

# Women in the Grail Quest and Their Relationship with Pessimistic and Optimistic Storytelling

Madison Ingram, Department of English and Modern Languages, Shepherd University

In this paper, I compare the literary tradition of the Grail Quest as demonstrated in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. More specifically, I look into the female characters in these stories and how they influence the outcome of each Quest. In Malory, women play overtly negative roles and are demonized by the narrator, whereas in Wolfram, women play exemplary positive roles and are revered by the narrator. Despite these differences, the women in both stories push the questers to the completion of the Grail Quest, although the ending of Malory's Quest leads to death and devastation and the conclusion of Wolfram's Quest leads to happiness and healing. I argue that Malory's negative portrayal of women leads his questers to remove the Grail from the land and incite further devastation upon it, whereas Wolfram's positive and revered portrayal of women leads his quester to success and to the restoration of the realm. I start my argument by showing how both Malory and Wolfram show women before the Grail Quest is initiated and how these portrayals shape readers' expectations about female characters to come. I then go into detail about Parzival's crucial, female-centered quests that take place before he may embark on the Holy Grail Quest, and how, conversely, Malory favors questers who have avoided women before the start of his Grail Quest. Next, I analyze the role of women as guides in both Grail Quests. I conclude my paper by demonstrating how the roles the female guides play match the ending of each story and, finally, bring in supplemental historical context that shows why each author may have written optimistically or pessimistically.

When Chrétien de Troyes wrote *Perceval, the Story of the Grail* for his patron Philip, Count of Flanders, in late twelfth century France, he left it unfinished due to his own death or that of his commissioner. Although Chrétien himself claims to only be "put[ting] into rhyme" the story "from the book the count gave him" his tale is accepted to be the first recorded story about the Quest for the Holy Grail (340). The abrupt and unresolved ending to the richly symbolic and highly mystical tale attracted many authors, over the centuries and across countries, to the idea of completing Chrétien's work. Even to this day, modern filmmakers and novelists adapt his plot to their own telling—rearranging timelines, family trees, and time

periods as they do so. From the very base of the story that Chrétien gave us, diverged multiple versions of the Grail Legend, some so different that it is difficult to find similarities between them.

One of the adaptations that is, perhaps, most similar to the original is the epic poem *Parzival*, composed in the thirteenth century by German knight and poet Wolfram von Eschenbach. Wolfram's version includes most of Chrétien's original with only minor changes, while contextualizing the protagonist's journey with a history of his parentage, showing a positive view of women, and completing the tale with a happy ending. Another medieval telling is Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte*

*D'Arthur*, written in fifteenth century England. Malory's multi-book series is comprised of his retellings of the various episodic tales of King Arthur, the knights of the Round Table, and eventually the Quest of the Holy Grail, which he gathered from various French and English sources and compiled into a chronological narrative. Though most of the stories in *Le Morte* are unoriginal to Malory, the book stands as the most popular representation of the Vulgate Cycle, or Lancelot-Grail Cycle, probably due to his cohesion of so many Arthurian stories. Malory's version of the Grail Quest is also vastly different from Chrétien's original—Malory has all of the knights of the Round Table attempt to find the Grail; portrays women as conniving and evil; includes the Vulgate Cycle hero, Galahad, to receive the Holy Grail; and essentially moves the original hero, Perceval, to second place in achieving the Quest and becoming Grail King.

Wolfram's and Malory's reiterations of the Holy Grail Quest represent the two major traditions of the Grail Legend that come close to polar opposites in their mode of storytelling. Where Wolfram is friendly and humorous in tone, Malory is serious and to the point; where Wolfram's plot is hopeful, bright, and ends happily, Malory's is full of darkness and doom with an ending to match. These two writers also lie in striking opposition to each other in their treatment of female characters. From the start of his books, Malory depicts most women as conniving and self-centered; he uses women in the Grail Quest as temptresses who attempt to distract the questers from their goal. Contrastingly, Wolfram sympathizes with and reveres his female characters from the beginning of *Parzival*, even writing women to be the main source of guidance Parzival receives in his Quest. The treatment of these women matches the tone of each story: Malory's evil characterization of women matching the darker storytelling and doomed ending of *Le Morte D'Arthur* and

Wolfram's equal treatment of women with men matching his friendly tone and optimistic ending in *Parzival*. Despite the differences in Malory's and Wolfram's treatment of their female characters, however, their functions in the Grail Quest are surprisingly similar in that they all lead the questers and test them on their readiness to achieve the Holy Grail; upon a close inspection of the functions of these guiding women in both tales, Malory's negative portrayal of women leads the questers to remove the Grail from Briton rather than secure it, whereas Wolfram's positive and revered portrayal of women leads his quester to success and to restoration of the realm. For the purpose of my argument, I will be discussing Malory first in each issue, as his tradition of the Grail Quest is more widely known. After I discuss Malory's pessimistic version of the Quest, I will move to compare it to Wolfram's positive mode of storytelling.

## Introductions to Female Characters Before the Initiation of the Grail Quest

Before Malory turns his story to the spiritual world of the Grail Quest, he explores the tales of several men in the Arthurian world, many of whom are antagonized by women. In these narratives, readers learn that most Arthurian women are self serving and seem to enjoy the act of controlling men. An early example of this female antagonism occurs in a chapter about Merlin, the great and powerful sorcerer who serves as the esteemed advisor of King Arthur and of his father, Uther Pendragon, before him. Malory describes, in his blunt chapter title, "How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the Ladies of the Lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and died" (1:117). In this chapter, we read how Merlin teaches Nimue, a lady of the lake, everything he knows in the realm of magic

and that Nimue even “made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her” (1:117-8). Once she learns everything she can and grows tired of Merlin’s romantic advances, she tricks him into going into a cave where she buries him under a rock and leaves him to die. What makes this passage even more intriguing is that Merlin has the ability to predict the future and is well aware that this woman will be his death; he even tells Arthur “that he should miss him, ‘Yet had ye lever than all your lands to have me again’” to which the king responds, “‘since ye know of your adventure, purvey for it, and put away by your crafts that misadventure.’” Merlin ends the conversation by simply stating, “‘Nay...it will not be’” (1:117). If the greatest sorcerer in the realm cannot say no to a woman’s self-serving ways, how can any other man hope to do better? Nimue serves as a strong example as one of the first antagonistic women in Malory because of her ability to trick the great Merlin into first teaching her his skills and then killing him when his purpose has been served. She is but one of many who shape and prime the reader’s view on what to expect from Malory’s women.

