

Tales of Enchantment: Exploring the Evolution of the Enchantress Archetype

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The “enchantress” archetype is richly depicted throughout both historical and literary contexts, thus the archetype and its characters were also richly influenced and even remains influential in contemporary settings. The enchantresses—feminine figures with magical abilities and powers, such as witches, faeries, and sorceresses—are continually reimagined and reconstructed, reflecting an important truth about society’s deep desires, fears, or anxieties with each rebirth. For example, the Salem Witch Trials and the mass hysteria surrounding witches were both part of a product and reflection of the patriarchal society, religious oppression, and the Puritanical desire for conformity in 17th century Salem. However, witches have reemerged and been reimagined in popular media transcending both time and culture: being represented as beautiful, benevolent figures such as Glinda the Good Witch in L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, or as protagonists in *mahou shoujo* (“magical girl”) works, a popular subgenre of Japanese fantasy media. Recognizing my own fascination as part of the collective lasting fascination with the enchantress figure, I’m especially interested in examining the construction and deconstruction of the enchantress archetype and its parts—magic, femininity, and power—through understanding the evolution and literary history of the enchantress.

I dedicated eight weeks to a combination of qualitative research, reading relevant primary and secondary texts, and historical and field research, exploring historical sites, museums, and libraries. Intending to read primary and secondary sources on various representations of the enchantress figure, the beginning of my reading journey included *The Witches: Suspicion, Betrayal, and Hysteria in 1692 Salem* by Stacy Schiff and *The Hammer of Witches* by Christopher S. Mackay, the former a secondary text providing an intimate glimpse into the diverse narratives in the Salem Witch Trials, and the latter a 15th century primary text that was regarded as the standard handbook for detecting, engaging with, and expelling witches. Primary and secondary sources, such as *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Thomas Malory and *Romance of the Grail: The Magic and Mystery of Arthurian Myth* by Joseph Campbell, respectively, also provided valuable Arthurian and medieval depictions of enchantresses, such as Morgan le Fay and the Lady of the Lake. Beyond literature, I visited sites related to my research, especially the Salem Witch Trials, such as the current-day town of Salem, Massachusetts and its museums, the Salem Witch Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum.

I intend to develop my summer research project into a year-long senior honors thesis with great excitement and a hopeful heart, and I am deeply grateful to the Office of Student Fellowships and the Martha Reed Coles Summer Fellowship for this wonderful opportunity. Also, thank you so much to my faculty advisor and mentor Professor Solberg for all your guidance, humor, wisdom, and encouragement. My summer of research has been nothing short of magical.

Professor Emma Maggie Solberg

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