Analytical Psychology Approach to the Love-Hate Relationship between King Arthur and Morgan le Fay in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*

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"For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord."
(Song of Songs, 8:6)

Introduction

Accompanied by many fair ladies all in black hoods, Morgan le Fay appears on a little barge on the lake, into which, minutes before, the mortally wounded King Arthur had returned his sword. While the ladies receive him with great mourning, Morgan, Arthur's half-sister, cries: "Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold".[1]

The emotional reaction of the enchantress in Thomas Malory's famous narrative from c. 1470 is both surprising and problematic. Morgan seems to express sincere sorrow upon seeing her mortally wounded half-brother, a behavior that stands in complete opposition to her political determination to sabotage Arthur's kingship, as well as to the regicidal and fratricidal character she is most identified with in the course of this narrative.

The reference to Morgan's feelings, presumably even love, for Arthur is unique: Malory is the only medieval author setting the necessary conditions for the emotional union we find in the above-mentioned episode. Yet, despite Morgan's clearly expressed feelings, only few studies have entertained the possibility of love between the two. Likewise, the love-hate motif is rarely discussed in studies of Medieval Arthurian fiction. Moreover, some scholars doubt such a union could ever exist: Lucy Allan Paton, for example, suggests that the Fay who summoned Arthur to the other world is

[1] Malory, Sir Thomas, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, United States: Penguin Classics, 1969, p. 517.

not necessarily the fairy who won his love, but rather one of Morgan's enchantress, named Annowre.[2] Raymond Thompson, on the other hand, does attempt to examine the complex relationship between Morgan and Arthur as well as the possibility of love relationship between them.[3] Amid the many modern variations of the story portraying the problematic love motif, Thompson finds six novels that took "the final step of focusing upon the love between Morgan le Fay and Arthur", five of the six written in the 1980s.[4] Using different examples, Thompson emphasizes the fact that in most of the novels he examined, the spiritual union in the end is reinforced by a physical union between the lovers in their youthful form, thereby creating an unbreakable bond between them – a bond which culture, tradition and taboo cannot sever. This "Childhood bond" as Thompson terms it, causes the lovers to fall in love almost without realizing it. Thompson's study attributes the recent popularity of this new trend within the Arthurian tradition to several reasons: First, sympathy for Arthur who is betrayed by his wife and best friend; second, the growing interest among contemporary scholars in the occult and in pagan religions; third, the force of the medieval image depicting the king's last journey, "his head resting on the lap of Morgan le Fay"; and fourth, the fact that most of the modern Arthurian novel writers are woman who are, according to Thompson, particularly interested in the love story of Morgan and Arthur.[5] Thompson does not explain what is it exactly that those modern female writers have intuitively grasped in between the lines of the Arthurian saga.

I believe that the reasons for the recent popularity of this love story are deeply rooted in the long story told in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*.[6] My aim in the present paper is first, to closely examine the meaning of the emotional change presented in this final episode, and second, to provide a plausible

[2] Paton, Lucy Allan, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, New York: Burt Franklin, 1960, p. 21.

[3] Thompson, Raymond H., "The First and Last Love: Morgan le Fay and Arthur," in: *The Arthurian Revival: Essays on Form, Tradition, and Transformation*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff, New York: Garland, 1992, pp. 230–247.

[4] Thompson, "The First and Last Love", p. 232,

[5] Thompson, "The First and Last Love", p. 241–242.

[6] The Arthur and Morgan of the genres under consideration here are based primarily on her account and actions in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Scholars regard Malory's narrative as a "masterpiece", an acknowledged source, and a most self consciously "authentic" of popular culture's Arthuriana. Loomis, R. S., *The Development Of Arthurian Romance*, New York: The Norton Library, 1963, p. 92; Skaler, Elizabeth S., "Thoroughly Modern Morgan: Morgan le Fay Twentieth-Century Popular Arthuriana," in: *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Sally K. Slocum, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992, p. 25.

explanation for the puzzling ending of Arthur's long reign in the Malorean saga, where Morgan le Fay, the King's most bitter rival, is the one chosen to be his companion for eternity. My reading provides what to a modern audience is a psychological explanation of Morgan's ambiguous words to her deadly wounded brother. I would like to argue that the emotional turning point on the barge is but the tip of the iceberg, for a closer reading could reveal many preliminary signs preparing the reader for the possible union between these two extremely different characters. In fact, I would like to argue that in context, the scene creates both a conscious and unconscious link between love and death in a way that transcends the realm of popular fiction and enters the sphere of the collective subconscious and the ethics of the real, pertaining to the field of psychoanalytical study.