Elaine is another example of a woman who takes advantage of a man, but deciding whether her role is positive or negative is much more confusing. After all, it is Elaine who is mother to the prophesied greatest knight in the world, Galahad, but she is so only through deception. It is her father, King Pellès, who would “have found the mean to have had Sir Launcelot to have lain by his daughter... The king knew well that Sir Launcelot should get a child upon his daughter... by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Grail would be achieved” (Malory 2:191). It is this prophesy that leads him to devise a plan with an enchantress to trick Launcelot into sleeping with Elaine, because they know he wouldn’t do so on his own, for most of the realm knows that he only loves Queen Guenever. In a scene similar to King

Arthur’s own deceptive conception, Launcelot gets a child upon Elaine while she is enchanted to look like his love, Queen Guenever. When they awake and the enchantment has fallen, Launcelot says, “‘now I am shamed... Thou traitoress, what art thou that I have lain by all night? Thou shalt die right here on my hands’” (2:192). Launcelot feels so angry and shocked by this cruel trick that he threatens to kill Elaine. She is saved from Launcelot’s sword only because she informs him of the prophesied son in her womb, and even pushes the blame on her father’s orders, as she says, “‘I have obeyed me unto the prophecy that my father told me. And by his commandment to fulfill this prophecy I have given the greatest riches and the fairest flower that ever I had’” (2:293). Here, Elaine seems to tell Launcelot that they have both lost something important, Elaine her virginity and Launcelot his true loyalty to the Queen. However, Elaine being aware of the trick while Launcelot was not somewhat negates her claim, and the fact that she uses the same enchantment to deceive him again, after Galahad is born, implies that she does not regret her act. Elaine is indeed a confusing example of the pre-Grail women, for without her cruel act, the savior Galahad would never have been born. In Malory’s tale, Elaine is very different from Wolfram’s hero’s mother, who, as I discuss later, is saintly in all ways.

Moving on to a more central and prominent antagonistic woman in *Le Morte*, we come to Morgan le Fay, Arthur’s sister who wreaks havoc upon the courtly world. Elizabeth Sklar describes Malory’s Morgan le Fay as “an essentially sociopathic personality, respecting no boundaries and acknowledging no rules save those dictated by her own ambitions, envy and lust” (27-8), and she is just so. After a mere passing mention of her name in attendance at Arthur and Guenever’s wedding early on in the series, readers are more formally introduced to her in the fourth book, in which she single-handedly attempts to slay her husband King

Uriens and, shortly afterwards, King Arthur— much to his surprise (1:137-43). What's more, Malory never specifically or directly cites a reason for Morgan's murderous ways, besides the extremely simple comment, "because [Arthur] is most of worship and of prowess of any of her blood"; so readers must simply assume that her sudden bloodlust comes from a desire to rule without her husband, and in Arthur's stead (1:134). The lack of depth that Malory ascribes to his major antagonist makes her and her storyline somewhat one-dimensional; she seems to be evil mostly for evil's sake.

Malory's superficial writing of Morgan le Fay's character is then furthered in her later reappearance where she is no longer interested in her ploy against her brother, and instead is intent on toying with Malory's favorite knight, Launcelot. In her reappearance, she and three other queens drug and kidnap Launcelot and, in unison, make their proposition: "I am Queen Morgan le Fay, queen of the land of Gore, and here is the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of Eastland, and the Queen of the Out Isles; now choose one of us which thou wilt have to thy paramour, for thou mayest not choose or else in this prison to die" (1:198). Again, Malory presents his audience with a strange and similarly unexplained motive of his female antagonist. Readers can only guess at the cause of this scheme orchestrated by Morgan, be it her own lust for Launcelot or perhaps her fixation with dismantling Arthur's court with the chance of exposing Launcelot and Guenever's affair. Through these episodes, it is evident that Sklar describes Morgan perfectly in calling her "sociopathic" because Malory refuses to distinctly define her purpose as a villain. Additionally, it is important to note that the rest of the conflict in Malory's Arthurian world mostly consists of internal conflict amongst the knights of the Round Table, so one would hope that the primary physical opponent to Arthur's court would be given more purpose and cause for their courtly

opposition; however, this is obviously not the case with Morgan. With Malory's primary physical antagonist to Arthur's court being a woman, and one without a clear motive, readers must infer that the true enemy of the knights *is* women, and bring this understanding to an analysis of the rest of the female characters introduced. Malory's preliminary characterization of women in the pre-Grail world sets the stage for how his female characters should be viewed within the Grail Quest to come.

Wolfram's positive view of his female characters in *Parzival*— and of women in general— comes as a striking contrast to Malory's negative characterization; where Malory uses antagonistic ladies to prime his readers with the expectation of female hostility, Wolfram shows well-intentioned women and even praises them for their honorable traits, allowing readers to have high expectations for them as the story progresses toward the Grail Quest. Early on in his tale Wolfram shows great admiration for women and the qualities they possess, often making direct and specific praises to the sex. For example, he says, "If anyone now speaks better of women, then truly I have no objection. I would be glad to hear their joy bruited wide," and shortly afterward, "Womankind, your true order keeps and always has kept company with loyalty" (49-50). Wolfram is clearly anything but shy in his appreciation for and admiration of women and even invites others to praise them alongside him— very different from Malory's implied, but never directly stated, mistrust of women.

After this general statement of praise, Wolfram moves on to describe Parzival's mother, Herzeloide: "there are very few now alive who, at a young age, would abandon the earth's wealth for the sake of Heaven's fame... Mighty Lady Herzeloide became a stranger to her three lands; she bore joy's dearth's burden. Falsity disappeared from her" (50). Wolfram sees Herzeloide as the embodiment of womanly perfection in her

selflessness in raising Parzival away from the courtly world. He notes that she did this out of pure love for him and to protect him from the tragic death that his father came to because of his knightly duties. As Marion Gibbs explains, “[Wolfram] says explicitly that [Herzeloyde] will be spared the pains of hell, suggesting, it seems clear, that the intermediate state of Purgatory is unnecessary for this woman, who has sacrificed so much in life and has proved herself so perfect in human virtues” (38). Wolfram’s depiction of Herzeloyde’s perfection sets a high precedence for the women to come in his narrative, and certainly also for her son Parzival, whom she tries so hard to protect from the dangers of the world. In Wolfram’s tale where feminine goodness and charity act as the pillars of morality and salvation, Herzeloyde can have none of the moral ambiguity that Malory gives Elaine. If Parzival is to be Wolfram’s true spiritual and chivalric hero, his mother could only be a pure and perfect woman. Parzival will inherit these traits of self-sacrifice and humility from his mother, but it is evident from the beginnings of his journey that he must come to a deeper understanding of the value of women before he is ready to become a man and knight, let alone the Grail King.

