Sweet Maidens or Evil Witches? A Post-Jungian Study of Women's Archetypal Images in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and the Epic Part of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*

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Abstract

The present article conducts a comparative analysis of the images of women in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and the epic part of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, addressing two key questions: how does Hillman's concept of archetypal images illustrate the major images of women presented in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh*? And, how are these images treated in their respective contexts? Using James Hillman's Post-Jungian theory of archetypal images, which emphasizes preserving the individual details of the images, in contrast to Jungian archetypes that are reductionist and imprecise, this study explores the images of the women in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh* both individually and in relation to one another. Based on a detailed examination of the unique characteristics of their images, collected from textual evidences, each of these women are categorized under the archetypal images of the daughter, the lover/wife, and the mother. The results of this study propose a comprehensive pattern, supported by various examples, for further detailed analyses of such archetypal images, as they open up new horizons for feminist studies by illuminating women's multidimensional personalities. In addition, the major diversions from this pattern under the archetypal images of the sorceress and the warrior are discussed according to their respective contexts and societies as well.

Key words: Archetypal Image, Post-Jungian Analysis, Feminist Study, Arthurian Literature, *Shahnameh*

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1. Introduction

Although the first wave of Feminism is now a century old, and it can be argued that nowadays the 'feminist' studies are regarded as classic to some extent, the necessity of re-reading literary works has by no means decreased. This is not limited to modern works of literature since feminist readings can be fairly expanded to older or even ancient works from all around the world too. European medieval romances have particularly proved to provide rich grounds for studying the roles and powers assigned to the female characters in both romantic and social spheres (Vines, 2011: 57). From gender studies discussing the characters in the stories to historical readings of the female patronage of the romancers, the literature of Middle Ages has turned out to be far from simply dominated by aristocratic men (Krueger, 1993: 102). In contrast to what modern readers are usually led to believe, women are not passive 'damsels in distress' waiting to be rescued by a knight in shining armor; they take part actively in determining their fate and make the best of whatever opportunity they can get in their patriarchal society (Carpenter & MacLean, 1995: xvii). They take on different roles from maidenhood to motherhood and although most of them follow the same pattern as their foremothers, there are some women who refuse to abide by the common rules and choose other paths.

This is particularly seen in the various images they display which, when analyzed through the lens of James Hillman's archetypal psychology, render rich insights into the multidimensional personalities of these women. Hillman defines images as "individualized, unique event[s]" (Hillman, 2004: 23) in contrast to archetypes whose collective universality disregards important details that can be decisive in the essence and meaning of the individual image. Paying attention to such details becomes more fruitful in feminist analyses since the feminine psyche has long been debated to be more complex than the mere projection of "the male ego," a complementary anima to the animus (Wehr, 1987: 3). Thus, Hillman's archetypal psychology, which redeems images from archetypes, can expand and enrich feminist studies, shedding light on more details of the multifaceted psyche of women as depicted in literary works of different eras.

Being one of the most famous medieval romances, *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Thomas Malory has enjoyed great popularity ever since its publication in 1485 as one of the first books to be printed in England. It tells the story of the legendary King Arthur of Britain and the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table along with many queens, princesses, and enchantresses. Malory's masterpiece has been studied carefully by many scholars and still remains one of the richest sources to provide a deeper insight into the portrayal of women in medieval literature (Wynne-Davies, 1996: 55). However, no study has tried

to apply Hillman's archetypal images on *Le Morte d'Arthur* and explore the represented images of women in this epic-romance in comparison with those of another medieval literary work from another culture.

Going almost five centuries back from *Le Morte d'Arthur* and entering another continent, beyond the exotic Constantinople and to the legendary Persia, we find a national epic named *Shahnameh*, the book of the kings, written by Ferdowsi in 1010 and in more than 45,000 lines. It is one of the longest epics in the world and recounts the legendary history of Persian kings, from its mythical beginning to later historical battles until the invasion of Arabs (Davis, 2007: 67). Even though it is mainly the account of battles of kings with natural and supernatural enemies of the kingdom, it is by no means bereft of the sweetness of love and fairness of enchanting damsels, accompanied by powerful queens, wise and compassionate wives, warrior maidens, and irresistible witches.

1.1 Literature Review

Although feminist readings in Arthurian literature are comparatively new, there have been numerous articles and casebooks discussing its different female characters from Morgan le Fay to Guinevere. Some of the famous examples of such studies are as follows: Fenster's *Arthurian Women: A Casebook* (1996), which gathers nineteen papers discussing various aspects of the female characters and their markedly feminine issues; Wynne-Davies' *Women and Arthurian Literature* (1996), which examines the portrayal of women in Arthurian literature across centuries; Lupack's *Arthurian Literature by Women* (1999), which is an anthology of various texts authored by women and addressing feminine matters in the Arthurian genre; and finally, Howey's *Rewriting the Women of Camelot: Arthurian Popular Fiction and Feminism* (2001), which reopens the traditional discussions of the feminine roles in Arthurian tradition. Nevertheless, no feminist study has analyzed the women of *Le Morte d'Arthur* through Hillman's archetypal image theory, their focus always remaining on molding the characters into certain types rather than examining their individuality.

