

THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY: THE CASE OF MORGANA FROM BBC'S *MERLIN*

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Abstract: *This article applies the concept of the 'heroine's journey' defined by Maureen Murdock in her book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (1990) to the interpretation of Morgana, the character of the BBC's series *Merlin* (2008-2012). The article follows Morgana's quest for reconciliation with her feminine nature and concurrently how it was shaped by the Arthurian society and culture in this digital remediation.*

Keywords: *Arthurian legend, heroine's journey, TV adaptation*

1. Introduction

Maureen Murdock, in her highly influential book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (1990), details the stages that a woman has to complete so as to become a whole and balanced individual. Murdock's theory, based on psychology and the examination of culture and society, proposes that today's purpose is for women to look within themselves and heal the split between the male and female attributes of their character, thus achieving the unification of the "Man with Heart" and "Woman of Wisdom" (Murdock 2013: 183). She suggests that we look beyond duality and reach a holy union of body, mind, and soul.

The article analyses the notions Murdock proposed in this book, such as the mother and father archetypes, the allies that come along the way, the trials and obstacles one must face along the journey in order to ultimately reach the level of completion. All these ideas are applied to the interpretation of Morgana Pendragon, the character in the TV series produced by the BBC, *Merlin* (2008-2012).

In the five seasons span, Morgana played a very important role in representing the female gender, acting as the half-sister to Prince Arthur, the illegitimate daughter of King Uther, but, most importantly, as the villain to Merlin's magical purpose of saving the kingdom of Albion. Morgana acts as a warning for Merlin, about the potential for turning to the dark side of magic, and, as her character develops, I investigate how and whether she follows the heroine's journey as designed by Murdock, which steps she completes and which she does not, and ultimately how her character unravels towards a spiral of madness and revenge, never reaching the union with herself.

I also look at Morgana from a feminist standpoint, discussing how she exhibits her subversiveness through her magic which goes against the patriarchal system, her social position of superiority as a white woman and a princess, and how she interacts with other women, while attempting to create a feminine community.

2. BBC *Merlin* and the portrayal of female characters

The TV series *Merlin* (2008-2012) has received ambiguous criticism in relation to its position about feminist issues and the representation of its female characters. I will briefly mention some of the praise and criticism that the series has received so as to offer a holistic view of the issue.

First and foremost, it must be said that feminism and female empowerment are issues that have divided many people, especially in the context of the diversity that makes the very idea of empowerment contradictory. The creators of *Merlin* chose to adapt the Arthurian legends in order to appeal to contemporary viewers and their needs and, when it comes to the issue of female representation, *Merlin* has “also chosen to plot feminist arcs for these characters, espousing ideals such as equality, female power, and feminine community.” (Edwards 2015: 3)

Throughout the series, we see characters such as Morgana and Gwen, who are the female leads, as well as secondary female characters, such as Isolde and Morgause, getting involved in politics, chivalrous adventures, and even fights, displaying skills equal to the male protagonists. Morgana is given the leading role as the king’s ward and as a witch who aims to take the throne of Camelot. She devises several plots and makes several allies, and “Each time she makes an alliance, she interacts with the male leaders in a similar fashion, using her quick tongue and her magic to establish the fear and power she needs to command. Her sexuality is never brought into the equation as a bargaining tool” (Wente 2013: 65). Some critics, like Sarah Wente, approve of the fact that Morgana never used her sexuality to manipulate her male allies, even if this seemed to be the quickest and easiest solution; others, such as Sarah Trammell, claim that “To be an empowered woman can become synonymous with being a sexual woman, and witch-media contributes to that idea” (Trammell 2020: 8). We could say that the TV series had a family demographic in mind, so overt sexuality was never an option, but, more importantly, the lack of sexual experiences might be an indicator of Morgana’s deeper psychological traumas which will be explored in the following pages.

Finally, we have to acknowledge that Morgana is also the main villain of the series and “When witches are made into villains, they become a warning against powerful women and the damage they can do to people and society” (ibid.). Some consider it commendable that women joined the fight against the injustice that King Uther enforced upon the people, while others claim that it is not politically correct for women to be represented as villains. Jennifer Edwards (2015: 69) believes that “in *Merlin*, women who take action, who are bold and aggressive, must be punished in order to be accepted, or else they are marked as evil and dangerous”. We could say that villains, no matter their gender, always end up being punished in the Manichean battle of good versus evil, and maybe it is empowering for women to reach the position of the main antagonist, regardless of their fate in the end. We should nevertheless acknowledge that Morgana was a powerful villainess throughout the series, and the next part of this article will focus on the steps she took to accomplish her status.