In the first section of Parzival’s journey, Wolfram gives Parzival two guides who help to show the feminine nature of the quest on which he about to embark. Parzival’s first teacher is his mother; when Parzival departs from Herzeloyde, she gives him advice for his travels as well as council regarding women. In words similar to Chrétien’s original telling, Herzeloyde instructs Parzival: ““whenever you may win a good woman’s ring and her greeting, take them— they will cure you of sorrow. You must hasten towards her kiss and grasp her firmly in your embrace— that will bring good fortune and high spirits, provided she is chaste and worthy”” (55). Though the council is given with good intentions and would

indeed be sound advice for most, Parzival’s ignorance and misinterpretation of her words leads him to folly. Upon his first encounter with a lady, Jeschute, he promptly forces a kiss upon her while squeezing her tightly to himself; he then proceeds to steal her ring and her brooch before leaving her “dishonoured” for her husband, Orilus, to find (56-7). Parzival’s early misadventures may at first seem to point out flaws in Herzeloyde and her way of raising him; indeed G. Richard Dimler calls her advice “primitive” (129), but upon closer interpretation it is obvious that her advice in itself is sound, and only taken out of context by Parzival’s extreme ignorance. As Dimler also argues, Parzival’s sin and mistreatment of Lady Jeschute are rooted in his “almost blind adherence to his mother’s teaching” (128). Though he was given good advice, following it without also interpreting his situation leads Parzival to folly. As Wolfram shows us throughout his tale, it is crucial to Parzival’s journey that he not only follows the advice of his guides and teachers, but that he must also achieve a complete understanding of what they mean. Thus, later on in the story, Parzival is able to recognize his mistakes with Jeschute and fix them, just as he is also able to follow his mother’s advice to its true meaning with his wife.

Parzival’s second guide is a man, old knight Gurnemanz, whose instruction in chivalry seems sound and wise, but leads Parzival to his initial failure with the Grail. Although Parzival gains some knightly insight from his instruction with Gurnemanz, his first encounter with the Grail Castle proves that he needs more than just chivalric teaching to fulfil his spiritual destiny. Because of Parzival’s blind adherence to Gurnemanz’s advice to “not ask many questions” (73), he fails to ask the pivotal question that would part the current Grail King from his suffering and complete the Grail Quest. Gurnemanz and his council ultimately prove to be more damaging to Parzival’s quest and the healing of the realm,

because they inadvertently make him fail the initial test of the Grail, forcing him to search for it in futility for years to come. What's more, Parzival's innate curiosity and habit of asking questions— that Gurnemanz finds disagreeable— were traits directly related to his mother's way of raising him. Had Parzival come to the Grail straight from his innocent upbringing and his mother's advice, without hearing Gurnemanz's council, he surely would have asked the healing question and solved the problems of the realm. Thus Wolfram reveals that though Gurnemanz's masculine advice would be helpful for a chivalric quest, it is damaging and destructive to Parzival's female-centric journey.

In order for Parzival to move on to his spiritual quest for the Grail, Wolfram has him embark on interwoven quests involving saving women from abusive and villainous men to emphasize that he must first right his wrongs with and understand women to become a man and a knight. These women are notably different from Malory's vindictive and deceitful female characters who abused men: Wolfram's women are each depicted as pure of heart and innocent of any wrong. Although Parzival must make right his wrongs against three different women—Jeschute, Cunneware, and Condwiramurs—the way that Wolfram interweaves Parzival's encounters with them aligns them as being all part of the same quest toward Parzival's maturation. Shortly after his first rude encounter with Jeschute and before he meets Gurnemanz, Parzival makes his way to Arthur's court where he witnesses Arthur's seneschal, Kay, beat the lady Cunneware because she has laughed at Parzival. It seems to be a strange scene, but Cunneware was prophesied to never laugh “unless she were to see that man who had won or was to win the highest prize” (Wolfram 65), similar to Chrétien's original. Because Parzival feels as though Kay beat the lady on his account, he feels responsible for her suffering. He exclaims, “A knight so

far forgot himself by me that he beat the damsel because she was moved to laugh on my account. Her woeful words still trouble me. They don't touch any outer edge of my heart, but that lady's pain resides by rights in its very midst” (68). For the first time, Parzival realizes the consequences of his actions and, even though he has not directly caused them, he still feels deep remorse for Lady Cunneware's pain and leaves court to try to avenge her. Parzival also seems to take responsibility for the lady's beating because no one else in the court attempts to bring Kay's wrong to justice. Despite his status as a socially-impaired fool, at this point in his story he seems to know better about the proper treatment of ladies than the entire Round Table. In his essay discussing “the socially integrative function of transgression” in *Parzival*, Will Hasty argues that “transgression has revealed itself, not simply as the result of a deficiency within Parzival, but as a deficiency in court society” (368). Perhaps because of Parzival's innocent upbringing and because he was raised solely by his mother, he can recognize the injustice toward women in courtly society. Parzival, an outsider to the norms of court, can act as a proper judge to the mistreatment of women and decide to act and change the wrongs he sees rather than immediately join the imperfect world of the Round Table. Lady Cunneware pushes Parzival to his first step in maturation by motivating him to leave the court until she is avenged. Not only is Parzival not ready to be a knight until he truly understands women, but the Round Table is not ready to receive him until certain ladies are given justice. In Arthur's world, where knights are bound to the code of chivalry which demands the protection of women, Parzival is the first to see that this code is not being properly observed.

