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Abstract

Analyzes T.H. White's characterization of Guenever, with detailed discussions of differences and similarities to Malory and Tennyson.

Additional Keywords

Arthurian myth; White, T.H.—Characters—Guenever; White, T.H. The Once and Future King

T.H. White's Defence of Guenevere: Portrait of a "Real" Person

AMANDA SERRANO

In the recent film *The Fisher King* the question is asked "Where would Arthur have been without Guinevere?"¹ The answer given in the film is "Happily married, probably." Judging from audiences I have sat with in the film, this also appeared to be a general instinctive reaction. Guinevere has been a much maligned figure in literature. Most people are familiar with the legend of King Arthur: the best-known aspects being the affair between Guinevere and Lancelot, the Round Table and the Grail Quest. But it is the love story which has become crucial, and around which the rest of the story revolves: it destroys the fellowship of the Round Table, and disqualifies Lancelot from achieving the Grail.

Throughout the ages Guinevere has epitomized the Faithless Wife, as Kenneth Webster asserts.² Guinevere's infamy is further established by Margaret J.C. Reid, citing Arthur Rhys' statement that "in Wales to call a girl Guinevere is to accuse her of wantonness."³ Regardless of the literary period, Guinevere, to varying degrees, has always been 'the secret and crucial enemy of Camelot'.⁴ Surprisingly, even today, in our age of moral and literary respect for female motivations, many critics still take this narrow-minded and simplistic view of Arthur's Queen: they persist in expecting each version of the Arthurian story to present a queen more or less like Tennyson's adaptation of Malory's Guinevere. But since T.H. White's epic revisionist work, it has become increasingly difficult to categorize Guinevere as the Unfaithful Wife; her recent portrayals (especially by the current wave of feminist writers) are far more sympathetic than ever before.

This paper does not attempt in any way to re-evaluate Medieval Arthurian material. My work analyses T.H. White's essentially mimetic twentieth-century characterization of Guenevere, with detailed discussions of three major predecessors.

T.H. White's tetralogy, *The Once and Future King*, offers the first full-length modern psychologically-based interpretation of Arthur's Queen, whom White calls Guenevere.⁵ White based his work directly on Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, and, in the course of the work, White frequently compares himself to his predecessors, most notably Malory and Tennyson, for example, in IV.3.524, 529. From such authorial comments, it can be conjectured that White meant his Arthurian to be a radical revision or even subversion of the traditional versions of the story, and of contemporary sentimentalizations of history — and legend. And so it is, particularly with regard to his portrayal of the protagonists.⁶

No longer delicate, fair, eternally young and beautiful, as she had seemed in Malory and Tennyson, White's Guenevere is dark, robust, still beautiful, but soon aging. In short, she is a "real" person, rather than the physical Ideal of Woman. Where Malory had portrayed her simply as the King's consort, and Tennyson as a creature of impulse and self-indulgence, White gives Guenevere a 'think-and-feel' reality. The episode (III.4.331) when Lancelot realizes that he has hurt her provides a significant example of this quality.

As in Malory, Guenevere does not formally appear in her own right until well into the work. But from her initial appearance she is a major player. The reader is first introduced to her in Book III, chapter 4, and it is, significantly, when she is introduced to the young Lancelot:

There is a story that her hair was yellow, but it was not. It was so black that it was startling, and her blue eyes, deep and clear, had a sort of fearlessness which was startling too. She was surprised by the young man's twisted face, but not frightened. (III.4.327)

White's description of her is a radical subversion of her traditional image, implying a certain strength, intelligence and hardihood which is absent from earlier Guineveres. Those blond Guineveres, very fair of skin and delicate of body, offer the image of the helpless woman, there to be protected by her man.⁷ White's Guenevere is inherently less feminine, in this passive sense, than her traditional counterparts. Indeed, Arthur's summation of her "three great virtues . . . courage, generosity and honesty" (III.16.386) affirms the less negatively 'feminine' aspects of her character. Furthermore, Guenevere refuses to be categorized by 'delicacy', evidenced in her reaction to Gawaine in III.18.435. Here, both Arthur and Guenevere refute the artificial delicacy and naïveté so often imposed on women; clearly, the narrator himself disapproves of such condescension.

Attributes allied to Guenevere's natural strength and hardness are seen in her practicality and wisdom. White's Guenevere will not allow herself to be openly indiscreet (IV.4.536). And when she is ambushed and abducted by Meliagrance (III.41.494-5), "the Queen had kept her head", not only bargaining with her abductor for the tending of her wounded knights, but discreetly and quickly sending a young page for help.

