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GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE : HER LOVERS AND SUITORS
AS PORTRAYED IN THE
MEDIAEVAL FRENCH VERSE AND PROSE ROMANCES

by

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ABSTRACT

Except in her relationships with Lancelot, Guinevere has hitherto been comparatively neglected by Arthurian scholarship, with the result that many links between extant romances, and many suggestions of links with earlier, now lost, romances, have remained uncommented upon. These links are important to the establishment of the extent of the various romances' dependence on their antecedents, whether extant or postulated, as well as the extent of their borrowings from older tradition, Classical or Celtic. While it seems as if rather too much emphasis has been placed (by the Celticist school of thought in particular) on the dependence of the Lancelot legend upon ancient Celtic tradition rather than upon the contemporary mores which it so vividly reflects, certain other liaisons involving Guinevere, which have been neglected (her almost-certain one-time dalliance with Gauvain, and her abduction by Brun de Morois for example), are shown in the present study to have greater dependence on anterior tradition than has been allowed by some scholars.

Guinevere's relationship with her husband Arthur is also discussed, as are the various other dalliances and abductions in which she is involved. Brief mention has had to be made of the non-French abductions and suits of Guinevere, as they demonstrate intricate links with the French versions and also suggest the one-time existence of a written and oral Arthurian tradition widespread before Chrétien de Troyes and of which we now possess but a small proportion.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: QUEEN GUINEVERE

From a state of comparative obscurity, at least insofar as can be made out from those texts which have survived the passage of time, Queen Guinevere was turned, almost overnight, into a literary sensation by a poet of Troyes known only to us as Chrétien, but who, in the absence of any other textual sources, seems to have been responsible for the popularization throughout Europe of the Arthurian legend, and in particular the activities of two of its principal characters, Guinevere and Lancelot. For prior to Le Chevalier de la Charrete^I (circa 1178), which gives us the earliest extant account of their liaison, neither features prominently in the matière de Bretagne (indeed, the name Lancelot does not appear as such until Chrétien's Erec et Enide² of circa 1170). However, while Lancelot is the name most readily associated with that of

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- I Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier de la Charrete, ed. W. Foerster, Niemeyer, Halle, 1899; repr. Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1965. All references will be to this edition. (Hereafter abbreviated to Charrete.)
- 2 Chrétien de Troyes, Erec et Enide, ed. M. Roques, CFMA, Paris, 1978. All references will be to this edition. (Hereafter abbreviated to Erec.) With reference to the dating of the works of Chrétien, see ALMA, pp. 158-9, and the following articles from the BBSIA: A. Fournier, 'Encore la chronologie des oeuvres de Chrétien de Troyes' (II, 1950, 69-88); J. Misrahi, 'More light on the chronology of Chrétien de Troyes?' (XI, 1959, 89-120); T. Hunt, 'Redating Chrétien de Troyes' (XXX, 1978, 209-37). The tendency in recent years has been to give his works a somewhat later dating; those dates given here are the ones postulated by Frappier, and for the purpose of this study can be taken as approximate termini a quo.

Guinevere (a phenomenon no doubt inspired by Chrétien's Charrete), there exist recurrent allusions, both overt and covert - together with a number of complete accounts - throughout the whole range of French mediaeval verse and prose Arthurian romance, concerning other extra-marital liaisons with, or suits of, Queen Guinevere. In some cases she was forcibly abducted, in others she either reciprocated the love offered her or rejected it. There are also cases where it is not clear what, if anything, happened. It is the purpose of the present study to examine these various relationships, many of which have been of interest in the long-standing debate over the origins of the matière de Bretagne; and this issue will be borne in mind and returned to frequently, as it appears as yet to remain unresolved.

What, then, of Guinevere herself? Concerning her origins, little is known and nothing is certain, beyond the fact that she first appears as Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's queen, in the Welsh tale Kwlhwch ac Olwen,³ of around 1100. Attempts to trace her name further back seem largely hypothetical⁴ and are not of great importance here, since even in the Mabinogion she exists as little more than a name. Her only

 3 The White Book Mabinogion, ed. J.G.Evans, Pwllheli, 1907.
 Quoted by Goetinck, n.⁴ below.

4 G.Witchard Goetinck, 'Gwenhwyfar, Guinevere and Guenièvre', Etudes Celtiques, XI (1964-7), 351-60; see p.351.

other pre-Chrétien appearances are in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae⁵ as Guennevera and Ganhumara, Caradoc of Llancarfan's Vita Gildae⁶ as Guenuvar, and Wace's Roman de Brut⁷ as Genoivre and Gahunmare.⁸ Here again, her interest to us is limited to what happens to her (in the Vita Gildae she is abducted by Melwas, while in Geoffrey and Wace she takes Mordred of her own free will); for her character itself is not dwelt upon:

De la reine Guenièvre, Geoffroy disait seulement qu'elle surpassait en beauté toutes les femmes de l'île: 'totius insulae mulieres pulchritudine superabat.' Elle garde évidemment ce privilège dans le Brut, mais Wace ajoute: 'Molt fu large et bone parliere'(v.III5).⁹

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- 5 Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae, ed. E.Faral (in La Légende Arthurienne, III, 71-303; Paris, 1929). Hereafter referred to as Historia. The Queen's name is found in the following forms: Ganhumara(p.276), Guennevera (p.274), Guenuera(p.237), and Guenuera(p.253).
- 6 Caradoc of Llancarfan, Vita Gildae, ed. T.Mommsen (in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi XIII, I07-I0; Berlin, 1961). See p.I09 l.37.
- 7 Wace, La Partie Arthurienne du Roman de Brut, ed. I.D.O. Arnold and M.M.Pelan, Paris, 1962. (Hereafter referred to as Brut.) See l.II05(Genoivre) and l.2628(Gahunmare).
- 8 The disparity between the two names gave rise to some confusion and the idea that Arthur had two wives. This, however, was not a widespread aberration, and is of little significance, as has been satisfactorily settled by Maurice Delbouille in his article 'Guenièvre fut-elle la seule épouse du roi Arthur?', Mélanges de linguistique et de philologie romanes offerts à Monseigneur Pierre Gardette (Travaux de linguistique et de littérature publiés par le Centre de philologie et de littératures romanes de l'Université de Strasbourg, IV, (i); Strasbourg, 1966), pp.I23-34.
- 9 J.Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes, Connaissance des Lettres, Hatier, Paris, 1968, p.29.

It can be deduced, moreover, from the lack of attention paid by authors and copyists prior to Chrétien de Troyes to the exact form of the name of Arthur's Queen^{I0}, that such inattention or uncertainty indicates a lack of familiarity with or interest in the person in question, at the time. However, once Chrétien had adopted the form Ganievre / Guenievre and aroused contemporary interest in her, the alternative form Ganhumare and its variants were replaced by Chrétien's reading, the exclusivity of which is thereafter disrupted only by the reading Guinemars^{II} in the Enfances Gauvain^{I2}, which seems to be a derivation of Geoffrey's Ganhumara^{I3}.

However, whatever the form that her name took, an important question concerning Arthur's Queen presents itself:

I0 M.Delbouille, art. cit. pp.I23-8.

II G.D.West, An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances II50-I300. Toronto, 1969, p.81. (Hereafter abbreviated to Verse Index.)

I2 ed. P.Meyer, 'Les Enfances Gauvain', Romania, XXXIX (1910), I-32.

I3 The form Gilalmer, with variants, occurs in a Provençal romance (Jaufré, roman arthurien du XIII^e siècle en vers provençaux, ed. C.Brunel, Paris, 1943) and therefore lies outside the scope of the present study, but is discussed in the article by P.Rémy, 'Le Nom de la Reine dans "Jaufré"' in Recueil de Travaux Offerts à M.Clovis Brunel, II, 412-9 (Paris, 1955). The forms Winlogée, Guenlòie and Guinlofe will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Concerning the Latin romances, it is interesting to note that the name Gwendoloena, given to the Queen in the 13th-century De Ortu Walwanii (ed. J.D.Bruce, p.85) also occurs in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Vita Merlini (ed. Faral, op. cit., III, 305-52, ll.170-3, 356 etc.), where it appears as Guendoloena, who is the wife of Loctrinus and mother of Maddan in the Historia, (pp.94-5) but the 'compagne de Merlin' in the Vita Merlini (v. P.Rémy, art. cit., pp.415-6).

was this sudden surge of literary interest in her adulterous activities, which took place after Chrétien had composed his Charrete, real or only apparent? In other words, was Chrétien the inspiration of subsequent works, or has pure chance decreed that his should be the earliest treatment of Guinevere's extramarital activities to have been rescued in any detail from oblivion? That all traces of any hypothetical romances dealing with the subject prior to Chrétien should have disappeared seems at first glance unlikely, but there exists a considerable body of circumstantial evidence which would seem to suggest the one-time existence of such postulated romances; this will be dealt with in later chapters. On the other hand, to deem Chrétien de Troyes incapable of producing the Charrete from his own imagination would be to grossly underestimate his creative talent. Yet his was a period when originality was considered less important than the manner of presentation, when indeed the representation of what was supposed to be history depended not upon inventiveness, but upon faithful adherence to the tradition as it was already known: any significant aberration from the authoritative tradition was considered deceit, and so any product of the author's imagination had to be disguised^{I4}. In view of this,

 I4 Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia is a good example of how, in order to be a success, any fictional composition had to go to considerable lengths to maintain an air of authenticity. Frappier (op. cit., pp.25-6) comments:
 L'Historia . . . est évidemment une oeuvre fabuleuse et une mystification . . . dont le succès fut considérable, [et qui] a trompé et charmé une foule

is it likely that Chrétien would have been able to get away with such a totally new 'fiction' as Lancelot's and Guinevere's adultery, and, moreover, would he have even wanted to create such a story, given his apparent opinion of adultery¹⁵ and the less-than-enthusiastic tone in which he acknowledges the source of his 'matiere et san' (l.26) to be his patroness, at whose prompting alone he is writing?

Des que ma dame de Chanpaingne
 Viaut que romanz a feire anpraingne,
 Je l'anprandrai mout volantiers,
 Come cil qui est suens antiers
 De quanqu'il puet el monde feire
 Sanz rien de losange avant treire. (Charrete, ll.I-6).

One might consequently be tempted to postulate the existence of an anterior story linking Lancelot and Guinevere in this way. Yet on the other hand, it would seem to be this very act of placing the burden of responsibility for the 'matiere'

 de gens. Geoffroy passait communément au
 Moyen Age pour une autorité incontestable,
 bien que déjà ses mensonges aient été dénoncés
 par quelques rares lecteurs, plus défiants ou
 plus avertis.

Chrétien himself, to give an air of authority to the material in his Conte du Graal (W.Roach, ed., TLF, Paris, 1959) claims that it has a written source, a 'livre' given to him by his patron; though if this were a lie, he would have hardly dared perpetuate it.

15 Three times in Chrétien's Cligés (ed. W. Foerster, Halle, 1884; repr. Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1965), Fenice lashes out against it, not wishing to abase herself as did Yseut (ll.3145-64, 5259-62, 5310-29), and even citing St. Paul; the vehemence and emphasis with which she rejects adultery would seem to indicate that these to a large extent most probably reflect Chrétien de Troyes' own personal feelings on the subject.

on Marie de Champagne's shoulders that makes it so unlikely that Chrétien should have had a written source for his Charrete. If he had, he would no doubt have said so, as he did in his Conte du Graal, for a written source bears a greater weight of authority than an oral one; and Marie de Champagne being the figurehead and promoter of a centre of literary creativity and experiment, it is not at all unlikely that she should have provided Chrétien with the germ of the idea - given the current vogue of the story of King Mark and his adulterous wife Yseut^{I6} - and left Chrétien to do the rest. Moreover, it is very probable that Marie de Champagne believed that there was more to be made from a literary point of view from adulterous love than from conjugal love, such as is portrayed in Erec; for she seemed to subscribe to the contemporary belief that love could not exist between married partners, commissioning as she did Chrétien's friend André le Chapelain to write his treatise on love^{I7}, wherein a letter,

 I6 One might even speculate that she originally suggested a version directly along the lines of the Tristan story, involving Arthur's nephew (perhaps Mordred, as in Wace?); but that Chrétien, finding such an incestuous relationship too repugnant, elected to introduce the new character as Guinevere's partner in adultery. This, however, must remain purely conjectural.

I7 Andreas Capellanus, De Amore Libri Tres, ed. E. Trojel. Verlag, München, 1964.

attributed to an unnamed Countess of Champagne who is pronouncing judgement on a hotly-debated question, contains the following affirmation:

Dicimus enim, et stabilito tenore firmamus,
amorem non posse suas inter duos iugales
extendere vires.¹⁸

In any case, whether Chrétien approved of the morality of the subject or not, there is no reason to automatically assume that his scruples effectively prevented his imagination from setting to work; 'N'imaginons pas un Chrétien travaillant la mort dans l'âme à une oeuvre entièrement contraire à ses goûts', says Frappier.¹⁹ However, if the whole question concerning the origins of Guinevere's adulterous tradition remains open, it can at least be said with some certainty that Chrétien was responsible for the introduction of Lancelot as the queen's lover, and in doing so he founded a whole literary tradition wherein the names of Lancelot and Guinevere were to become inextricably linked.

One of the less fortunate results of Lancelot's establishment as lover of the queen was the neglect into which other, perhaps older, extramarital relationships featuring Guinevere fell, so that few new romances were subsequently composed featuring any other lovers or suitors (Durmart le Galois²⁰ is

18 Ibid, p.153. Translated by J.J.Parry, The Art of Courtly Love by Andreas Capellanus, Ungar, New York, 1970, p.106:

'We declare and hold as firmly established that love cannot exert its powers between two people who are married to each other.'

19 J.Frappier, op.cit., p.122.

20 Durmart le Galois, ed. J.Gildea. 2 vols., Villanova, 1965-6. (Hereafter abbreviated to Durmart.)

of course a striking exception), and we have to rely in many cases on hints, or on veiled allusions to lost texts or to an oral tradition. These will be dealt with in due course, but it seems to make sense to commence this study of Guinevere's amorous liaisons with an examination of her relationship to her spouse, Arthur. For some reason the early part of Arthur's career is neglected in the verse romances, apart from a brief mention in *Wace*²¹, where we learn simply that he took her as his queen as soon as he

... tot son regne ot restoré
An l'ancfene digneté, (ll.II03-4)

following its ravaging at the hands of the Saxons. At the time he was little more than fifteen, the age at which he was crowned king (ll.469-74); she was young, beautiful and of noble Roman blood (ll.II06-8). While we learn that

Artus l'ama molt et tint chiere (l.III6),

there is no hint given as to the nature of Guinevere's feelings for Arthur, and indeed later on she elopes with Arthur's nephew Mordred while the former is in France fighting the Romans. The marriage is without offspring, '... ne parent anfant avoir' (l.III8); infertility at that period being generally considered a disorder peculiar to the female sex, we may suppose that *Wace* intends us to take it that Guinevere is the barren spouse, although he does not further clarify the issue, and Arthur is not accredited with offspring by other women in the *Brut* (he in any case remains strictly faithful

21 *Wace*, op. cit., ll.II01-18.

to Guinevere throughout). Assuming, then, that it is Guinevere who is sterile, this characteristic, which is slipped in without explanation and remains with her throughout the French mediaeval romances (with one minor exception²²), may possibly be an echo of earlier tradition. According to Cross and Nitze,

the story of Guinevere and her abductors is based ultimately on a Celtic tale in which a fée (such as Etain) leaves her Otherworld mate and becomes the wife of a mortal (such as Eochaid or Arthur).²³

Now fées are of necessity immortal, and generally childless: as J-Ch. Payen remarks²⁴, childbirth and longevity (let alone immortality) are incompatible, and were indeed especially so in mediaeval times. As the primaeval function of man, as of any species, is the continuation of the race by reproduction, once a woman has had children, she has, from that point of view, served her purpose and is therefore redundant. In order, then, to be able to claim a 'right' to immortality, a woman (fairy, goddess or whatever) must not be seen to be redundant, i.e. past child-bearing; and once she has had a child, she is setting a limit on her immortality, for according

22 G.D.West, An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Prose Romances. Toronto, 1978. (Hereafter abbreviated to Prose Index.) p.136: 'In most texts Genievre is childless, but the author of Perlesvaus makes her the mother of Lohot, who is Arthur's illegitimate son elsewhere'.

23 T.P.Cross and W.A.Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere: A Study on the Origins of Courtly Love. Chicago, 1930. p.58.

24 J.-Ch.Payen, 'Plaidoyer pour Guenièvre - la culpabilité de Guenièvre dans le Lancelot-Graal.' Lettres Romanes, XX (1966), 103-114.

to the normal pattern of things, by the time a woman's offspring was old enough in turn to reproduce, she herself was past child-bearing. Speaking of Guenièvre, Payen summarizes the situation as follows:

Elle a conservé aussi la stérilité, qui est une autre façon d'échapper au temps; rien ne marque mieux le vieillissement²⁵ que de voir grandir ses enfants.

That her sterility has endowed her with, if not an immortality indicative of fairy origin, then at least a remarkable state of preservation, becomes clear in La Mort Le Roi Artu²⁶, where

la reine estoit si bele que touz li monz s'en merveilloit, car a celui tens meïsmes qu'ele iert bien en l'aage de cinquante anz estoit ele si bele dame que en tout le monde ne trovast l'en mie sa pareille, dont aucun chevalier distrent, por ce que sa biauté ne li failloit nule foiz, que ele estoit fonteinne de toutes biautez.
(4/I8-25)

Indeed, she is still sufficiently attractive by the end of the Mort Artu, by which time she must be well over sixty - for Lancelot, we are told, is fifty-five and Arthur a nonagenarian (I58/58-63) - to inspire Mordred with an all-consuming passion for her; which would seem to constitute a

²⁵ Ibid, pp.104-5.

²⁶ La Mort Le Roi Artu, Roman du XIII^e Siècle, ed. J.Frappier TLF, Genève/Paris, 1964. (Hereafter abbreviated to Mort Artu.) Quotations from the text will be identified by paragraph and line numbers.

state of preservation indicative of an intrusion of the 'merveilleux' into a work where that characteristic is otherwise conspicuous through its absence! It should, however, be pointed out that her beauty has to be maintained for the purposes of the plot, for she must be seen to be sufficiently attractive to inspire the passion which brings about the tragedy. In any case, for all that, Guinevere's sterility can prove nothing; it is simply a stock characteristic which may indicate links with an earlier, mythical immortal being.