On the other hand, although numerous books and articles have been written on *Shahnameh*, not many feminist studies have been conducted on this national epic. Moreover, the few that have addressed these issues are mostly written by Iranian scholars, who are well-versed in both the text and the culture. In "Women in *Shahnameh*: An Overview on Mythical, Lyrical and Social Aspects" (2020), Rahmanian and Ashrafzadeh study the famous heroines in the background of combined literary traditions, social status, and cultural heritage, but their analysis is limited to the boundaries of Persia. Taking a step

further, Alibaygi Sarhali and Ramezani discuss three women of *Shahnameh* in terms of Jungian archetypes in "Psychological Critique of Shahnameh Women Based on Jung's Theory (Based on the Characters of Gordafarid, Katayoun and Tahmineh)" (2022). Still, they too remain in the Persian culture and start structuralizing the characters into reductionist tropes. As far as the researcher knows, there is no study that has analyzed the women in *Shahnameh* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* in comparison with each other, nor is there any that has conducted a feminist archetypal analysis of the two. Consequently, this article is a pioneering work that can make a path for other studies to explore the role of women in these works more comprehensively, encompassing a greater number of characters and in further details.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Questions

There are only a few comparative analyses that focus on medieval literary works since, due to their oldness, these works are regarded by scholars to be written based on outdated and biased mindsets which were filled with the clichés of Western versus Eastern ideology, one always regarding the other as inferior. However, it is the modern prejudices of our time that project themselves on our readings of these works and view them as such (Otaño-Gracia, 2017: 186). Therefore, the significance of this article is doubled as it studies the depiction of women in consideration of both the dichotomy of Eastern and Western traditions, and their medieval contexts, which are marked by patriarchy. *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh* stand as the epitomes of medieval epics in their respective cultures, and it is in them that a great variety of unique images of women are gathered that illustrate distinct aspects of the portrayal of women in both their respective societies and the genre of medieval epic as a whole. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is to cast light on the differences and similarities between the two chosen works regarding their depictions of women and to categorize their images in a structured pattern of different roles. Not only does the present study seek to collect findings that can establish a higher regard for medieval romances as a rich corpus containing complex social and psychological matters, but it also tries to win a better position for the classic Persian literary works in feminist studies, so that the biases towards them as either sensually exotic or harshly misogynist would be revised and hopefully further demolished. This study aims to answer two questions: how does Hillman's concept of archetypal images illustrate the major images of women presented in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh*? And, how are these images treated similarly or differently in their respective contexts?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

To answer the above questions, the present study uses James Hillman's Post-Jungian theory of archetypal images which analyzes the images in a detailed examination without reducing them to clichéd frames of archetypes. Hillman, the prominent Jungian scholar who founded the school of 'archetypal psychology' in the 1970s, proposed the concept of 'images' to break free from the restricting Jungian archetypes and their consequent misleading "unnecessary metaphysical assumptions" (Adams, 2008: 109). While archetypes result in noumenal frames that erase any form of individuality, images retain the phenomenal essence of their subject (Hillman, 2004: 24). This will allow a far more comprehensive analysis by illuminating the distinguishing characteristics of each phenomenon that was lost in Jungian archetypal studies. "The archetypal perspective offers the advantage of organizing into clusters or constellations a host of [images]" (Hillman, 1975: xiv), which would otherwise be lost in the blurring background of archetypes. As argued by Samuels, "any classification is, to an extent, a creative falsehood in that there are unlikely to be many individuals who exactly fit the descriptions. For some temperaments, classification is seen as of little value or even as destructive to individuality" (1985: 14). Therefore, while this study proposes a new classification for the images represented of the female characters in these two epic/romances, its limitations are taken into consideration, and the individuality of those characters' images that prove not completely fitting into the pattern is not overlooked, with special regards to the fact that *Shahnameh* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* belong to two different cultures.

1.4 Scope and Methodology

The present article applies Hillman's concept of archetypal images to the major women in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh* by analyzing the textual evidence collected from different parts of the two texts. It must be noted that, while this analysis examines the entire text of *Le Morte d'Arthur* to trace the images of women, due to the great length of *Shahnameh*, it limits its scope to the epic part, which according to Safa starts from Kaveh's rebellion against Zahhak and ends with Rostam's death (1954: 208). In addition to being considered the most important part of *Shahnameh* (Safa, 1954: 208), the epic part includes the most notable women whose images are vividly unique and rich in diversity. Focusing on the two texts, this study interprets and compares the textual evidence in the light of archetypal images by creating a pattern that classifies each image in its group but emphasizes its individuality as well. The first three images, structured successively, would focus on the routine pattern, while the

following two images would present diversions from it. Gathering examples from the texts and analyzing them with regard to their contexts, the chosen analytical approach will also illuminate the nature, similarities, and differences of the archetypal images of the characters from one another and in contrast to Jungian archetypes.

2. Discussion

The major matter that needs to be clarified is that examining the characters under the classification of the proposed 'roles' is not a new disguise for the old archetypes. Far from it, what is suggested is studying the collected archetypal images in a comprehensive and ever-expanding pattern that does not confine itself to specific characteristics but welcomes various and even opposing images. As stated by Hillman, "any image can be considered archetypal. The word 'archetypal' rather than pointing at something ... points to something, and this is value" (1977: 82). Therefore, each image is examined individually, and it is out of their shared core that the pattern of the suggested roles arises. Giving the value of archetypal to each image allows an inductive analysis that "stick[s] to the image... not translating images into meanings, as though images were allegories or symbols" (Moore & Hillman, 1989: 50) and frees them from the strict frames of archetypes. It is only thus that a truly complete picture of the variety of the roles women took on in these two texts, as representative of their respective cultures, can be arrived at.