Later, in Book IV chapter 12, Guenevere escapes Mor-dred's quasi-incestuous advances by barricading herself in the Tower of London, having slipped out of his grasp under the effective pretext of buying her trousseau. This image of the Queen besieged in the Tower is a traditional one, used by Malory (Book VIII, "The Day of Destiny",

707), but never before had it been deployed to illustrate her acuity and decisiveness. Her Tennysonian counterpart shows a similar practical streak, but she is far more malicious and contemptuous in her reasoning. This is indicated, for example, in her rebuke of Lancelot's indiscretion in "Lancelot and Elaine" (lines 97-101, 144-57).

White's Guenevere is physically very different from her traditional counterparts: she ages, and her aging is far from graceful. She retains some of her natural and famous beauty, but with age comes a certain amount of physical insecurity for Guenevere, and she can be, at times, a pathetic figure. When she appears at Lancelot's homecoming, Book III, chapter 32, she tries to "defy the invincible doom of human destiny" by recourse to "bad make-up and loud silks" (p. 455). Both she and Lancelot feel her insecurity in the situation — which, ironically, makes her more insecure. She has become a parody of the beautiful, proud and stately queen she once was. It is only when she can come to terms with her ageing, and the fact that Lancelot loves her for more than her youthful beauty, that she regains her nobility and becomes truly beautiful once more:

Guenevere waited for Lancelot in the candle-light of her splendid bedroom, brushing her grey hair. She looked singularly lovely, not like a film star, but like a woman who had grown a soul. (IV.7.560)

White had earlier described this process of ageing and acceptance as a "seventh sense" — a "knowledge of the world" (III.13.374).

Like Malory's Queen, White's Guenevere is gracious and stately in her role as Queen, in both the early days of glory and the final days of war. As a very young Queen, when the Table is in its first glory, a great parade of knights is lined up at the Pentecost celebrations to tell of Lancelot's prowess and to submit, not to Arthur, but to her (III.8.358-9). The impact of this grand gesture is great, both in terms of the developing relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere, and in the respect she receives as Queen. Late in Book III, on the knights' various returns from the Grail Quest, she and Arthur welcome each knight home with honor, then sit attentively and listen to their adventures. Ironically, these tales of the Grail adventures signal the end of the Table period, whereas the early tales, centered on Lancelot's prowess, heralded its zenith. In Book IV, we find that, of the royal couple, it is Guenevere rather than Arthur who carries the crown with diplomacy: it is more often the Queen who entertains "distinguished company under the flambeaux of the Great Hall" (IV.4.540), while Arthur sits quietly alone, employed in mending or some such homely occupation. And in Book IV, chapter 11, in her confrontation with the now insane Mordred, she is described as:

... the royal lady which she was ... a straight-backed dowager whose rheumatic fingers flashed with rings, who had ridden the world successfully for fifty years. (IV.11.610-11)

Guenevere is also stately and generous in her diplomacy, as seen in her offer to stop the civil war between Arthur and Lancelot (IV.9.588). Such generosity is not a common feature

of Guinevere's portrayal, in either older or recent works. Geoffrey and his direct successors Wace and Layamon have Guinevere openly deserting Arthur for Mordred and then fleeing to a nunnery when Mordred is defeated. Both Malory and Tennyson, White's direct positive and negative influences, give Guinevere the virtue of generosity, but in a very limited way. Tennyson is particularly cautious in attributing qualities to his Guinevere: she only becomes virtuous after she has been "blessed" by Arthur and has lived a life of penance in the convent ("Guinevere", 663-92). Malory's acceptance of a Courtly-love dimension (which first appeared in Chrétien and the Vulgate) and a Christian overview makes tragedy rather than mere guilt an outcome of Guinevere's story. Her tragedy is further heightened when Mordred, and not Lancelot, is Arthur's replacement as her intended husband and King. Thus, her retreat into the convent can be seen, not as an act of cowardice or penance, as in Tennyson, but as part of her "central tragedy": she takes the only safe option open to a woman in her position and of her standing.