The unconscious and the Arthurian romance

When analyzing a fictional, literary text, psychoanalysis is not necessarily the first means of analysis which comes to mind. Surprisingly, however, the reverse is more common: in their attempt to clarify theoretical models, psychoanalysts often employ examples derived from culture and art. Freud, for instance, suggests that art, particularly its rich, verbal expression in literature and poetry, contain traces of the author's life of the soul, behavioral patterns and repressed personality traits. When analyzing Jansen's story *Gradiva*, Freud emphasizes this claim using an ancient Latin saying: *naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret* ['you may drive out nature with a pitchfork, but she will always return'].[7]

Carl Jung, who searched for the universals in texts, describes this matter using slightly different imagery, claiming that a poet's work turns into his destiny and determines his spiritual form. Literature, according to Jung, is "a living substance, a super personal process, the great dream of *mundus archetypus* ['archetypal world']."[8] In other words, Jung suggests it is not Goethe who creates Faustus, but Faustus who creates Goethe. Similarly, Jacques Lacan, too, believes that through art one may learn about

[7] Freud, Sigmund, *Art and Literature: Jansen's Gradiva, Leonardo de Vinch and Other Works*, transl. James Strachey, London: Penguin, 1985, p. 60.

[8] Jung C. G., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, transl. Richard and Clara Winston, London: Collins and Routledge & Kagan Paul, 1963, p. 197.

psychoanalysis, and claims that art, more than reflecting psychology, gives rise to it. [9]

For a psychoanalyst, the power of a literary work lies in its communicative potential, which overrides cultural defense mechanisms and allows for the exposure of repressed psychological layers, conveying them to both the individual and collective consciousness. Psychoanalysis, known as "the science of the unconscious" is a type of practical ethics dealing with the individual's desires (*désir*), resulting from a fundamental lack (*manqué*) in the person's neurotic structure. The psychological methods for treating mental problems refer to the subject as the subject of desire, striving to fill in for those parts of the patient's personality repressed or blocked for various reasons such as education, anxiety, tension, guilt, traumatic experience, lack of emotional stability and so forth. The underlying assumption of this analytical system is that a person is born into an existing language, composed of a series of interlinked signifiers, creating the effect of meaning. However, they generally do not describe the "Truth", except in a limited, often distorted way. The psychoanalyst, therefore, does not accept a person's verbal expression of feelings as a clear explanation for a certain behavior, but perceives such an expression as an encrypted code which needs to be decoded by uncovering the data and rearranging it. This complex process results in a surprising discovery of the subjective truth which has been repressed. In this manner, I find that the complex relationship between Arthur and Morgan should be viewed as a code to be decrypted.

Three prominent psychoanalysts have dealt with the ambivalence and complexity of the love-hate relationship: Freud, Lacan and Jung. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, defined love-hate relationship in terms of the representation by the opposites (reversal). He first discussed this phenomenon in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) stressing that: "The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictories is highly remarkable. It is simply disregarded. 'No' seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned… Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary, so that there is no way of deciding at first glance whether any element by its wishful contrary, and no way of deciding at a first glance whether any

[9] Lacan, Jacques, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (Seminar XI, 1964)*, transl. Alan Sheridan, London: Penguin, 1977.

element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream- thoughts as a positive or as a negative."[10]

The Freudian subconscious is manifested through a failure of speech, memory or action, when a person says one thing and means another – what is known as a Freudian slip of the tongue. The deep, inner meaning, says Freud, does exists in speech but only symbolically, and can be understood only through the mediation of an interpreter. Jacques Lacan, who put these psychoanalytical principles in Saussurian terms (langue/parole, signifier/signified, metaphor/metonymy), stresses the semblance (*semblant*) in love. Lacan, like Freud, claims that the love-hate dichotomy is not considered a real contrast in psychoanalysis, because on the subconscious level, it is only the intensity of the emotions that counts. Appropriately, Lacan terms one, *Lust Ich* (the field of lust) and the other, *Unlust Ich* (the field of un-lust). From a psychological point of view, it is not important whether the result is intense love or intense hate.[11]

Thanks to his analytical experience, Carl Gustav Jung views the love-hate contrast as part of a typological classification, defining different "types" in terms of polarity. On one side, we find the introverts – people who concentrate on themselves and direct their energy inwards, such as loners and daydreamers. On the other, we find the extroverts who tend to react towards the outside and value the outer world with the prestige and social interaction it offers. The Jungian method is more useful than those of his fellow psychoanalysts for it allows the reader to enter the symbolic sphere of the language as well as providing the basis for the construction of metaphors that may shed new light on the latent symbolism in Malory's narrative.