Parzival next encounters Queen Condwiramurs, whose people are suffering as her unwanted suitor, Clamide, ravages her kingdom to provoke her into marrying him. Of course, in Parzival's new journey to

restore the rights of women, he consents that Condwiramurs “shall be defended by [his] hand, as far as [he] proves capable” (83). In his protection of Condwiramurs, Parzival consequently also does service to Cunneware. As he defeats first Clamide’s seneschal, Kingrun, and afterward Clamide himself, he sends them both away with the instructions to, “take [their] knightly oath of surrender from this plain to the land of Brittany, to a maiden who for my sake suffered what she should not have suffered, if justice were acknowledged. And tell her, whatever happens to me, she will never see me happy until I avenge her by piercing shields” (85). Thus, Parzival both frees Condwiramurs of her oppressors by defeating the two men and acts in the favor of giving Cunneware justice by having them surrender to her. Parzival’s brave acts toward the protection of women are then acknowledged by Wolfram’s description of him as “flawless” and rewarded by his marriage with Condwiramurs, whose love is described as true and pure, and not simply an arrangement because of her defeated suitor.

After Parzival and Condwiramurs have settled into their marriage, Parzival leaves to check on his mother and to seek adventure, but not without first receiving permission from his wife (94-5). During his time away, he encounters Jeschute for a second time, though she is now starved and dressed in rags, a punishment from her husband after Parzival’s first encounter with her. Parzival acknowledges that “that disgrace he took upon himself as his responsibility” and wishes to help the innocent lady back into her husband’s favor (111). To prove her innocence, Parzival defeats her husband in combat, makes him vow to forgive Jeschute and surrender to Lady Cunneware at Arthur’s court, and then swears on a holy relic that Jeschute is innocent of her assumed transgression. As Gibbs compares this scene to the original source, she says, “although Chrétien also has two encounters with his Jeschute-figure,

there is less idea in *Le Conte del Graal* of crime and atonement... for Wolfram, the incident has considerable significance, beyond that of his source” (184). Although Jeschute herself is not an active guide for Parzival’s maturation, her role as the first victim of his ignorant transgressions is vital to his path to atonement and worldly learning. In order to move forward in his journey, Parzival needs to make amends for an injustice to a woman that he himself has caused, though unknowingly. Now, with Parzival pardoned for his first transgression against a woman, with another servant sent to Cunneware, and with Arthur’s court close at hand, Wolfram prepares Parzival for his next step in maturation—bringing the man who had beaten Cunneware, Kay, to justice and joining the knights of the Round Table.

As Jeschute and Orilus make their way to Arthur’s nearby encampment, Parzival refuses to join them because of his previous reservations about the court’s treatment of Lady Cunneware. He remains nearby, however, where he is transfixed by the sight of three drops of blood on the snow, which hold his attention and put him in a hypnotized state because the image reminds him of his wife’s white face and red cheeks. Wolfram describes him in this scene as “unconscious,” “asleep,” and explains that the likeness of Condwiramurs “plucked his wits from him” (119). In this dreamy state, Parzival is approached by a few of Arthur’s men who seek to bring him into Arthur’s service; without conscious awareness, Parzival bests them all in combat, never breaking from the vision of his beloved wife. It is not until Gawan approaches Parzival and covers the drops of blood with a scarf that Parzival regains his wits; Gawan then asks Parzival himself to join the company of Arthur’s court. Again, Parzival refuses: “I cannot with honour see him, nor the Queen. I must first avenge a beating, because of which I have ever since ridden with regret” (128). Gawan then points out that Parzival without knowing it, has broken Kay’s arm and leg;

with Lady Cunneware now “ungently avenged” Parzival joins the courtly society without hesitation (128). As Parzival moves through his pre-Grail quest of maturity, he also fixes the wrongs that he has seen in society by fighting against the injustices women faced. He remains as an outsider to courtly encounters until he resolves the issues that he observes, first in his defeat of Condwiramurs’ ill-intentioned suitor, next with his restoration of Jeschute’s honor, and last with his revenge for Cunneware’s unjust beating. It is no surprise that it is Condwiramur’s image in the snow that holds Parzival near Arthur’s court so that he may complete his first quest, as thoughts of her will act as his motivation along the rest of his journey. Parzival, now wiser than when he was given his first piece of advice from his mother and his subsequent teachings in chivalry from Gurnemanz, is able to see the error in other knights’ following of chivalric code, address them, and fix them himself. From these female-centered lessons and quests, Parzival has overcome his blind adherence to the societal codes presented to him and made them align with what is right and just. Now that Parzival has given justice to Lady Cunneware, he feels that the Round Table is now improved and that he is ready to join their company. Wolfram signifies the ending of Parzival’s quest toward maturity by first granting him a marriage with Condwiramurs and then making him a true knight of the Round Table. Now that Parzival has achieved some worldly wisdom from the women who guided his journey, he is fully able to participate in the larger task at hand: achieving the Holy Grail.

## Female Forces Within the Grail Quest

Juxtaposed to the significance that Wolfram places upon the woman-centered quests Parzival must complete before participating in the Grail Quest, Malory’s lack of positive woman-centered quests in *Le*

*Morte* becomes more pronounced. Although Malory does include Percival’s sister in the Grail Quest and gives her an important and positive role in guiding the questers, her part is diminished by the fact that Malory refuses to give her a name, only referring to her as Percival’s sister or gentlewoman, and that he has her die before the Quest is complete. Because she provides the background information surrounding the Grail legend for the questers, and in turn for the readers, but perishes soon after this wisdom is provided, she seems more like a plot device rather than as a guiding character. As I made evident earlier, Malory’s treatment of women before the realm of the Grail Quest is exceptionally negative—so his quests involving women do not usually portray them as helpful guides or positive forces of love and motivation, as they are in *Parzival*. What’s more, Malory’s questers—Galahad, Percival and Bors—do their best to avoid relationships with women before and during the Grail Quest, and are viewed as purer for it and thus rewarded by God. Directly opposite from Wolfram, who shows Parzival freeing women from crimes committed by men, Malory most commonly depicts men as the victims of female cruelty.

