She says, "I had just given over my life and freedom to him, and all he could talk about was horses!" (p. 357). After their wedding ceremony, Arthur wastes no time in consummating the relationship, leaving her "confused and surprised," and "wondering at the absence of the kisses and caresses [she] had so looked forward to" (p. 423). Arthur had made no time to "share and trust the closeness of [their] bodies" (p. 423). As she gazes at her sleeping husband, Guinevere thinks of the way Nimue and Merlin look at each other, and she realizes that "there could be much, much more" (p. 424). Even though she continues to share Arthur's work as together they make lists and treaties, and learn the Saxon language, their sexual relationship continues to lack "grand passion and deep emotional communion" (p. 456). Guinevere accepts it, saying, "I hoped with time we might grow closer on a romantic level, but was content to accept the present as it was" (p. 457). She has come to this marriage at first reluctantly, but then falls very much in love with Arthur. The unfulfilling nature of his attentions leaves the door wide open for another

lover in Guinevere's life. Whether Woolley chooses that route for Guinevere or not, she has described a Guinevere who approaches this political marriage with a healthy enthusiasm and desire to make it last. Guinevere is not, at this stage, an adultress, or even heading to be solely responsible for an affair if one should occur, for she is clearly being placed in a less than fulfilling marriage.

Guinevere's personal relationship with Morgan Le Fay in Sharan Newman's trilogy was practically non-existent, although Morgan had an indirect impact on Guinevere's life as she and Morgause became the instigators of the sorceress plot against Guinevere. Their purpose, however, was to seek revenge on their brother, Arthur, for stealing their mother away from them and had nothing to do with Guinevere other than that she became a convenient pawn. The personal feelings between Guenevere and Morgana in Godwin's two books, as seen from Chapters 2 and 7, were, in contrast, specifically hostile. In fact, Guenevere orders Morgana's execution because she cannot deal with the fact that Arthur loves Morgana more than her. What both writers have in common is that they make Morgan the mother of Arthur's son, which undoubtedly infringes on Guenevere's territory as his wife and queen, and which indirectly links the two women together. Woolley has not revealed by the end of her first

book whether Morgan will be the mother of Arthur's son, but she has established a somewhat tense relationship between the two women. As Lady of the Lake, Morgan considers herself to be a rather powerful woman, but Woolley's Guinevere proves to be a challenge to her (p. 447). The book ends with Guinevere being privy to Morgan's affair with Accolon, a secret which could possibly lead to further tension between them in the coming volumes.

Like Sharan Newman's trilogy and Parke Godwin's Beloved Exile, the main character of Persia Woolley's Child of the Northern Spring is Guinevere. As in Beloved Exile, Woolley also makes her Guinevere the narrator of her own tale. While we know from the first volume of Woolley's projected trilogy that Guinevere is from the north, born to Leodegrance, possesses incredible beauty, has a bad encounter with Maelgwn, and marries King Arthur, we do not know what her outcome will be. Her childhood experiences are described differently than in Newman in that she is a well-adjusted child, and her adult personality is significantly different from characterizations offered by both Newman and Godwin. She seems the most well-balanced of the three, but not without her own struggles as she must reconcile herself with the politically arranged marriage with Arthur. She is given a Celtic background and pagan

allegiances which is a departure from her traditional Roman lineage, but which places her in a potentially interesting situation as she enters a Roman court. She loves and respects her parents, and is interested in and unpretentious with people in general. Perhaps she is the best suited of the three for queenly duties since she already displays diplomacy, thoughtfulness, grace, and perceptiveness, to name only a few of her characteristics. It is tempting to speculate that she is heading for an love affair, and that she may encounter trouble with Maelgwn and Morgan, but unfair to say much more than that. What this first book actually provides is an introduction to a well-rounded characterization of Guinevere, whose traditionally arranged marriage forms the main plot of this story.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