Opposites strive for balance

According to Jung, there is a feminine element in every man's consciousness and conversely, a masculine element in every woman's consciousness. In his essay *The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious* Jung identifies the feminine element as "*anima*". It is associated with women and characterized especially by sentimentality and emotionality. A man with a strong *anima* element will be inclined to over-emotionality. The *anima* inspires self-consciousness and contributes to the development of a "private life", Jung's

[10] Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, transl. James Strachey, New York, Basic Books inc, 1958, p. 318.

[11] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 191.

term for "intimacy".[12] The corresponding masculine element is called "*animus*", and is identified with a male character, i.e. with practicality and a directness of approach. In his essay, Jung suggests that in order to maintain a mental balance, people have unconsciously adopted characteristics taken from both the *anima* and the *animus*, so that in every "normal" person (men and women alike) there are both feminine and masculine elements. Therefore, he claims, a personality in which one of those elements is repressed might exhibit behavioral disorders in various levels of severity.[13] In my view, the contradictory behavioral patterns demonstrated by King Arthur and Morgan le Fay are actually characteristic, typical behavior patterns, which may be understood not only as suppressed sexual tension, but also as part of a symbolic structure of neurotic behavior, caused by extreme typological malfunctions.

Morgan le Fay is not considered a major character in Middle English literature, unlike the typical Arthurian characters such as Lancelot, Gawain and Merlin. It was suggested that Morgan's character received little attention due to her "deficiency in literary lineage".[14] Her name, points out Elizabeth Skaler, is seldom mentioned: "she is a woman with a past (in both senses of the word) but a woman without a history".[15] While in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* she appears relatively often, she is still mentioned only fifteen times in a plot comprising 1,000 pages – including references in which only her name is mentioned but she is not physically present. Nevertheless, her character traits and behavior towards Arthur and his men – especially the fear from her ability to wreak havoc on the patriarchal-social order – have made her the main enchantress of the narrative, and therefore play an important thematic role as a whole.

Malory's tale recounts how, immediately after marrying Igraine, King Uther Pendragon hurries to find alternative dwellings for Igraine's daughters from her previous marriage to the Duke of Cornwall. He manages to find suitable husbands for the older daughters, but young Morgan is sent to live in a monastery, where she is surrounded only by women until she comes of age and marries King Uriens. She is deprived of a Father figure, of balance, and of male support and protection; a situation that, according to

[12] Jung, Carl Gustav, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious," in: *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, transl. R. F. C. Hull, New York: Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 193. Compare with the architypical Mother figure in Robert Graves' *The white Goddess: A historical grammar of Poetic myth*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux [1948] 1982, pp. 383-408.

[13] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", pp. 188–211.

[14] Skaler, "Thoroughly Modern Morgan", p. 24.

[15] Skaler, "Thoroughly Modern Morgan", p. 30.

Jung, might lead to the development of a personality suffering from "*neglected persona*".[16] The "persona" is a mask, an artificial personality that an individual adopts by extroverting certain character traits for the purpose of creating a certain impression. In order to please society, a person hides his or her individual nature and takes on a role – a "game" ruled by the collective soul, creating what Jung see as "a mask of the collective psyche".[17] Jung explains that people who suffer from neglected persona are blind to the world, and especially: "[...] if they are women, spectral Cassandras, dreaded for their tactlessness, externally misunderstood, never knowing what they are about, always taking forgiveness for granted". [18]

Elizabeth Skaler provides a most succinct description of Morgan's Malorean prototype, identifying her as the empowered female antitype: "Malory's Morgan represents all that is structurally subversive within Arthurian society as a whole. The quintessential anarchist… enabled through her possession of supernatural powers to violate "natural" gender-boundaries and constraints… a thoroughly bad egg, a composite of all the patriarchal nightmare-woman of literary tradition."[19]

Malory's Morgan sets an example of how collective concessions can be misused. She has developed an aggressive and impulsive "social image" based on selfishness and egotism. Although she possesses supernatural traits, she is far from being divine, as she is able neither to restrain her destructive impulses nor to suppress her compulsive need for revenge. In one of her main appearances, Morgan lures her husband King Uriens, her lover Accolon of Gaul and King Arthur into boarding an enchanted ship lit with torches. After a magical night, all three awake to find themselves in the enchantress' trap: she had magically transferred her husband to his bed, where she awaits, knife in hand, ready to cut off his head. At the same time, she sends her lover to fight King Arthur, after making sure the latter unknowingly uses a fake Excalibur.