2.1 The Pattern

To study the archetypal images of women in a successive structure, this study proposes three categories of daughter, lover/wife, and mother to make up the usual pattern of the roles a woman takes on in her life in most of the medieval stories, *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh* being no exceptions. These three stages create an evolutionary process as a female character leads her life in the context of the story, her image changing from one to another. The first stage puts the image of the daughter in connection with the image of the father, as the prominent male figure in her life; in the second stage, this becomes the image of her lover/husband; and finally, in the last stage, it is her son's image which pairs with her image as the mother. In the following sections, this pattern will be examined and the diversions these women might make from their prescribed routine will be analyzed; this article then investigates the nature of these diversions and tries to see to what extent they are similar to or different from one another within their respective cultural backgrounds.

2.1.1 The Daughter

The archetypal image of the daughter, as in relation to her father, is always associated with the land and her kingdom. This bond is especially strong when the father has no son, and the daughter is the only heir (Garry & El-Shamy, 2005: 436). The theme of the 'sovereignty goddess' is known in the myths and legends of many nations; for example, in the Celtic legends, Ireland is personified as the goddess Airu and in a ceremonial marriage is wedded to the king of Ireland (Bromwich, 1961: 445). It is from this tradition that the sovereignty goddess, in the form of a nameless maiden encountered in the forest, finds her way to Arthurian legends when she appears in the adventures of Sir Gawain and accepts him as her consort (Bromwich, 1961: 452). In the more famous versions as found in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, many such princesses are found in their castles, besieged by an unwanted suitor or a greedy uncle who tries to force them into marriage and usurp their lands. The relation between the maiden and the kingdom, therefore, becomes obvious in both literal and symbolic ways, since the maiden both owns the land and is the land herself. In *Shahnameh*, the most famous instance is the story of Arnavaz and Shahrnaz, the daughters of Jamshid, who are forced to marry Zahhak when he usurps the throne of Persia (Ferdowsi, 2001: 22). They are eventually freed by Fereydun who defeats Zahhak, takes the crown as the rightful king of the land, and marries them (Ferdowsi, 2001: 35-39). At the core of this mythical story of the battle between good and evil lies the same image of the hero killing the beast and winning the princess as she is both the crown and the kingdom.

The image of the sovereignty goddess might connote a woman who is passively waiting for a knight to rescue her when she is bereft of her father's protection after his demise. No matter how symbolically rich the motif is regarding the relationship between the king and his land, our modern mindset would expect a more active role from the princess. What should not be forgotten in this matter is the act of choosing by the princess and her resistance against the unwanted suitor/usurper for a long period of time. In many instances, the princess fortifies her castle and resists, sometimes for years; and even if her castle is eventually doomed to be taken, she refuses to meet the same fate. An illuminating example is the story of Blancheflor when she discloses to Sir Perceval her decision to commit suicide the following morning when her castle is to be overtaken by her unwanted suitor (Chrétien de Troyes, 1987: 401). Another instance is found in the last book of *Le Morte d'Arthur* when Guinevere runs from Mordred when he claims to be the king of Britain in Arthur's absence. She flees to the Tower of London, fortifies it, and resists him until Arthur's arrival:

> Then Sir Mordred sought on Queen Guenever by letters and sonds, and
> by fair means and foul means, for to have her to come out of the Tower of

London; but all this availed not, for she answered him shortly, openly and privily, that she had liefer slay herself than to be married with him. (Malory, 1906, vol. 2: 380)

Thus, by looking deeper into her image, we can see how, although left unprotected by her male relations, this lonely damsel of sovereignty is not wholly vulnerable and is still able to defend herself and her freedom, even at the expense of her life. Consequently, the image distances itself from the clichéd archetype as a passive obedient princess, who due to her femininity is destined to be ruled by the active, masculine force.

In *Shahnameh*, matters are taken a step further, especially when the princess chooses a foreigner or even an enemy as her lover/husband as opposed to someone from her native land. The implied persistence in her courageous decision could be interpreted as a rebellion against her father, the king; this conflict is usually resolved with the help of the queen, and the resolution is illustrated in the form of the greater reconciliation of the two kingdoms. The most famous of such cases is the love story of Zal and Rudabe, which ends with peace being made between Rudabe's father, Mehrab, and Zal, as their kingdoms unite (Ferdowsi, 2001: 110). The story of Bijan and Manijeh also ends happily with the marriage of the lovers although their kingdoms remain enemies. It is especially in this story that we see Manijeh opposing her father Afrasiab by staying loyal to her lover, risking her life (Ferdowsi, 2001: 528-538). She does not present the image of a weak-hearted princess spoiled by the luxuries of the court; on the contrary, her image is that of the resolute, strong, young woman who is unafraid to rise against her father/king when his image becomes tyrannical. In the case of marrying a stranger, Tahmineh is the most famous heroine who chooses Rostam as her lover because of the numerous stories she has heard about his power and glory (Ferdowsi, 2001: 202), exactly like how maidens craved Sir Gawain to become their lover, even for a short time, because of his far-reaching fame in the matters of love and battle (Bruce, 1999: 211-214). These women resist what is expected of them by law and tradition as they retain their free will in choosing their lovers themselves. This matter gains greater importance when we consider their young age and the mortal risks they are willing to take to establish their rights over their lives. In Hillman's words, they make their identity once they "articulate [their] images," and through which realize the "individuation of their images" (2004: 39). The breaching from the figure of the father to unite with the lover/husband is not drifting from one male domination to another; far from it, it is the first step the princess takes when she deems herself mature enough to decide for her own life and become the queen of the king that she has chosen, not the fates.