To return to King Arthur, then, the only text in which we are given any details of his courtship of, and marriage to, Guinevere, is the comparatively late Vulgate Merlin Continuation²⁷, probably the last part of the Cycle to be written as it displays knowledge of the other parts in the many 'predictions' it makes; for although composed late, it deals with the very earliest years of Arthur's reign and seems to have been written with the object of 'filling in the blanks' by setting the scene for the events of Arthur's later career as narrated in the parts of the Cycle already

 27 ed. H.O.Sommer, The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, II, 1908, 88-466 (l'Estoire de Merlin; hereafter abbreviated to Vulgate Merlin). Quotations from the text will be identified by page and line numbers. I have unfortunately not been able to trace any reference to the actual date of this work, beyond a terminus a quo of 1215-30, given by Frappier (ALMA p.295) as the approximate date of the Prose Lancelot, which almost certainly precedes it.

composed. It is after the Rebel Kings, (those vassals who refused to accept Arthur as the rightful king of Logres), have been defeated and before the struggle against the Saxons begins that, we are told, Merlin advises Arthur's allies to go to the help of King Leodegan, whose daughter he has selected to become Arthur's wife (I07/I7-33). This daughter, Guinevere, is an only child, and Leodegan is old, so Arthur will inherit his kingdom. The match, then, is obviously politically motivated, although it is said of her that she is

de moult haute gent & si est bele & de si
grant ualor que nule pucele ne poroit
plus estre (I07/I9-20).

Later on, while watching the fighting from the safety of her father's castle, Guinevere admires Arthur's bravery, without realizing who he is (I54/38-I55/2). After the battle, Guinevere bathes Arthur

si li laua la damoisele mismes le uis &
le col & lessua dune touaille moult
doucement (I56/39-40),

at which point they begin to take interest in each other, Guinevere in particular seeming decidedly keen on the stranger:

li rois ártus fu de moult biaute plain
si le regarda la pucele moult durement
& li rois lui . & ele dist entre ses
dens que moult deust estre lie la dame
qui sí biaux cheualiers requerroit
damours & si boins comme cis est . (I57/3-6)

Then while she is serving him with wine, Arthur is quick to notice appreciatively her finer points (I57/39-I58/6);

and it is not long before the first signs of love - pensiveness and loss of appetite - appear, of which he is sufficiently conscious to try and conceal them from his companions (I58/I2-I5). More battles intervene, and when King Leodegan offers Arthur his daughter's hand he is still unaware of his future son-in-law's identity. They are wedded that same day; the whole affair is passed over somewhat perfunctorily

& puis furent faites les noeches si grans
que onques si grans ne furent veues . &
deseure tous cheus qui iluec estoient fu
lie genieure de son espous . (2I7/3I-3)

And that seems to be it; there is hardly any more space devoted to it than in Wace - there could hardly be less. Why this neglect of such an important event in the history of Logres and in the Arthurian legend as a whole? The issue is further complicated when, some eighty pages later and after battling with the armies of King Rion, the Saxons, and Claudas, King Arthur and Queen Guinevere are married - again, without reference being made, moreover, to the fact that they already were man and wife. Possibly one of the marriages is a later interpolation; it seems strange that the original author should have forgotten in such a small space of time that he had already married Arthur and Guinevere²⁸. In any

28 In his article on the Vulgate Merlin, 'la composition de la Vulgate du Merlin', Romania, LXXIV (1953) 200-220, A.Micha sidesteps the issue by describing the first marriage as a betrothal - 'Arthur se fiance' (p.202).

case, this time the nuptials are described in a manner more befitting of the occasion (301/36-302/24) and are followed by a tournament, an abortive attempt to replace Guinevere in the wedding-bed by her identical half-sister of the same name, and finally the consummation of the marriage (310/19-22), which incidentally does not receive mention following the first marriage. Apart from a brief presage of the False Guinevere episode (310/23-36), there is little else of interest concerning Guinevere throughout the rest of the Vulgate Merlin. All in all, the relationship of Arthur and Guinevere prior to their marriage seems to have been given the barest minimum treatment required by propriety so as not to make it appear based on purely political, pragmatic motives; we see them spend precious little time together, we do not hear them exchange vows of love, and what mutual attraction there is is purely physical. Once married, their relationship is no longer of any interest, it seems, for it takes a back seat to whatever else is happening throughout the remainder of French Arthurian literature, with Arthur's feelings for Guinevere aroused apparently only when they are threatened. The belief that respect alone, and not love, could exist between spouses was evidently widespread in mediaeval France, and not just restricted to the court of Marie de Champagne. However, we do find, in the Mort Artu, some traces of affection shown by King Arthur for his wife, although he by now is presumably in his eighties. Having

been accused by Mador de la Porte of murder and being unable to find a knight to defend her and prove her innocence, the Queen seems doomed to death. As upholder of the law, it is Arthur's duty to see that justice is done, and as final arbiter, he must remain neutral and therefore cannot take up his wife's cause himself; but as her husband, he is much grieved at the prospect of having to pronounce judgement on Guinevere:

Celui soir dist li rois a la reïne moult corrouciez: "Certes, dame, ge ne sei que dire de vos; tuit li bon chevalier de ma cort me sont failli; por quoi vos poez dire que au jor de demain recevroiz mort honteuse et vileinne. Si volsisse mieuz avoir perdu toute ma terre que ce fust avenu a mon vivant; car ge n'amai onques riens el siecle autant com ge vos ai amee et aing encore." Et quant la reïne entent ceste parole, si commence a plorer trop durement, et aussi fet li rois; (79/33-43).

Even after Lancelot and Guinevere have been caught in flagrante delicto, Arthur, forced by common consent to have her burned, is stricken with grief at his loss:

Quant li rois la vit, si en ot si grant pitié qu'il ne la pot regarder, einz commande que l'en l'ost de devant lui et que l'en en face ce que la cort esgarde par le jugement (93/44-7).

Like Pontius Pilate, he washes his hands of the affair, sending Agravain and the faithful Gaheriet - the latter against his will - to perform the task of guarding the queen against a possible rescue attempt. In a sense, Arthur's stubbornness in sending Gaheriet brings the

responsibility for the whole subsequent series of tragic events down onto his own shoulders. Blinded by jealousy, deserted by his beloved nephew Gauvain, and ignoring the wishes of the common people (93/49-60), in his anger he lets himself be guided by the treacherous Agravain and his two other brothers (unnamed, but presumably Mordred and Guerrehet) in condemning Guinevere to death. Not content with that, he unwittingly sets the scene for Gauvain's démesure and, ultimately, his own end, by forcing Gaheriet to guard the Queen, and thereby sending him to his death at Lancelot's hands. Arthur's responsibility for all this is the more marked in view of Gaheriet's obviously unwillingness to get involved in this:

"Ore, Agravain, fet Gaheriet, cuidiez
 vos que g'i soie venuz por moi mesler
 a Lancelot, se il voulait la reine
 rescorre? Or sachiez bien que ja ne
 me mellerai a lui; einz voudroie ge
 mielz qu'il la tenist toz les jorz
 de sa vie einz que ele moreust issi."
 (93/72-7)

It is all the more tragic, then, that Arthur's eventual downfall should occur as the result of Gaheriet's death, and Arthur's jealous love for his wife, though not heavily emphasized, is used by the author of the Mort Artu to great tragic effect in its tightly-woven sequence of events.

The comparatively scant treatment accorded to the relationship between Arthur and Guinevere by the mediaeval French romances in general, would seem to indicate that there

was little in the way of either written or oral tradition, upon which to base such material, already existing; and in view of the obscurity concerning Guinevere's origins, which cannot be traced with any certainty much further back than the beginning of the twelfth century, it is likely that what little we have is the result of discreet invention on the part of the authors. Certainly it seems unlikely that any Celtic myth or tradition should have furnished a direct source for the somewhat mercenary reasons behind Arthur and Guinevere's espousal; however, once their names had been linked by the authoritative Historia, mediaeval reluctance to invent too freely, coupled with a general disinterest in conjugal love, serve to explain the neglect of their relationship by the mediaeval French romancers.

CHAPTER TWO

YDER AND THE MODENA ARCHIVOLT

In 1898, Professor Wendelin Foerster^I brought the attention of Arthurian scholars to a sculpture² on the archivolt over the Porta della Pescheria at the Cathedral of Modena in northern Italy. While correctly surmising that it represented an episode from an Arthurian story, Foerster's hypothesis, that it was linked with the story of Caradoc of the Dolorous Tower in the Prose Lancelot³, in which Gauvain is rescued by Lancelot from his imprisonment by Caradoc in the Tower, was subsequently refuted and replaced by the generally-accepted theory⁴ that it represented a version of the rescue of Guinevere from imprisonment at the hands of an abductor. Less widely accepted, and hotly debated ever since, was Foerster's assertion that the sculpture dated from the first decade of the twelfth century. It is the dating of the sculpture in particular which has led to the most vigorous controversy, which has raged to and fro in the pages of learned journals for over half a century and which has helped to divide Arthurian scholarship into two camps, those who postulate Celtic origins for the bulk of the matière de Bretagne, and those, the 'non-Celticists',

 I Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, XXII, 243, 526.
 Cited by Loomis, Celtic Myth, p.7 n.9.

2 V. infra, p.23, Fig. I.

3 Sommer, IV, 88ff.

4 But see below, pp.28ff.

who prefer to credit mediaeval authors with greater powers of originality and invention, and a debt to sources Classical rather than Celtic. From the latter school of thought, the latest proposed date was 1200, suggested by Edmond Faral⁵, while in the vanguard of the Celticist host Roger Sherman Loomis has forcefully defended Foerster's position with his postulation, reiterated in a series of articles, of a date between 1099 and 1106. Rather than risk getting embroiled in a blow-by-blow account of the debate, which would no doubt in itself end up out-growing the entire present study, it would seem more practical to list the material in which it can be followed in detail if desired⁶. Should the later date be taken as being correct, we can assume that the sculpture was inspired by the vogue for tales of Arthur and his court which arose following the composition of the works of Wace and Chrétien de Troyes; these seemed to have achieved a rapid rise to widespread popularity throughout Western Europe by

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- 5 E. Faral, Recherches sur les Sources Latines des Contes et Romans Courtois du Moyen Age (Paris, Champion, 1913) p.395. (Hereafter abbreviated to Recherches.) See also E. Mâle, L'Art Religieux du Douzième Siècle (Paris, 1922), p.269, where the date suggested is 1160.
- 6 See the special bibliography at the end of the present chapter. Further to the arguments presented in those articles, one point seems to have escaped the attention of observers, a point which, if valid, would strengthen the case for a later date. It concerns 'Che', who is positioned at the very rear of the attacking force and with his lance pointing behind him over his shoulder in an 'at ease' position. Can this be interpreted as being representative of the typical Kay of twelfth-century romance, who is portrayed as being more and more churlish and cowardly with the passage of time?

the end of the twelfth century. If, however, the earlier date carries the day, which it seems to have done, then we must assume that there were already tales of Arthur and his knights being told in Northern Italy by the end of the eleventh century, and this in turn would indicate that neither Chrétien de Troyes, nor Wace, nor even Geoffrey of Monmouth were responsible for the development of Arthurian romance, but that there was already a strong tradition of Arthurian legend behind them when they wrote - either in a written form no longer extant, or disseminated orally by professional conteurs. That such a tradition did in fact exist to a certain extent can hardly be denied, given that, in 1125 or thereabouts, William of Malmesbury, in his Historia Regum Anglorum, speaks of tales of Arthur circulating amongst the Bretons⁷; while thirty years later Wace, in his Brut, speaks of Arthur's

. . . Reonde Table,
Dont Breton dient mainte fable. (1211-12).

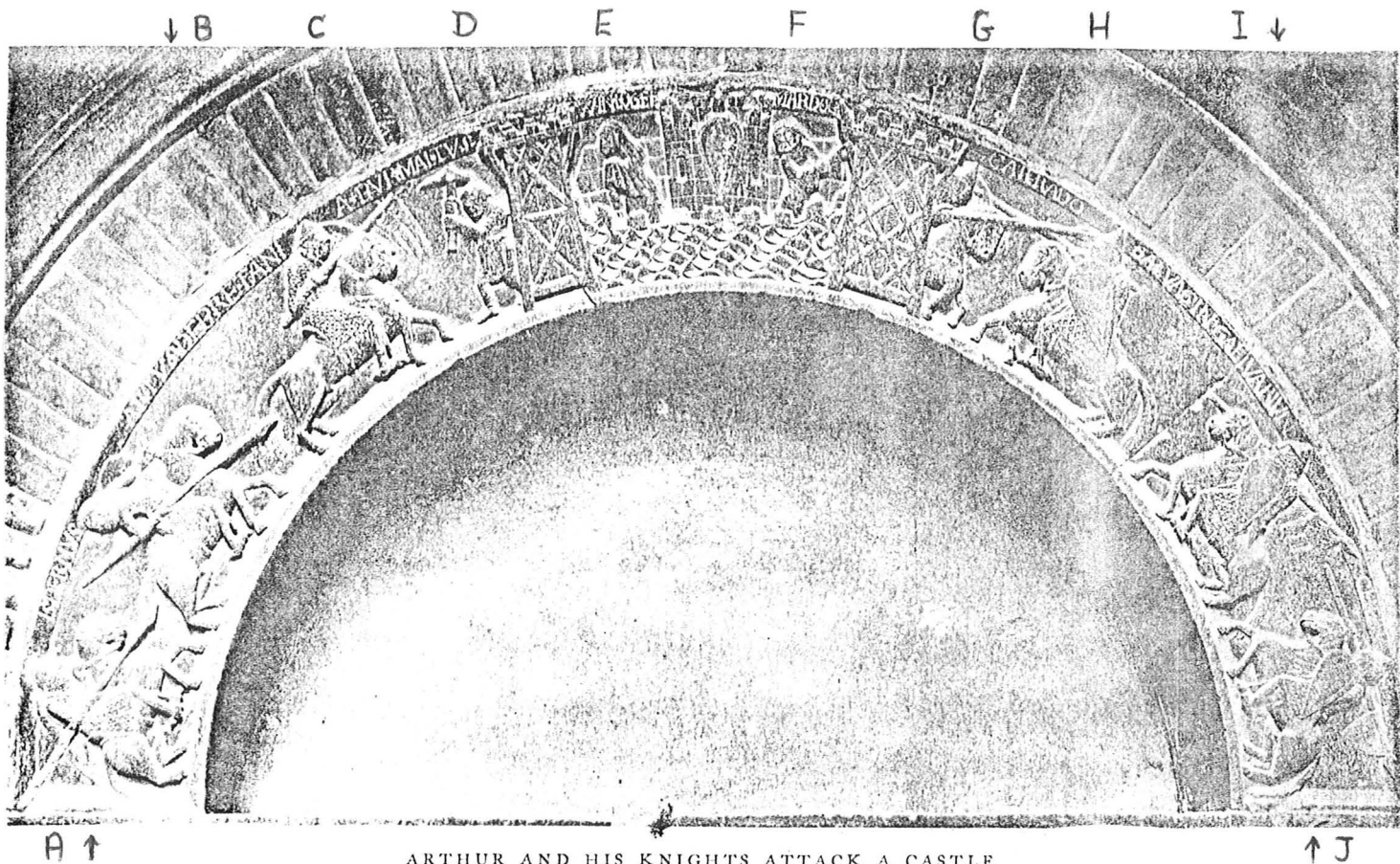
Later still, in the prologue to his Erec, Chrétien de Troyes seems to be implying that other versions of the story are circulating:

d'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
que devant rois et devant contes
depecier et corronpre suelent
cil qui de conter vivre vuelent. (19-22).

7 E. Faral, La Légende Arthurienne, I, 244-50. See also the preface to Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia (Faral, op. cit., III, 71) which speaks of Arthur's fame spread 'amongst many peoples' (a multis populis quasi jocunde inscripta et memoriter praedicarentur).

Finally, in the prologue to his Conte du Graal, Chrétien speaks of a 'livre', a written source for his tale, given to him by his patron; and although such references, often made to impart an air of authority and veracity to a work, should generally not be taken too seriously, in this particular instance it is hardly likely that Chrétien would have lied in naming his patron as the source of the book, when the poem was intended to be recited before him. Clearly then, Arthurian tales were circulating in Brittany by 1125 and were already popular at Marie de Champagne's court half a century later, before Chrétien wrote Erec⁸. But is it credible that their popularity should have risen sufficiently to inspire a profane sculpture on a sacred edifice in Italy as early as 1106? If this be the case, and if the interpretation of the sculpture as being a depiction of the rescue of Guinevere is correct, then the Modena Archivolto represents the earliest extant 'version' of the Rape (abduction) of Guinevere, and the second oldest document we have portraying Guinevere, after Kwlhwch ac Olwen (v. supra, p.2). Yet the sculptor evidently presupposes a widespread familiarity with the theme, requiring only the naming of the characters involved to explain it to the contemporary Modenese; unfortunately, however, the Arthurian scholar does not possess such familiarity, and

 8 Cf. J.D.Bruce's dogmatic statement that 'there is nothing to justify the assumption of a fully-developed genre of Arthurian romance before [Chrétien de Troyes]'. The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the beginnings down to the year 1300 (2 vols., Gloucester, Mass., 1958) II, 54.



ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS ATTACK A CASTLE
Archivolt, Modena Cathedral. c. 1106

Figure I: ALMA, ed. Loomis, facing page 60. See also Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art, and Wales and the Arthurian Legend; also Durmart le Galois, ed. Gildea, II, frontispiece, for more detailed close-ups.

cannot even be sure that an original story, upon which the sculpture may have been based, actually existed; we can only surmise, and judge for ourselves which is the most reasonable interpretation, given the evidence available to us. Proceeding in a clockwise direction around the archivolt, I have lettered each of the protagonists (see Figure I), to facilitate reference to the unfortunately poor-quality reproduction of

the original photograph, a procedure rendered all the more necessary by the awkward fact that there are four figures to the left-hand side of the castle and only three names, placed so ambiguously as to have led to some controversy over who is who. While most critics, particularly Loomis, and, most recently, Maurice Delbouille⁹, would make (A) unnamed, (B) 'Isdernus', (C) 'Artus de Bretania' and (D) 'Burmaltus', K.G.T. Webster¹⁰ proposed that (A) be taken to be 'Isdernus', (B) 'Artus', (C) 'Burmaltus' and (D) unnamed. While this allows 'Burmaltus' to be interpreted as a form of Durmart, the unarmed (B), who seems to be in the process of being unhorsed, ill fits the personage of Arthur. Webster's claim that

. . . he (Arthur) appropriately is the only one differentiated from the others in position and costume. . . . Arthur's being without helm and armour, though he has lance and shield, suggests he has been worsted in some encounter where he lost the captive lady, but that the II encounter was not a hunt,

does not sound at all convincing, and his explanation does not coincide with any known Arthurian text; yet it cannot be dismissed altogether, as he bases his hypothesis on a pre-Geoffrey of Monmouth dating, which presupposes a now-lost version of the story which could have presented Arthur as the Queen's escort at the time of her abduction. Certainly

9 art. cit. in Mélanges Gardette, pp.133-4. For complete reference, v. supra, p.3 n.8.