The Malorean version, while collecting many of the medieval Round Table tales and legends, depicts the image of the Arthurian society as a whole, and is influenced by the feudal-patriarchal order. Thus, it is hardly a coincidence to find that one of the most bitter rivals to the monarchy, the chosen structural antagonist violating order, is an ambitious and deceitful feminine figure.

[16] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 199.
[17] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 157.
[18] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", pp. 198–199.
[19] Skaler, "Thoroughly Modern Morgan", p. 26, 28.

In the course of the narrative, she is consistently depicted as aggressive in both appearance and behavior. Driven by uncontrollable urges, Morgan's characteristics are an embodiment of society's structurally imposed perception of her gender as chaotic and threatening to social order, a perception that was highly widespread throughout the Middle Ages. Women were accused of capricious behavior and unwanted action, leading them to perform astonishing acts that they cannot take responsibility for. Medieval scholars, such as Thomas Aquinas, believed that since women do not possess enough reason or by rationalism to balance their animalistic and bodily urges, their means of defense cannot be explained through reason either: "woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discernment of reason predominates".[20] When Sir Gawain asks Sir Marius why he hates women so, Marius replies: "For they may be sorceresses and enchantress many of them, and a knight ever so good of his body and full of prowess as man may be, they will make him a stark coward to have the better of him."[21] Though unaware of Freud's notion of the *vagina dentata* (the vagina as a teethed, harmful animal), Sir Marius' conventional view of the woman as a devilish Medea – as well as most of Malory's feminine representations – are the visual embodiments of the patriarchal ideal epitomizing a misogynistic concept of femininity. Sir Marius is not an exception; Malory even summons the wise King Solomon and his knowledge for this purpose: the King who "knew all the virtues of stones and trees…where through he weened that there had been no good woman".[22]

Descriptions of female conduct through a comparison to beasts and wild animal appear in various medieval writing. Pierre De Beauvais, the author of *Bestiaire*, the pseudo-zoological animal guide, describes the devilish animal characteristics of the wolf and explains that the word *loup* – meaning "taking power away" – is the source for *louves*, a word used to describe the actions of women who destroy the virtues of men who fall in love with them by "taking away their power".[23]

It should be noticed, though, that the anarchic and obsessive characteristics of the fairy, presenting a devastating combination of sexuality and sorcery, do not appear in most of the earlier Arthurian tales. In twelfth-century French prose romances such as Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide* (vv.

[20] Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, in: *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis, New York: Random House, 1944, pp. 880 – 881.
[21] Malory, Sir Thomas, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. I, p. 146.
[22] Malory, Sir Thomas, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. II, p. 338.
[23] De Beauvais, Pierre, "Bestiaire," in: *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, ed. Babriel Bianciotto, Paris: Stock+Moyen Age, 1980, p. 63.

1904–8, 2357–66, 4193–202) and Le *Chevalier au Lion* (vv. 2948–51), as well as the anonymous *Le Lai de Tyolet* (v. 630) and Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Innconnu* (v. 4349), Morgan le Fay is mentioned for her healing powers; the stories give no hint of the malicious side of her character, which materialized in later versions.

Following Jung's analytical approach, we may suggest that Malory's Morgan takes on the persona (the "mask") of a woman's collective conscious in the eyes of medieval men. Her *anima* – her inner world – is highly developed, yet composed of excessive feminine consciousness causing her to act aggressively and selfishly at the expense of exhibiting social sensitivity. Her character is depicted as that of an introvert.

Malory's King Arthur, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the benevolent king. His very name stands for nobility, decency, justice and respect for his subjects in general and to his knights in particular. At the beginning of the narrative, the reader is told that Uther Pendragon fulfilled his promise to Merlin and let him raise Arthur. Thus, since birth, Arthur grew up with his adoptive father Sir Hector; his brother Kay and his mentor Merlin. As a result, Arthur's childhood, like that of Morgan le Fay, is deficient. While Morgan lacks a primary father figure, Arthur suffers from the lack of a primary female/mother figure, a situation that leads to his own character flaw.