Malory’s most prominent depiction of a romantic relationship, that between Launcelot and Guenever, is tainted by the fact that it is adulterous and treasonous, as Guenever is the wife and Queen of King Arthur. Their relationship is also shown to be unhealthy due to the controlling aspects that Guenever exhibits when she presumes that Launcelot has taken another lover, despite her own marital status. For example, when she discovers that Launcelot has a child with Elaine, “Queen Guenever was wroth, and gave many rebukes to Sir Launcelot, and called him a false knight” (2:199) and, later, when she finds him tricked into bed by Elaine, again, “the queen was nigh out of her wit, and then she writhed and weltered as a mad woman” (2:202). Indeed, Guenever’s reactions to Launcelot’s affairs are dramatic,

considering that their own relationship is adulterous and could result in both of their executions if it were discovered. Malory depicts a psychotic and controlling adulterer as his primary female lover, completely devoid of any logical reasoning as is evident in her angry reactions to Launcelot's accidental affair. Despite these obvious problems with Guenever's psyche, Launcelot remains as loyal as he can to her, denying other female suitors and only faltering when Elaine tempts him while she is disguised as Guenever. When Launcelot encounters Guenever's rage at his accidental unfaithfulness, he reacts by fainting, waking and jumping out of a window, and disappearing into the wilderness for two years (2:202). Guenever can only bring Launcelot sorrow, as his love for her is pure but can never come to fruition. This central, one sided, and unhealthy relationship has no parallel in Wolfram, where women act as logical and positive forces and the few malignant characters are men.

It is this relationship that proves to be the catalyst of the Grail Quest itself, the reason God puts judgement upon the Round Table, and why Launcelot can no longer be deemed "the best knight of the world" (2:245). In her adulterous role as the primary motivation for the Grail Quest to begin, Guenever acts as the first negative female guide for the Quest. Because of her affair with Launcelot and her infidelity to Arthur, the Queen is the negative force that pushes the Quest into existence, opposite from Wolfram's positive female force that initiates his. Her acts of treason against Arthur and her control over Launcelot become the main source of sin that God sees in Logres, thus needing the spiritual cleansing of the Grail. Again, as with Morgan le Fay, Malory places a woman as a main opposing force to the knights of the Round Table. Indeed, the hermit Nacien even sends word before the knights embark on their Quest that "none in this quest lead lady nor gentlewoman with him, for it is not to do in so high a service as

they labour in'" (2:249). Despite God's invitation to the entire Round Table to join the search for the Holy Grail that would save the realm from its current state of corruption, only the knights who reject women are able to participate in the Quest, which remains consistent with the fact that the most significant form of corruption in the court is the adulterous and treasonous relationship between the Queen and the (former) best knight. During Launcelot's attempt to join the Quest, he is the first to witness a miracle of the Grail but cannot go near it because "he was so overtaken with sin" (2:269). Thus, only pure knights may attempt to achieve the Holy Grail; Malory leaves Guenever to blame for Launcelot's inability to participate in the Quest, as he has committed no other sins besides.

In the same way that Malory excludes Launcelot from the Quest because of his sinful attachment to Guenever, he allows his chaste questers to achieve the Grail in accordance to their history with and the degree to which they are tempted by women. These women serve as pessimistic guides within the Grail Quest; Malory inserts them to test the questers in their purity and readiness to achieve the Grail, and though they act as negative forces, they, nonetheless, serve as the primary guides of the questers to their goal.

Malory first depicts Percival as he embarks on his Quest for the Grail. Percival's temptress promises him that she will tell him where she saw another quester, Galahad, so long as Percival "ensure[s] [her] by the faith that [he] owe unto knighthood that [he] shall do [her] will'" (Malory 2:287). Percival's excitement for joining the good knight in their Quest makes him agree quickly to her proposition of servitude. Soon after, the lady proffers sex to him, Percival readily agrees, and comes close to losing his virginity until his sword catches his eye and its shape reminds him of the crucifix which makes him "bethought him on his knighthood and his promise made toforehand

unto the good man” (2:289). Though the lady is later revealed to be the devil himself, his form as a woman tests the purity of Percival’s faith and chastity. This episode causes Percival great sorrow, to the point where he wounds his own thigh, a symbolic castration, in repentance for coming so close to failing God and his Quest. However, in his ultimate and timely denial of the lady and his praise to God for helping him protect his virginity, Percival has proven himself worthy of continuing on the Grail Quest. After this final test by his negative female guide, Percival embarks on the spiritual ship that marks the end of his need to be tested and his journey to the Grail.

Bors begins the Quest not as a virgin as Percival and Galahad, but with a deep fear of sex and desire because he strayed once in his chastity years ago and had fathered an illegitimate son. He is different from Launcelot because at the start of the Quest, he had already repented for his past sin and deeply regretted it. Malory explains Bors’s chastity in a vision about the Grail questers that a hermit interprets for Gawain. He saw one hundred and fifty bulls, which were all black except for three white ones. The hermit explains that

“by the bulls is to understand the fellowship of the Round Table, which for their sin and their wickedness be black... and the three bulls which were white save only one that was spotted: and two white betokenen Sir Galahad and Sir Percival, for they be maidens clean and without spot; and the third that had a spot signifieth Sir Bors de Ganis, which trespassed but once in his virginity, but sithen he kept himself so well in chastity that all is forgiven him and his misdeed.” (2:306)

By having only the chaste knights be able to achieve the Holy Grail, Malory directly equates the Round Table Knights’ relationships to women with their overall worth. Those who avoid or repent for their relationships with women are then raised above the other knights, who are seen as

sinful and with no hope of salvation, unless they too truly repent for these relations. Malory essentially considers Bors a virgin alongside Percival and Galahad because of his repentance and chastity, but not as pure as the true virgins. From this vision, readers learn that it is the absence of sex that allows the questers to eventually receive the Holy Grail, opposite from the crucial presence of womanly love that moves Parzival to his Quest in Wolfram.

Bors’s most prominent Quest guide takes the form of a lady who wishes for him to sleep with her. Upon his refusal to break his chastity, the lady threatens that she “shall die for [his] love” and her twelve lady attendants beg him to “suffer my lady to have her will, and if ye do not we must suffer death with our lady, for to fall down off this high tower, and if ye suffer us thus to die for so little a thing all ladies and gentlewomen will say of you dishonour” (2:319-20). Here, Bors faces the responsibility for thirteen suicides and, as the ladies make note, eternal infamy for not accepting her simple proposal. This decision is a difficult one for Bors, whose chastity remains important to him and is instrumental in his participation in the Grail Quest, but his honor and the protection of the lives of innocent women are important to his duty as a knight. This rather extreme test against his chastity is designed for him to test his purity and readiness to achieve the Holy Grail. Bors passes the test when he decides to let them jump; in Malory’s world of evil women and sanctified virginity, a knight is rewarded for choosing chastity over the lives of thirteen women. Though they are later revealed to be devils in the guise of women, Bors has wholeheartedly believed that he let the women die to protect his own virtue. Not only does Malory’s Quest show that sexual relations with women must be avoided by questers at all costs, but that female lives should be disregarded for the sake of male virginity. Though Bors is horrified by his own actions and seeks a holy man to confess

to immediately, his action against women proves to be the right one and brings him one step closer to achieving the Holy Grail, as he soon after joins Percival on the ship guided by faith.