Both Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere can independently be the subject of study, but they have always been intrinsically linked with each other in the Arthurian story. The most obvious factor linking them together is that they are the only two well-known female characters in a story about men and heroism and the glory of a brotherhood. They are also the only two women King Arthur beds, and their love for him is as interchangeable as there are versions. They can also appear to be opposites of each other. Morgan Le Fay is usually evil while Guenevere is good, and if this is changed in one, it is changed in the other. Morgan is not a beautiful woman while Guenevere stands for the epitome of female beauty. Maureen Fries even suggests that since the dark colors of hair and complexion attributed to Morgan Le Fay "[diverge] from the pink and white complexion and golden hair of the heroine [Guenevere]," the dark characteristics are representative of evil while physical beauty is representative of good ("Female Heroes," p. 17). It is interesting, then, that as some of the modern writers reverse the evil and goodness of these women, Morgan Le Fay's and Guenevere's physical characteristics remain unchanged. Also polarizing these women is the fact that Morgan Le Fay always bears Arthur's son while Guenevere is barren, and therefore, unable to bear a legitimate son

to Arthur. Guenevere's love for Lancelot is also sometimes rivalled by Morgan. Some of the modern writers make Morgan symbolic of the old religion while Guenevere is the new Christian queen, as in Zimmer Bradley. And often we find in the modern novel the narrative structure pivotting between the action of either woman. They both stand apart from the ordinary woman because of power and status, since Morgan Le Fay has magical connections with Avalon and is usually its ruler, while Guenevere is Queen of Britain. Their action should have an effect on others, and indeed, Morgan has typically aided in the destruction of the Round Table and Arthur, and Guenevere, through committing adultery with the king's captain, commits treason, destroying her marriage as well as causing the break-up of the Round Table as loyalties divide. The Arthurian story has, in the past, been nothing but battles without them. But their significance has always been secondary to the plot. The modern writers avoid basing their importance solely on their effect on Arthur and the Round Table.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Morgan Le Fay's traditional characteristics include being a healer and having expert knowledge of herbs, association with a Celtic otherworld, and bearing Arthur's son, yet by virtue of being the daughter of Gorlois and Igraine she is also Arthur's half-sister. She is also usually married to King Urien, and lover to Accolon, and is Arthur's

formidable opponent, most infamous for replacing his magical scabbard with an ordinary one. And she is also an irritant to Guenevere. In the end, however, she is usually one of the three queens who take a dying Arthur to Avalon on a barge. After having studied how she is portrayed in such modern works as Godwin's Firelord, Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon, and Wolf's The Road to Avalon, I may say that she has retained many of these characteristics and developed many new ones, yet has a completely different personality in all three works.

All three writers continue to attribute to Morgan Le Fay the ability to heal as well as a knowledge of herbs. She is also associated with or lives in an "otherworld." Godwin's Morgana lives in hidden places with the Prydn, while Zimmer Bradley's Morgaine is trained as a priestess in Avalon and returns to rule there, and Wolf's Morgan rules Avalon. In all three novels, these otherworlds are the places where Morgan happens to be intimate with Arthur, and even in The Mists of Avalon, where the result of their intimacy is horror, the love-making is pleasant and fulfilling. In Firelord, Arthur intends to make love to Morgana while she visits his court, but she is murdered before he can do so. Thus, the extent of their sexual relationship is confined to the Prydn world. In The Road to Avalon, Morgan and Arthur only make love in Avalon, a safe haven, away from the eyes and

ears of Camelot. Therefore, the "otherworld" continues to function as a beautiful, dream-like place, in which the hero experiences the "illusory promise of ease and peace and pleasure" (Cavendish, p. 123). Arthur must always return to his responsibilities of ruling the kingdom and the reality of his marriage to Guenevere.

Godwin and Zimmer Bradley both retain Morgan Le Fay's Celtic background while Wolf doesn't seem to make an issue of it. Interestingly, it is Morgan's Celtic characteristics in Godwin and Zimmer Bradley that distinguish her from the Romanized Guenevere of Godwin and Christianized Guenevere of Zimmer-Bradley. Both authors make these cultural/religious differences between Morgan and Guenevere major themes in their stories, perhaps attempting to show women of the different social influences of their times. Zimmer Bradley is the only writer who chooses to make Morgan the daughter of Igraine and Gorlois, hence perpetuating the incest motif, and in fact makes Morgaine's shame, as a result of the incest, one of the biggest obstacles to her personal inner growth. Godwin deletes the Igraine/Gorlois lineage entirely, giving Morgana a completely new identity with the Prydn. By doing this, Godwin is then able to marry Morgana and Arthur, making their relationship legitimate for the first time. Wolf chooses to make Morgan Arthur's step-aunt, instead of his half-sister, and

consequently removes the possibility of incest further away from the couple, a choice which suits her story since she casts Morgan and Arthur as true lovers. All three writers do, however, accept the tradition of making Morgan the mother of Arthur's son, which of course necessarily means that she has sexual intercourse with Arthur.