Jung explains that men's unconscious features an inherent collective image of a woman, through which men grasp the meaning of women. This ancient, inherent image is the *imago* (or the archetype) and is an important factor in shaping the femininity of the soul. The *imago* is a portrait of an image created in infancy and holding a significant emotional burden. Since the *imago* is created from the relationship between a child's individual personality and the behavioral patterns of the child's parents, it is only natural that the mother is the first one to carry the image of the soul. Subsequently, the *anima*, in the form of the mother-*imago* is transferred to the woman, the wife. Young Arthur grows up without a primary feminine model (*anima-imago*), in the absence of which, according to Jung, a man cannot obtain a balanced inner world.[24]

As a result, despite having a positive father figure, King Arthur's childhood lack of a mother figure causes a personality disorder Jung calls "*brilliant persona*".[25] The "*brilliant persona*" stands in complete opposition to

[24] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 197. Compare with Lacan's "mirror stage" in *Foundemental Concepts*, p. 279.
[25] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 199.

the "*neglected persona*" and is characterized by blindness to the existence of inner realities (thus classifying the person as extrovert). The political situation and social constraints have displaced the private self in King Arthur's personality, allowing the collective self to take over entirely.[26]

In the symbolic cultural system, the father figure stands for law and culture, and its presence in the child's life prevents the world from falling apart – unlike the mother, who represents nature and "mother earth". The masculine metaphor here is clear – Arthur grew up with only a male role model to identify with, thus developing high awareness of law and social order.

According to Malory, Arthur was crowned at a young age, without having a say in the matter. This reality was imposed on him by an external authority: Merlin, one of the child's two prime father figures, destined Arthur to be king even before he was born. After he was chosen, Arthur's consciousness was dominated by the need to live up to the expectations of his father-figure. Pulling the sword out of the rock, he proves to himself – as well as to those around him – that kingship is indeed his destiny. In order to fulfill these expectations, the King develops those sides of his personality that fit the needs of society: he becomes the "spotless" man of honor and public benefactor. In effect, these are the same character traits that most psychoanalytic scholars associated with the male aspect of one's personality. And so, because of the importance he assigns to social recognition Arthur relinquishes his individual self for this social position.

The ideal social standards of feudal society, especially the "proper behavior" expected of royalty (*nobilis*), impede individual freedom. In the strict feudal demand for conformity, the King was expected to relinquish his personal, private needs for the sake of the collective; this was perceived as a both social obligation and a virtue.[27]

Given that feudal society rewards personalities with collective characteristics, Arthur becomes a beloved and revered King, due to his demonstration of appropriate cultural leadership skills - which in turn, help him form and maintain a utopian Kingdom. However, collective needs often stand in opposition to the needs and interests of the individual, or as Seneca puts it in *Thyestes* (vv. 388–389) "*Rex est qui metuit nihil/Rex est qui cupiet nihil*" ['A King fears nothing; a King desires nothing']. The disregard of

[26] Compare with Thompson: "after an all to brief period of happiness together the lovers [Morgan and Arthur] are seperated, either because of concern over incest, or because of the conflicting demends of duty" (Thompson, "The First and Last Love", p. 239).

[27] See, for example, Bloch, Marc, *Feodal Society*, transl. L. A. Manyon, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1961] 1965, pp. 79–80.

personal needs is defined in psychoanalytic terminology as repression. It is a protective mechanism through which emotions, memories, and urges that cannot be reconciled with the social persona are held outside of consciousness.

According to Stoic philosophy, a true ruler is not one who controls external matters, but rather one who controls his spirit and desires and overcomes his weaknesses. Weaknesses and desires are individual expressions that are in contradiction to collective ideals. Malory's King Arthur – the extroverted prototype – lacks the necessary tools for dealing with the feminine element, the *anima* (which Jung identifies as the element in charge of intimacy, emotionalism and "private life"). Thus, this entire aspect of his personality is pushed away into his unconscious, resulting in an extreme imbalance between the male and the female elements of his personality.