2.1.2 The Lover/Wife

This group is closely related to the previous one since the image of the lover/wife hovers between the image of the daughter and that of the mother. In Arthurian literature, especially, the lover/wife's category is the largest one since many women, even those whose principal image is completely different, still take on the image of the lover/wife in at least one period of their lives. For instance, Morgan le Fay, who is best known for her rebellious character, being the greatest enchantress to whom even the strongest men are powerless, appears also as a very passionate lover for Sir Accolon, who describes her as such: "she loveth me out of measure as paramour, and I her again" (Malory, 1906, vol. 1: 104). Another example is Igraine, whose role as King Arthur's mother is not as important as her role as the lover/wife of Uther Pendragon. It is because of her love that Uther declares war on her husband, the Duke of Cornwall, and she almost disappears from the story after giving birth to Arthur (Malory, 1906, vol. 1: 5-9). The only exceptions to this comprehensive group are the women associated with the Grail since they must remain chaste and cannot fall in love. The spectrum of the lover/wife is very wide as it includes the lover, the seducer, the adulterous, and the faithful wife. Such a meticulous classification of images allows us to have a more precise understanding of the characters, and analyze all the details that would be lost to the inclusive but inaccurate umbrella archetype of the lover. Beginning with the most classic kind, we can see Enid, Sir Erec's wife, as the faithful lover and wife who, after leading a chaste maidenhood, accepts Erec as her first lover, becomes his wife after a few days and stays loyal to him throughout her life despite many hardships (Bruce, 1999: 168). Such is the traditional pattern that most women follow in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and almost all the other medieval romances. The story always ends with the happy couple getting married because of their mutual love for one another and remaining in love 'forever'.

The more complex kind is the seducer, under whose image Isolde could be categorized. Although married to the much older king Mark, Isolde does not back off from having an affair with her beloved Tristan, the nephew of the king and the two famous lovers stay loyal to each other until their death (Lacy, 1996: 463-465). As much as it is a tragic love story, it is a bold act of pursuing one's wish and desire despite all the circumstances. Isolde does not marry Mark willingly and is never in love with him; therefore, she considers herself justified in loving the man who is not only her subject of desire by choice but also her natural match since they are the same age. What is of great importance is the sympathy of both the storytellers and the audience towards her as no narrative reproaches the lovers or portrays their love negatively. Since she has had no love for her husband in the first place, and is faithful to Tristan throughout her life, Isolde's image goes beyond the clichéd archetype

of the seducer, who cares little about love and is regarded merely as a femme fatale. Consequently, although she dooms both herself and her lover to death, she is not harshly criticized as an unfaithful wife, which is a title usually given to Queen Guinevere.

There are many negative narratives of the queen's love affair with Sir Lancelot; even *Le Morte d'Arthur* cannot be totally sympathetic towards their relationship as not only does their love lead to the deaths of many glorious Knights of the Round Table, but it also puts an end to the golden age of Britain and condemns it to be conquered by the Saxons. Although Arthur is not always a faithful husband either, he never dishonors their marriage openly and lives up to the expected image of him as the husband/king. Guinevere is, therefore, guilty of not being secretive and discreet in her affair; in other words, she fails to maintain the image expected of her as she forgets her position not only as the wife but also as the queen who has the responsibility of keeping the court in peace. This is a key factor in the difference between Isolde and Guinevere: whereas Isolde's affair with Tristan causes no disturbance in Mark's court, since she always cunningly proves her innocence, Guinevere's affair crumbles Camelot down to ashes because she is unable to keep up her responsibilities as the wife of the king and the queen of the kingdom. Thus, it can be seen how two characters that could be categorized under the broad archetype of the seducer display two images that both have different characteristics and are treated differently.

By contrast, the lover/wife category, although always present and powerful, is a secondary image for the female characters in *Shahnameh*. They all experience this role in their lives, but they rarely limit themselves to it and usually go further to take on other images, especially that of the mother. For the women of *Shahnameh*, there is not much difference between being a lover or a wife since, like the case of Enid in Arthurian romances, the image of the lover very quickly turns into the image of the wife who remains loyal to her husband even after his death, best exemplified in the stories of Faranak, Fereydun's mother, and Farangis, Siyavash's wife (Yahaghi, 2007: 623). What empowers this loyalty to the memory of the husband is the presence of his son, who is, metaphorically, the reborn husband. This transforms the image of the wife to the young mother whose only comfort in her grief for her husband is raising their son, which in turn shifts her devotion from her husband to her son.