The traditions of Morgan Le Fay marrying Urien, being Accolon's lover, and instigating the scabbard plot, seem to have interested only Zimmer Bradley. The Mists of Avalon is probably the only book to have incorporated most of the traditional Arthurian material. Godwin's Morgana lives a completely different life, while Wolf's Morgan is a warm and benevolent woman. The hostility Morgan Le Fay usually displays towards Guenevere is also absent except in Zimmer Bradley. Godwin and Wolf simply don't portray her as an evil person bent on revenge. Finally, perhaps the most well-known motif associated with Morgan Le Fay is her accompanying Arthur to Avalon. It is the subject of many paintings and can be traced as far back as Geoffrey in his Vita Merlini (ca. 1150). Zimmer Bradley incorporates the motif into Mists, but Godwin and Wolf do something quite different. Since Morgana's death precedes Arthur's in Godwin, she cannot accompany him to Avalon as he dies, nor is there an Avalon in Godwin. But Arthur looks forward to meeting Morgana in eternity. Wolf also leaves the

impression that the two will meet in an afterlife, and there, continue their love.

The most notable new development in Morgan Le Fay's character, and which is adopted by two of the three writers, is her role as Arthur's true love. Both Godwin and Wolf make Morgan Arthur's real love, and his wife in Godwin's case. Casting Morgan and Arthur as lovers is nothing new since the incest motif has long provided the opportunity to do so. But both Godwin and Wolf have developed the liaison into a love relationship, and, while perhaps taking the hint from the incest motif, have then chosen to delete it or modify it in order to qualify the love. This new role for Morgan Le Fay necessarily affects the relationship between Guenevere and Arthur, since he is not totally enraptured by Guenevere, and modifies Morgan's personality into one which is more loving and benevolent than that is usually ascribed to her. In addition to this new development, both Godwin and Wolf cast Morgan Le Fay as Arthur's equal and confidante , raising her status from a background female character to one who shares and understands the king's thoughts and concerns.

The third major development for her is becoming the main character of an Arthurian re-working to whom all the other characters and plots are subordinate. It is in Zimmer Bradley and Wolf that we find Morgan Le Fay

to be the main character, and the narrator in the case of Zimmer Bradley's work. Instead of operating in relation to the traditional heroes, namely Arthur and Lancelot, Morgan becomes the new hero. Her personal struggles in Mists and The Road to Avalon allow her to mature and reach a new peace within herself. Maureen Fries defines the hero's quest:

> In their most complete quests . . . heroes . . . are able to undertake journeys to knowledge in which encounters with that which is Other lead ultimately to the decisive encounter, with the Self. If completely successful, female as well as male heroes return to their original societies with the prized gift of renewal.
>
> ("Female Heroes," p. 3)

Morgaine in The Mists of Avalon journeys through her life as a believer of the Goddess, and struggles with her pain as the Goddess leads her to do one evil act after another. Her final reconciliation with Christianity because she realizes that the Virgin Mary operates as a Mother Goddess figure, and the Christian Saint Brigid is the Goddess of Ireland, allows her to forgive herself. She sees that the Mother's work has been done despite her own failures. She returns to Avalon cleansed and at peace. The quest of Morgan in The Road to Avalon is to endure a secret love life with Arthur when their love is so strong, it's telekenetic. As he dies, she feels despair, but as Arthur tells her, "we will be together . . . believe that," she finds a peace overwhelming her (p. 358). So she, too, is renewed.

When we look at Guenevere's traditional characteristics, as discussed

in Chapter 5, we find a beautiful woman of Roman lineage, whose father is Leodegrance. She is married to King Arthur, barren, and adulterous in a love affair with Lancelot. She is usually the object of an abduction by Meleagant, Mordred or Saxons, or any combination thereof, and meets her end alone, seeking penance in a nunnery. Sharan Newman's Guinevere trilogy, Godwin's Beloved Exile and Woolley's Child of a Northern Spring retain some of these characteristics in their portrayals of Guenevere, and create new material such as a childhood or her life after Arthur's death, and come together mostly in diminishing the seriousness of her adultery and giving her personal goals to accomplish.