Finally, Malory tells of how Galahad enters the ship with Percival and Bors. Rather than being given a test of chastity, Galahad is simply led to the ship by a maiden gentlewoman, Percival's sister, who promises that she "shall show [him] within these three days the highest adventure that ever any knight saw" (2:330). And when the three chaste knights and maiden meet on the ship, "they told every each other... of their great temptations" but Galahad has no such story to tell (2:331). As Megan Arkenburg explains, "Galahad's virginity is conspicuous within Malory's text because it manifests itself not as the result of moral virtue but as a constitutive *absence* of sexual desire. This absence differentiates Galahad from all other Malorian virgins, including Perceval, whose virginity is threatened by sexual temptation" (Arkenburg 3, original emphasis). Galahad's identity as the best knight is then equated with his asexual identity; he is viewed as purer than Bors and Percival for his complete lack of sexual desire, as is proven when he receives no tests by God to assess his chastity.

Throughout the concluding chapters involving the Quest, Galahad's superiority to the other knights is reiterated. When the knights reach the castle of the Maimed King Pellés, a broken sword is presented first to Bors, who cannot hold it, then to Percival, who also cannot hold it, and then to Galahad, who has the power, not only to hold the sword, but also to mend it as if it had never been broken (2:363). In the same fashion, the Maimed King welcomes Galahad as the one he has long desired to heal him, but does not acknowledge the other questers (2:364). Further, when Jesus himself comes out of a holy vessel during the service at the castle, he speaks only to Galahad in his instructions to remove the Grail from Logris and bring it to

the holy land, and it is only Galahad who may heal the Maimed King (2:366). When the knights finally reach Sarras, the holy land, it is Galahad who becomes king there and, after a year, asks God's permission to depart from his worldly body and have his soul join him in heaven (2:369-70). At his death, Percival becomes a hermit for a little over a year, with Bors "alway with him, but never changed he his secular clothing" (2:371). Percival and Bors have both come as far as Galahad and have repeatedly proved their chastity and faith, and Galahad's complete lack of desire for women seems to be the only trait that separates him from the other two. These three are the only knights of the Round Table able to deny women, and are rewarded equivalently in their receipt of the Grail. Galahad, being asexual, becomes the Grail King and shortly afterwards departs from the earthly realm; Percival, being a complete virgin, but not asexual, does not become the Grail King and dies a mortal (and non-mystical) death; Bors, chaste but not a true virgin, returns to the sinful land of Arthur once his fellow Grail knights have passed away. The ending of Malory's Quest and the way that the questers each receive the Holy Grail emphasizes the ways in which they are defined and judged by their relationships to women.

As Wolfram turns his tale to the spiritual realm of the Grail Quest, his female characters become more assertive in their roles as Parzival's guides as well as more directly the cause of his success, as opposed to Malory's women who actively act against the knights on their quest. Wolfram also noticeably give the characters he borrows from Chrétien more depth as he has Parzival revisit these key guides throughout the Quest, beyond where his source stopped his narrative. It is also worth noting that, in addition to the physical guides I will be discussing in this section, Wolfram makes it clear that thoughts of Parzival's wife motivate him throughout his quest. From Gawain's perspective we hear that Parzival

“suffers on account of the Grail, and yet also for love of [Condwiramurs]. Both are always in [his] thoughts” (164). Later, when talking with Trevrizent Parzival notes, “my highest anxiety concerns the Grail. Next comes my own wife” (197). Because he is separated from both the Grail and his wife, he constantly thinks of them; both thoughts motivate him toward the completion of his Quest. His own original failure to ask the healing question keeps him from returning to his wife until his Quest for the Grail is complete, similar to his refusal to join Arthur’s court until Cunneware has been properly avenged. When the Quest is complete, Parzival may finally rejoin his wife without feeling the guilt of leaving the realm in its wasteland state. In Wolfram it is obvious that the pure love of a woman is what holds the quester’s motivation in completing the Quest, rather than the absence of such that allows Malory’s questers to take the final step of their journey.

Parzival encounters two women, Sigune and Cundrie, who scorn him for his initial failure with the Grail, which endows him with the guilt necessary to start his Quest; the harsh words from these guides not only push him to begin his journey, but their repeated meetings give him the motivation to continue and finish it. Though the initial admonitions from these two ladies are indeed grating, they speak so out of pure concern for the devastated state of their realm and with the knowledge that Parzival might have thrown away his only chance at healing it. Because of the intention of their words and their help later on in the narrative, these women act as positive forces within Parzival’s journey. As with Parzival’s pre-Grail quests with Jeschute, Cunneware, and Condwiramurs, his meeting with Sigune and Cundrie are interwoven in ways that show their connectedness to each other and their instrumentality in the completion of the Grail Quest. Though Parzival’s encounters with these two women are similar, their individual functions within the Quest are unique and

show development of their character, opposite from Malory’s rather static characterization of his female antagonists.

I will start with my analysis of Sigune’s role as a guide because she appears first in Parzival’s narrative. Though Parzival meets Sigune in the beginning stages of his previous journey, where she introduces herself as his cousin and reveals to him his own name, her role in the Grail Quest becomes significant in their second meeting. When Sigune first realizes that Parzival has just left the Grail castle, she exclaims, “Let joyful tidings be heard— is peril averted? A blessing on you for this blissful journey” (Wolfram 106) because she assumes that Parzival has asked the healing question and restored the realm. Though her lover has recently perished, she breaks from her mourning here and reacts in pure joy at her hopeful assumption. So excited about the healing of the realm, she then tangentially gives Parzival more information about the castle, the Maimed King, and the sword given to him at the castle (106-7), showing her wisdom and knowledge as a guiding character. However, when Parzival reveals that he “did not ask the question,” her mood quickly changes back to that of the, now angered, “grief-laden maiden” (107). She immediately reproaches him: “Dishonoured, accursed man! You bore the venomous wolf’s fangs when gall took so young a root in your loyalty... You live, yet you are dead to bliss!” and when Parzival innocently suggests that he will atone for his mistake, she answers “there shall be no atonement for you!” (108). Her pure rage at his failure points further at her despair for the loss of hope that her realm will be healed, for in her wisdom she knows that those granted access to the Grail and its mysteries are not so easily accepted back.