The circumstances in Arthur's and Morgan's lives are different, but the end result is the same. In both cases, the *anima* and the *animus* have taken over the protagonist's and the antagonist's personality respectively, and become autonomous – thereby creating a radical, pathological imbalance between the male and the female elements. Both Arthur and Morgan possess a heightened sense of self-esteem resulting from their social-collective positions, and the "part" they have adopted for themselves that has now become synonymous with their personality. They are unaware of the fact that they are suffering from what is known in professional jargon as "*autonomous complex*" i.e., a neurotic personality disorder that lies at the very basis of their soul and requires treatment.[28]

Jung believes that bringing the unconscious into the realm of consciousness is the way to overcome neurosis. In order to correct the situation and achieve a natural and balanced mental state, one must go through a mental process in which he must bring forth from his unconscious mind all the issues that have been, for years, suppressed by society, circumstance and time. By confronting the full extent of personality, Jung claims, people can achieve "*self-realization*".[29] It is a painful process that can be reached in two ways: either through realizing the need for it (for example, in our times when a person seeks psychological counseling); or – and this is the more difficult way – when circumstances force a person to deal with his flaws. In Malory's romance we clearly see that King Arthur arrives at this

[28] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 227.
[29] Jung, "The Relations Between The Ego and the Unconscious", p. 173.

process the latter way, when the utopian world he has created for his people is beginning to show signs of collapse.

King Arthur's knights inform the King three times that his wife was unfaithful to him with his best friend. Each time Arthur chooses to ignore the grave significance of these warnings. The king should have responded strictly, since the warnings were not only signs for lack of discreetness on part of the Queen and her lover, but a clear violation of taboo which is very disruptive to the utopian social order identified with this specific king. In the first time, Morgan sends Tristan to compete bearing a shield depicting the story of the Queen's infidelity. In the second time, King Mark sends Arthur a letter revealing the Queen's adultery with Sir Lancelot, and again King Arthur chooses to ignore the warning. In the third time, when Sir Gawain and his furious brothers insist on ambushing the two lovers, the King reluctantly agrees, yet even when the two are caught in the act, the King is willing to forgive Lancelot and take back his queen unconditionally. The Malorean text clearly illustrates King Arthur's unwillingness to deal with the problems in his personal life.

Catching the Queen and Lancelot in the act exposes the decay of the Kingdom, and especially the corruption of people who until then have been the paragon of virtue. Not only is Arthur betrayed by his family and the people closest to him, but the incident that leads to the unavoidable physical clash between the King's men makes him realize, with amazement, that the hearts of his utopian knights are flooded with feelings of jealousy, enmity, and revenge. Soon, these feelings develop into the rebellion led by Mordred, the symbol of corruption and moral decay, and lead, in the course of the narrative, to the final demise of Arthur's kingdom symbolized by Camelot's collapse.

It is no coincidence that Malory chooses the single episode of Arthur's death to serve as the name of the whole story. Following the psychoanalytical approach, the destruction of the utopian kingdom facilitates and inspires yet another displacement. The tragic socio-political developments force both the King and the fairy to deal for the very first time with that aspect of their personality they have been neglecting: their individual identity. This brings us back to the final scene described in the beginning of this essay.

The sword and sheath: The sign and the signifier

The final episode is described in much detail and in great length. In the last battle, taking place in Salisbury according to Malory (Camlann according to other versions), King Arthur is mortally wounded by Mordred. After years of constant denial, an external event forces the King to confront his problem. Psychologically speaking, the moment Mordred plunges his sword into Arthur's body is when – for the first time – Arthur is overtaken by his larger consciousness. The process of revelation (the transit from unconsciousness to consciousness) creates the meeting point between the fictional and the symbolic. In any effort to grasp what is, in fact, at stake in the text, nothing is more instructive than a glance at its organization: an apparently simple scheme, in two parts. First, disavowal of collective responsibility and then development of individual awareness.

Mortally wounded on the battlefield, Arthur asks Sir Bedivere to take his enchanted sword and throw it into the water. Bedivere hesitates and tries to avoid the task three times, as the sword is valuable and is embedded with precious stones. Twice he goes to the river and returns with the sword, as if reassuring that the King is willing to begin the painful process. Only on the third time, when the King insists emphatically, does Bedivere comply with his wishes throwing the sword into the water. He tells Arthur that a mysterious hand came up from the water and took the sword. Arthur then knows that the sword has been returned to its rightful owner, Vivian – the Lady of the Lake. The repetition clearly symbolizes the passage to a mental state in which a conscious development of the soul can take place. Arthur's resolve and determination reflect his emotional maturity, which enables him to confront the core of his personality with all the difficulties and suffering involved.