3. Morgana Pendragon: from fairy princess to villain

Lady Morgana is one of the four protagonists of the series, along with Merlin, Arthur, and Guinevere. Her story starts with her as the ward of King Uther, enjoying the life of a privileged princess in the castle, attending feasts and looking

pretty. Gradually, her character evolves, as she observes the cruelty King Uther shows to all the users of magic, which he outlawed in the kingdom. Morgana shows compassion for the victims Uther executed, and then her feelings towards her guardian turn from adoration to hatred.

As the series unfolds, we learn that her father and Uther's friend, Gorlois, and her mother Vivienne are out of the picture, so the burden of raising her falls on King Uther's shoulders and on Guinevere, who, in this version, is Morgana's maid. Prince Arthur and Merlin are her friends and allies, up to the point when she realizes that her new magical powers set her apart from the rest of the characters, as she fears for her life under Uther's ban on magic.

In the first episodes, Morgana is described as a compassionate and strong-willed character, though, in secret, she is afraid of her newly awakened magical abilities which she does not understand, as can be seen later in *The Nightmare Begins* (BBC, season 2, episode 3). (Van Beek 2016: 18) Morgana becomes afraid of her magical powers when King Uther bans magic in his kingdom, under penalty of death, but "From a feminist perspective, the fact that the witch has always been significantly presented as a woman 'with a *different* power than the average woman' (2007: 3) provides her with a highly subversive potential power" (Alonso 2020: 25). Morgana has always been vocal about the injustices that she sees in the kingdom and her magical skills add to her independence and fierceness.

The series takes a feminist twist in several instances, as a way to keep up with society's demand for equal representation, and Morgana and Guinevere act as the main representatives of the female gender "espousing ideals such as equality, female power, and feminine community." (Edwards 2015: 57) Slowly and gradually, Morgana realizes the extent of her power, both in terms of magical abilities and in terms of her will power, so she sets out of the boundaries of the castle and King Uther's restriction in order to discover herself and her destiny. "While still living at Camelot, she is adamant about helping Arthur on his various quests, at one point bluntly telling him, 'Why let the boys have all the fun?'" ("Poisoned Chalice"). (Wente 2013: 65)

During the third season, Morgana becomes a full-blown villain under the tutelage of her half-sister and evil witch Morgause, and "she slowly turns against Uther, seeing how magic can be good, while he refuses to see that (BBC, season 2, episode 8)" (Van Beek 2016: 18). After this moment, her road towards revenge has no return and her descent towards darkness and bitterness is inescapable.

In the following pages, I analyse Morgana's life's journey along Murdock's theory and then reach a conclusion as to what extent the TV character embodies this feminist discussion about how society and our relationships with each other shape our character and destiny. At the same time, I identify and explain the points where Morgana diverges from the theory and how this contributes to her inability to achieve a complete self.

In the first chapter of her book, "Separation from the Feminine", Maureen Murdock states that

The degree to which a woman's mother represents the status quo, the restrictive context of sexual roles, and the deep-seated sense of female inferiority within a patriarchal society determines the degree to which a woman will seek to separate herself from her mother. (Murdock 2013: 30)

Morgana's mother Vivienne was the wife of Gorlois, King Uther's friend and ally, but her fate remains unaddressed. Morgana often speaks fondly of her memories with her supposed father Gorlois, but never mentions Vivienne, either because she died when Morgana was quite young or because she had to flee the 'Great Purge', to hide the fact that she had magical powers. The absence of a mother or a mother figure leads Morgana to attach herself to her servant Guinevere, a woman of her own age, but their initially healthy relationship becomes corrupt and is terminated when Morgana prophesises that Guinevere would become the queen of Camelot upon marrying Arthur, the position that Morgana was coveting for herself.

4. Playing for team masculine

"If a woman feels alienated or rejected by her mother she may first reject the feminine and search for recognition by the father and the patriarchal culture" (Murdock 2013: 42). As stated before, Morgana did not know her mother, therefore she turned to King Uther, her guardian, for emotional and societal support. "Our heroine looks for role models who can show her the steps along the way. These male allies may take the form of a father, boyfriend, teacher, manager, or coach..." (idem: 50). Following Uther's wishes, Morgana turns into a skilled swordswoman and attends royal feasts and tournaments. Her version of femininity is shaped by Uther, as is her ideology. Although the king does care for her, their relationship fails when it turns out it was based on a lie, Uther hiding the fact that he is her biological father. Her shock and devastation at this news contributes to her quest for revenge.

"When he died and I took you into my care, you fought me from the beginning. Your will is as strong as my own." (Uther on Morgana, *TV Tropes* n.d.) As a young girl, Morgana was quite attached to Uther, attending banquets and sharing conversations, but her maturation brings about the realization that King Uther is vicious and vindictive towards all users of magic, a category which included her, now showing prophetic skills through her dreams. Fearing for her life in the castle, Morgana decides to take action against her caretaker.