After this severe chastisement, Sigune refuses to speak to Parzival and he leaves her in his newly grievous and distressed state, but as of yet he lacks the wisdom and proper guidance to amend his

mistake at the Grail castle. It is after this encounter with Sigune that Parzival then meets Jeschute for the second time, and is able to recompense her for his first ignorant mistake with her. Wolfram's pairing of the assumed unpardonable, but innocently committed, sin at the Grail castle with his next act of fixing his earlier mistake surely points hopefully to his chance of later completing the Grail Quest. As I have argued earlier, Parzival must complete these women-centered quests before he has the wisdom to fully embark on the Grail Quest; so although Sigune's words perturb him, it is not until after he avenges Jeschute and Cunneware that he may focus his attention on the Grail. After Parzival has proven himself by completing these tasks, Cundrie, the Grail messenger, appears to publicly reinstate Sigune's rebukes in front of Arthur's court for over a page of monologue. Cundrie completes her speech by crying sorrowful tears to which Wolfram explains, "her loyalty taught the maiden to lament her heart's regret to the full" (134). Though she is even more harsh than Sigune in her criticism of Parzival's failure, Wolfram still affirms that she too acts out of despair for her realm and the Maimed King, and as Gibbs notes, out of her personal disappointment in Parzival for his seeming lack of empathy for the Grail king and failing his noble parents (220-1). Gibbs goes further to assert that only after Cundrie's speech, "did he become conscious of his failure, and only a consciousness of failure could produce in him the humility which enabled him to strive towards success" (226). These harsh and public words force Parzival into his search for the Grail Quest, and also into an enmity toward God for causing him such grief (140).

Again, Parzival is left with the knowledge of his failure, but with no obvious means of resolution. This absence is not a lack in Wolfram's storytelling ability, but rather a demonstration of the nature of the Grail Quest. Though Parzival has many guides that instruct him on his journey, he

must come to an understanding of his Christianity and faith on his own to complete the Quest. As Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand argues, "Cundrie marks the beginning and end of Parzival's journey. But she does not show him the way. That task is left for Sigune" (Sterling-Hellenbrand 62). When Parzival encounters Sigune for the third time, they do not recognize each other at first. As with each of their meetings, they both seem to mature beyond recognition, Parzival in his wisdom and Sigune "from violent self-reproach to a state of passive acceptance of her burden, until she finds the way to God which leads through the desire to atone and the act of atonement" that makes her "a model of the path which Parzival is to follow" (Gibbs 120). Indeed, upon their third meeting, Sigune is in a peaceful acceptance of her husband's death and in pure devotion to her faith, when she tells Parzival, "let all my vengeance upon you, cousin, be renounced!" (Wolfram 186). And Parzival, who recognizes her change from mournful anger to peace, is able to compare his own angered grief and ask her for the "counsel" (186) for his journey. In Wolfram's tale, his hero is not the only one to develop and change, but his guides do as well, creating a model for Parzival to follow as well as showing their humanity. Though Sigune does not instruct him directly in matters of faith, Parzival's observation of her growth will eventually lead him to seek atonement for his enmity toward God with the hermit Trevrizent, the final step he must take before he may achieve the Grail. Again, it is important at this phase of the Quest that Parzival learns his faith through his own wisdom, so his observation of Sigune's atonement being the cure to her grief, without her direct statement of the fact, becomes instrumental in the final step of the Grail Quest. Before he comes to this realization, however, Sigune first points him in the direction of Cundrie, who he hopes will lead him to the Grail.

As Parzival follows Cundrie's path, he meets the unnamed daughters of a pilgrim who demonstrate the love that pure Christianity has to offer and who point him toward his final step in completing the Grail Quest. Parzival happens upon the pilgrim with his wife and daughters walking "confession's path" who proclaim their devotion to God and inform him that it is Good Friday (188). The pilgrim questions Parzival's wearing of armor and riding a horse on the holy day, and tells him, "if you are no heathen... ride on, on our trail. Not too far ahead of you resides a holy man. He will give you counsel, penance for your misdeed" and it is his daughters who interject, "what wrong do you wish to avenge, father?... Why don't you take him to where he can get warm?" (189). Here, Wolfram compares father and daughter in their way of faith. Where the father wishes for the man whom he deems a heathen for denouncing God to leave and repent on his own, his daughters wish to show him the compassion and love that they feel is their duty to their faith. Gibbs contends that "in their treatment of Parzival, they reveal that depth of human love which is both the beginning and the manifestation of true Christianity" (231). Wolfram uses the pilgrim's daughters to represent pure Christianity and kindness in their unconditional offer of hospitality toward Parzival. He, however, must leave them because he feels "unfit" to ride beside them while they walk barefoot, and because he does not love the God that they devote their lives to (190). As he rides away, he thinks more about their kindness and then asks his horse to "go as God chooses!" (191). It is the pure love of the pilgrim's daughters that gives him the hope to let his course be guided by faith. Here he comes to Trevrizent, where he understands that he must atone for his biggest sin of going against God and come to a deeper understanding of his faith, as Sigune had atoned for her anger surrounding her husband's death in order to

come to peace. With his atonement complete after being guided by the love of the pilgrims and the model of Sigune, Parzival is one step closer to finally being reunited with the Grail so that he may restore the realm.

Finally, Parzival is reunited with Cundrie, who greets him with an apology for her previous harsh words and praise for his finally coming to true faith. Now, her role as guide becomes more literal as she leads him to be reunited with the Grail now that he is ready to ask the healing question that would restore the realm. It was Cundrie who truly pushed Parzival into the humility that began his Quest, and with her connection to the Grail it seems only fitting that she be the final guide in it; Gibbs agrees that "[Cundrie's] reproaches were certainly the direct cause of his success... the part which she plays in his success is revealed unambiguously in the fact that she is the one who leads him to his kingdom" (226). Parzival's Quest begins and ends with the guidance of Cundrie, who pressures him to figure out how to rejoin the Grail on his own, while Sigune and the pilgrims show him the power and goodness of Christianity, and thoughts of his wife motivate him along the way. Wolfram's quester moves from each positive female force in his quest to learn more about himself and his faith; without their guidance he would never have been able to be reunited with the Grail and use it to restore the realm.