The discarding of Excalibur is a significant symbolic event, since it frees the King from everything that burdens him. First, Arthur is freed from the collective responsibility of a leader, legitimized in the eyes of his people through the enchanted sword. Second, he is freed from the constant need to prove himself, assert his masculinity and affirm his worthiness to be King – *The* sword carrier. Indeed, in literary symbolism as well as in psychoanalytical dream interpretation, swords and spears are associated both with war (manhood and aggression) and sexual act (phallic symbol or symbolic sexual prowess).[30] By utterly relinquishing all the archetypal

[30] Compare with Miranda Green, *Celtic Goddesses: Warriors, Virgins and Mothers*, London: British Museum Press, 1995, p. 40.

symbols characterizing his rule, Arthur is on the one hand freed from his male ego and on the other, left exposed, defenseless and persona-less. At this exact moment Morgan appears on a barge on the other side of the lake.[31]

Given that returning the sword to its owner might be understood as an act of disarmament, Morgan's touching appeal to the injured King Arthur represents the fairy's sincere intention and willingness to confront that aspect of her unconscious she has been suppressing. The enchantress known to the Logrian inhabitants as a "lady who did never good, but ill"[32] now relinquishes the obsessive desire to overpower the king, as well as her craving to obtain Excalibur.

Interestingly enough, the single tale entirely revolving around Morgan in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, is the scene where she steals and subsequently disposes of the sheath of Arthur's sword, thereby causing the king to fight her lover, Accolon of Gaul, with a fake Excalibur. The struggle over the sword and sheath takes the reader from the fictional to the symbolic. For the king, the sword is a sign of power and reign. For Morgan it signifies, first and foremost, her primary concern for regal succession and aristocratic inheritance rights. Her most concerted effort, recounted in the tale mentioned above, is to place her lover, Accolon, on Arthur's throne so that she may become queen of Logres. "Swords and hands", affirms Tovi Bibring "are also associated with manly authority since they are used to produce symbolical gestures during official, religious, and social ceremonies led and directed by men".[33] In addition, the stolen sheath episode resembles many other psychological stories that recount sexual tension between men and women. Citing examples from medieval French *lais* and *fabliaux*, Bibring claims that "any weapon is manipulated by the *Hand* which in itself registers as phallic, as a result of its illustrative physics and of the use of the same verbs such as 'to take'". On the other hand, she argues that "the ring… stands for the vagina". Therefore, the stolen sheath in our episode is to be understood as designating the same feminine organ as all various

[31] It could be suggested that the Lady of the Lake and Morgan le Fay are one and the same. Harf-Lancer notices the dynamics between the two as well, and points out that: "Ces deux figures irréconciliables mais inséparables incarnent deux représentations de la féminité dans l'imagianaire médiévale" [Those two irreconcilable - yet inseparable figure embody the two representations of femininity in the medieval imagination]. Laurence Harf-Lancer, *Le Fées au Moyen Âge – Morgane et Mélusine La naissance des fées* Genéve: Slatkine 1984, p. 380

[32] Malory, Sir Thomas, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. I, p. 428.

[33] Bibring, Tovi, "Of Swords and Rings: Genitals' Representation as Defining Sexual Identity and Sexual Liberation in Some Old French *Fabliaux* and *Lais*," in: *Genealogies of Identity: Interdisciplinary Readings on Sex and Sexuality*, ed. Margaret Breen & Fiona Peters. Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2006 (forthcoming).

metaphorical objects containing holes or entrances (such as well, bottle, ring and enchanted ring).[34]

Thus, the episode with Accolon of Gaul may be understood as a symbolic text dealing with the domination of female sexuality. When Morgan steals the sheath from Arthur, she does not seek to transfer the ownership over it to herself, but rather to her lover Accolon. Relying on the model suggested by Bibring, the fact that the King received the sword and sheath from the Lady of the Lake, and the history/genealogy of this character as researchers formulate it, we may assume that the Lady of the Lake is the embodiments of Morgan herself. King Arthur, discovering that "what was his" has been "taken away" (in its double meaning), is furious.