10 K.G.T. Webster, Guinevere: A Study of her Abductions (Massachusetts, 1951) p.II2 n.2.

II loc. cit.

this would fit in with the general theory, often put forward, that in the earliest stages of the development of the tradition Arthur was the central figure; and that the romances we have, which must considerably postdate such stages, present a state of development in which other characters such as Yder and Gauvain, both already present in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, and later on Lancelot, become attached to the Arthurian tradition and oust Arthur as the centre of interest (lover of Guinevere, rescuer of Guinevere etc)^{I2}. But given the romances that are available to us, and comparing them with the Modena Archivolt, it seems more logical to equate (B) with 'Isdernus', who is generally equated with Yder of the romances; for it is he who, in the thirteenth-century courtly romance Durmart le Galois, is escorting the Queen, unarmed, when she is seized by the abductor, Brun de Morois. Unable to offer more than token resistance, Yder is unhorsed and, too ashamed to return and admit his loss, turns in pursuit. That this theme is not new can be seen in Erec: in the scene of the affront to Guinevere (ll.I38-274; a more courtly, watered-down version of the abduction theme, one is tempted to surmise), Chrétien has simply changed the names around to fit the new hero, Erec, into the story. Thus, instead of Yder being the unarmed knight accompanying

 I2 G.Paris speaks of 'la tendance générale des contes bretons de cette période à mettre Arthur sur le second plan et à faire accomplir tous les exploits par les chevaliers qui l'entourent'. Romania, XII (1883), 513.

the Queen when the aggressor appears, it is Erec; and, no doubt to save having to look too far for a name for the aggressor, he simply transfers the name Yder to him^{I3}. The other similarities - the remainder of the party going out on the hunt for the white stag (Durmart 4187-8, Erec 63-76), the Queen and her escort separated from them (Durmart 4200-6, Erec 129-32) - are so striking as to be beyond the realms of coincidence. But it is the differences which are of the greatest interest, when we draw comparisons with the Archivolt. For if Erec echoes an earlier tradition in which Yder was the abductor and Arthur the escort, and represents the turning-point in Yder's career - the point at which he is won over to the forces of good - in Durmart he already occupies that position, as the trusted escort of the Queen. Why is it, then, that the Archivolt is closer to the thirteenth-century romance,

 I3 An alternative interpretation would be to see in Erec an adaptation of an earlier version in which Arthur was the Queen's escort and Yder the abductor. In Erec Yder plays a less malignant rôle and is pardoned, and by the thirteenth century he has become a respectable member of Arthur's court and can no longer be attributed any maleficent rôle; so the part of abductor is transferred to Brun de Morois, while Yder is displaced to the part of escort. There are strong connections between Erec and Durmart which indicate that Yder once played the rôle of abductor given, in the latter work, to Brun: for instance, both Brun and Yder have dwarfs as henchmen, and both dwarfs taunt the Queen's men; while Yder is the prevailing champion at the sparrowhawk contest who loses the day to the hero newcomer, Erec, in Chrétien - and Brun is brother of the prevailing champion, who likewise loses to the new challenger, in the sparrowhawk contest in Durmart.

placing as it does 'Isdernus' amongst the rescuing forces under Arthur? For the prostrate attitudes and the costume of 'Isdernus' on the archivolt are so strongly reminiscent of Durmart that the connection cannot be denied, and yet no critic places the Archivolt any later than 1180 (Faral having later on conceded twenty years on his earlier assessment quoted above^{I4}) which is more contemporary with Chrétien than with Durmart. To complicate matters further, Jacques Stiennon and Rita Lejeune in a recent article^{I5} have suggested yet another variation in the allocation of names on the sculpture. According to them, (A) is 'Isdernus', (B) an unnamed knight who is about to attack Arthur but at the last moment is unhorsed by (A), (C) is Arthur and (D) 'Burmaltus'. Unfortunately, however, this latest interpretation has done little to clarify the issue.

Moving on around the bas-relief to 'Artus de Bretania', even if we accept Webster's claim (v. supra, p.24) that Arthur is the one who was escorting the Queen at the time of her abduction, there is no doubt that here in the rescue he is playing second fiddle to Gauvain ('Galvagin') who is playing the leading rôle in the attack. Thus, whatever the date of the sculpture, it represents a state in the development of the tradition already beyond that of the hero-king whose own

 I4 Bédier and Hazard, eds. Histoire de la Littérature Française Illustrée vol.I (1923): 'Le Moyen Age: Première Partie' by Faral, p.18.

I5 'La Légende arthurienne dans la sculpture de la cathédrale de Modène' Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale VI (1963), 281-96.

personal exploits, rather than those of his vassals, form the centre of interest. Personages (D), (I), and (J), although each of interest in their own right, need not concern us here as they have no connection with Guinevere.^{I6} 'Galvagin' (H) will be dealt with in the next chapter, where reference will be made to his appearance in the sculpture; likewise 'Carrado' (G) and 'Mardoc' (F) who will receive mention in the chapter on the abductors. Let us turn, then, to the personage (E), 'Winlogée', on whom the interest of the entire frieze is focused, for it is she, we presume, who is the object of the rescue attempt. Three-quarters of a century of controversy have still not contrived to settle her identity with any certainty: let us, however, at least try to put 'Winlogée' into perspective. The problem as to whether or not 'Winlogée' is in fact Guinevere centres around the association of the latter with Guenlōie^{I7} and, or, Guinlōie^{I8}; for these are the forms most often linked with, and phonetically closest to, 'Winlogée': 'Winlogée is plainly an intermediate form between the Breton name Winlowen and the name Guinlōie [sic]' says Loomis^{I9}, while according to Maurice Delbouille, 'en effet, comme celui de Galvagnus = Gouvain et de Wiligelmus = Wilhelmus, le g de Winlogée doit, sur l'archivolte de Modène,

 I6 But see above, p.20 n.6 concerning 'Che' and the date of the sculpture.

I7 G.D.West, Verse Index, p.81.

I8 Ibid., p.84.

I9 Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, p.19.

représenter un yod'²⁰. Yet, instead of giving Guinlofe as the derivation, as one might expect, Delbouille proposes Guen(e)lofe (sic) who is the amie of Yder in the romance of that name. (Guinlofe is the name given to Gauvain's amie in the Chevaliers as Deus Espees²¹; she is the daughter of Amangon, one of Arthur's knights.) Both the Yderroman²² and the Chevaliers as Deus Espees being thirteenth-century romances, it is possible (though by no means certain) that Guenlôie the lover of Yder, and Guinlofe the lover of Gauvain, were at one time identified with and identical in all but name to Arthur's wife²³ - in all probability an example of the common phenomenon of fission of character, which occurs when one character, having developed either two significantly different name forms or two incompatible characteristics, or both, 'splits' to become two different personages.²⁴ There is evidence that at one time an amorous liaison linked Gauvain and Guinevere (v. infra, chap. III) in earlier tradition, but this came into conflict with the new fashion linking Guinevere with Lancelot, to whom she was supposed to be faithful; consequently it was suppressed, and

20 Delbouille, art. cit. p.130.

21 Ed. Foerster, Halle, 1877; repr. Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1965. ll.91-3.

22 Der Altfranzösische Yderroman, ed. H.Gelzer (Dresden, 1913).

23 Loomis, Celtic Myth, p.8; Cross and Nitze, Lancelot and Guinevere, p.23; Richey, Modern Language Review, XXVI(1931), 329.

24 A brief perusal of either of West's Indexes will reveal several instances of two more different characters bearing the same or similar names, reflecting a possible originally single identity eventually split to allow for incompatibilities of character or behaviour (Gaheriet/Guerrehés, Yder/Yder etc.).

Guinlofe, as lover of Gauvain, was made a separate entity. Much the same can be said of the other form, Guenlōie (v. infra, pp.35ff.), which hints at a one-time affair between Yder and Guinevere (a suspicious mind would perhaps raise an eyebrow at Yder playing the lone unarmed chaperon to her in Durmart, for example). Given this possibility, then, that the two forms, which are originally, it might seem, phonetic developments of the Modena 'Winlogée', both originally designated Arthur's wife (much as the alternative forms Genoivre and Ganhumare in Wace designated the same person, the latter form being based on a false reading of the Welsh Gwenhwyfar), then one can indeed surmise that it is the rescue of Guinevere that we are witnessing on the sculpture. But in order to attain a degree of certainty, we need to be able to show that the Modena form 'Winlogée' is itself a derivation of the earliest form available to us of the name of Arthur's wife - that is, Gwenhwyfar. Loomis postulates²⁵ that it was derived from it through the Breton form 'Wenlowen' or 'Winlowen', a common name which the Breton conteurs, who were responsible, according to Loomis²⁶, for the dissemination on the mainland continent of much of the matière de Bretagne, substituted - quite arbitrarily it seems, or at least Loomis offers no detailed reason - for the less euphonious and far

 25 PMLA XLV (1930), 418.

26 ALMA p.52-63.

from mellifluous Gwenhwyfar. Later, according to Loomis' completely hypothetical but highly imaginative reconstruction²⁷, they joined up with an army of Bretons and Normans about to leave for the Crusade of 1096. At Bari in southern Italy where they wintered, Wiligelmus, the sculptor, thought to have been responsible for the carving of the archivolt, heard their tales prior to his move northwards to work on the cathedral at Modena. For all Loomis' ingenious hypotheses, however, it remains unclear how Winlowen was transformed into 'Winlogée' which, as already mentioned (supra, p.28), is phonetically much closer to Guinloie.

Fortunately however we are left with a much more concrete connection between Winlogée and Guinevere, and, once again, our parallel is to be found in Durmart²⁸. There, as in the sculpture, the castle is surrounded by water:

Ne nus ne le puet aprochier
 D'une liue por assegier,
 Quar de mares et de croliere
 Estoit fermés en tel maniere
 Que nus nel pooit assaillir. (4307-II)

And once inside, Durmart sees a tower (cf. Figure 2) which

. . . avoit bien quarante escus
 As creteaz de la tor la sus.
 Mais je vos di bien sans mentir
 Li escu ne sont pas entir;
 Ni a celui ne soit tröés. (4455-9).

 27 Celtic Myth, pp.5-6.

28 For analogues in the prose romances, see Webster, op. cit., pp.II2-22.



8. Winlogée and Mardoc.

DETAIL, MODENA ARCHIVOLT. EARLY XII CENTURY.

Figure 2: L.H. & R.S. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art, pp. 33-6.

Now, while practical reasons naturally obviated the carving of forty, or indeed of any number of shields on such a small relief, the parallel is striking, the more so as it seems as if the shield is more heavily pitted (troué) than the surrounding stonework. The question is, has pure coincidence dictated that the shield be more heavily weathered, or did the sculptor add his own, deliberate scars

to this war trophy? Furthermore, Webster²⁹ suggests that the ace-of-spades shaped projection pointing out from behind and above the shield, is a spear head; presumably it, too, is connected with the vanquished victims - the victim's head impaled on a spear is a commonplace in Arthurian romance, and the spear would seem to indicate yet another link with Durmart in particular:

Et li chiés vostre compaignon
Sera fichiés en un plançon. (4515-6)

In any event, the above parallels, taken with the already mentioned situation in which Yder finds himself at the time of the abduction of the Queen in Durmart, and the explanation it provides for the attitude and dress of figure (B) whom we presume to be 'Isdernus', should suffice to allow a similar connection to be drawn between Guinevere of Durmart and 'Winlogée' of Modena, identifying them as one and the same person. Delbouille³⁰, however, will have none of this. Somewhat justifiably attacking Loomis' tenuous derivation Winlogée < Winlowen < Gwenhwyfar, he goes on to provide an alternative source which is phonetically more sound, but, from a practical point of view, somewhat dubious. This source turns out to be the name of one of the daughters of one of the earliest kings of England: Guenlodoe daughter of Ebraucus son of Mempricius, according

29 op. cit. p.II7 n.I.

30 art. cit. pp.I29-34.

to Geoffrey's Historia³¹. This person is admittedly also mentioned by Wace in his Brut, but there is no mention of her ever being subject to abduction or imprisonment, and why any sculptor should pick such an obscure name, apparently completely at random, and then proceed to make that person the centre of attraction in a sculpture, is not explained by Delbouille. But what, then, is the relationship between Yder, Guinevere and Guenlōie, as far as can be made out from the texts available? In the twelfth-century Lai du Cor³², the Queen admits that she was once loved by a young man who, although not named, from the description she gives could well be Yder:

Jeo donai un anel
 le autre an ad un dauncel
 juvencel, enfaunt,
 qui oscit un geaunt -
 un encrime feloun,
 qui de grant trefoun
 retta çaiens Gawain,
 un soen cosin germain.
 L'enfes le defendi,
 a lui se cumbati;
 al trenchaunt de l'espee
 out la teste coupee.
 De [s] lors qu'il fust oscis
 ad çaienz coungé pris.
 Ma amour lui presentai,
 un anel lui donai
 kar le quidai(e) retenir
 pur la court ademplir.
 Mes si il fust remes
 De mai ne fust ames! (Bennett's ed., 1.336-356).

33

31 Faral, La Légende Arthurienne, III, 96-7.

32 Available in two recent editions: The Anglo Norman Text of Le Lai du Cor, ed. C.T.Erickson, Oxford, Blackwell, 1973, and Mantel et Cor: Deux Lais du XII^e Siècle, ed. P.Bennett, Exeter, 1975.

33 See also E.C.Southward, 'The Knight Yder and the Beowulf legend', Medium Aevum XV (1946), 1-47. (Cf. Webster, op. cit., p.60 n.I).

Similarly, in the Folie Tristan de Berne³⁴, Yder seems to be actually named as the Queen's lover by Tristan:

Onques Yder, qui ocist l'ors,
N'ot tant ne poines ne dolors
Por Guenievre, la fame Artur
Con je por vos, car je en mur. (232-5).³⁵

In the sometimes-vague Yderroman, Yder is credited with an amie Guenlðie (variants Genlðie, Guenelðie). She is a queen in her own right (a trace of former identity with Guinevere?) and a 'niece' of Arthur (3468-71), and she eventually becomes Yder's wife. The impression which the text imparts is one of a certain awkwardness on the part of the author, who seems to be doing his best to shed his tale of a liaison which existed between Yder and Guinevere in his source materials, but which would not be well-received at a time when audiences were used to having Guinevere linked with Lancelot, not Yder. Presumably his source material featured both forms of the Queen's name, and he made a divorce of convenience, assigning the rôle of lover of Yder to the offshoot character, to whom he gave the more obscure form of Guinevere's name - thereby freeing

34 ed. E.Hoepffner, Paris, 1949.

35 The date of the Folie de Berne has not been satisfactorily decided. If it postdates the thirteenth-century Yderroman, it is no doubt a reference to the same episode in that romance; if, however, it antedates it, it can be considered to suggest the existence of an earlier romance of which Yder was the hero and in which he was openly portrayed as the lover of Guinevere.

Guinevere herself to remain loyal to Arthur in his new romance. For the Yderroman tries to be a work of high morals: Yder is keen to remain loyal to his amie, for whose sake he intends to be a good knight so that his fame may spread till it reaches her ears:

Mes or volt vivre pur s'amie.
 Mult se voldra, ço dist, pener,
 Qu'el oie de ses feiz parler,
 Mult se penera de bien feire,
 Si ert humbles e de bon aire (520-4).

Nonetheless, the old relationship is often hinted at. The Queen first takes notice of Yder at the siege of Rougemont, where much to her delight he humiliates Kay (1317-21), whom she strongly dislikes. Later, as an example of the confusion between the two personages, when the wounded Yder is taken to the abbey to be nursed, we are told (3069-80) that it is 'la raine' who brings him Guinard the physician. However, it is not clear which of the two queens, Guenlôie or Guinevere, is meant; it would be unlikely to be the former as her visit evokes no emotion on Yder's part, and Guenlôie had just previously (2809-13) warned his squire Lugein not to make any reference to her having visited him, as it would be too much of a shock for him in his present state. Logically, then, she would hardly be likely to go and visit him herself. On the other hand, if it is Guinevere who visits him, then it is strange that later on both Arthur and Gauvain are unaware of Yder's recuperation, and have to be informed of it by a boy; for Guinevere, who was privy to the conversation

yet said nothing, on hearing of their intent to visit him, asks to go with them (3113-64). Already at this juncture the King is showing signs of jealousy:

Li rois Artus fist un ris faint
 Que fu alques de felonie
 Par racine de gelosie.
 Vers la rēine out le cuer gros,
 Pur ço qu'ele en faisait tel los. (3170-4).

This, of course, will burst out into the open following Yder's rescue of the queen from the marauding bear (3333-85)³⁶, when Arthur, beyond the limits of jealousy, makes Guinevere admit in spite of herself that, were he himself dead, Yder would be the one she would be least unwilling to marry (5168-5220). Beside himself with jealousy, Arthur plans revenge on Yder:

Des ore est li reis en agait
 De Yder destruire e cil nel set (5240-I).

Delbouille³⁷ uses this vendetta pursued on Yder by Arthur as evidence to negate the validity of the Folie Berne reference, in which, he claims, the words 'pouines' and 'dolors' could refer equally well to the physical hardship the vendetta will cause Yder, and which can be said to be due to Guinevere. In interpreting the episode thus, Delbouille is taking the word 'por' (1.234) to mean 'à cause de', which sense it is shown to possess elsewhere. In spite of all the uncertainties raised by the text of the Yderroman itself, Delbouille

36 Cf. Le Lai du Cor, where an unnamed youth, possibly Yder, kills a giant in the Queen's palace in defence of Gauvain (ll.339-48; cited above, p.34).

37 art. cit. p.I30-I.

categorically denies (p.132) the possibility of the existence of an older story with Yder as its hero, which seems a trifle rash. Throughout his article he also denies the possibility of an anterior relationship between Guinevere and Yder, without refuting all the evidence which hints at its one-time existence. The question remains tantalizingly open.

It seems, indeed, that the only real certainties that can be said to exist, so far as most of the questions raised in the **course** of this chapter are concerned, are those that lie or lay in the minds of those scholars on either side of the fray who are or were so firm in their convictions that they will call them 'facts' - a word which was a favourite with Loomis but which over the last fifty years has steadily been acquiring more emphasis, more and more users and less and less meaning in a field of study where circumstantial evidence is thin enough on the ground and objective, unquestionable facts are few and far between. So much is hinted at by the Modena Archivolt and by works such as the Yderroman, and yet so little is clear, that any conclusions as to their origins and the rôle played by Arthur's Queen in any such sources, must remain quite tentative.