However, this by no means implies that the lover/wife image is not strong or that its depiction is not romantically vivid enough; far from it, Rudabe and Manijeh represent their image as the lover even stronger than their image as the mother. Although she is the mother of Rostam, the most prominent hero of *Shahnameh*, Rudabeh plays her most active role as the beloved of Zal, when

she refuses to leave him despite their families' enmity (Ferdowsi, 2001: 77-92). Her self-will as the daughter and loyalty as the lover are by no means contradictory images since she asserts her power in her romance with Zal not only in sharing the same status with him as the princess and sole heir of her father's kingdom, but, more importantly, in her equal independence and resolution as she chooses him freely to be her match, not her master.

The story of Zal and Rudabe is one of the most famous love stories in *Shahnameh* and is rivaled in its tenderness of language and romance only by the story of Bijan and Manijeh which was mentioned in the previous section. Giving up her position as the princess and risking her life for Bijan, Manijeh accompanies her beloved in his troubles, displaying the image of a compassionate selfless lover. She is unafraid to speak her mind but her boldness does not make her apathetic; on the contrary, it makes her more fervent in her passion for her loved ones. She is not naïve to passively follow her lover, but seeks help and plays a key role in both rescuing Bijan and making their escape (Ferdowsi, 2001: 527-530), proving once more that the lover/wife image of women in *Shahnameh* is unwaveringly faithful regardless of a happy or tragic ending.

Another woman whose images as the lover, wife, and mother become increasingly complex and at some point even contradictory is Katayun. Like a fairytale, her story begins with her dreaming of a foreign prince who proves to be Goshtasp (Ferdowsi, 2001: 718) but from this innocent flourishing of love, there follows a series of tragic events that challenge Katayun's image as a wife. As a young wife, she follows the example of her peers in pure devotion to her husband and remains loyalty to him even before knowing his position as the prince of Persia. Later on, however, when conflict arises between Goshtasp and their son Esfandyar, she struggles to make peace between the two but fails to dissuade her son from seeking out Rostam which she knows would bring him to his doom (Ferdowsi, 2001: 820). After Esfandyar's death, Katayun laments but does not accuse her husband of his death, like her other son Pashutan does (Ferdowsi, 2001: 864-866). She tries to keep a delicate balance between her image as a wise queen and a dutiful wife, yet this balance is silently fractured when her image as the mother is helplessly devastated and cannot find any relief but soundless grief.

2.1.3 The Mother

The last image, that of the mother, can be divided into two variations in accordance with the presence or absence of its counterpart image, the father. When the father is present, the mother is pushed to the background in the life of the son, and her relationship with him becomes less prominent (Hillman, 1973: 76-77). Arthur always maintains his respectful and loving relationship

with his mother, Igraine, but it is with his father, Uther, that he shapes his bond. The same situation is found in Rostam's family where Rudabe is loved and respected but remains in the background while Zal and Rostam seems closer to him. Although the son is usually raised and trained by his father to eventually take his place after his death, it is not the only way for the hero to be brought up. In the alternative situation when the father is not present, it is the mother who plays the central role in the life of the son (Hillman, 1973: 77). The theme of a lonely mother raising her infant son in a forest, or some secluded place hidden from the eyes of the enemy who has killed her husband, is found in the legends of many nations across the world. Perceval's mother, whose name remains mostly unknown in the stories, is the best example of such a mother. After the death of her husband in a tournament, she takes Perceval to the woods, trying to raise him unaware of knighthood but relents when he insists on joining Arthur's court (Lacy, 1996: 422). She never asks her son to avenge his father's death and displays her image only as a protective mother who does not want to lose her son even at the cost of his gaining no fame and glory. There is wisdom in her choice when she turns her back on the glorious bloodshed that has brought her nothing but grief. However, this is not how the masculine world of knights works, and her pleas for following a peaceful happy life fall silent to the sound of clashing swords perusing the phantom of fame.

Another example of such protective mothers is the Lady of the Lake who takes on the role of Lancelot's foster mother when she rescues him from the court of his mortal enemy who had brought about the death of both of Lancelot's parents (Bruce, 1999: 302). She is stronger than Percival's mother in that she understands the rules of the knightly world and gives wise counsel to Lancelot and many other Knights of the Round Table. She urges Lancelot to take up arms and seek revenge on his father's enemy and reclaim his kingdom. The difference between the images of these two mothers is reflected in the attitude of the two young knights: whereas Percival is ignorant of knightly customs and acts naively in his early adventures, Lancelot shows his prowess from the beginning and is skilled in the matters of both the battlefield and the court. Therefore, a strong-minded mother, who is familiar with the masculine world surrounding herself and her child, can raise a son who will not show any signs of weakness because of the absence of a father figure in his upbringing as his mother has proved to be equal to the image of her male counterpart.

Similarly, the widowed mothers in *Shahnameh* rise to such stature that two of the greatest kings are raised by them. Faranak is a fascinatingly strong mother who after her husband's murder at the hands of Zahak's men raises Fereydun in the remote countryside (Ferdowsi, 2001: 26-28) but unlike Perceval's mother, she does not hinder her only son from seeking revenge for

his father's death. Portraying the image of a desperate mother, Faranak does anything from fierce resistance to pitiable pleading to protect her son. But when the time arrives, she also is a prudent and experienced mother who cautions her son against his fiery and impulsive passions of youth in seeking revenge. Farangis is another such figure who, after the death of Siyavash, raises Keykhosrow alone and joins the Persians against her treacherous father to avenge the death of her husband (Bassari, 1971: 128-162). She is pregnant when her father, Afrasiab, kills her husband and condemns her to a life of grief and fear. Farangis, however, stays strong and raises Keykhosrow to seek justice for Siyavash's blood, avenge the evil done to his family, and claim his right to the throne to rule in peace and prosperity. All of these tasks, Keykhosrow determines to achieve and it is after accomplishing them that he accepts the crown, becoming the ideal king of Persia.