All three writers continue to see Guenevere as a beautiful woman, but only Newman gives her a Roman lineage. Godwin and Woolley choose instead a Celtic ancestry for their Gueneveres, making her come from a culture characterized by strong women. Both of these Gueneveres are, however, subject to Latin education since it is the civilized culture of Britain at the time. Women of royal families would be expected to be well acquainted with the Latin language and Roman customs to be valuable brides. Leodegrance appears in Newman and Woolley as Guenevere's father while Cador plays the role in Godwin. Maureen Fries points out that the "heroine's beauty and aristocracy are initially seen as an impetus to

virtue" ("Female Heroes," p. 5). All three authors marry Guenevere to Arthur, and she appears barren in Newman and Godwin. She is also adulterous in Newman and Godwin (yet to be determined in Woolley), but it is only in Newman that Guenevere is described as truly in love with Lancelot. In Godwin, it is Arthur whom she really loves, and Lancelot serves but as a distraction. Newman and Godwin continue the tradition of abducting Guenevere. In Newman, she is abducted by Saxons and Meleagant, and held prisoner by Mordred. Godwin has her abducted by Saxons but with a new twist: they are slave traders, not Arthur's rivals, and are unaware of Guenevere's identity. Woolley approaches the motif as Maelgwn accosts Guinevere in the darkness, and we are certain he will eventually try again. Finally, Guenevere's traditional end in a nunnery is abandoned altogether, as Newman takes her back to rule Cameliard and to discover her true self, and Godwin's Guenevere is exiled to Constantinople because she is a threat to rivalling princes.

Since Guenevere is thought of mostly as an adultress, perhaps this is the most significant aspect of her character to be addressed. In the modern works, she remains unfaithful to her husband, but the terms have changed. She is no longer simply adulterous and discovered, but is given all sorts of excuses and acceptance to bed another man. In Newman,

Guinevere is "destined" to love Lancelot, hence a new element of fantasy is added to lessen the responsibility of human frailties, and force the lovers together beyond their control. And Guinevere is charged not with adultery, but with sorcery, a charge completely concocted by Arthur's enemies, and he blames himself for all the humility and pain suffered by Guinevere because of it. He is fully aware of the love of Lancelot and Guinevere but excuses it, choosing to live with it. In Godwin, since Arthur's true love is Morgana, he all but welcomes Lancelot into the picture. He does not wish to lose Guenevere because she brings with her the loyalty of the northern Parisi. She is condemned in Godwin also, but again, not for adultery, but for murdering Morgana and threatening Arthur's life. While Woolley's first book leaves this question unanswered, it is perhaps noteworthy to point out that Zimmer Bradley and Wolf excuse Guenevere's adultery as well. Therefore, the trend seems to be that while Guenevere continues to be unfaithful, the severity of this violation has been reduced, making room for other, perhaps more significant, action for her character. Guenevere's undying love for Lancelot is only maintained in Newman; therefore, the medieval texts in which Guenevere's character seemed to be determined only through Lancelot's actions are being abandoned. She is no longer simply a symbol of courtly grace but also shows her value as the king's

partner in helping him write treaties and draft laws. The Guenevere of these three modern writers makes her own mark as an independent person.

Guenevere's independence is, in fact, the subject of Newman's trilogy, as the character struggles to determine her own capabilities and place in the world. It is resolved at the end when she takes charge of her own self while held captive by Mordred. Her declaration to Lancelot that she always expected to be rescued from life and that with Mordred, she knew she had to rely on herself, frees her from being the passive heroine of Arthurian tradition and allows her to become a "hero." With her newfound strength, Guinevere is able to take over Cameliard, nurse plague-stricken people, and help merge Saxons with Britons. Her renewal is easily seen. Godwin's Guenevere displays basic independence in her power to rule, but later undergoes a painful inner struggle to free herself from her ambitious and imperious side as she physically endures a journey into slavery. Ironically, she had always been a slave to herself, but it is real slavery that frees her from her selfish and imperious personality. She returns to Britain, renewed with enormous concern for the people and attempts to share Saxon plowing techniques with them. Unfortunately, she is labelled a reformer and exiled, but she manages to integrate the Saxons with her people by willing all of her holdings to the Saxons. Woolley's young Guinevere also

struggles with her independence as she re-assesses it in the context of an arranged marriage. Her physical wedding journey represents a search inwards as she attempts to come to terms with her situation.