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THE MODENA SCULPTURE

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all by Roger Sherman Loomis) in chronological order:

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 'The Arthurian Legend before 1139.' Romanic Review, XXXII (1941), 3-38

See also the following books by the same author:

- Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance. N.Y.: Columbia U.P., 1927;
rev. ed. 1935. Referred to throughout as Celtic Myth.
See pp. 5-II.
Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art (with L.H.Loomis). London,
O.U.P., 1938. See pp.33-6.
Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes. N.Y.: Columbia U.P.,
1949. Referred to throughout as Arthurian Tradition.
See pp. 19-20, 237-9.
Wales and the Arthurian Legend. Cardiff: University of Wales Press,
1956. Pp.179-220; reprint, with photographs, of the
lastmentioned article above.
Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (under Loomis' editorship).
Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959. Referred to throughout
as ALMA. See pp. 60-I (includes a good general
photograph of the Archivolt).

II) Articles Opposing the Celticist Viewpoint

- Des Noettes / Deschamps: 'Deux réponses à un article de MM. Kingsley Porter et Loomis.' Gazette des Beaux Arts, LXXI (1929), vol.i, 96-107.
- G.Hutchings: 'Isdernus of the Modena Archivolte.' Medium Aevum, I (1932), 204-5.
- G.Hutchings: 'Gawain and the abduction of Guinevere.' Ibid., IV (1935), 61-6.
- G.H.Gerould: 'Arthurian Romance and the Modena Relief.' Speculum, X (1935), 355-76.
- J.S.P.Tatlock: 'The dates of the Arthurian Saints' Legends.' Ibid., XIV (1939), 345-65; see p. 357.
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- J.Stiennon / R.Lejeune: 'La Légende arthurienne dans la sculpture de Modène.' Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, VI (1963), 281-96 (includes photographs).
- M.Delbouille, art. cit. in Mélanges Gardette, pp.129-34. (1970). For full reference, v. supra, p.3n.8.

CHAPTER THREE
THE MINOR SUITORS

In this chapter it is hoped to consider those characters of whom a liaison with Guinevere is only either hinted at or briefly mentioned: Gauvain, Gosengos and Lanval. We shall examine Gauvain first, as he is featured in the Modena Archivolt discussed in the preceding chapter, as well as appearing in practically every extant Arthurian romance. He is one of Arthur's longest-standing companions, appearing in the very earliest French Arthurian texts as well as in William of Malmesbury (1125) and Geoffrey of Monmouth (circa 1136). That he was a popular subject of tales as early as the last quarter of the eleventh century, may be inferred from the frequent occurrence of his name in Italy in deeds and documents of the early twelfth century¹; he appears as Gwalchmai in the turn-of-the-century Kwlhwch ac Olwen, and has been equated by the Celticists on the one hand with Cuchulinn and Curoi from tenth-century Irish legend², and by non-Celticists on the other with Agamemnon³. A leading characteristic of Gauvain's throughout the French romances seems to be his attractiveness to women; G.D. West⁴

1 Pio Rajna, 'Contributi alla Storia dell' Epopea e del Romanzo Medievale' Romania, XVII (1888), 161-85, 355-65.

2 R.S.Loomis, Celtic Myth, pp.55-67.

3 C.B.Lewis, Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance, O.U.P., 1932 pp.249-50.

4 Verse Index, p.71; Prose Index, p.134.

has detected a total of sixteen amies of Gauvain, who is, moreover, often portrayed as having an eye for the ladies - being nicknamed in one romance 'Le Chevalier as Damoiseles'. Given Gauvain's long association with the Arthurian legend, then, and both his and Guinevere's traditional affinities for members of the opposite sex, it would hardly be surprising if, at some time or another (probably early on in the development of Arthurian romance, before Chrétien, while Gauvain was still considered to be the chief knight at Arthur's court) the two were linked in an amorous liaison. Yet in few places is such a relationship much more than alluded to in passing, as though by the time of those romances which we now have in our possession, it had faded to only a dim memory, ousted by the prestige of the new fashion which made Lancelot the Queen's lover. However, the existence of such hints make a study of Guinevere's and Gauvain's relationships towards each other worthwhile; and while they can only suggest, and not prove, the existence of an earlier body of romance - now lost - in which Gauvain fulfilled many of the rôles attributed to Lancelot in extant texts, they at least seem to indicate that the non-Celticists⁵ have somewhat underrated the contribution made by earlier sources, of whatever origins, to the body of romance which has been preserved. (Of course, that is not

 5 v. supra, p.22 n.8.

to say that the Celticists are entirely guiltless of over-rating the strength of their own position, either.)

The earliest clue which we have indicating the possible one-time existence of an earlier tradition linking Guinevere and Gauvain in an amorous liaison is to be found in the Modena Archivolt⁶. It has already been pointed out⁷ that 'Galvagin' is the only member of the attacking force who appears to be making any headway; 'Artus de Bretania' is visibly being held back by 'Burmaltus', so we are obviously intended to believe that it is 'Galvagin' who is leading the attack and is destined to be the rescuer. That he is to be interpreted as the centre of interest amongst the attacking force might also be inferred from the fact that his is the only shield on which the sculptor has bothered to carve any form of decoration. On the other hand, had one also been intended to infer from the sculpture that 'Galvagin' was the lover of 'Winlogee' as well as her rescuer, the sculptor would no doubt have depicted the latter looking in the direction of 'Galvagin', rather than the other way; indeed, if any character on the relief is meant to be interpreted as the object of 'Winlogee''s love, it would presumably be either 'Isdernus' or 'Artus de Bretania', towards whom she is looking. Moving on in time, however, to Chrétien de

⁶ V. supra, p.23 Fig.I.

⁷ R.S.Loomis, 'Isdernus Again.' Medium Aevum, II (1933), 160-3.

Troyes, many of Lancelot's adventures in the Charrete, where he is depicted as the Queen's lover, are elsewhere attributed to Gauvain⁸, suggesting that the parallel might in an earlier version have extended to the all-important rôle of lover of the Queen as well. Moreover, in the Charrete itself it is actually Gauvain who returns the Queen to her husband, which might suggest that in the original 'matiere' he could also have been the rescuer (especially as both the welcoming crowd - ll.5336-9 - and Arthur, ll.5326-9 - initially jump to that conclusion) and even, as was Lancelot, the lover of Guinevere. Jessie L. Weston points out⁹ that

. . . surely it is significant that it is he [Gauvain] and not Lancelot, who, nearing the castle, elects to cross the bridge which, we are told,

. . . A non li ponz evages,
 Por ce que soz eve est li ponz,
 Si a de l'eve jusqu'au fonz
 Autant de soz come de sus,
 Ne de ça mains ne de la plus,
 Ainz est li ponz tot droit an mi;
 Et si n'a que pié et demi
 De le et autretant d'espés.

When, in the first version of the story, Gawain rescued the Queen, it was doubtless by this bridge, which probably was then the only means of access, that he reached the castle,

 8 E.g., the Perilous Bed incident (which Gauvain undergoes in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, ll.7817-84), the combat with the Queen's abductor postponed for a year (which occurs in the German romance Diu Krône), etc.

9 The Legend of Sir Gawain, London, 1897, p.74. The quotation is taken directly from Foerster's edition, ll.660-7, as Weston's version contains some errors.

but it was Gaston Paris¹⁰ who pointed out the important connection that Chrétien

. . . a donné comme parallèle au voyage de Lancelot celui de Gauvain, pour étoffer un peu sa matière, et créé le pont evage comme pendant au pont de l'épée

.
Il n'est pourtant pas impossible que nous ayons là aussi une ancienne tradition mythologique. Le royaume des morts est quelquefois conçu comme étant non dans une île, mais sous l'eau, et on y accède par un pont dans le genre de celui que décrit Chrétien.

As Gauvain's visits to other-world castles - castles of the dead - are commonplace in Arthurian literature, and Guinevere's abductions can often be interpreted as being in the mould of Pluto's abduction of Eurydice, with Guinevere's rescue by her lover being equivalent to Eurydice's attempted rescue by Orpheus - in other words, as both Guinevere and Gauvain have such strong connections with an other-world tradition (Gauvain far more than Lancelot), it would be most surprising if at some time prior to Chrétien Gauvain were not the rescuer of the Queen from an other-world abduction in a now-lost romance or oral tradition. Later on in the Charrete, when the appointed time for Meleagant's postponed combat with Lancelot arrives, in Lancelot's absence Gauvain prepares to stand in for him. At the last moment, however, Lancelot arrives and insists on fighting Meleagant himself. Interestingly,

10 'Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde' Romania XII (1883), 515 and n.3.

when Gauvain finally acquiesces and divests himself of his armour, Lancelot, according to one manuscript version, puts it on, so that he goes out to fight Meleagant wearing, for no apparent reason, Gauvain's armour:

Si [Gauvains] desvest son hauberc et sache
 De son dos, et ~~†~~ost se desarme.
 Lanceloz de ses^{II} armes s'arme
 Tot sanz delai et sanz demore; (6930-3).

Does this hark back, once again, to an earlier version in which Gauvain, as the hero of a similar story, fought an abductor of the Queen under like circumstances? Can we extend the parallel so far as to surmise him to have been her lover as well? To do so on the internal evidence available in the Charrete alone would be to over-stretch credulity; however, Chrétien seems to have furnished us with more leftovers of what might be such an earlier tradition, in two of his other works. In the romance of which Yvain is the hero^{I2}, for example, which Frappier believes to have been composed at the same time as the Charrete^{I3}, there is an interesting cross-reference to the latter work. Yvain, seeking to spend the night at a castle owned by Gauvain's brother-in-law, discovers that the lives of his host's sons are menaced by a giant, Harpin, who desires the host's daughter, Gauvain's niece. Yvain

 II Var. ces.

I2 Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier Au Lion (Yvain), ed. M. Roques; CFMA, Paris, 1960 (hereafter Yvain).

I3 J. Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes, p.9.

is surprised that he hasn't sought Gauvain's help, but as his host explains,

. . . il eüst
 boene aïe, se il seüst
 ou trouver mon seignor Gauvain.
 "Cil ne l'anpreïst pas en vain
 que ma fame est sa suer germainne;
 mes la fame le roi en mainne
 uns chevaliers d'estrange terre
 qui a la cort l'ala requerre.

 einz est Gauvains alez après celui
 cui Damedex doint grant enui
 quant menee en a la reine." (3907-14, 3931-3).

No mention is made here of Lancelot; it is Gauvain who has set off to rescue the Queen. Of course, as Lancelot plays no part in Yvain it would be irrelevant to mention him. But there seems to be another parallel motif here: just as in the Charrete Guinevere is placed in peril by her abduction and with Lancelot away she has no-one to rescue her, so in Yvain the niece of Gauvain is placed in peril at the hands of Harpin the giant through the absence of her protector Gauvain. Just as Yvain's host bemoans Gauvain's absence and consequent inability to help him:

". . . ce est chose tote certe
 que mes sire Gauvains li preuz
 por sa niece et por ses neveuz,
 fust ça venuz grant aleüre
 se il seüst ceste aventure;
 mes il nel set, don tant me grieve
 que par po li cuers ne me crieve; . . ." (3924-30).

so Guinevere, as she is led away by Meleagant, says under her breath (presumably to the absent Lancelot) the following:

"Ha! ha! se vos le seüssiez,
 Ja, ce croi, ne me leississiez
 Sanz chalonge mener un pas!" (Charrete, 2II-3).^{I4}

This close parallel between two romances on which he was working simultaneously would suggest that the motif was one which pleased Chrétien. Unless it was of his own invention, which is of course quite possible though not by any means a foregone conclusion, it is likely that Gauvain originally was the defaulter, as in Yvain, and the imperilled woman was no doubt Guinevere, as in the Charrete; for Lancelot was, so far as we know, a comparative nonentity until the latter was written, while the crediting of Gauvain with a niece in Yvain is an invention of Chrétien (who also attributes Gauvain with a nephew, Cligès, in the romance of that name). By implication, then, we would also expect Gauvain to have once fulfilled the rôle of rescuer. But of lover? From the evidence considered this far, to assign a parallel in the rôle of lover solely on the grounds of the probable one-time existence of a parallel in the rôle of rescuer, would be somewhat presumptuous. However, we are

 I4 A.Foulet, 'Guinevere's Enigmatic Words: Chrétien's Lancelot, vv. 2II-I3', in Jean Misrahi Memorial Volume: Studies in Medieval Literature, ed. Runte, Niedzielski, Hendrickson; Columbia 1977, p.175-9, offers two alternative readings of l.2II to those offered by the Foerster edition cited here and that of Roques ('"Ha! rois, se vos ce seüssiez..."'). One, '"Ha! amis, se le seüssiez"' he rejects as being too explicit, the other, '"ahi! se vos le seüssiez"' along with Foerster's reading, is the interpretation he is inclined to adopt.

provided with a more concrete suggestion in Chrétien's Perceval, or Conte du Graal, where towards the end Gauvain suddenly bursts out into a long and enthusiastic eulogy of the Queen (8176-98), which goes well beyond the normal limits of simple deference to and respect for the wife of one's lord. Moreover, further on still, while giving a messenger instructions to take to the Queen, he says:

"Autel diras a la roïne:
 Qu'ele i vigne par la grant foi
 Qui doit estre entre li et moi,
 Qui est ma dame et m'amie." (9126-9),

a remark which is, to say the least, enigmatic and leaves strong grounds for suspicion if nothing else; although the somewhat negative argument could be put forward in explanation, that the word 'amie' was only used to provide a convenient rhyme with the last word in line 9130, 'mie'.

Moving on from Chrétien de Troyes, in Manessier's Continuation^{I5} we are told, totally out of the blue and as though it were common knowledge, that the Queen

. . . l'amoit d'amor entiérine
 Et il autresi moult l'amoit; (37468-9).

Jean Marx assures us^{I6} in this context that Manessier can be relied upon as a 'témoin tardif mais informé de la tradition arthurienne', and even goes so far as to speak of

 I5 ed. Potvin, Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal.
 Société des Bibliophiles Belges, Mons, 1870. Vol.V.

I6 Nouvelles Recherches sur la Littérature Arthurienne,
 Klincksieck, Paris, 1965, p.266.

'une tradition qui unissait la reine et le neveu d'Arthur',^{I7}. This tradition hung on doggedly right through to the second half of the thirteenth century when Escanor^{I8}, one of the last of the French Arthurian verse romances, was composed. In the course of an account of Gauvain's return to court following one of his adventures, we learn that the Queen

en fu pluz lie . IIII . tanz
que nuz hom nez ne peust estre,
car ele amoit lui et son estre
pluz que tout le mont, fors le roi. (734I-4).

This last qualification leaves the impression of being little more than a hasty cover-up added almost as an afterthought to give some semblance of respectability to her relationship towards Gauvain, especially in view of all the talk of honour and respectability which surrounds the passage and which otherwise would be made to sound false, were an adulterous passion on her part to be openly implied. It is as though appearances must be kept up, even by the author - a sort of self-imposed 'censorship.' Further on, there is a curious passage, worth quoting in full:

Tout enssi la douce royne
qui tant ert sage et enterine
de quan qu'a dame couvenoit
a mon seingnor Gavain tenoit
son conseil, mais que c'ert de cuer,
car anuier a nis .I. fuer
ne se peust de son neveu;
ainz dist qu'ele avoit fait .I. veu

I7 Ibid, p.267.

I8 Der Roman von Escanor von Gerard von Amiens, ed. H. Michelant. BLVS I78; Tübingen, 1886.

que deduire avoec lui s'iroit
 dedenz sa chambre et li feroit
 compaignie, mais qu'il li siece
 ou ele ne feroit a piece,
 ce dist, chose qui li pleust."
 "Dame, rienz qui vouz despleust
 ne ferai," dist il, "ou je puisse:
 mix vaudroie c'ainc nez ne fuisse."
 La roine prist par la main
 adonques monseingnor Gavain
 et puis Gifflet en apela
 qui avoec eulz aussi ala
 pour tenir Gavain compaignie. (7376-96).

Having decided to take pleasure in Gauvain's company in her bedroom, the Queen then drags Gifflet along, almost as an afterthought once again; one wonders what induced the author to establish such a contradiction. Strangely, although the name Lancelot appears on numerous occasions throughout Escanor, it is never more than as that of just another knight, sometimes forming one of a list of knights and often being named alongside Yvain, but never being attributed with any particular characteristic or epithet (whereas Mordred is described, in lines I89I7-8, as '. . . le felon / ou pluz ot mal qu'en Guenelon'). It is as though the clock has been turned back a century, with Gauvain given the prestigious rôles and Lancelot once again being a nonentity. Furthermore, in its presentation of Kay it is much closer to the earlier chronicles, before he acquired his later reputation for churlishness, for in Escanor he is quite courteous.

Similarly, in another late work, Le Livre d'Artus¹⁹, we have yet one more echo, this time much stronger, of what once might have been before Lancelot was established by Chrétien de Troyes as the Queen's lover. Guinevere is abducted (v. infra, chap. IV) and it is Gauvain, who 'amoit la roine de si grant amor ou plus que enfant ne fait sa mere' (67/19) who comes to her rescue (66/32-68/35)²⁰. Furthermore, we find that in the later Vulgate Merlin, Gauvain is the leader of the group known as the Chevaliers a la Roine²¹ - who are also entitled in the Livre d'Artus²², moreover, les Compaignons la Roine. Although the group is only mentioned in the later romances, these deal with the earlier stages of the legend before the arrival at Arthur's court of Lancelot, and could be seen as an attempt to explain Gauvain's otherwise inexplicably close ties with the Queen, given that she now had Lancelot as a lover. Finally, the phenomenon linking Gauvain and Guinevere would not be entirely without precedent, for the theme of incest between the nephew and the wife of the uncle is found at a fairly early stage in the legend of Tristan and Yseut, who was the wife of Tristan's uncle, and

 19 Sommer, VII. Quotations will be identified by page and line number.

20 Webster (op. cit. p.21) suggests that Gauvain may also at one time have been the defender of the Queen against a challenge by a former husband of Guinevere - a rôle taken over from Gauvain by the hero of the Lanzelet (v. infra, pp.66ff.).

21 Sommer, II, 322/3-4.

22 Sommer, VII, 3/27.

of course in Mordred's adultery with the Queen in Wace's Brut. Weston also suggests²³ that the changeover to Lancelot may have been the result of dissatisfaction on the part of poets and their audiences with the situation of such a close and trusted kinsman, who was developing as the model of the new courtly code of conduct and the embodiment of knightly honour, courtesy and chivalric virtue - as was Gauvain - betraying those very ideals in incestuous adultery. The problem was to a large extent avoided by substituting a then little-known knight who was not in any way related to Arthur, for Gauvain; the fluidity with which rôles and attributes were transferred from one character to another has already been mentioned with reference to Erec and Yder²⁴, but was in fact a widespread phenomenon, and it is by no means impossible that such a transfer may have been effected in the case of the rôle of lover of the Queen²⁵.