Such are the images of the women who play a pivotal role in the upbringing of their sons and manage to teach them all of the characteristics needed for becoming ideal kings. They fulfill their image as the mother so skillfully that their sons grow up to be virtuous and powerful kings who can keep the balance between justice and mercy. This shows how wise and brave their mothers are, who do not shun away from the affairs of the kingdom as masculine or harsh matters. In contrast, the image we find in the *Le Morte d'Arthur*, like many other medieval romances, is the retreat of the queen to the background of the court when faced with blood-dripping swords, which renders her powerless when bereft of her king's protection. Whereas in *Shahnameh*, her image changes as she braces herself for the patriarchal world, learns its rules, and although powerless for some time, raises her son to reclaim what is rightfully his. Consequently, this close analysis shows how reductionist the archetype of the mother can be for the various mother images that differ in so crucial characteristics that put them in sharp contrast to one another.

2.2 The Diversions: Magic and Swords

Having observed the images women possess successively throughout the routine of their lives, it is time to see how they break away from the prescribed procedure written for them. It should be noted again that each of the stages discussed previously, although restricted in nature, were not passively obeyed by our female characters. On the contrary, these women pushed their limits in a constant attempt to gain as much freedom as they could, sometimes even succeeding in breaking their frames and emerging victorious in their resistance against the patriarchal system. Still, what takes a greater degree of courage is breaking free from these traditional images even at the cost of losing all relations with other figures, such as the father, the husband, or the son and

becoming a lonely outcast. Making such courageous decisions can be analyzed in the light of the fact that for individuation to really result in individuality, one must create her own image by breaking others that are not hers (Moore & Hillman, 1989: 40-41). In this study, the images of sorceress and warrior are recognized as the two major diversions from the routine path of medieval female life. Reading the two texts closely, it can be noticed that almost early in their first stage as the daughter, a few female characters choose to pursue a different way of life. The alternative they turn to, however, is not the same in the two books, and the views of their respective societies regarding their choice vary from absolutely reproaching, to hesitantly approving, and even heartily praising.

2.2.1 The Sorceress

Magic has never been an easy concept for any nation in the world throughout history. Even in societies where magic is praised as a powerful and useful force, it is still held in awe, and its practitioners are feared because they possess a power that is not guaranteed to be always benevolent. Hence the ideas of white magic and black magic, formed in the minds of primitive people and passed onto our ancestors, are still used in modern times when discussing the matter. As argued in James Frazer's classic study, *The Golden Bough* (1994)*,* with the introduction of religion to societies around the world, magic was further pushed to its darker realms and practicing it became more associated with evil intentions (60). This is a pivotal fact in understanding the views of our texts towards the women who choose magic as their way of gaining independence. It must be noted that this analysis deals with the images of the sorceress, and not its archetype; in other words, while the sorceress archetype focuses on the generally chaotic force of anima (Hillman, 1985: 36), the sorceress images differ greatly from one another and each display specific features in proportion to their contexts.

Starting with the disapproving view, in *Shahnameh*, magic is almost always regarded as an evil force that belongs to Ahriman and is used to deceive people through lies and illusions (Arzhangi, 2015: 103). In Zoroastrianism, there is a great opposition between truth, or 'asha', which belongs to Ahura Mazda, and untruth, or 'drug', which belongs to Ahriman; accordingly, white magic is aligned with asha and black magic with drug. In *Shahnameh*, which resonates with Zoroastrian beliefs, there are few instances of white magic, the most famous of which are Zal's invocations of Simurgh for succor (Khosravian, 2005: 50-51). Since black magic belongs to Ahriman, any person who uses magic, whether man or woman, gets involved with him and, as a result, is doomed to eternal damnation. The most famous woman who has dealings with magic in *Shahnameh* is Sudabeh (Seyed-Gohrab, 1999: 74), and yet, she is

not a sorceress or "zan jādū" herself but seeks help from one who is not afraid of committing the worst crimes such as adultery or abortion, portraying the most evil image a woman can have (Ferdowsi, 2001: 245). The wicked image of Sudabeh is further shown in contrast with Siyavash's innocence. What is of greater importance for this discussion, however, is that Sudabeh does not use magic to break free from the pattern; quite the contrary, she uses magic to strengthen her position as the queen and her image as an innocent wife when she deceives Keykavus against his son. Other instances of zan jādū, found in Rostam and Esfandiar's adventures, appear nameless and only as evil forces to be overcome without having any character, thus displaying no specific image (Sharifian, 2013: 84). It can be seen, therefore, that not only is the image of a sorceress regarded as evil, but it also provides no freedom for women in *Shahnameh* and has no function other than deception.