It is my hope that through this analysis of Morgan Le Fay and Guenevere we have gained an insight into the treatment and development of their characters from a medieval reference point to the portraits being created today. It is clear that the trend in these modern Arthurian novels is to focus less on Morgan Le Fay's evil sorceress image and Guenevere's adulterous one, and to expand their inner personalities and personal struggles. To this extent, they become new heroes of the Arthurian story, as never seen before. These writers have introduced the modern reader to an entirely unknown dimension of the Arthurian world: that of the women, and its potential for further development is limitless.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. The Mists of Avalon. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982.

Godwin, Parke. Firelord. New York: Bantam Books, Inc. 1980.

_________. Beloved Exile. New York: Bantam Books, Inc. 1984.

Newman, Sharan. The Chessboard Queen. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.

_________. Guinevere. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

_________. Guinevere Evermore. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

Wolf, Joan. The Road to Avalon. New York: New American Library, 1988.

Woolley, Persia. Child of the Northern Spring. New York: Pocket Books, 1987.

Other Primary Arthurian Texts

Berger, Thomas. Arthur Rex: A Legendary Novel. New York: Delacorte, 1978.

Bradshaw, Gillian. Hawk of May. New York: Signet, 1981.

_________. In Winter's Shadow. New York: Signet, 1983.

_________. Kingdom of Summer. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981.

Canning, Victor. The Crimson Chalice. New York: Charter Books, 1978.

Chapman, Vera. The Green Knight. London: Collings, 1975.

Chapman, Vera. King Arthur's Daughter. New York: Avon Books, 1978.

__________. The King's Damosel. New York: Avon Books, 1978.

Cherryh, C.J. Port Eternity. New York: Daw Books, Inc. 1982.

Chrétien de Troyes. Arthurian Romances. W. W. Comfort, trans. Great Britain: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd. 1975.

Christian, Catherine. The Pendragon. New York: Warner Books Inc. 1980.

Cooper, Susan. The Dark is Rising. New York: Collier Books, 1986.

__________.. Greenwitch. Pennsylvania: Atheneum, 1974.

__________. The Grey King. New York: Collier Books, 1986.

__________. Over Sea, Under Stone. England: Puffin Books, 1983.

__________. Silver on the Tree. Pennsylvania: Atheneum, 1977.

David, Peter. Knight Life. New York: Ace Fantasy Books, 1987.

Erskine, John. Galahad Enough of His Life to Explain His Reputation. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Publishers, 1926.

Fortune, Dion. Avalon of the Heart. London: Fredrick Muller, Ltd. 1934.

Gash, Jonathan. The Grail Tree. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979.

Green, Roger Lancelyn. King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table. Great Britain: Puffin Books, 1984.

Johnson, Barbara Ferry. Lionors. New York: Avon Books, 1975.

Karr, Phyllis Ann. The Idylls of the Queen. New York: Berkley Books, 1982.

Layamon. Brut, in Arthur King of Britain. Richard L. Brengle, ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1964.

Lerner, Alan Jay. Camelot. New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc. 1961.

Lewis, C.S. That Hideous Strength. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1946.

Löseth, Eilhert. Le Roman en prose de Tristan. Paris: Champion, 1891.

The Mabinogion, from The Welsh of the Llyfr Coch O Hergest. Lady Charlotte Guest, trans. A facsimile reproduction of the complete 1877 edition. U.S.A.: Academy Press Ltd. 1978.

Malory, Sir Thomas. Le Morte d'Arthur. Vols. I & II. Based on Caxton's printed edition of 1485. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969.

Meany, Dee Morrison. Iseult. New York: Ace Fantasy Books, 1985.

Monaco, Richard. Blood and Dreams. New York: Berkley Books, 1985.

__________. The Final Quest. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980.

__________. The Grail War. New York: Berkley Books, 1984.

__________. Parsival: A Knight's Tale. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1977.

Monmouth, Geoffrey of. The History of the Kings of Britain. Lewis Thorpe, ed. & trans. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1980.