We now turn to a most obscure character, who in the verse romances²⁶ occurs as little more than a name, and who only appears in prose in the comparatively late Vulgate Merlin and Livre d'Artus²⁷ - and yet who in the two last-

 23 op. cit. p.78.

24 v. supra, pp.25-6.

25 Weston, op. cit. pp.79-80: 'In Diu Krône (v2087ff) we find that Lancelot's strength waxes double at mid-day - a trait which...belonged to Gauvain.'

26 G.D.West, Verse Index, p.78, Gosengos.

27 G.D.West, Prose Index, p.143, Gosengos, var. Gosangos.

mentioned is presented as a suitor of the Queen. The character in question is one Gosengos, a young man 'qui nouiaus cheualiers estoit',²⁸ summoned, along with numerous other kings and knights, to help Arthur in his fight against the Saxons. From the Vulgate Merlin, believed the very last part of the cycle to have been written, it seems that Gosengos might have married Guinevere, were it not for the war which had earlier taken place between his father Amant²⁹ and Arthur, then ally of Guinevere's father Leodegant, during the course of which Amant was killed by Bohort. Presumably Gosengos was subsequently reconciled with Arthur, but by the time he is called to join in the struggle with the Saxons, Guinevere is already married. But it still seems as if she herself had something of a penchant for Gosengos:

Et nabunal qui auoit este senescal al
 roy amant semonst ses gens & assambla .
 si pria as fiex al roy amant quil en
 uenissent auoec lui & il si fisent . &
 il estoient moult biau uarlet escuier
 & auoit li vns ame la roine genieure &
 volentiers leust prinse a feme sil fust
 cheualiers . mais ce quil auoit eu guerre
 entre les . ij . peres li toli . Car la
 roine genieure lauoit tous iours desire
 plus que nul autre tant comme ele fu
 pucele . & encore desiroit moult li vns
 lautre a ueoir . & enuoioient lun lautre
 souent messages & druerie . (Vulgate Merlin 377/I0-I7)

 28 Sommer, VII, I6/I0.

29 West, op. cit. p.I5 'Amant⁵'.

Although reference is made here only to 'one of Amant's sons', we can safely assume Gosengos to be the one in question as nowhere else is any mention made to any other sons of Amant, and Gosengos himself is connected with the Queen elsewhere. In the Livre d'Artus, during a description of a battle with the Saxons, several lines are devoted to his exploits, which hold the admiration of the Queen:

& la roine qui fu desus les murs amont
 lesgarde molt uolentiers . quar de lui
 se prenoit esgart . (Livre d'Artus, 29/I8-I9).

Obviously the Queen's feelings go deeper than simple admiration. This is borne out by a more explicit assessment of another day's battle, later on:

ilec fu molt regardez Gosengos de la
 roine qui molt le fist bien le ior &
 molt iosta a son talant . & i fist de
 maint biaus cols despee & de lance dont
 molt fu prisiez & loez dauquanz & de
 plusors . & la roine meismes en parla
 plus que tuit li autre quar bien sauoit
 quil ne se penoit fors solement por luj .
 (4I/8-I2).

In their tête-à-tête following Gosengos' arrival it becomes clear that they had loved each other before Guinevere married Arthur, and that they loved each other still:

& Gosengos remest parlant a la roine qui
 molt li offri son seruisse & lacointance
 de luj . & il dist quil ne sauoit dame
 que il autretant peust amer come luj ne
 que il tant uolsist seruir se ele mestier
 auoit de son seruisse . mais uos estes
 fait il tant riche dame que uos nauez mais
 cure de cels qui amee uos ont ca en
 arriere . & la roine dist pourquoi il le
 dit . iel di fait il por ce . mainz ior

uos aurai [sic] amee onques por ce mielz
 ne men fu . & ele li dit que ia chose que
 il onques eust en li il ne perdra . dame
 fait il se ge ce sauoie dont atendroie ge
 uostre merci . & ele li dit que toz fiz
 en soit il . dame fait il se uos me doniez
 uostre amor ge uos uerroie tel foiz que ge
 ne uos uoi mie . si mait dex fait ele ia
 de mamor escondiz ne seroiz . car ge la
 uos doing & otroi & la monseignor autresi
 & quanque nos auons . & il dit dame
 granz merciz . (36/46-37/5).

Nor was this some mere flash in the pan; some time later on King Arthur holds court to celebrate Easter, and Gosengos does not attend, having placed himself in self-imposed exile - ostensibly 'car il estoit dolenz de ses amis que messires Gauvain auoit blechiez & naurez' (I32/26-7) but more likely for reasons which will be apparent from the incident narrated in the following excerpt, which unfortunately, according to Sommer, 'is not told [i.e. in full] in the portion of the Livre d'Artus which has survived.'³⁰:

si en fu la roine molt dolente en son
 cuer de ce quil ni uint car molt le
 ueist uolentiers come [celui] a cuj li
 cuers [s] en aloit auques eschaufant .
 & dautre part est molt dolente de son
 pere quant il ni est uenuz . Mais il nen
 faisoit mie a blasmer que malades gisoit
 au lit du mal dont onques puis ne respassa
 & si i iut molt longuement . & nequedent
 si ne fu elle mie tant dolente de son pere
 quant il ni uint come de Gosangos a cui
 ele auoit samor promise & lama molt
 uolentiers sil i uolsist entendre . &
 neporquant si en fist ele tant tel ior
 fu que lamor fust enterine se ne fust
 messires Gauvain qui les troua ensemble

 30 Sommer, VII, p.I32 n.7.

qui les departi apres ce que Gosangos
fu deuenuz des compaignons de la Table
Roonde . (I32/29-37).

It seems, then, that they were caught together more or less 'in flagrante delicto'. Later on, when Guinevere sees Nabunal, Gosengos' seneschal, she eagerly enquires as to whether it is a new 'amie' who is keeping Gosengos away from court. Nabunal assures her in reply

. . . si croi ge encore que uos soiez la
dame que il plus aime & que il plus .
uerroit uolentiers se aise le metoit en
leu ou il puet parler a uos sanz grant
compaignie de gent . (I56/3-5).

and Guinevere in turn assures Nabunal that she will receive him whenever he can come, for

. . . se [ge] peusse de mon cors faire
a ma uolente autresinc com il puet du
suen ge le uerroie plus souent que ge
ne faz . (I56/29-30).

The two part; we hear of Gosengos but once again (p.2I3), where we learn that he has sent Nabunal with an army to help Arthur against the Saxons, but that he could not be present himself 'car il estoit auec ses cousins u roiaume d'Escaualon' (2I3/I2).

The whole affair, then, remains a tantalizing mystery. There is no doubt as to the kind of relationship portrayed in these two branches of the Vulgate Cycle; the question is, why should their author(s) attribute such a rôle, by the time of their composition almost exclusively Lancelot's, to a complete nonentity? Given that at the

stages of the narrative covered by the two branches Lancelot had not yet appeared at Arthur's court, were they 'using' Gosengos as a 'filler-in' to satisfy the by then presumably widespread association of Guinevere with marital infidelity, or perhaps to break the monotony of interminable battle scenes with a touch of romance, to use the word in its modern sense? One can only surmise. However, the desultory fashion in which the liaison is left hanging in mid-air and then forgotten, and the somewhat arbitrary (indeed, feeble - would Lancelot have allowed himself to be separated from the Queen by such trifles?) reasons given, or hinted at, for Gosengos' disappearance from court, all tend to leave the reader with an unsatisfactory, awkward impression of the whole affair, along with a feeling that it was concocted to serve some ulterior purpose unbeknown to us; which objective having once presumably been achieved, the whole story was perfunctorily allowed to drop.³¹

Finally, we come to Lanval, hero of the lai of that name³² attributed to Marie de France and written,

 31 Webster (op. cit. p.65-6 n.3) suggests a parallel between Gosengos and Gasozein (v. infra, chap.IV), who claimed to have been the husband of Guinevere prior to her marriage to Arthur. See also Freymond, E., 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der altfranzösischen Artusromane in Prosa' ZFSL XVII/1 (1895), 1-128; p.41, where such a connection was first suggested.

32 Marie de France, Le Lai de Lanval, ed. J.Rychner; TLF, Droz, Genève, 1958.

according to Ewert, 'sometime before 1189',³³ and probably therefore roughly contemporaneously with the work of Chrétien de Troyes, although it is generally accepted that Marie lived and wrote in England. Lanval, like all her lais, is an adaptation of a Breton lay (Marie herself tells us that much); but little of the Celtic tradition shows through the refined atmosphere of courtoisie - even the fairy amie of the hero has more of the air of a riche dame with her abundant wealth and her splendid retinue (though it is necessary that it be understood that she is in possession of magical powers in order for her to be aware of Lanval's breaking of his vow in revealing her existence). Moreover, the basic theme can be traced back to a Biblical source, with which Marie de France would most certainly have been familiar: the 'Potiphar's Wife' episode in Genesis, chapter 39, where the wife of Potiphar, Joseph's employer, wishing to lie with him is rejected, and in revenge accuses him of wishing to lie with her - whereupon Joseph is thrown into prison by his wrathful employer. The same motif is also to be found in classical mythology, where Phaedra, wishing to lie with her stepson Hippolytus, has her advances likewise rejected; whereupon she accuses Hippolytus of attempting to violate her, and her husband, Theseus, who is also Hippolytus' father, has him killed. This pattern, then,

 33 Marie de France, Lais, ed. A.Ewert; Blackwell, Oxford, 1958, p.x.

repeats itself in Lanval: the hero, like Joseph and Hippolytus, is a simple, unsophisticated but handsome young man, who attracts the attention of the wife of his lord King Arthur (obviously Guinevere, though she is never named³⁴). Her overtures are spurned; insulted, she protests to her husband

. . . que Lanval l'a hunie:
De druerie la requist; (316-7),

34 In Thomas Chestre's Middle English Sir Launfal (ed. Bliss; London, Nelson, 1960), the Queen is named (Gwennere, l.42, Quene Gwenore, l.156 etc.). In the earlier Sir Landevale (*ibid*, pp.105-128) she is not named, being identified by her title alone. Compare the following lines from the latter with the crucial ll.260-8 of Lanval:

The quene hersylf beheld this all:
"Yender," she said, "ys Landavall;
Of all the knyghtys that ben here
There is none so faire a bachyler;
And he haue noder leman ne wyf,
J wold he louyde me as his lif.
Tide me good or tyde me ille,
J wille assay the knyghtys wille." (195-203),

and,

Whan the daunsynge was jslakyd,
The quen Landavale to concell hath takyd:
"Shortely," she said, "pu gentil knyght,
J the loue with all my myght,
And as moche desire J the yere
As the kyng, and moche more.
Gode hap is to the tanne
To loue more me than any woman." (211-18).

who subsequently puts Lanval on trial³⁵. The same theme crops up yet again in the anonymous, non-Arthurian French poem, La Chastelaine de Vergi³⁶; although Whitehead dates³⁷ the latter work some twenty to thirty years after Ewert's location of Lanval, neither can be placed with any certainty and it is not impossible that the Chastelaine may even antedate Lanval. In any case, the 'Potiphar's Wife' theme is one that is a commonplace in popular literature, and one with which Marie de France would have been quite familiar. What is striking, however, is its application to the Arthurian tradition: Le Lai de Lanval is the only existing work in which Guinevere is cast in the rôle of a temptress. Indeed, of all the Arthurian male characters who have at any time been associated with Guinevere and who constitute the subject-matter of the present study, Lanval is the odd man out for the simple reason that he is the only one to be loved by

 35 According to J.Wathelet-Willem, 'Le Personnage de Guenièvre chez Marie de France' in Marche Romane XIII (1963) 119-31, the Queen in Lanval does not overstep the limits of respectability in her overtures towards Lanval, and she is only playing the part of a courteous host in offering him her 'druerie' (l.267), which she interprets as meaning 'friendship' in the strictest platonic sense. Her interpretation, although it throws an interesting and completely different light on the lay, seems difficult to concur with in view of the aggressiveness of the Queen's advances. Compare also with the lines of Sir Landevale, quoted above (n.34).

36 ed. F.Whitehead, Manchester University Press, 1950.

37 ibid, p.ix.

Guinevere and not return the love. It is interesting, too, that the queen is never referred to by name. Why this semi-anonymity, when it should be perfectly obvious that the queen in question is Guinevere? The treatment of her in the text hardly seems to be that befitting of a queen, moreover; we are given no physical description of her, while her personality and her behaviour (as befits her rôle in the story) are downright unpleasant; and her approach to Lanval is, to say the least, lacking in the subtlety and finesse one should expect of aristocratic intercourse, especially when such a delicate matter was being broached:

Al chevalier en va tut dreit;
 Lez lui s'asist, si l'apela,
 Tut sun curage li mostra:
 "Lanval, mult vus ai honoré
 E mult cheri e mult amé;
 Tute m'amur poez aveir:
 Kar me dites vostre voleir!
 Ma druerie vus otrei:
 Mult devez estre liez de mei! (260-8).

In other words, Guinevere is portrayed here, not in the usual Arthurian tradition of the noble queen endowed with courtly qualities and certain traces of a fairy background, but in the completely different mould of selfish, vindictive temptress possessed of all-too-human qualities. Hence, it might be surmised, Marie's apparent reluctance to name her. But what then, of Marie's claimed Breton source (l.I-4)? We have hitherto only briefly mentioned the other woman in the story, Lanval's fairy amie. Stories of other-world beings taking mortal lovers and subjecting them to conditions

or restraints, such as happens to Lanval, abound in Celtic and Arthurian tradition. Could it be that such a tale formed Marie de France's source, and that she added the 'Potiphar's Wife' element, placing the whole in the fashionable Arthurian context? Such a hypothesis would at least go towards explaining the disparity of the two elements - supernatural perfection and base human lust - and the incongruous light in which Arthur's Queen, whose portrayal usually equates more closely with the former, is presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ABDUCTORS

It seems paradoxical, bearing in mind both the comparatively late date at which Arthur's Queen is first mentioned by name and her near-total absence as we know her from Celtic sources (v. supra, pp.2-3), that it should be the theme of the rape^I of Guinevere, in its numerous versions, that has provided so much material linking the matière de Bretagne with ancient Celtic myth. Yet it is patently clear that, for all the mediaeval courtly trappings with which the French versions presently to be considered are to a greater or lesser extent invested, and for all that they are placed in a strictly Arthurian context with a heroine who is a comparative latecomer to the scene, we are dealing with an ancient and extremely widespread folklore motif. The origins of this motif, moreover, are not by any means confined to Irish tales of the Dark Ages, but date back some two thousand years to Homer², and no doubt beyond.

 I In the present study, the word 'rape' will be used with its older, etymological sense of 'seizure, carrying-off by force'. It should in fact be noted that 'it is one of the persistent features both of the Celtic and the Arthurian versions of the abduction that the lady is not violated'. (R.S.Loomis, in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, Lanzelet, trans. K.G.T.Webster, ed. R.S.Loomis, Columbia U.P., N.Y., 1951, p.217 n.204.)

2 Although Greek was not at all widely known in mediaeval times - Latin being the exclusive 'classical' language until the fall of Constantinople released to the Western world the whole gamut of Greek learning which had hitherto

It should therefore be not at all surprising to find such a mythological commonplace adapted to the thirteenth-century vogue in Western European literature for stories of the court of King Arthur, especially in view of their absorption of so many other long-standing myths and legends³.

While the theme of the rape of Guinevere has already been examined by Webster⁴, owing to the fact that he died before completing his study it does contain some obscurities and lacunae. To avoid unnecessary repetition of his material, however, occasional reference will have to be made to it, particularly as it contains important discussions on the German and English romances in which Guinevere is abducted, which, because of their close and often intricate links with the French romances, cannot be ignored altogether by the present study. Those abductors whose seizures of Guinevere are to be found in French romance are as follows: Brun de Morois, Meleagant, Mordred and Urien. There is also the Carrado of the Modena sculpture (v. supra, chap. II) which

 been nurtured by the Ottoman civilization alone - much of the ancient Greek culture was known through the medium of Latin translations and adaptations. Thus it is quite possible that the composers of the mediaeval romances were familiar with Homeric epic, especially as there even existed a French rendition of it, the Roman de Troie by Benoît de Sainte-Maure (6 vols., ed. L.Constans, SATF Paris 1904; repr. Johnson, N.Y. 1968).

3 See R.S.Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance, passim, and C.B.Lewis, Classical Mythology and Arthurian Romance, passim.

4 K.G.T.Webster, Guinevere: A Study of her Abductions.

is generally accepted as being a portrayal of the ravisher of the Queen defending his prize⁵.

Urien's abduction of Guinevere (Sommer, VII, 65-8) is a brief affair which has no antecedent in the other romances, and is principally of interest because Gauvain is in this incident the Queen's rescuer (v. supra, p.52). Urien's motivation for the rape is not clear - there is no mention of love on his part for Queen Guinevere, if anything his reasons seem pragmatic and political. He is one of the Rebel Kings who, in the early stages of Arthur's reign, refuse to accept him as their liege lord; hearing that the Queen has been left at Kardoil with only a small garrison to protect her, he sees that he could obtain revenge on Arthur by seizing her, and could use her as a bargaining pawn to get his city, Clarence, back from Arthur:

si tost com li rois Vriens entendi que
la roine estoit a Kardoil si dit en son
cuer que sil la pooit auoir en sa baillie
que encores auroit il Clarence sa cite &
si auroit molt lou roi Artus corrocie .
(VII, 65/23-5).

The only other point of interest concerning Urien's abduction of Guinevere is the fact that, like many of the other abductors (Brun de Morois in Durmart, Yder whose affront to the Queen

5 It seems that everything that can be said about Carrado, has been said - principally in the course of the controversial debate concerning the Modena Archivolt, the major articles in which it features being listed in the special bibliography attached to chapter II, q.v. (p.39-40). Any further discussion here can only serve to repeat material already available and to considerably lengthen the present study. Concerning Mardoc as a possible ravisher, v. infra p.80n.25.

in Erec can be interpreted as a 'watered-down' rape - v. supra, pp.25-6 - and Gasozein in the German Diu Krône⁶), King Urien is later reconciled with King Arthur and becomes a member of his court. Arthur's apparent lack of vindictiveness is a recurrent feature and often seems puzzling. The Celticist explanation of this is that Guinevere was originally the wife of an 'Other-world' personage and that Arthur took her from him; thus the recurrent abductions of Guinevere are in fact merely attempts by her former husband to regain her, and as such are only to be expected:

In the Crône Gasozein is (or claims to be) the rightful husband, but the queen had been seven years with Arthur; . . . this indicates plainly what I take to be, relatively speaking, the original form of the story: Guinevere was the wife of another before Arthur won her, and the husband still pressed his claims upon her second union. Such a conception could not exist in fashionable romance as Arthur grew in popularity; it is an archaism even in the thirteenth-century Crône. Arthur could certainly come to be looked upon as the rightful and only husband, while the other, his previous claims forgotten, would be considered merely a lover of the queen, good or bad, favoured or not, as the case might be.