The struggle, then, is not only over political reign but also a struggle over the fairy's sexuality. When left with no alternative, Morgan throws the sheath into the water, a gesture signifying the throwing away of her sexuality. Arthur's throwing away of the sword – the corresponding phallic element – when Morgan appears on the barge, is the parallel male gesture. This assumption is supported by an additional observation by Roger Sherman Loomis, who claims, based on several manuscripts, that Arthur, like many other maimed Kings, might have been wounded in the thigh.[35]

Eternal love – eternal death

Arthur and Morgan complement each other and need each other in order to rise above their personal character flaws and the deficiencies in their lives. This brings us back to the Freudian notion of identification. Freud regarded identification as part of the ambivalent complicity "of the eternal struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death".[36] Identification, he explains, is an early expression of an emotional relation to another individual, and is ambivalent by nature. It may turn into an expression of liking towards someone, or, at the same time, express the wish to remove

[34] Compare with Peggy McCracken's reading on the discovery episode in the fourteenth-century *Prose Lanselot*, where Morgan announces with messengers the adoultrous love between Guenevere and Lancelot by presenting the ring the queen gave her lover. McCracken, Peggy, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and sexual Transgression in Old French Literature*, Philadelphia: Penn, 1998, p. 103.

[35] Loomis, Roger Sherman, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*, London: Constable, [1926] 1993, p. 193.

[36] Freud, Sigmund, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, transl. James Strachy, New York: Norton & Company, 1961, p. 79.

this person and take their place. The relationship between the two seems to adhere to the negative pattern seen throughout the tale, when Morgan wishes to remove Arthur and take his place. But in the final scene that gives the overall tale its name, the Freudian point of view is replaced by a neo-platonic one, known to the modern reader as Jungian. Jung's explanation allows us to assume that this scene is the climax of a process depicting how each of these two archetypical persons gradually became whole, or better put – how they turned into the unique, whole individuals that each one of them was meant to be. Jung explains, relying on the platonic dialogue *Timaeus*:

> There exists the primary opposition of male and female, but whereas fourness is a symbol of wholeness, threenes is not. The latter, according to alchemy denotes polarity- since one triad always presupposes another just as high presupposes low, lightness darkness, good evil. In terms of energy, polarity means a potential and wherever a potential exists there is the possibility of a current, a flow of events, for the tension of opposites strives for balance." [37]

Awareness of their archetypal roles allows the characters to start adjusting to them – consciously, this time. The external reality here changes shape according to the true individual personalities of the king and the fairy and becomes a depiction of an internal experience. Awareness makes their souls ready for the internal union between *anima* and *animus*.

Confronting and overcoming compulsive fixation brings about not only a feeling of exultation, but a resemblance to God. Quoting from Goethe's *Faust*: "*Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum*" (v. 2047), Jung explains that "resemblance to God" refers to one's knowledge of both good and evil, of things that were previously unseen.[38]

Once free from the external characterization of their previous roles (personas), both heroes gain Freedom, a divine quality enabling them to feel love and evoke love in others. Their personalities expand and allow them to transcend the earthly sphere in which they function as demigods (a utopian, flesh-and-blood King and a powerful fairy) and reach a higher plane of existence as divine beings. Despite centuries of Christianization of the text, Morgan is still referred to as "Morgan the Goddess" exactly as the fourteenth-century author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* identified her.

[37] Jung, Carl Gustav, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9:II, transl. R. F. C. Hull, London: Routledge & Kagan Paul, [1959] 1971, pp. 234–235.

[38] Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9:II, pp. 140–141. Compare Goethe, *Faust*, part I, New-York: Anchor Books, 1963.

She seems to realize her originally Celtic divine status that was localized in time.

The paradox of this vision, as we eventually learn, is that love and its realization do infuse mental being with eternity, yet only on condition that death is an integral part of being. In fact, death – in Jung's terms – is an essential part in the "archetype of wholeness" or the "unified wholeness of the individual" since it is the element which points to a profound harmony between all forms of existence.[39]

True love which is really "as strong as death" is part of the post-conscious, all-embracing essence of mental wholeness, creating an inevitable link between life and death. The King's dying day is ultimately also a day of joy, since through death he is able to realize the promise of defeating mortality and ensuring eternity. This is the reason the name of tale focuses on the scene of Arthur's death, as the fairy is attracted to the dying King and derives force and life from him. This climax enhances the paradox: turning to the dead for reinforcement in life; life leads to death, and death is the guarantee for the eternity of love. A unique, moving paradox well phrased by Paul Celan [40]:

> Du warst mein Tod:
> Dich konnte ich halten,
> Wahrend mir alles entfiel.
>
> ['You were my death:
> You I could hold
> While everything slipped from me.']

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[39] Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9:II, pp. 111, 195, 261, 388.
[40] Celan, Paul, *Selected Poems and Prose*, transl. John Felstiner, New York-London: W. W. Norton 2001, pp. 296–297.