__________. The Vita Merlini. J.J. Parry, ed. and trans. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. X, No. 3, 1925.

Morris, William. The Defence of Guenevere, in The Arthurian Legends. An Illustrated Anthology. Richard Barber, ed. Dorset Press, 1985.

Munn, H. Warner. Merlin's Ring. New York: Ballantine Books, 1974.

Norton, Andre. Merlin's Mirror. New York: Daw Books, Inc. 1975.

Nye, Robert. Merlin. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1979.

Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur and Daphne Du Maurier. Castle Dor. New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc. 1962.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1959.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo. J.R.R. Tolkien, trans. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1983.

Spenser, Edmund. The Faerie Queene. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1978.

Steinbeck, John. The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights. New York: Ballantine Books, 1984.

Stewart, Mary. The Crystal Cave. New York: William Morrow & Co. Inc. 1970.

________. The Hollow Hills. New York: William Morrow & Co. Inc. 1973.

________. The Last Enchantment. New York: William Morrow & Co. Inc. 1979.

________. The Wicked Day. Canada: Coronet Books, 1984

St. John, Nicole. Guinever's Gift. New York: Random House, 1977.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. Sword at Sunset. London: Ebenezer Baylis and Son, Ltd. 1963.

________. The Sword and the Circle. London: The Bodley Head Ltd. 1981.

Tennyson, Sir Alfred Lord. Idylls of the King. New York: Airmont Publishing Company, Inc. 1969.

Tennyson, Sir Alfred Lord. The Lady of Shalott, in Alfred Lord Tennyson, Selected Poetry. Herbert Marshall Mcluhan, ed. New York: Rinehart & Company Inc. 1956.

Treece, Henry. The Great Captains. New York: Random House, 1956.

Twain, Mark. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. New York: The New American Library, Inc. 1963.

The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances. H. Oskar Sommer, ed. 8 vols. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1908-16.

Wace. Le Roman de Brut, in Arthur King of Britain. Richard L. Brengle, ed. Eugene Mason, trans. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1964.

White, T.H. The Book of Merlyn. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1977.

_________. The Once and Future King. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1966.

_________. The Sword in the Stone. Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd. 1984.

Yolen, Jane. Merlin's Booke. New York: Ace Fantasy Books, 1986.

Zelazny, Roger. The Last Defender of Camelot. New York: Pocket Books, 1980.

Studies

Bogdanow, Fanni. "Morgain's Role in the Thirteenth-Century French Prose Romances of the Arthurian Cycle." Medium Aevum 38 (1969).

_________. The Romance of the Grail: A Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Prose Romance. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966.

Campbell, Joseph. The Hero With a Thousand Faces. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949.

Cavendish, Richard. King Arthur and the Grail: The Arthurian Legends and Their Meaning. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co. 1985.

Chadwick, Nora. The Celts. England: Penguin Books, 1985.

Chambers, E.K. Arthur of Britain. The Story of King Arthur in History and Legend. New York: October House Inc. 1967.

Cross, Tom Peete, and William Albert Nitze. Lancelot and Guenevere: A Study on the Origins of Courtly Love. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930.

Di Pasquale, Pasquale, Jr. "Malory's Guinevere: Epic Queen, Romance Heroine and Tragic Mistress." Bucknell Review 16.2 (1968), 86-102.

Ferrante, Joan. Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.

Frappier, Jean. Chrétien de Troyes. The Man and His Work. Raymond J. Cormier, trans. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982.

Fries, Maureen. "Arthurian Women: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." Paper delivered at the "Arthur of Avalon: Medieval and Modern" Conference at the State University of New York, Binghamton, Summer 1988.

Fries, Maureen. "Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition." Paper delivered at the "Arthur of Avalon: Medieval and Modern" Conference at the State University of New York, Binghamton, Summer 1988.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Garthright, Karen T. "The Development of the Character of Guinevere in Selected 20th Century British and American Arthurian Works." (MA thesis, University of Maryland, 1987).

Godwin, Parke. "Finding Firelord." Avalon to Camelot, 1, 4 (1984), 24-25.