.
Now it becomes apparent why the abductor (in spite of his reprehensible conduct) is generally represented as an unusually splendid and formidable prince; why his land is so peculiar and rich; why Guinevere is not blameworthy in spite of

6 Heinrich von dem Türlin, Diu Krône, ed. G.H.F.Scholl, BLVS 27, Stuttgart, 1852. See Webster, op. cit. pp.59-78, for a summary of the narrative and an analysis with respect to the abduction of Guinevere it contains.

these escapades, and Arthur no cuckold - till late ballad times at least; why Guinevere is never maltreated in any of her 'captivities', and why she is in no hurry when 'rescued' to return to her legal spouse, or even finds difficulty in deciding between Arthur and Gasozein.⁷

In such a comparatively late romance as the Livre d'Artus (Sommer's vol.VII) it is not surprising to see that little is left of this postulated early tradition in which Guinevere was the wife of a lord of the 'Other-world' before becoming Arthur's Queen. Indeed, the only trace linking King Urien with such an origin is the rather other-worldly 'uals de Driaigue' (65/38) to which he takes her in his flight. Significantly, it is a kind of 'hidden valley' of extraordinary beauty, full of fountains (very often a focal point for magical happenings, as indeed was any form of running water; hence perhaps the name of the valley, 'aigue' meaning water in Old French) and uninhabited, for there are no roads leading to it - and, by extension, no roads out of

⁷ K.G.T.Webster, 'Arthur and Charlemagne', Englische Studien, XXXVI (1906), 337-69. Pp.347, 350. The following observation by Kittredge (Harvard Studies and Notes, VIII, 189; cited by Cross and Nitze, op. cit., p.59-60) is also relevant: 'The mortal husband regularly loses his fairy wife and has a hard time to recover her. If his quest is successful, he never searches too curiously into her conduct during her absence. He is satisfied to win her back.' Not once, be it noted, does Arthur pursue inquiries into his wife's activities during her enforced absences; and yet he is no wittol: he will send his wife to be burnt at the stake when she is caught committing adultery with Lancelot (Mort Artu, 93/105).

it. Reminiscent of Baudemagu's 'reaume . . . / Don nus estranges ne retourne' (Charrete, ll. 644-5), which itself smacks strongly of the land of the dead, it is invested with more than a hint of the merveilleux:

molt estoit desuoiables icist uals &
destornez de toz chemins . mais molt
estoit biaux & plaisanz & plains de
fonteneles dont li ruissel coroient
toute la ualee aual qui tuit chaoient
en la uoie de Driaigue . & poi estoient
de gent qui en ce ual habitassent car ni
auoit point de chemin errant fors solement
des paisanz quant il aloient chacier ou
querre fruit . (65/40-3).

That apart, the remainder of the abduction scene is relatively mundane, as might be expected of a mid-thirteenth-century romance. Still more heavily rationalized, and yet paradoxically more revealing of the original magical elements, is the earlier verse romance of Durmart, whose editor has unfortunately been unable to place it more precisely than some time in the first half of the thirteenth century⁹. Here we find that the 'merveilleux' has been replaced almost entirely by an atmosphere of refinement and 'courtoisie'; the obstacles placed in the way of success for the hero are physical, not magical. Thus, for example, there is no perilous water-crossing involving risk to life and hinting at the passage to the land of the dead, such as the crossings Lancelot and

8 The hunt was, of course, frequently associated with magical happenings (see Webster, Guinevere, chap. VI pp. 89-104); and could the 'fruit' perhaps be the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge?

9 J.Gildea, op. cit., II, 95.

Gauvain have to make to reach Baudemagu's castle in Chrétien's Charrete and the prose Conte de la Charrette, or the Stygian river that Gauvain crosses to reach the castle where he meets his grandmother, mother and sister, of whom the first two had been long dead, in the Conte du Graal. Instead, in Durmart the castle of the ravisher, Brun de Morois, is surrounded by marshland:

Ne nus ne le puet aprochier
 D'une liue por assegier,
 Quar de mares et de croliere
 Estoit fermés en tel maniere
 Que nus nel pooit assaillir. (4307-II).

While the description is reduced to strictly rationalistic terms, it can still, however, be interpreted allegorically: there is only one entrance - 'N'i avoit s'une entree non' (4135) - just as entry to the land of the dead can be made through death alone; the watery separation, like the classical Styx, can be interpreted as representative of the frontier between the lands of the living and of the dead; and so on. Never once does the author stretch our credulity, at least not in that part of the romance which covers Brun's abduction of Guinevere and her subsequent rescue by Durmart¹⁰. Yet there are many features which have obvious mythological sources, even though these traditional origins have undergone mutations and manipulations to fit them in with the narrative. Thus Brun de Morois 'chascun an se met a celee' (2690) to

 10 Lines 4112-4974 of the romance.

ensure that his brother has carried off the prize at the sparrowhawk competition (v. supra, p.26 n.I3), which, given that, as we are later told, Brun de Morois is a ravisher of the Queen, smacks strongly of the seasonal element in the classical abduction of Proserpina by Pluto, lord of the Underworld^{II}. Brun himself possesses some of the qualities of a preternatural being: his castle, already mentioned, and his imposing appearance. Like Gasozein of the Krône, who claimed to be Guinevere's first husband, Brun is magnificently dressed when he seizes Guinevere:

Covers estoit et acesmés
 D'un drap de soie emperial,
 Si seoit sor un grant cheval.
 Bruns de Morois est mout vaillans,
 Hauz hom et riches et poissans. (4210-4).

Another curious similarity with the Krône, incidentally, is the fact that Gasozein, the self-proclaiming former spouse of the Queen, had been deprived of her company for seven years; and likewise, in Durmart we find that Brun de Morois

Long tens a la roïne amee
 Plus de set ans l'a desiree. (4215-6).

Other features which Brun's abduction of Guinevere bears in common with the general tradition include the hunting of the white stag^{I2}, the Queen's unarmed escort (cf Erec, ll. 103-4 and v. supra, p.26 n.I3) and the immunity granted her until

 II In Chrétien's Charrete, the fight to determine possession of Guinevere is put off for exactly a year: 'au chief de l'an se combatra' (1.3900).

I2 See Webster, Guinevere, pp.89-104.

sundown:

Ja de rien ne l'enforcerai
Tant comme li solauz luira. (4244-5).

A similar immunity is granted, pending a formal defence of the Queen by single combat, in Chrétien's Charrete, where Meleagant is forbidden by his father Baudemagu, lord of the kingdom 'don nus estranges ne retorne' (l.645), from having carnal knowledge of the Queen before he has fought for her and defeated her champion (4066-83). This preservation of the Queen's chastity pending a final decision over her fate - a last chance to recover her - is interesting^{I3}.

We have a variant of it in the Ceres legend: because her chastity had been partially tainted by her abductor, she was compelled to return to Hades for six months of each year. According to Krappe^{I4},

il s'agit de mort et de résurrection.
Il ne faut pas que la belle victime
demeure dans le pays d'outre tombe.
Mais . . . une fois . . . qu'elle
aurait partagé sa couche, il n'y
aurait pour elle plus de possibilité
de retour.

However, this tradition has been heavily veiled in Durmart by the motives of courtoisie which prompt Brun de Morois to give Yder a chance to rescue the Queen. It is a means of removing the stigma of cowardice from his act of seizing a defenceless woman (Yder, her escort, was unarmed) which

I3 Cross and Nitze (op. cit. p.51) bring forward some examples from Celtic literature of similar postponements.

I4 Quoted by Webster, op. cit. p.19 n.I.

would otherwise have ill fitted his portrayal throughout as a man of honour; for example, he is sufficiently honour-bound to give Durmart sixty days' grace to recover from his wounds, rather than take advantage of his incapacity to avenge his brother's death on him (2872-2951). Such, indeed, is Brun's honourable reputation that, having conquered him and thereby saved the Queen, Durmart knows he can rely on Brun's word to return the Queen:

Car Bruns ne li mentira mie
Tant est plains de cortoisie. (4863-4).

On the other hand, Yder's attitude towards the seizure of the Queen is curious, seeming to be an echo of an earlier tradition where, already married or no, a woman was considered fair game when won by combat; for in the early Irish tales,

romantic accounts of wives abducted
willingly or by force formed an
important part of the stock-in-trade of I5
literary men.

Yder's response to the seizure of Guinevere by Brun is as follows:

Vos l'enportés come roberes;
Se ce fuist par chevalerie,
Je ne vos en blamasse mie,
Mais vos avés fait traïson
Et felonie et mesprison. (4232-6).

The passage where Brun de Morois entertains his victim (4528-72) shows how stylized the tradition has become, and the extent of the influence of contemporary taste for

I5 Cross and Nitze, op. cit. p.33.

'fine amor'. There is none of the violence normally associated with rape; indeed, the Queen is presented in an idyllic setting, with a chaperon of

Sis dames et quatre puceles
Sages et cortoisies et beles. (4553-4),

presumably to ensure that her honour is not tainted. Moreover, Brun de Morois maintains a respectful distance from her,

Car fine amors qui li defent
Li fait la roïne cremir. (4546-7).

He has used his strength to avail himself of the Queen's person, true to the old tradition, but now in keeping with the principles of 'fine amor' he abdicates his power in favour of the lady, at whose mercy he places himself: hence his fear of annoying her. However, there is a trace of awkwardness in his declaration

"Dame, dist il, j'ai mout grant joie
De ce que vos me demorés;" (4558-9)

which has a very false ring to it for the obvious reason that for all the delicate treatment she is receiving, she is none the less a prisoner. Obviously it was not easy to impose new concepts onto stories the origins of which bore characteristics completely incompatible with the new fashion: 'fine amor' and rape are simply irreconcilable. In any event, Guinevere is quite resolute in her refusal to submit, and, unlike in Diu Krône (where, on being given the choice between Arthur and Gasozein, she dithers for some time before finally choosing Arthur), there is no hint of hesitation in her

loyalty to her spouse:

"Sire, dist la roïne sage
Dex me defende de hontage." (457I-2).

However, when Durmart appears on the scene, we have a repeat of Yder's earlier assertion which implied that a woman can be acquired, be it against her will or against the wishes of her husband or fiancé, by virtue of victory in combat - a barbaric element that jars with the general tone of the work:

"Trop seés pres de sa moillier;
Cel siege vos covient changier,
Ne l'avés pas a droit conquis." (4583-5).

The courtois overlay is maintained even after Durmart's victory over Brun; instead of simply leaving, they go through a whole rigmarole of formal leave-taking. Finally, as mentioned above, the ravisher ends up joining the ranks of Arthur's court. In making him do this the author was, it is true, conforming to the tradition whereby the knights errant who were the heroes of such romances sent their defeated opponents to join Arthur's court (Perceval, for example, does this with his series of vanquished opponents, whom he sends as a tribute to Arthur in Chrétien's Conte du Graal); but in this case it strikes a bizarre note, given that Brun has just carried off his wife, especially as the outcome of the whole affair is that Arthur, as a direct result of the abduction of his wife and the timely intervention of Durmart, has acquired the valuable fief of Morois, which

previously Brun had held without owing allegiance ('Il ne le tient de nul saignor,' 1.4325).^{I6} This peculiar situation could be explained to a certain extent, however, if it was viewed in the light of the origins suggested in Webster's article cited above: that is, that Brun de Morois represents what was once an 'other-world' lord (which would account for the independence and power inherent in his lack of allegiance) who, by surrendering both his consort and his power to Arthur, exalts the position of the latter to that of lord of both worlds, and thereby places him above any mere mortal sovereign.

If Brun de Morois' preternatural origins are heavily veiled, those of the other principal abductor, Meleagant, are much more readily apparent. The story of his rape of Guinevere has come down to us in two versions, one prose, one verse: the latter being Chrétien's Charrete, the former the thirteenth-century Conte de la Charrette embodied in the Vulgate Cycle^{I7}. As far as the narrative is concerned,

I6 'Morois' is also the name of the forest whither Yseut was taken (willingly) by Tristan, following her rescue by him from burning at the stake.

I7 Sommer, IV (Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, II, 1911), 155-362. Quotations from the text will be identified by page and line numbers. The text is also available in the edition of G.Hutchings: Le Roman en Prose de Lancelot du Lac: Le Conte de la Charrette (Paris, 1938), which corresponds to Sommer, IV, 155/19-226/II. A critical edition of the whole of Sommer's vol. IV has recently appeared - Lancelot: Roman en Prose du XIII^e Siècle, ed. A.Micha, 2 vols., TLF, Droz, Paris, 1978. It should be noted at this juncture that, when referring to the tale of Lancelot and the cart, the verse (Chrétien) and prose (Vulgate) versions will be differentiated by spelling, using Charrete for the former and Charette for the latter. For ease of reference, Sommer's edition will be the source of quotations from the Lancelot Propre (Sommer III, IV, V) in the present study.

they are both very similar, but the treatment of the material shows considerable differences. For the prose version is much more rational, exhibiting little of the atmosphere of the 'merveilleux' so prevalent in the poem:

Tandis que certains critiques ont été portés à voir à l'origine du poème de Chrétien la légende du rapt de Flore par le Roi de la Mort, et à identifier Meleagant avec ce roi, et le royaume de son père dont nul étranger ne revient, avec le pays des morts, une telle confusion ne peut pas se suggérer au lecteur du roman en prose, car . . . le royaume de Baudemagus n'a rien de mystérieux. Les 'Ponts Perilleux' ont perdu leur caractère mystique, et ne gardent que leur allure extraordinaire. Ce sont des aventures que Lancelot et Gauvain doivent surmonter, avant de pouvoir délivrer la Reine. I8

It is notable that neither version of Meleagant's rape follows the forcible-abduction patterns established in classical mythology and perpetuated in the Vita Gildae ('violatam et raptam',^{I9}), Diu Krône, Durmart, and Malory's Morte D'Arthur²⁰ (where the Queen is out in the fields celebrating the coming of Spring when she is carried off forcibly by Sir Mellyyagaunte, son of King Bagdemagus, who had long loved her). Rather, they seem to bear some of the following points in common with Celtic myth, according to

I8 G.Hutchings, op. cit. p.lv.

I9 Vita Gildae, p.I09 ll.37-8.

20 The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. E.Vinaver (Oxford, Clarendon, 1967), III, II55-II60.

Cross and Nitze²¹: a husband is visited by a mysterious stranger who is a former lover or spouse of the lady, and who, on being granted a boon, asks for and receives the lady (or else carries her off without ceremony). He flees to his supernatural realm but delays consummation of the union: while in his pursuit the rescuer must traverse a perilous passage, and is entertained by a 'hospitable host', finally succeeding in recovering the lady either by a trick or with the help of a magician²². The victim of the abduction invariably possesses fairylike qualities.

In the verse Charrete, there is no mention of any anterior relationship between Meleagant and Guinevere, and he does not even profess any love for her until l.3295 when he describes her as "'la rien que plus aim"'. His consummation of the union is prevented by his father Baudemagu, who even tries to persuade his unruly son to give up the Queen to Lancelot without a fight. Although their kingdom lies beyond a preternatural barrier, the river whose only crossings were the sword bridge and the submerged bridge, neither father or

 21 op. cit., p.61. See also p.49: 'In . . . the [Irish] Echtra Chormaic, and [Welsh] Pwyll, the abductor gets possession of the lady by . . . inducing the husband to grant a request without knowing what is involved'.

22 This feature is preserved, not in the Meleagant versions but in the German Lanzelet (which bears a number of similarities to the Meleagant abductions). The trick or magic is replaced by the single combat, considered more worthy of a knightly hero by the end of the twelfth century.

son seem to possess any magical characteristics themselves; neither for that matter does Guinevere. In fact, the magical element generally seems to have been restricted to the environment. However, Chrétien seems to have kept to the broad outline of the tradition as postulated above and reconstructed by Cross and Nitze, adding his own personal stamp in his interpretation of it, and supplying the major innovation of Lancelot as lover of the Queen; he creates in Lancelot, moreover, the embodiment of the courtly knight, thereby catering for contemporary tastes in literature (v. infra, chap.V). Incidentally, another major difference from the 'forcible-abduction' group (listed above) which is displayed in both the Lanzelet and the Charrete, is the killing of the abductor following the rescue of the Queen. While this hardly coincides with the theory of a supernatural origin for the abductor, it does fit in nicely with the Irish text proposed as a model or source for the Charrete by Cross and Nitze, Aided Con Roi, of which a summary is given on pp.39-41 of Cross and Nitze, and in which the abductor, Curoi mac Daire, is eventually killed by the hero, Cu Chulinn.

However, there are certain analogies which can be made with Classical, as well as Irish, mythological sources. C. B. Lewis²³ suggests the abduction of Helen from her husband

23 op. cit., p.253.

Menelaus by Paris, which was responsible for starting the Trojan War. He points out (loc. cit. n.3) that Troy is spoken of as 'the land of men whence none would hope in his heart to return', which is close enough to the description of Baudemagu's kingdom quoted above (p.72). However, neither Paris nor his father Priam possess any links, genealogical or otherwise, with the Underworld; although on the other hand (and Lewis neglects to point this out), just as Meleagant's father, Baudemagu, did not approve of his son's abduction of Guinevere and protected her from violation, so Paris' father Priam 'is an amiable character, tender and considerate to Helen, although he disapproves of the war and its cause (Iliad, III, 162ff).'²⁴

We now move to Mordred, who cannot be considered as a clear-cut ravisher²⁵ but who has been included in this

 24 The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Oxford, 1970, p.875.

25 R.S.Loomis, however, in his article 'The story of the Modena Archivolt and its Mythological Roots', in Romanic Review XV (1924) 266-84, does see certain links with Meleagant. He proposes an etymological derivation from the Celtic other-world lord and abductor, Mider, on the following lines: Mider > (Welsh) Medrot (cf. Medraut, Annales Cambriae of A. D. 955) > Mordred > Melvas (the abductor in Vita Gildae) > Meleagant. Loomis also claims that interchangeability of characteristics, personalities and adventures is common between fathers and sons in Celtic legend, and goes on to say that, in the Mort Artu Mordred's son Melehans is associated with a Conte de Gorre, who could be Meleagant himself, given that his father is the lord of Gorre. This vague link between Meleagant and Mordred through the latter's son leads him to assert that 'in this association of Mordret and Melehans-Melvas we have a reminiscence of the original identity of the two abductors of Guinevere' (p.281). Loomis also incidentally

chapter largely for convenience' sake. The closest he is portrayed to becoming an abductor is in his attempt to force Guinevere to marry him in the Mort Artu; as this is the most detailed and interesting version of the story of Mordred's love for Guinevere, we shall deal with it last of all. The only other French texts in which Mordred and Guinevere are thrown together are the Brut and the Didot Perceval²⁶; and in both of these the union is voluntary - at least, we must assume so, for they married in both cases. Practically nothing is said, however, in either text of Guinevere's sentiments towards Mordred - indeed, in the Didot Perceval she is such an insignificant figure that she is not even mentioned by name; although her minor rôle is very much in accordance with the general tone of the work, which tends to be a turning-back of the literary clock, with characterization and content more closely allied to that of the early Chronicles (Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace etc.) and no trace, according to Roach²⁷, of any influence from the Vulgate Cycle. Both French texts deal somewhat perfunctorily with the relationship,

 sees the Mardoc of the Modena Archivolt as being a Breton derivation of the same name-family, though he does not explain satisfactorily what he is doing in the tower with Guinevere when the abductor is in this instance clearly Carrado.