White's Guenevere has a wider yet more interconnected range of responses and roles than the earlier versions; unlike Malory, in whose stories consistency of characterization is rarely an issue, White is at pains to recognize the paradoxical aspects of her temperament and conduct, and to present the contradictions themselves as psychologically convincing. His Guenevere can be as emotional, hysterical and jealous as any of her predecessors. Indeed, she is referred to by one critic as "immature, temperamental, intolerant."⁸ But this judgment is harsher than the evidence warrants. Perhaps the best example of Guenevere's 'hysteria' is seen at the opening of Book III, chapter 18, on the morning after Lancelot has slept a second time with Elaine, thinking it to be Guenevere. As the scene between the Queen and the "lovers" progresses, Guenevere becomes more and more hysterical, until she is described as "hideous" (III.18.391). Guenevere, bordering on paranoia, accuses Lancelot of teaching Elaine "the old lie" in order to make a fool of her. She is totally obsessed, a far cry from the dignity and grace of the Queen, recalling Elizabeth Jenkins' apt description of Malory's Guinevere as "tormented" by the "strain of her passion" for Lancelot.⁹

Guenevere's 'aloneness' here is important. White implies in this scene that part of the reason for Guenevere's hysteria is her feeling of isolation. She feels betrayed by Lancelot, not only in their sexual relationship, but also in their friendship and deeper emotional bond. Throughout "the matter of Guinevere", the Queen is seen as essentially isolated; she has her 'women', but her only close relationships are with Lancelot and Arthur. Guenevere's 'aloneness' can be seen largely as a consequence of her royal position: as Queen she is supposed to stand above her subjects and to be exemplary in behavior. Her rank as Queen implies a certain aloofness from those around her, and would naturally inhibit close relationships with her Court ladies. The nature of her relationship with Lancelot,

however much of an open secret it becomes at Court, again requires complete discretion and therefore emotional solitude. A further implication is that such loneliness is a female characteristic; Arthur and Lancelot have an emotional closeness which is more than a deep affection, it also encompasses a professional respect for and camaraderie with each other. It is a form of aristocratic mateship. They had campaigned together, practiced and jousted together, saved each other's lives, caroused and joked together, and buffeted and bruised each other over several years. The narrator points out that a woman's only expected occupation revolves around her children and her husband (III.34.469). Guenever's childlessness, married to a husband who is also King and therefore usually preoccupied with matters of State and often away, induces intense feelings of separation from those around her.

The narrator's comments here imply an imaginative sympathy with Guenever's frequent realization that her life's externals are trivializing her intelligence and demeaning her passion. Women's "occupations" involve "amusements", nothing more serious than games or domestic duties. The surrounding male assumptions refuse to accept that women in general, and Guenever in particular, can be "passionate . . . real and hungry in her fierce and tender heart" (III.34.469). Arthur's debate between "Might is Right" and "Might For Right" ethics is purely, and exclusively, a male concern. From Malory, through to Tennyson and Morris, women's roles in adventures and quests center around being either the "villain of the piece" or the helpless victim who begs the knight for help. If the Queen is asked for help, it is only on special occasions or when 'women's matters' are concerned. Only in Morris (and of course in White) does the Queen (or any other woman) show dissatisfaction with her role in society.

Crane claims that it is Guenever's selfishness which characterizes her and which "drives Lancelot into two years of insanity."¹⁰ She may indeed be one cause of Lancelot's insanity, but she cannot be the only one. He has been emotionally unstable throughout his adolescence — his first scene, peering at his own reflection in a helmet (III.1.311), is a clear signal of neurosis. (White details Lancelot's emotional instability throughout his presentation in Book III).

In Malory and White, Elaine effectively blames Guenevere for Lancelot's madness (Malory, Book V, "Lancelot and Elaine", 487-8; White, III.18.393). In Tennyson there is no such direct accusation of the Queen's driving Lancelot to madness by Elaine (Tennyson's Elaine being too naive to believe such "slanders"), but during "Lancelot and Elaine" the narrator makes reference to the affair and to the physical effect it has had on Lancelot ("Lancelot and Elaine", 244-52). This Tennysonian "marriage" of Lancelot's features could be the origin of his facial hideousness in White. The "Mal Fet" title, in some of its meanings, is of course in Malory, but the marred face is not.

Another of Guenevere's traditional essential traits is her insecurity, particularly about Elaine. White gives a psychoanalytic explanation of Guenever's insecurity about Elaine (III.16.384-5). This insecurity also appears to be gender-related: White asserts that women have, in general, an intuition or special sensitivity about the development or the potentially catastrophic consequences of emotional relationships, comparing Guenever and Lancelot to Anna Karenina and Vronsky.