__________. "The Road to Camelot." Science Fiction & Fantasy Review 66 (1984), 6-9.

__________. Unpublished transcript of interview with Karen T. Garthright, October 7, 1985.

Goodrich, Norma Lorre. King Arthur. New York: Franklin Watts, 1986.

Graves, Robert The White Goddess. New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 1978.

Hale, William C. "Morgaine, Morgana, Morgause." Avalon to Camelot, 1, 4 (1984), 35-36.

Herman, Harold J. "Sharan Newman's Guinevere Trilogy." Arthurian Interpretations 1.2 (1987), 39-55.

Jennings, Margaret. "'Heavens defend me from that Welsh Fairy' (Merry Wives of Windsor, V, v, 85): The Metamorphosis of Morgain la Fee in the Romances." Court and Poet. Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society. Glyn S. Burgess, ed. Liverpool: Frances Cairns, 1981, 197-205.

Kennedy, Edward D. "The Arthur-Guenevere Relationship in Malory's Morte Darthur." Studies in the Literary Imagination 4 (1971), 29-40.

Lacy, Norris J., et al., eds. The Arthurian Encyclopedia. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1986.

Lewis, C.S. The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. New York: Oxford University Press, Reprint, 1981.

Loomis, R.S. The Development of Arthurian Romance. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1970.

_________. "Morgan la Fée and the Celtic Godesses." Speculum 20 (1945), 183-203; reprint Wales [item 59], 105-30.

Marx, Jean. "La vie et les aventures de la reine Guenièvre et la transformation de son personnage." Journal des Savants (1965), 332-42; reprint as "Transformation du personnage de Guenièvre." Nouvelles [item 1322], 260-69.

Merriman, James D. A Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973.

Morgan, Henry G. "The Role of Morgan le Fay in Malory's Morte Darthur." Southern Quarterly 2 (1963-64), 150-68.

Murray, Margaret. God of the Witches. Oxford University Press, 1973.

_________. The Witch-Cult in Western Europe. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

Noble, Peter. "The Character of Guinevere in the Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes." Modern Language Review 67 (1972), 524-35.

Olstead, Myra. "Morgan le Fay in Malory's Morte Darthur." Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society 19 (1967), 128-38.

Parry, John Jay. The Art of Courtly Love by Andreas Capellanus. New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co., Reprint, 1959.

Paton, Lucy A. Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance, 2nd ed. New York: Burt Franklin, 1960.

Quilligan, Maureen. "Arthur's Sister's Story." New York Times Book Review 30 January 1983.

Reid, Margaret J. C. The Arthurian Legend. Comparison of Treatment in Modern and Mediaeval Literature. A Study in the Literary Value of Myth and Legend. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938. Reprint New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970.

Samples, Susann. "Guinevere: A Re-Appraisal." Arthurian Interpretations 3.2 (1989), 106-118.

Schwartz, Susan. "Marion Zimmer Bradley's Ethic of Freedom." The Feminine Eye. Tom Staicar, ed. New York: Fredrick Ungar Pub. Co. 1982.

Skinner, Veronica. "Guinevere, A Study in the Arthurian Legend." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1976).

Starr, Nathan Comfort. King Arthur Today: The Arthurian Legend in English and American Literature, 1901-1953. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1954.

Stewart, R.J. The Mystic Life of Merlin. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1986.

Stone, Merlin. Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood (2 vols.). New York: New Sybilline Books, 1979.

__________. When God was a Woman. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Swilling, Paula. "Images of the Great Goddess." Avalon to Camelot, Vol. I, No. 4 (1984), 26-27.

Takamiya, Toshiyuki and Derek Brewer, eds. Aspects of Malory. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981.

Taylor, Beverly and Elisabeth Brewer. The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature Since 1900. Cambridge: Brewer, 1983.

Thompson, Raymond H. "Firelord and Beloved Exile." Book Review in Avalon to Camelot I, 4 (1984), 13-14.

__________. The Return from Avalon: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in Modern Fiction. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Tipton, Catharine A. "Morgaine: Bradley's New Woman of Ancient Myth." Paper delivered at the Popular Culture Association, March 23-26, 1988.

Urrutia, Benjamin. "Les Amours de Morgaine." Mythlore 10.2 (Summer 1983), 39.

Wais, Kurt. "Morgain amante d'Accalon et rivale de Gueniève." Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne 18 (1966), 137-49.