26 The Didot Perceval According to the Manuscripts of Modena and Paris, ed. W.Roach. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941. Quotations will be taken from the manuscript E version, printed on the top of each page.

27 Roach, op. cit. p.16. However, the Didot Perceval does show knowledge of developments later than the chronicles, e.g., Gauvain's death from a head wound and the presence of Saigremor (whose earliest known appearance is in Chrétien).

adding little to Geoffrey's account. In the Brut, all we are told is that, prior to departing for a campaign in France, Arthur entrusts his kingdom and his wife to Mordred, who had long secretly loved Guinevere. Having won over the barons with pledges, he married her, thereby provoking Arthur's return and final great battle (2625-41; 4451-4704). To all intents and purposes, the only difference in the Didot Perceval is that Arthur delegates the care of his kingdom and of his wife to Mordred on two occasions - the first time for his campaign in France, during which no mention is made of any treasonable activities on Mordred's part and at the end of which Mordred and the Queen meet Arthur on his return (1967-2167). Nothing can have happened on that occasion, for when Arthur later returns to the Continent to fight against the Romans, he again places Mordred in charge during his absence. This time, the move proved to be Arthur's downfall:

. . . si vint Artus a Mordret, son neveu,
 qui frere estoit monseignor Gauvain, si li
 commanda se terre et ses castiaus et se feme
 a garder. Maismiels li venist que il les
 eüst andeus bolis en caudieres, car Mordrés
 qui ses niés estoit fist vers lui le gregnor
 traïson dont on oïst onques parler; car il
 ama se feme et fist tant as cevaliers et as
 castelains et as baillius que il le reçurent
 a segnor, et espousa le roïne, et mist
 garnisons es castiaus de le terre, et se
 fist coroner a roi. (2400-2407).

News of this reaches Arthur (2545-59) and he returns, pursuing Mordred as far as Ireland before the final battle. As for Guinevere, we hear no more of her; her fate is left unaccounted for. At least we are given, in the Brut, an account of her end:

La reïne sot et oï
 Que Mordrez tantes foiz foï;
 Ne se pooit d'Artur desfandre
 Ne ne l'osoit an champ atandre.
 A Guevrevic ert a sejour,
 An pansé fu et an tristor;
 Manbra li de la vilenie
 Que por Mordret s'estoit honie,
 Le bon roi avoit vergondé
 Et son neveu Mordret amé;
 Contre loi l'avoit esposee
 Si an estoit molt avillee;
 Mialz volsist morte estre que vive.
 Molt fu triste, molt fu pansive;
 A Carlion s'an est foïe,
 La entra an une abafe,
 None devint iluec velee,
 An l'abafe fu celee.
 Ne fu oïe ne veïe,
 Ne fu trovee ne setïe,
 Por la vergoigne del mesfet
 Et del pechié qu'ele avoit fet.

It is a penetrating yet economical portrayal of the humiliation and loneliness of Guinevere's last days, and constitutes virtually the longest passage devoted to her in the whole of the Brut.

In the Mort Artu, however, Mordred's usurpation is dwelt upon in much greater detail. The author also makes modifications to the chronicle tradition: Guinevere strongly resists Mordred instead of succumbing to his advances, and whereas in the Brut Mordred had long been in love with her, in the Mort Artu his love is inspired through the increased contact he has with her:

Si repera tant Mordrés avec la reïne qu'il
 l'ama de si grant amour qu'il ne veoit pas
 qu'il n'en moreust, s'il n'en eüst ses
 volentez.

(I34/I2-I5).

'Ce changement' says Frappier, 'est d'un psychologue'²⁸. More important, however, it better fits thus into the entire tightly-woven sequence of events that is the Mort Artu, that Mordred should have fallen in love with Guinevere as a result of his entrustment with that guardianship (which in itself was the direct result of Arthur's departure in pursuit of Gauvain's vengeance quest - and so on, in a whole sequence of interdependent events) and not independently of or prior to it. Mordred's love for Guinevere is very realistically portrayed - we are even told that at first 'ne li osoit dire en nule maniere' (I34/I5-I6); and to achieve his objective he goes to the greatest of lengths, craftily playing on the barons' fear of Lancelot's possible return and seizure of Guinevere in the forged letter which he himself wrote and which, supposedly from Arthur on his deathbed, urged him to take Guinevere as his wife, so Lancelot could not marry her:

car se Lancelos savoit qu'ele ne fust mariee,
il vendra seur vos et la prendra a fame, et
c'est la chose por quoi m'ame seroit plus
dolente. (I35/I3-I6).

Thus Mordred makes it appear to be in Arthur's own best interests for him to marry Guinevere, and at the same time acquires the justification to take her by force if necessary. He even plays the part to the extent of feigning a swoon when the news of Arthur's imminent death is read out.

28 La Mort Artu, ed. Frappier, p.xv.

Curiously enough, it is only when Arthur is (she thinks) dead, that Guinevere makes an open display of feeling for him; ostensibly out of loyalty to the memory of her dead husband, but no doubt in the hope that she might remain free to marry Lancelot, she refuses to take another husband,

"por ce que je ne porroie jamés avoir si
preudome come j'ai eü; et por ce vos pri
je que vos ne m'aresnoiz plus de ceste
chose, car je n'en feroie riens, et si
vos en savroie mal gré." (I39/I2-I7).

Showing great presence of mind, by flattering Mordred's ego

"Certes de Mordret ne di ge mie qu'il ne
soit preudom et bons chevaliers . . ." (I40/7-8),

she obtains a week's respite which she uses to shut herself up in the Tower of London, prepare for a siege and send for Lancelot. Meanwhile, spurred on by his passion for Guinevere, Mordred has so successfully won over Arthur's former vassals that he is able to make the rupture with their former lord complete, having them swear that they will support him 'neis contre le rois Artu, se aventure l'aportoit jamés ceste part' (I42/62-4). Thus the scene for the final battle is set; the break with Arthur is complete, and the next logical step is the latter's return to take part in the final annihilation of the Order of the Round Table, which itself is the last step in the inexorable series of causes and effects which can be traced back throughout the Mort Artu, until we find where the ultimate responsibility lies - the démésure of Lancelot and Guinevere, the spanner in the works of Arthur's court, and the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

LANCELOT

Prior to Chrétien's Charrete, there is no extant reference to Lancelot as the lover of Queen Guinevere, nor is there any direct parallel for it in the Irish and Welsh traditions out of which, according to Loomis¹, the Lancelot myth grew. For example, while the Lanzelet of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven (a translation of a now-lost French romance presumably anterior to Chrétien) attributes many love-affairs to its hero, and presents Ginover as being fickle of fancy, there are no hints of any relationship between the two. It should also be noted that Ulrich and Chrétien provide us with the earliest texts to actually link Lancelot with the Arthurian tradition, as he is absent from the Latin chronicles and from the Brut (although Loomis² claims descent from the Celtic sun-god Lug in Irish literature). Naturally, then, it would appear that Chrétien is introducing a new variation on the old theme of Guinevere's adultery - possibly at the suggestion of his patroness Marie de Champagne, as mentioned above³. However, Loomis⁴ suggests that from Chrétien's handling of the relationship it might be argued that he was not dealing

 1 Arthurian Tradition, pp.187-95.

2 Loc. cit.

3 v. supra, p.7.

4 Arthurian Tradition, p.194.

with something which was totally new to his audience. For example, the handmaid to whom Guinevere at last reveals the name of her lover seems to display little surprise, her only reaction being an expression of joy:

"Deus, com or ai le cuer riant
Et lié et sain!" fet la pucele. (3678-9).

Had Chrétien been introducing a totally new theme one might have expected him to have her register similar reactions to those it would evoke in the audience: surprise, at the very least. Loomis is careful to add, however, that the idea was not necessarily old or widespread. In any event, so great was the prestige in which the Charrete was subsequently held that thenceforth Lancelot's devotion to the Queen became his most important characteristic in literary tradition. However, Chrétien was innovatory not only in his introduction of Lancelot as the Queen's lover, but also in his treatment of love in accordance with the 'courtois' ideals of the time - the Charrete being, so far as is known, the earliest application to an Arthurian romance of these ideals, which envisaged complete devotion towards the object of one's love as the ultimate goal of every noble heart, and stemmed no doubt from contemporary fascination for deep analysis of love and its effects⁵. An essential feature of this new, fashionable

5 Myrrha Borodine (La Femme et l'Amour au XII^e Siècle, Slatkine, Genève, 1967, pp.161-2) gives an example of the degree to which Lancelot has been invested by Chrétien with the ideals of courtoisie in a comparison between the Tristan of Thomas and the episode (Charrete 1224-54) in

'amour courtois' was the codification of behaviour: in order to attain perfection in love, and as a prerequisite for the capturing of a lady's heart, a knight must observe certain rules (which are set forth, incidentally, in André le Chapelain's treatise on love⁶), amongst which complete submission to the will of the lady and total secrecy are paramount. Thus, Guinevere in the Charrete exercises total control over Lancelot, and expects complete submission from him - shunning him, for example (3955-77), because he actually hesitated before committing the shameful act of boarding a

which, in return for lodgings, a damsel exacts a promise that he will lie with her :

Lancelot tient, en effet, la parole donnée, il partage la couche avec la demoiselle, mais il n'effleure même pas d'un regard la beauté qui s'offre à lui . . . ce n'est pas par devoir ni même par scrupule que Lancelot s'abstient rigoureusement de toute jouissance sexuelle. Non, la tentation n'exerce aucun attrait sur son imagination où règne seule l'image de son amie absente, et encore moins sur son coeur qui ne connaît pas de partage. C'est là, comme on voit, un raffinement de la sensibilité de notre héros que le poète oppose, semble-t-il, à cet égard, à l'amant célèbre de son émule Thomas. En effet, dans une situation à peu près analogue, Tristan qui vient d'épouser Yseut aux Blanches Mains, pour oublier Yseut la Blonde, est en proie à une lutte sentimentale, la lutte entre son vouloir et son désir', c'est-à-dire, selon l'interprétation de M. Bédier, entre la concupiscence charnelle et l'amour. . . . Or Lancelot ignore complètement cette fièvre des sens qui brûle Tristan et pourtant ce n'est qu'à un rêve, à un espoir vague qu'il est fidèle, non pas à tout un passé de passion et de tendresse, comme l'héros de Thomas.

6 v. supra, pp. 7-8.

cart, like a condemned criminal, in order to have news of her (362-5); while on the other hand Lancelot's absorption in Guinevere is complete, to the exclusion of all else - even to the extent, at times, of not noticing that he is being attacked (734-81). His sole source of motivation is the hope of finding favour with her, regardless of what others may think of him. Thus, when the Queen, recognizing Lancelot at a tournament, in a capricious test of her hold on him sends a messenger to instruct him on her behalf to make a fool of himself, he promptly does and continues to do so, heedless of the jests made at his expense and the scorn to which he is subjected, until the Queen sends another message, this time to do his best in her name - whereupon he routs the field (5641-6046). Similarly, his attempted suicide (569-71) on losing the Queen from sight having been maliciously misinterpreted by his hostess, he does not even bother to put her right: so long as he finds honour in his lady's eyes, he cares not what the rest of the world thinks of him. 'Don Quichotte perce déjà sous Lancelot' says Frappier⁷; indeed, his single-minded devotion has been described as being

. . . parodique . . . de forme burlesque . . .
 voire satirique, ayant pour objet de démasquer,
 en souriant, une conception illusoire de
 l'amour courtois . . . qui est aussi contraire
 à la raison . . . qu' à la vraisemblance et

 7 Chrétien de Troyes, p.138.

qui, au moment même où il revêt une forme quasi religieuse, démontre ironiquement son caractère artificiel en s'accomplissant, pour trouver la joie, dans un acte d'union⁸ incontestablement physique.

If the Charrete could indeed be interpreted as a satire on the whole concept of 'amour courtois' - and there are good reasons for doing so, as the behaviour of Lancelot and Guinevere often appears to be deliberately over-exaggerated - then this would at least resolve the apparent contradiction between the adulterous relationship which forms the principal interest of the Charrete, and Chrétien's seeming distaste for the adultery implicit in 'amour courtois', which is invariably understood to be extra-marital, and which is so completely absent from the happy picture of conjugal love and fidelity which he portrays in Erec and Cligés⁹. Moreover, it might explain why Chrétien himself did not complete the work (it was finished off, with Chrétien's approval, by one Godefroi de Leigni), as a satire on 'amour courtois' would not at all have been what his patroness wanted. If, however, it was intended as a satire, his plan obviously backfired on him miserably, as a whole flood of littérature courtoise ensued, a good deal of it narrating that very same love of Lancelot

 8 P.Imbs, 'La Charrette avant La Charrette: Guenièvre et le roman d'Erec' in Mélanges de Langue et de Littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier, I, 421 (paraphrasing L.Pollman, Die Liebe in der hochmittelalterlichen Litteratur Frankreichs, pp.285-308).

9 v. supra, p.6 n.15.

and Guinevere.

A considerable proportion of this subsequent tradition is to be found within the Vulgate Cycle, in the Prose Lancelot (vols. III-VI of Sommer's edition). The Prose Lancelot breaks down into five parts: the Galehaut^{I0}, the Conte de la Charrette^{II}, and the Agravain^{I2}, which are grouped collectively under the title of Le Lancelot Propre (or Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac in Sommer's edition); followed by La Queste del Saint Graal and La Mort le roi Artu^{I3}. Although grouped under the collective title of Prose Lancelot, the above volumes are not concerned exclusively with that person; indeed there are frequent long passages from which he is absent altogether. However, it begins with Lancelot's birth and culminates in his death, and one of the major sources of interest in it, particularly in the Mort Artu, is his long-standing passion for Guinevere.

Right from the start, true to the tradition initiated by Chrétien, it is evident that this relationship has its roots not in ancient myth or tradition but in contemporary mores and ideals. No longer is the woman a mere passive victim, a toy in the hands of the abductor against whom she is powerless to resist; indeed, on the

I0 Sommer, III, and IV, 3-155.

II Ibid., IV, 155-362. V. supra, p.76 n.I7.

I2 Ibid., V.

I3 Both in Sommer, VI. For the latter, Frappier's edition (op. cit.) will be used here, quotations being identified by paragraph and line numbers.

contrary, the powerless one is Lancelot, who, at his first sight of the Queen, is transfixed (Sommer, III, I25/39-I26/5). What is more, we no longer have an impressive, arrogant and mature knight confronting an innocent, frightened damsel; rather the inverse, for here it is Guinevere who is the more mature and experienced, and therefore the more fitted to play the leading rôle. For she is already married and accustomed to court life; Lancelot is only eighteen and has been brought up in seclusion under the auspices of the Lady of the Lake. He becomes the Queen's own knight, though largely as a result of the Lady of the Lake's machinations rather than through his own effort, and goes forward in her name to seek adventure, having first meekly sought leave of her. From then on until his return from the Quest of the Grail, his attitude towards her is one of awe, reverence and fear of crossing her - typical of that demanded by the code of 'amour courtois'. True to form, in her absence he is pensive and listless, totally absorbed in thoughts of love; E. Kennedy^{I4} has picked out numerous instances from the Galehaut of such trances on Lancelot's part, which, as in the Charrete of Chrétien, occasionally lead to him getting unceremonious soakings when caught unawares and lost in thoughts of

 I4 'Royal Broodings and Lovers' trances in the First Part of the Prose Lancelot', in Marche Romane: Mélanges de Philologie et de Littératures Romanes offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, Liège, 1978, pp.301-I4.

Guinevere. For personal self-esteem no longer holds any place in his heart; his only concern is the Queen's opinion of him, and this, in his capacity as Queen's knight, is what prompts him to undertake so many adventures in the Queen's name, which in turn increases the Queen's estimation of him, to the extent that she 'moult le verroit volontiers' (I7I/4I). Eventually, while aiding Arthur in his war against the numerically superior forces of Galehot, Lancelot through his valour makes such an impression on the latter that, desirous of seeking the friendship of such a valiant knight, Galehot ingratiates himself with Lancelot to the point where Lancelot is able to effect a reconciliation between the former enemies(242/28-249/19). Later on, prevailing upon his new-found friendship with Arthur and aware of Lancelot's and Guinevere's mutual attraction, Galehot manages to secure a private interview between Lancelot and Guinevere. There, Lancelot hesitantly avows his love, an avowal which however is cleverly elicited by Guinevere, who from the stronger position of experience is able to manipulate the proceedings as she wishes:

Et ie sai bien que por aucune dame aues
 vous che fait . & dites moi qui ele est
 par la foi que vous me deues . ha . dame
 fait il bien voi que il me couient a
 dire . Dame che estes vous . (26I/2-4)

She takes advantage of her position of strength to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, suggesting, although she well knows otherwise, that he might have another lady love; for

'ele se delitoit durement en se mesaise veoir & esgarder.' (262/I3-I4). Lancelot, unable to sustain this mental torture, is on the point of swooning when his friend Galehot intervenes; and it is only after much prompting by Galehot that she finally puts him out of his agony by conceding that she does indeed love him: 'Ensi fait ele lotroi ie que il soit tous miens & ie soie toute sieue.' (263/I4-I5). Note however that it is still the woman who is granting a favour, not the man who is taking it. Further on, moreover, it is Guinevere who makes the move to kiss Lancelot - 'si le prent par le menton & le baise deuant galahot asses longuement.' (263/29-30) There is no doubt as to who is in command of the situation. It is not until Arthur leaves on his trip to Camille's castle in lustful pursuit of the latter that they have the opportunity to spend the night together, but once again it is the Queen who organizes the rendez-vous, 'et orent toutes les ioies que amant peuent auoir.' (4II/3-4). In the course of the remaining section of the Galehaut we have the episode in which Guinevere's position as Arthur's wife is usurped by her identical half-sister of the same name, usually known as the False Guinevere. The illegitimate offspring of Guinevere's father, Leodegan, she is conceived on the same night as her half-sister and seems to represent a kind of malicious 'alter ego' to Guinevere. She comes to court claiming to be the true Guinevere, wife of Arthur, and to have been abducted the day she was married to him; since when she has

been languishing in prison while Arthur was maintaining an adulterous relationship with the other Guinevere whom she claimed was a usurper. By wheedling her way into Arthur's affections, the False Guinevere succeeds in establishing herself as Arthur's wife; meanwhile, the real Guinevere is sent into exile, where she stays with Galehot and Lancelot for two and a half years, until the False Guinevere confesses her deceit (IV, 9-18, 45-88). Together with Arthur's adultery with Camille, this whole episode is an attempt, according to F. Lot^{I5},

sinon de disculper Guenièvre, du moins
de lui trouver des circonstances atténuantes
. . . [car] le roi se laisse trop facilement
prendre aux filets de la belle sorcière
[Camille] . . . [et] se fait duper avec
une facilité stupéfiante par une aventurière I6
[la fausse Guenièvre].