Contrary to *Shahnameh* that rejects magic straight away, *Le Morte d'Arthur* takes different complex points of view towards it and allows men and women to try their hands at both white and black magic although it is always Christianity, having transformed white magic to miracle, that triumphs over all the other shapes of extraordinary deeds (Saunders, 2009: 209). The most important sorceress in *Le Morte d'Arthur* is the youngest sister of Arthur, Morgan le Fay, who chooses a path different from her sisters and peers when she goes on to learn magic at a very young age (Malory, 1906, vol. 1: 8). Displaying ambivalent images, she remains a distant figure from her family and keeps changing her position from a friend to an enemy of her brother. She uses magic as a way of becoming independent and gaining so much power that not only does she need no man to save her when faced with danger, but she also becomes a threat to many Knights of the Round Table herself. However, in the end, she is the one who takes Arthur to Avalon and promises to heal him as she mourns over his body (Malory, 1906, vol. 2: 389).

Although possessing other images such as the lover, the wife, and the mother, Morgan remains distant from her husband and son, retaining her independence and fulfilling her roles only so much as she is obliged by duty. In contrast, as it was seen in the lover/wife category, her lover image is very passionate and even mad as she is willing to kill her brother and husband to make her lover the king (Malory, 1906, vol. 1: 104). In whatever relationship she is, Morgan proves to be the more powerful party of the pair and is always interested in her own desires, "respecting no boundaries and acknowledging no rules save those dictated by her own ambitions, envy, and lust" (Sklar, 1992: 28). Behind all these, however, one can see the strong and proud image of a woman who is not afraid of paving her way with blood and black magic if it means retaining her authority in a world that knows women only as distressed damsels.

In the same category of the sorceress, but in sharp contrast with Morgan, there is Lady of the Lake who is more associated with white magic. Benevolent to Arthur as she is, the Lady of the Lake remains second to Merlin in playing the crucial role of the magician advisor. The inconsistencies in the narratives surrounding her character render two Ladies of the Lake: one being the fairy that raises Lancelot and remains distant from Arthur's court, the other becoming Merlin's paramour who takes on the image of a femme fatal (Lacy, 1996: 267). Despite having learned all of Marlin's magic, she does not prevent the downfall of Arthur. The white magic of Lady of the Lake turns out to be somewhat more passive than the black magic of Morgan le Fay, revealing the fact that even if endowed with the greatest magic of Merlin, it requires an ambitious and stronger, even if darker, character to make a woman powerful enough to break free from her prescribed roles and play the real queen in the chess of kings. Therefore, we can see an extensive variety of sorceress images that use different forms of magic, and disclose more unique details about their personality with each spell they perform. This allows us to see these sorceresses not as the shadows of one greater archetype, but as characters who have their own special image.

2.2.2 The Warrior

The other image that rises against the traditions is that of the warrior. Very few women are willing to accept such a masculine role, and in the entirety of *Shahnameh*, there is only one woman who becomes an actual warrior maiden. Gordafarid is the famous maiden who puts her helmet on and brandishes her sword when she sees her father's castle under the attack of the enemy (Ferdowsi, 2001: 206). She, in her first role as the daughter, attempts to be a son for her father and equally serve her family; an endeavor that she eventually accomplishes. But masculine as her image is, her battle with Sohrab depicts her paradoxically as one of the most attractive women (Ferdowsi, 2001: 207). It is a new image for a woman to be as courageous as a man on the battlefield and her prowess in fighting gives a special edge to her attractiveness as a maiden. The warrior image of Gordafarid defines femininity anew when she proudly crosses the boundaries to become what was always regarded as masculine (Alibaygi Sarhali, 2022: 195). Gordafarid, however, never takes the role of a lover despite what Sohrab would have wished; she remains a maiden, despising any bond that would chain her to anyone or anything. Such a detachment from everyone gives Gordafarid an even greater power than that of a sorceress like Morgan le Fay, who endangers her land and herself by meddling with other's affairs. Gordafarid's end is not clear, and nothing more is heard of her after Sohrab's departure, leaving the castle in peace and acknowledging her power and mastery over it.

By contrast, there are no female knights in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and the only times women touch a sword are when they hand it over to the knights and the authority and power with it. There is no instance of a woman donning armor instead of a dress and going to defend her land or even using a dagger in a sudden act of self-defense. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*'s world, women are sweet vulnerable creatures that never use weapons, not even in critical situations, let alone choosing to become a warrior for a lifetime. However, there are women who might not brandish swords but dare to step out from their safe roles and venture their life for what they value. Some of the maidens are powerful not in the matters of love and magic but in the matters of devotion and honor, even at great costs. Although such instances are rare, they are still significant in depicting another image of women: the image of a priestess. Perhaps the most famous are the unnamed damsels at the service of the Holy Grail who devote their lives to performing the mystic mass and healing the wounded knights who prove to be worthy of their services (Berthelot, 1996: 157-158). Although their image might overlap with that of the healing sorceress, here disguised under the veil of Christianity, there are some women who do not limit themselves to performing rituals but actively seek adventures.