White is the first major writer to use a psychological interpretation of the central Arthurian relationship, and such an interpretation aids our understanding of Guenever's very complex character. However, his circumspect repetition of phrases like "perhaps" (III.16.384-5) and "probably" (III.43.500) when speculating on Guenever's motivations, prevents the narrator from seeming to intrude on the inmost soul of the lover. White similarly restrains his narrative authority in his first description of Lancelot, in his use of the verb "dabbling" (III.1.311).

The narrator's central analysis of Guenever occurs in Book III, chapter 34, pp. 468-71. He challenges the idea that she was a "man-eater" who destroyed Arthur and Lancelot; he sees her as a "real" person, with all the ambiguities and contradictions of people in the 'real' world.

A large part of this Guenever's problem, as already suggested, is the potent combination of isolation and worthlessness she feels, particularly with regard to her barrenness; after all, the most important single duty of a Queen was to provide the realm with an heir. White's Guenever is a 'modern', highly intelligent woman, trapped in a Medieval reality, a life which is essentially defined by male assumptions and indifference, her position in that society significantly weakened by her barrenness. White sees his Guenever as essentially a tragic figure, whose shortcomings and indiscretions arise from her central tragedy (White overtly links his Guenever's "central tragedy" to her barrenness).

White writes at length in his diaries about the type of person he thinks Guenevere was and should have been, asking and answering his own questions about how he should portray her. It is clear from these notes that White's main villainess, and Arthur's 'real enemy', was Morgause.¹² By association, Arthur himself is also his own enemy, as his liaison with Morgause produced Mordred, the ultimate and deliberate destroyer of Camelot. Such implications throw an entirely new light on Guenever's portrayal, by White and by other more recent authors. White is the first author to emphasize Morgause's part in Arthur's downfall. Morgause's enmity to Arthur and her deliberate manipulation of both him and her sons (particularly Mordred) are even more crucial to Mary Stewart, Marion Bradley and Fay Sampson.

White makes overt comparisons between the two queens, but his image of Morgause as a "spider" is far more sinister than his treatment of Guenever. In a moment

of brilliant irony Guenever, herself sometimes thought of as a "man-eater", describes Morgause in similar terms (IV.11.606). The "man-eater" image of Guenever, once interrogated — by the authorial narrator rather than a character — is rejected as both superficial and inaccurate: she was not promiscuous (as was Morgause), nor did her "eating" of Lancelot and Arthur reduce them to the "living larder" (IV.11.610) that Mordred becomes. Guenever has no children, so her indictment of Morgause has a real edge to it, though no self-indulgence comes through in the tone. Her tone is "thoughtful" rather than either bitter or censorious. Not unreasonably, she thinks of Morgause as the "devouring mother", the fourth and darkest aspect of Jung's feminine archetype, the fourth face of the Great Goddess (compare Bradley, *Mists of Avalon*, 1.2.26). This is most apparent in the predatory metaphors Guenever uses, particularly the spider image and the repetition of the word "caught" (IV.11.606).

White felt that Morgause constituted a crucial constraint on his portrayal of Guenever: "... I have already had one unattractive woman in the epic — Morgause — and it goes against the grain to have two, especially if Lancelot is to love her."¹³ If Guenever were to be the — or even a — "villain of the piece", then it would be contradictory for Lancelot and Arthur, the two greatest heroes of the story, and "nice" people according to White, to love her. So Guenever had to have some truly good qualities, otherwise she could not have attracted either man on anything but a physical or superficial level. Although Arthur did have a short sexual liaison with Morgause, he is generally excused because he was inexperienced and under her spell at the time. The 'problem' regarding Guenever's characterization was resolved by making her ambiguous, and having Arthur and Lancelot drawn to her for different reasons. White determined that she was to be "a sort of tigress, with all the healthy charms and horrors of the carnivore."¹⁴ But, at the same time, she was to be "worshipped" for her positive qualities, which undoubtedly outnumber any negative traits.

Like her Malorian predecessor, White's Guenever is predestined to betray Arthur. White, like Malory, cites the clash of private and public values as one of the causes of the catastrophe. The situation with Lancelot and Guenever began as a personal one, and became political, firstly because of Guenever's (and Arthur's) public position, and secondly because of the manipulations of Agravaine and Mordred. This clash is felt intensely by Arthur, Lancelot and Guenever. Central to the dilemma, when the accusations of adultery are made public, is Arthur's public position: as King, he is forced to choose between Justice and his love for Lancelot and Guenever.¹⁵ This raises to tragic seriousness the Arthur/Lancelot/Guenever triangle. Because they are noble characters, both in their ethics and in the social sense, the options open to them in such personal situations are restricted.