The end of the Galehaut and the beginning of the Charrette recount Morgain's imprisonment of Lancelot, her theft of the ring given to him as a love-token by Guinevere and her sending of it to Arthur's court with a message, ostensibly from Lancelot, seeking forgiveness for his disloyalty to Arthur in his love for the Queen and returning the ring in token of his renunciation of that love. Morgain does this to humiliate Guinevere in return for the sending away by the latter of her cousin Guiomar, who was Morgain's

I5 Etude sur le Lancelot en Prose, Paris, Champion, 1918,
repr. 1954.

I6 Ibid. p.67.

lover, after she caught the two of them together. This is an interesting episode in its parallels with the Tristan legend, for Yseut, like Guinevere, gave her lover a ring which he was to carry everywhere with him as a token of their love. By treacherous means a knight, one Kariado, who was in love with Yseut, managed to steal the ring and by letting Yseut see that he was in possession of it, made her think that Tristan no longer cared for her as he had given it away. When he next visits her, she snubs him, which leads to his subsequent return, this time under the disguise of 'folie', to try and obtain an interview with her. In the Lancelot, the ring, archetypical symbol of the conferral of a secret love, possesses the same function, is stolen to similar ends and leaves the Queen, not for a moment doubting his fidelity but instead assuming he is either mad or dead:

il est hors du sens ou il est mors . Car
 cest anel ne quidaisse iou mie que nus le
 peust auoir pour nulle riens . (IV I42/33-4).

He is indeed mad, but this is a real, not assumed, 'folie' - a 'folie' induced by his enforced absence from the Queen, which serves to show that his reason depends on her love to maintain its balance, for such is her power over him that once withdrawn it leaves his mind an empty shell.

In the Conte de la Charrette, as already mentioned (v. supra, pp.76-7), there are few changes in subject-matter, beyond those necessary to fit what was originally an independent

entity into an integrated whole without leaving loose ends or anomalies^{I7}, from Chrétien's Charrete. There is, however, quite a marked difference in the prose treatment of Lancelot's love for Guinevere:

Le prosateur s'intéressait beaucoup plus aux aventures de Lancelot, et racontait plus volontiers ses exploits chevaleresques, que les souffrances qu'il éprouvait pour l'amour de la reine . . . il a abaissé l'histoire de l'amour de Lancelot et Guenièvre de son niveau intellectuel et théorique, et l'a réduit à un simple intrigue entre un chevalier et la femme de son suzerain, à la fois plus ordinaire et plus naturel. I8

Even the cart is stripped of most of its significance; although Lancelot hesitates to climb onto it, it is not so much out of shame as of doubt that the dwarf will keep his word to lead him to the Queen (IV, I62/34-8), and when later on the Queen rebuffs him, it is not because of this hesitation (as it is in the poem) but because she believed he had given Morgain the ring which she had given Lancelot as a token of their love (v. supra). This simplification in the Charrette of what was in Chrétien's original version

le symbole de l'avilissement suprême que Lancelot souffrirait pour l'amour de Guenièvre, [et un] symbole qui était nécessaire à sa haute conception du caractère de l'amour courtois, I9

is typical of the watering-down of the 'courtois' element in the Charrette in comparison with the verse original. For no

I7 See Hutchings' edition of the Charrette, pp.lii-liv.

I8 Ibid., p.lvii.

I9 Ibid., p.lvi.

longer is Lancelot's love for Guinevere the prime motivation of his every action; rather, he seems more concerned with undertaking adventures - for their own sake; no longer solely to boost his image in Guinevere's eyes, as in the Galehaut. The same can indeed be said of the Agravain, where the only episode of real interest to the present study is Lancelot's unique infidelity to the Queen, which resulted in the conception of Galahad (V, I09/I2-III/22). The composer in fact had little choice but to make Lancelot unfaithful this once, for it was necessary to create a knight who could be Lancelot's equal in valour but whose purity was unblemished by unchastity and who would then be worthy of the supreme honour of achieving the Quest of the Grail. Such a knight could only be the offspring of Lancelot himself; but to attribute a son to Lancelot would infer some infidelity on his part, as Guinevere could not be made the mother of Lancelot's son when the Arthurian tradition, with only one exception in French romance²⁰, made her childless and therefore presumably infertile²¹ - and in any case any son she bore would be nominally Arthur's. The compiler of the Agravain gets around this to a certain extent by having Lancelot lie with the daughter of King Pelles, who is the Grail Guardian, while under the influence of a drug which makes him believe that he is with Guinevere; he does not

 20 See West, Prose Index, p.197 Lohot.

21 V. supra, pp.9-II.

realize until the next morning what he has done, and by then Galahad is conceived. This makes way for the Queste (Sommer, VI), where Lancelot undergoes a spiritual rehabilitation, renouncing his love for Guinevere - only, on his return from the Quest, to recommence the liaison with even greater intensity, in the Mort Artu. It is from then on that the liaison of Lancelot and Guinevere is most sensitively portrayed, and is also most intricately linked with the narrative as a whole. It is also in the Mort Artu that the most heavily-marked contrast with the refined 'amour courtois' of Chrétien's Charrete is to be found. In the latter,

la dame de Lancelot est la reine, plus tenue que toute autre à demeurer l'image de l'inaccessible, hors de toute soupçon. Ses attitudes de rigueur ou de tyrannie ne viennent pas du seul orgueil ni de la froide application de maximes dogmatiques : son honneur de femme et sa dignité de reine sont aussi en cause. 22,

whereas by the time of the Mort Artu,

dans l'exaspération de sa passion, Guenièvre perd non seulement toute retenue, mais pire encore, tout sang-froid, et la voici sans ressorts devant son démon familier : la jalousie. Préfigurant les héroïnes raciniennes, elle en arrive même à souhaiter plus que la mort de son amant : son déshonneur : 'si l'en het si mortellement qu'il n'est honte qu'ele ne li vousist bien veoir souffrir' (Mort Artu, 44/I4-I5)²³.

In the Mort Artu, the absence of the merveilleux and the suppression of the more idealized aspects of 'amour courtois' are more than compensated for by the intense psychological

22 J.Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes p.I39.

23 J.-Ch.Payen, art. cit. p.I08.

realism. The Mort Artu forms the third and final part of the Prose Lancelot, and is a sort of 'Twilight of the Gods', in which

Lancelot et Guenièvre doivent être punis de leurs longs égarements. Leur châtement, c'est d'être, dans l'arrière-saison de leur existence, la cause involontaire des discordes finales qui déchirent la cour d'Arthur et font périr les compagnons de la Table Ronde dans une lutte fratricide où succombe . . . Arthur²⁴.

Herein lies the essential importance of Guinevere's adulterous relationship with Lancelot as it is depicted in the Mort Artu. By overstepping the limits established by the patterns of 'fine amor' accepted by contemporary society (and which constituted the only form of adultery which could in any way be considered socially acceptable, purely because its essential element was total secrecy and dissimulation), they are putting themselves above the law and are, in short, inviting trouble:

Les choses se gâtent lorsque Guenièvre cesse d'être courtoise pour devenir passionnée. L'adultère courtois n'est pas une faute tant que l'amante garde son sang-froid. L'adultère passionnée devient un péché majeur, aussitôt²⁵ que l'héroïne ne se commande plus.

Pushed, then, to the point of 'démesure' by their all-consuming passion, they are incapable of concealing it; a change in the status quo must therefore result from their inevitable eventual discovery, to start the ball rolling towards the destruction of the Arthurian empire:

²⁴ Frappier, Mort Artu, p.x.
²⁵ Payen, art. cit. p.II0.

Et se il avoit devant meintenu celui pechié
 si sagement et si couvertement que nus ne
 s'en estoit aperceüz, si le meintint après
 si folement que Agravains . . . s'en aperçut;
 et tant s'en prist garde que il le sot
 veraïement, que Lancelos amoit la reïne de
 fole amour et la reïne lui autresi. (4/10-18).

It is worth noting incidentally how their 'fine amor' has become a 'fole amour', an excess which was not tolerated in mediaeval times, when the tendency was to elevate the mind at the expense of the body. The word 'fole' implied the absence of reason, inexcusable in reasoning beings; the concept of absolute passion, where the heart dominates all and the powers of reason have no influence over it, is a Racinian legacy that would have been anathema to mediaeval society. To return to the text, if the misunderstanding over the Damsel of Escalot and Guinevere's shunning of Lancelot serve to mislead Arthur into thinking that his suspicions are unfounded, once the two are re-united following Lancelot's defence of Guinevere against Mador de la Porte, the situation is repeated:

Et se Lancelos avoit devant ce amee la reïne,
 il l'ama orendroit plus qu'il n'avoit onques
 mes fet a nul jor, et ele ausint lui; et se
 demenerent si folement [my italics] que li
 pluseur de leanz le sorent veraïement, et
 messire Gauvains meismes le sot tout apertement,
 et aussi firent tuit si quatre frere (85/33-9).

Another point worth noting at this juncture is the author's insight into human nature, which always makes the cuckolded husband the last person to find out that he is being deceived. We see the same effect in the Tristan legend, where King Mark, blinded by his love for Yseut, either cannot see, or

refuses to see, that his beloved nephew is cuckolding him. While we do not see much display of affection for Guinevere on Arthur's part, given that he is by now a nonagenarian we can safely assume that he is blinded by old age²⁶. But even Arthur must eventually make the tragic discovery; the lovers are caught 'in flagrante delicto', Lancelot flees, rescues Guinevere from the stake and in doing so kills Gauvain's beloved brother Gaheriet. Thus the seal is set on the downfall of the Round Table: the damage done to the honour and feelings of its two most important members, Arthur and Gauvain, is irreparable, and all as a direct result of Lancelot's and Guinevere's adultery. The tragedy, however, lies, even in Arthur's eyes, not so much in the loss of Guinevere, as in the internecine, indeed almost fratricidal, slaughter of Round Table knights. For Arthur's reaction to the news of Guinevere's rescue is described almost perfunctorily - 'Li rois fu si dolenz de ceste nouvele qu'il ne set qu'il doie fere' (98/I6-I7), whereas on the other hand when he sees his second favourite nephew Gaheriet lying dead, he faints, and on coming to, utters a lament which crystallizes in so few words the tragic essence of this third part of the Prose Lancelot: "'Ha! Dex, ore ai

 26 It might be noted that Arthur himself was not always a faithful spouse. See West, Prose Index, p.25 (Artu), p.59 (Camille), p.137 (Genievre), and also, incidentally, p.195 (Lisanor), on whom Arthur engendered Lohot before meeting Guinevere.

ge trop vescu" (99/23). For too long now the Arthurian empire has been at the apogee of its success; the quest for the Grail has been achieved, and with no other noble cause left to occupy its members (a problem evident from the necessity Arthur finds himself in, at the beginning of the Mort Artu, of holding tournament after tournament to keep his knights from boredom), internal dissension is bound to break out in the absence of a common cause or adversity to act as a unifying bond. It is Lancelot's and Guinevere's adultery however that acts as a catalyst for this inevitable destruction, and the gravity of their sin is reflected in the barbarity of the retribution brought down on Arthur's court. Hence the ring of bitter truth in Arthur's words: he has, so to speak, outstayed his welcome. The Wheel of Fortune, so often evoked in the Mort Artu, is turning full circle, and it is the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere which is driving it round. However, Arthur being, in the Mort Artu, something of a weak cuckold, a stronger passion than his is required to maintain the impetus towards destruction once he is reunited with his wife, and this time it is the 'démesure' of Gauvain which keeps the war going - a 'démesure' which is the direct result of Lancelot's and Guinevere's excessive passion: for had they been able to control their lust, they would not have been found out; had they not been found out, Guinevere would not have been condemned to death and rescued, Gaheriet would not have been killed, Gauvain would not have pursued his

vengeance quest into France and Mordred would not have been left in control of Arthur's spouse and kingdom; and so on. Evidently, then, the lover's excesses bear the ultimate responsibility for unleashing the whole chain of events which culminated in Arthur's death and the destruction of his empire.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Character by character, we have examined in the course of this study the various Arthurian personages who were, or may have been, at some time or another linked with Guinevere in an amorous relationship, in either written or oral tradition or both. If some of these characters (e.g., Gauvain, Brun de Morois) seem to have received a more detailed treatment than other names more frequently associated with Guinevere, such as Meleagant and Lancelot, it is because these relationships merit greater attention than has hitherto been paid to them, while the likes of Meleagant and Lancelot have already been subjected to extensive study by Loomis, Cross and Nitze et al., particularly with reference to the Charrete. What has in fact become clear is that those names less-frequently associated with Guinevere, or those just taken for granted (e.g. Arthur) have been quite unjustifiably neglected by Arthurian scholarship. For example, while almost all of the many hints at a Gauvain/Guinevere liaison (v. supra, pp.41-53) can be dismissed as relatively insignificant when considered singly, when put together and taken as a whole, as I believe has been done only for the first time in the present study, they do constitute powerful evidence for the one-time existence, antedating Chrétien de Troyes, of a tradition linking Arthur's wife and his favourite nephew - just as in that other famous mediaeval

legend, Yseut loved and was loved by Tristan, the favourite nephew of her husband Mark. The question of whether or not such a postulated Gauvain/Guinevere association can be traced back to a Celtic source lies outside the scope of the present study, but it is surprising that the Celticists, in their compulsion to prove dependence on earlier tradition, have so ignored such a considerable body of evidence for it as that mentioned above. Indeed, while the abduction tradition (see Chapter IV) has strong links with and almost certain dependence on both Celtic and Classical tradition, and it would be unwise, for example, to claim that the Charrete was the unaided product of Chrétien's imagination alone, Loomis has, I believe, gone too far in claiming analogues for the Lancelot/Guinevere relationship in Celtic myth and an ancestor for the former in the Irish god Lug; for it is patently obvious that in the Charrete, the first-ever portrayal (as we must assume) of their love, we are meant to see a reflection, and possibly even a parody, of the exclusively twelfth- and thirteenth-century predilection for littérature courtoise and the expression of the most delicate nuances of 'fine amor', which cannot possibly have any antecedents in the barbaric Celtic myths of the Dark Ages (though the classical Latin poet Ovid, very popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and almost certainly known to Chrétien, undoubtedly had some influence on the development of the courtois ideal). Likewise Yder, who

has been comparatively neglected, and the Modena Sculpture, which has not, both point to the existence of a pre-Chrétien body of romance making Guinevere party to an extra-marital relationship long before Lancelot came on the scene; but this evidence (equally circumstantial to, but less comprehensive than that surrounding Gauvain) has already been adduced. Arthur does not throw much light on the question of origins, as the account of his courtship of Guinevere, what little we are told, is of late composition and does not give any indications of an anterior tradition. Much the same can be said for Gosengos, although a connection with the German Gasozein is possible; while Lanval, although himself an obvious echo of a biblical/classical tradition, again throws little light on Guinevere's literary past. Likewise Mordred - in spite of heavy speculation on Loomis' part, linking him to practically any abductor, or any character having any links with Guinevere, however indirect, whose name begins with the letter M; for the Mordred tradition seems to have its source directly in Geoffrey of Monmouth, being enlarged upon in the Brut and the Didot Perceval, and again in the Mort Artu. In none of these, nor in any other text of the writer's knowledge, are there any references, direct or indirect, to an earlier tradition linking Mordred and the Queen. As to the abductors, they seem to divide into two distinct categories - those who are 'forgiven' and become members of Arthur's court (Yder, who may once have been represented as

an abductor; Brun de Morois; Urien; Melwas; and Gasozein), and those who are killed (Meleagant, Mordred, and Valerin of the Lanzelet). The latter group has analogues in both Celtic and Classical legend, but the former group is more interesting in that its members are probably an echo of a much more primitive oral or written Arthurian tradition in which a powerful preternatural lord, who was Guinevere's first spouse, took her back, before being subdued and brought under Arthur's sway. Such a personage may have been the prototype of Yder - Webster^I claims that his father Nut was a god of the dead; Rhÿs, that 'Nûd[†] was originally the Zeus of the Celts'². In the affront to the Queen in Erec we have a possible remainder of a one-time version in which Yder may have actually abducted her, as the transfer of two characteristics from the Yder of Erec to the Brun de Morois in Durmart (the presence of the dwarf and the involvement in the sparrowhawk competition) make it likely that Brun's rôle of abductor was also transferred from Yder. All this is of course speculative, but the grounds for speculation do exist; as one of ^{the} oldest of the Arthurian knights, Yder is one of the most mysterious and interesting. Probably Gasozein and Urien, and perhaps Melwas, are, like Brun de Morois, variants of this postulated tradition.

Such, then, were Guinevere's amours; and while

 I Guinevere, p.84.

2 J. Rhÿs, Studies in the Arthurian Legend, Oxford, Clarendon, 1891, p.336. See also pp. 36, 69.

interesting enough in themselves, their many echoes of a now-lost past suggest that the manuscripts which have survived the passage of time represent only the tip of a whole iceberg of oral tradition and probably quite a small proportion of a good deal of written literature now lost to us, telling tales not only of Guinevere, but of the more senior knights such as Gauvain and Yder. We may well indeed have a relic of such a story in the Modena Archivolt. Unfortunately, until a written record of this postulated tradition is uncovered, in spite of all the evidence in favour of its existence, the debate must remain open.

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<u>BBSIA</u>	<u>Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne</u>
BLVS	Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart
CFMA	Classiques Français du Moyen Age
OUP	Oxford University Press
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
TLF	Textes Littéraires Français
<u>ZFSL</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur</u>

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