Perceval's sister is the first woman who goes on her own adventure and overcomes the dangers of Perilous Chapel, achieving what even her brother could not (Evans, 1898, vol. 1: 286-290). In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, she joins her brother and other knights to go on the quest for the Holy Grail and sacrifices herself to heal a sick lady in spite of her companion's attempts to hinder her (Malory, 1906, vol. 2: 252). With such a great act of self-sacrifice, "Malory allows Percivale's sister to claim 'worship' for herself, an unusually strong seizure of power and agency for a Malorian woman that has previously been seen only in ambivalent or actively evil figures such as Nynyve [Marlin's paramour] or Morgan le fay" (Caughey, 2011: 168). This comparison with Morgan le Fay becomes more interesting when the two characters are analyzed as women who seek their independence, although through different ways that lead them to different images. Even though Perceval's sister cannot be regarded as a warrior maiden per se, she proves to be brave enough to challenge demons and welcome death, being armored with faith and holiness. Thus, these diverse images illustrate how dynamic and progressive the warrior image is (Lane & Wurts, 1998: 134), going beyond the physical features of its archetype and demonstrating psychological aspects as the character's image progresses.

3. Conclusion

To assess the findings of the present article, it is necessary to return to the questions posed in the introduction concerning the nature, similarities and

differences of the images of women presented in *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *Shahnameh*, when read comparatively. Hillman's Post-Jungian theory of archetypal images allowed this study to analyze every image of each character individually which revealed specific distinguishing details that, although crucial, had often been neglected previously. As the findings of this article show, a pattern of the archetypal images of the daughter, the lover/wife, and the mother can be drawn to categorize the major images of the women in the two works. For each category, various examples were brought from both texts in equal numbers, covering almost all the aspects of the discussed image without giving preference or value to either of the texts. Considering the nature of the images and their relations to the characters, two important matters were revealed; firstly, although falling into the same categories, each image is unique in its representation of the character and its relations with the other images. Secondly, each character can take on various images in her life not only successively but also simultaneously as was shown in the cases of Rudabeh, Manijeh, Igraine, and Morgan le Fay. Moreover, the relations of each image with other images were discussed, especially those of its male counterparts such as the father, the lover/husband, and the son; for instance, the image of the lover/wife does not deal only with her lover/husband but has complex relations with her father and later her son too.

Contrary to the common belief, it was also shown how these women, even in their traditional frames, display proud independent images of themselves and use their freedom to the utmost when faced with patriarchal images. Going beyond the usual pattern, this study found two forms of variation which were grouped as the two images of the warrior and the sorceress. As shown and discussed, the image of the warrior stands prominent in *Shahnameh*, especially in the character of Gordafarid, whereas it is the image of the sorceress, as portrayed by Morgan le Fay and Lady of the Lake, that has such a position in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The two images were also found to be significant in their opposition to one another, to the other images that are usually taken up by women, and to the images of their male relations, chiefly those of the father and the husband/lover. The relations of these two standing out, if not rebellious, images were especially analyzed in relation to the other images and additionally in the contexts of their societies and their respective cultures whose rejection or acceptance of them is reflected in the negativity or positivity of their portrayal in the two texts.

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دوشیزگان دلربا یا جادوگران شریر: بررسی پسا یونگی انگاره‌های کهن‌الگویی در مرگ آرتور توماس ملوری و شاهنامه فردوسی

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چکیده

جستار حاضر پژوهشی تطبیقی است که تصاویر روایت شده از زنان در مرگِ آرتورِ اثر توماس مَلوری و شاهنامهٔ فردوسی را بررسی و با یکدیگر مقایسه می‌کند. در این پژوهش دو پرسش محوری مطرح می‌شود: جوهرهٔ تصاویر ارائه شده از زنان در این دو متن چیست؟ و شباهت‌ها و تفاوت‌های این تصاویر از نظر جایگاه و نحوه برخورد بافتشان با آن‌ها چگونه است؟ برای پاسخ دادن به این پرسش‌ها، این پژوهش ازخوانش پسایونگی جیمز هیلمَن مبتنی بر تصاویرِ کهن‌الگویی استفاده می‌کند. برخلاف دیدگاه کلاسیک یونگی که کلی‌نگر است و در آن شخصیت‌ها به تعدادی کهن‌الگو تقلیل داده می‌شوند، دیدگاه تصاویرِ کهن‌الگویی بر حفظ فردیت و ویژگی‌های خاص هر تصویر تاکید می‌کند. به همین دلیل پژوهشِ حاضر با تکیه بر این خوانش به بررسی تصاویر زنان در مرگِ آرتور و شاهنامه هم به صورت جداگانه و هم در مقایسه با یکدیگر می‌پردازد. در این پژوهش، پس از بررسی دقیق ویژگی‌های منحصربه‌فرد هر تصویر، تصاویر هر یک از شخصیت‌ها با توجه به ویژگی‌هاشان تحت سه تصویر کهن‌الگویی دختر، معشوقه/همسر، و مادر گروه‌بندی می‌شوند. همچنین دو تصویر کهن‌الگویی جادوگر و جنگجو به عنوان دو دگرسانی اصلی از این الگو در بافت خود بررسی می‌شوند. در نتیجه، این پژوهش الگویی جامع و مبسوط ارائه می‌کند که با مثال‌هایی گوناگون از هر دو متن تایید شده است و می‌تواند برای تحلیل دقیق‌ترین جزیی‌ترین ویژگی‌های تصاویر دیگر شخصیت‌ها به کار رود.

واژگان کلیدی: تصویر کهن‌الگویی، نقد پسایونگی، نقد فمنیستی، ادبیات آرتوری، شاهنامه

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