## The Final Effect of the Female Guides

Finally, it is the endings of Wolfram's and Malory's Quests that demonstrate the effect that these guiding women have on the attainment of the Grail and the restoration of Arthur's realm. In Malory's tale, although the knights achieve the Grail, they must remove it from Arthur's realm, which is too tainted by the sins of the Round Table, and transport it to Sarras. This ending presents a rather anticlimactic and

pessimistic resolution to the Quest that was intended to heal the realm. As Martin Shichtman states, “[Malory’s] Grail quest offers no real sense of closure. Having achieved the Grail, Galahad, the last member of the Grail family, departs from the world” (14). Additionally, the end of the Grail Quest is not where Malory concludes *Le Morte D’Arthur*; rather he continues to narrate the devastation and turmoil in Arthur’s court. In doing so, he starts the book following the conclusion of the Grail Quest by immediately proclaiming that “Sir Launcelot began to resort unto Queen Guenever again, and forgat the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest” (Malory 2:373). By inserting this line directly after the Grail Quest is completed, Malory reinstates the idea that the sinful realm was no longer worthy of the glory of the Grail, and further points at Guenever and Launcelot’s relationship to be the reason. Malory’s tale continues on once the Grail is removed to show the devastation and deaths within Arthur’s court as it tumbles further into its wasteland state. In the end, Malory’s negative depiction of women and his use of them as antagonistic forces that attempt to hinder the questers lead to a pessimistic ending for his Grail Quest and leave Arthur’s realm in its state of doomed devastation.

At the conclusion of *Parzival*, after the hero is led through his pre-Quest and Grail Quest journey by the guidance of positive female figures he is able to achieve the Holy Grail, heal the Maimed King, become the Grail King himself, and restore the realm from its wasteland and warring state. This event is also what concludes the narrative as a whole—the Grail is achieved, the land is restored, and the story ends happily. Wolfram’s positive characterization of women throughout Parzival’s journey leads Parzival on a successful and optimistic Quest in which he is able to finally heal the realm and take on the role of the Grail King in Britain. Without these female guides, the questers would never have been able to

achieve the Grail, for different reasons, but the outcome of and conclusion to either story shows that positive female guides result in a optimistic ending, while female guides used negatively result in a pessimistic resolution.

## Concluding Thoughts

It is impossible to ignore what may have affected the authors’ perspectives when they wrote their versions of the Grail Quest. To start, it is largely accepted by Malorian scholars that the Sir Thomas Malory who authored *Le Morte D’Arthur* wrote while in prison, and most likely on the accusation of rape. It is possible that Malory was projecting his self pity for his imprisonment in the way that he often writes men to be the victims of female abuse in his tales. Perhaps this role reversal helped Malory justify his crime and imprisonment for himself. Malory also wrote during the War of the Roses, a time of turmoil, confusion, and mistrust for British nobility, which may be reflected in his favoring of the darker Grail tradition and ending. On the other hand, not much is known about Wolfram von Eschenbach aside from what he tells us in his writing. Ursula Liebertz-Grün’s study of the socialization of German noblewomen as seen in the courtly literature during Wolfram’s time, then, becomes extremely useful in ascribing more meaning to what may have influenced the poet-knight’s writing. In her article, Liebertz-Grün uses courtly medieval German literature, including Wolfram’s other rather feminist tale, *Willehalm*, to demonstrate how German patriarchs of the time gave “open-minded theologians and other authors at their courts the opportunity to develop courtly romance... to depict models of noblewomen more in accord with the requirements of courtly society” (19). In other words, Wolfram wrote in a time when his audience would have been largely female and when a woman’s role in courtly society was changing in a way that granted her more

power, which became represented in literature. For obvious reasons, this aspect of time period probably affected Wolfram's outspoken positive portrayal of women. On another historical note, Wolfram wrote around the time of Teutonic Order in Germany, where knighthood and Christianity merged as German crusaders fought and converted in the Middle East. Although there is no evidence that Wolfram himself was involved with this Order, the sense of Christian nationalism felt within Germany may have influenced Wolfram's overall positive attitude throughout the epic, while his choice to adapt Chrétien's tale about a Christian knight may have been spurred from the Order's unification of knightly and Christian ideals.

## Works Cited

- Arkenburg, Megan. "A Mayde, and Last of Youre Blood": Galahad's Asexuality and Its Significance in *Le Morte Darthur*." *Arthuriana*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2014, pp. 3-22. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44697492.
- Chrétien de Troyes. *The Story of the Grail. The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*. Translated and edited by David Staines, Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 339-449.
- Dimler, G. Richard. "Parzival's Guilt: A Theological Interpretation." *Monatshefte*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1970, pp. 123-134. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30156409.
- Gibbs, Marion Elizabeth. *A Study of the Women Characters in the Works of Wolfram von Eschenbach*. MA Thesis, Bedford College, 1964. *ProQuest*, Oct. 8, 2018.
- Hasty, Will. "Beyond the Guilt Thesis: On the Socially Integrative Function of Transgression in Wolfram Von Eschenbach's *Parzival*." *The German Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 3, 1988, pp. 354-370. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/406438.
- Liebertz-Grün, Ursula. "Women and Power: On the Socialization of German Noblewomen 1150-1450." *Monatshefte*, vol. 82, no. 1, 1990, pp. 17-37. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30155220.
- Malory, Thomas. *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Vol. 1 & 2. London: Penguin, 1969.
- Shichtman, Martin B. "Percival's Sister: Genealogy, Virginité, and Blood." *Arthuriana*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1999, pp. 11-20. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27869448.
- Sklar, Elizabeth S. "Thoroughly Modern Morgan: Morgan le Fey in Twentieth-Century Popular Arthuriana." *Popular Arthurian Traditions*. Ed. Sally K. Slocum. Popular Press, 1992. 24-35.
- Sterling-Hellenbrand, Alexandra. "Women on the Edge in *Parzival*: a Study of the 'Grail Women.'" *Quondam Et Futurus*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1993, pp. 56-68. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27870235.
- Wolfram von Eschenbach. *Parzival and Titirel*. Translated by Cyril Edwards, Oxford University Press, 2006.