As with his literary predecessors, White's Guenever's relationship with Lancelot is compared with the ill-fated

affair between Tristram and Isoud. However, unlike Malory and Tennyson, White does not represent Guenever as a direct influence on the sexual indiscretions of Tristram and Isoud; their affair is already common knowledge before the Queen's takes its sexual form. Whenever the two relationships are juxtaposed, the integrity of Lancelot, and particularly of Guenever, is inevitably lowered. This is at first the case in White's work, although, in his usual way, he provides a radical twist as the story progresses. Far from treating the affair of Tristram and Isoud in terms of traditional (and rigid) morality as Tennyson does, White emphasizes its comic elements, thus lightening the moral situation of Lancelot and Guenever (III.41.494). Arthur's comments regarding Tristram and his two Isouds serve to parody Lancelot's confusion between Elaine and Guenever — although Lancelot was forgiven for his dilemma, as he had been drugged and deliberately misled. The comic absurdity of Tristram's situation distances Lancelot and Guenever from the moral ambiguities obvious in Morris, Tennyson and Malory. Guenever, in White's interpretation, is exonerated from her role as Eve, the Temptress and Fallen Woman who encourages sexual deviance by her own example (the version of Guinevere created by Tennyson).

White further distances Lancelot and Guenever from Tristram and Isoud by presenting the lovers as commentators who treat the Cornish story, so ferocious in Tennyson, as fiasco, doomed from its inception (IV.7.560-5). However, White darkens the scene with Guenever's realization that Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak, two of the three best knights in the world, lie dead as a result of their love affairs. This directly foreshadows the ambush of the third, Sir Lancelot, later in the chapter.

Despite the several comparisons between the two ill-fated relationships, White never allows his Lancelot and Guenever to be common adulterers, as they are in Tennyson. Malory, though he portrays Lancelot and Guinevere as adulterers, also respects them as "trew lovers" and noble victims, doing the things they have to do. In White, the comparison with the Cornish lovers ennobles the relationship of Lancelot and the Queen.

White departs from many of his predecessors in humanizing Guinevere: in both Malory and Tennyson we are never allowed to forget that Guinevere is Queen first and Woman second. William Morris' influence on White is apparent in that his "Defense lays a heavy (and surprisingly non-judgmental) emphasis on Guinevere's womanliness and humanity. In White there are still hints of Guenever (and, to a similar extent, Elaine) as Eve; however, these derive from Lancelot's perceptions of himself and his 'miracles' (III.11.365; III.12.373).

White's Guenever attracts sympathy — the reader is invited to respond to a "real person" with feelings and motivations; her public position and its implications become of secondary importance. This Guinevere is not so easily labeled the 'secret enemy' of Arthur, as her literary

predecessors had been; indeed, her Malorian and Tennysonian counterparts see themselves as having destroyed Arthur's realm (Malory, Book VIII, "The Dolorous Death and Departing", 720; Tennyson, "Guinevere", 663-4, 682-3).

Like her literary antecedents, White's Guenever and her affair with Lancelot are used by Arthur's enemies to bring him down. Once she is designated by Agravaine and Mordred as their "national grievance" (IV.11.514-5), she loses some of her 'character' in that she is seen by the manipulators as merely the vehicle of their revenge, rather than a 'real person'; she is now merely a 'helpless woman' at least in political terms. And so she is. These are male power games in which she, as the "grievance", has already played her part, and has thus become largely redundant.

Guenever regains some of her power and strength later in Book IV, after she has been reconciled with Arthur and reinstated as Queen, because the viewpoints emphasized are Arthur's and Lancelot's, for whom her importance is still primary. It is simply an effect of having to take Mordred's point of view as a starting-point that makes the audience see Guenever as diminished. Her return to her former high status is reflected in her language to Mordred in Book IV, chapter 11: she insists that Mordred use her title when he is speaking to her, and several times reminds him that she is Queen of England (pp. 609-14).

Many critics continue to see White's Guenever as a literary failure, and as Arthur's essential enemy.¹⁶ However, such criticisms judge her, not as a character in her own right, but in terms of Lancelot and Arthur, and their active masculine values and achievements. Necessarily, in such a biased comparison, Guenever fares badly. As White himself says, Guenever is selfish, jealous, unfaithful and temperamental, but such judgments of her assume that these are her *only* characteristics. In fact, White's complex characterization of her, which forms the basis of any attentive reader's response to her, shows that she is much more than this view of her suggests.

White's epic work, in its characterization of Arthur, Lancelot and especially Guenever, does more than add a new perspective on an old story: his renarration provides the impetus for the current wave of female fantasists like Marion Bradley, Persia Woolley, Fay Sampson and Sharan Newman, who further rework the legend, giving it a predominantly female focus. White brings the Arthurian women out of the closet, in some ways even reinvents them. Instead of being simply wives and lovers, damsels in distress or villainesses, White's women, especially his Guenever, become "real" people, endowed with intelligence, emotions and motivations of their own. No longer simply an extension of her men, White's Guenever is capable of standing alone as a character, and as a "person" in her own right, as many current works attest. ~

Notes

1. *The Fisher King*, director Terry Gilliam, Columbia Pictures/Tri Star, 1991.
2. Kenneth G.T. Webster, *Guinevere, A Study of Her Abductions* (USA: The Turtle Press, 1951; reprinted, Folcroft Library Editions, 1973), p.2.
3. Arthur Rhys, *Arthurian Legend*, p. 40; cited in Margaret J.C. Reid, *The Arthurian Legend: Comparison of Treatment in Modern and Medieval Literature, A Study in the Literary Value of Myth and Legend* (USA: Barnes and Noble, 1939, reprinted 1970), p. 88. See Also Barabara Ann Gordon Wise, *The Reclamation of a Queen, Guinevere in Modern Fantasy* (USA: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 62, 69 (N. 9, 10).
4. Throughout this paper I will be using two forms of quotation marks: double quotation will be used when representing direct quotations; single quotations marks will be represent commonplace cultural terms, as well as this summary label, as far I know original with me.
5. Whiter departs from traditional spellings, no doubt in order to distance himself as writer, and Guenever as his creation, from the prejudices inherent in earlier Guineveres, especially Tennyson's.
6. In effect, White provided the impetus for many contemporary female authors such as Marion Zimmer Bradley, Fay Sampson, Sharan Newman, Berta Barker and Persia Woolley, who have further reworked the tradition of Arthur and particularly, of Guinevere.
7. Caitlin and John Matthews express the contrast between the traditional images of fair-complexioned heroes and heroines, and the images of the 'Dark Lover' which also abound in traditional literature: Significantly, the few 'active' women of the medieval Arthurian stories appear as ugly, black or misshapen. This may initially appear to be in line with the universal convention of beauty. The reveals a series of incidents in which the golden-Arthurian story princess in her tower must be fought for, whereas her dark-haired sister who comes with the message of her imprisonment is discounted as an object of romance. This happens in the story of Gareth, who answers the call of Lynet-ter to rescue her sister, Lionors — whom he marries... The preference for the golden or blond woman over the dark may also seem the result of the same kind of ingrained cultural obsession, as still exists in India where advertisements for wives stress a preference for 'light-skinned' candidates. But the darkness of the black maiden has nothing to do with racial derivation or skin pigmentation, and everything to do with the nature of the archetype. The beauty of blackness is known by those who know the true worth of the soul, those who have ever sought the dark, not the light, mistress. The impassioned lover and the yearning mystic have not written about the pretty blond girl, but about the Nut-Brown Maid of the Dark Lady. Women similarly perceive the empowering inner masculine not as a blond knight in shining armour, but as a dark, mysterious lover whose gift is to change the soul. This ability is reflected in his own changeable nature and appearance, which may be daemonic, angelic or bestial — the very reverse of the conventional handsome and sought-after Adonis. (*Ladies of the Lake*, pp. 164-5.)
8. John K. Crane, *T.H. White* (New York: Twayne, 1974) p. 106.
9. Elizabeth Jenkins, *The Mystery of King Arthur* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, Ltd., 1975), pp. 111, 144.
10. Crane, pp. 105-6.
11. Jenkins' reference parallels White's own juxtaposition of the two liaisons.
12. Diary entry dated October 10th, 1939, in Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T.H. White* (London: Jonathon Cape with Chatto and Windus, 1967), p. 150.
13. Diary Entry dated October 10t, 1939, in Warner, p. 150.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-152. These comments are about a psychologically realistic character; there is no metafictional detachment or irony of the "she's only a character" kind. When one thinks of White's unique impudence with history, and the fantastic narrative conventions of character in Merlin's life and Arthur's education, this is surprising.
15. Crane, p. 116.
16. Crane, pp. 105-6, offers the most virulent (and perhaps the most flawed) of the arguments regarding Guenever's "failure."