Famous author and Arthurian researcher Geraldine Heng, in the chapter "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory", claims that magic is "a woman's equivalent of a knight's skill at arms, and a means of accomplishing a purpose by her own efforts" (Heng 1996: 112). It would be justified for men and knights more specifically, as they are the protectors of the kingdom, to fear witches as it "is entirely possible for magic to overpower sword, shield, and armor" (Chandler 2018: 196-197) From a feminist viewpoint, we can assess that, even during the medieval period, the Arthurian legends became popular and the figure of Morgan Le Fay was established as the female antagonist to King Arthur, magic was portrayed as a threat to the patriarchy.

Murdock (2013: 51) claims that "Lack of genuine involvement or negative involvement on the part of the father, stepfather, uncle, or grandfather deeply wounds a woman's sense of herself". King Uther is indeed involved in Morgana's life and education, theoretically in a positive manner, but the discovery that he was her biological father and the deception he used to keep the secret crush her. "Morgana discovers in the third season that Uther had an adulterous relationship with her mother and that she is therefore his illegitimate daughter". (Chandler 2015: 11) "Morgana's initial disagreements with Uther become bitter hatred as the

series progresses, marking her change from a passionate proponent of others' rights to a tyrant in her quest for vengeance". (Howey 2015: 5) It is ironic to observe that Morgana started as a sweet, innocent woman who only wanted to help and defend the weak, but, after the revelation of her true paternity, she becomes a vengeful and determined witch, set on taking her throne. What she doesn't realise is that her violent actions are the very strategies that King Uther employs.

According to Murdock (2013: 51) the father figure does not have to be necessarily the one the heroine relies on, another masculine figure can take over. Morgana's path is crossed by a variety of male counterparts. In this case, even if Arthur and Morgana were raised together, when they reach adulthood their visions of the world clash – Arthur stands for justice and defending the rights of the majority, while Morgana, enraged by Uther's deception and his witch hunts, sets out to take control of the kingdom in a most violent manner. Merlin was Morgana's ally until she starts plotting to destroy the kingdom, and Gaius, the court physician, seemingly treating Morgana for her nightmares, turns out to use his skills only to gaslight her out of her magical abilities for prophecy.

Morgana gradually realizes that she cannot rely on the men she formerly believed to be her friends, like Merlin and Arthur, or the father figures she saw in King Uther or Gaius the physician, and her loneliness and need for connection drive her out of the castle and into the mysterious forest. This initiates her quest towards finding her identity and purpose in life.

This quest takes the form of adventure in the BBC series. In fiction, simply going out of one's house has been associated with the beginning of adventure, literal and metaphorical, and Morgana, as Murdock claims:

crosses the threshold, leaves the safety of her parents' home, and goes in search of herself. Along the way she meets ogres who trick her into going down dead ends, adversaries who challenge her cunning and resolve, and obstacles which she must avoid, circumscribe, or overcome. (Murdock 2013: 58)

The true identity of a person is revealed in times of crisis and with no safety net to fall upon, and this also includes the protection and guidance of the people loving and surrounding us. Once Morgana realizes that she is a witch and her father Uther would have her executed for this, she decides to take action and stop him and his murderous crusade against magic. She sets out to find allies in her maternal sister Morgause, a fellow witch with a similar desire to overthrow Uther. What Morgana doesn't realize is that her allies have their own agendas as well, so she ends up acting as a pawn in their schemes to overthrow the king.

Morgana's gradual change in character and spiral towards evil is also symbolized by her personal style. At the beginning of the series she wears bright and happy colours, suggesting her innocence and naïvety, but "Morgana's transference to a black horse and attire, which reflects the shift in her character from feminine to masculine, from passive to active, augmented by her relationship with Morgause". (Brennan 2015: 49)

As Morgana sets out on her quest, she must find her purpose in life, which, for her, is to become the Queen of Camelot, with the help of her half-sister Morgause.

To destroy the myth of inferiority a woman needs to carry her own sword of truth, sharpening her blade on the stone of discernment. Because so much of women's truth has been obscured by patriarchal myths, new forms, new styles, and a new

language must be developed by women to express their knowledge. A woman must find her own voice. (Murdock 2013: 67)

Despite finding her purpose in life, to take the throne, Morgana fails to come up with a plan for ruling the land justly and for all citizens, those who embrace magic, as well as those who don't. Instead of eliminating her father King Uther's segregating mentality, she opts for the same strategy of violence, but with the additional magic ingredient.

This is even pointed out in the show, by Queen Annis, whom Morgana tries to goad into going to war against Camelot. "You came to me in the name of Gorlois," Annis says when Morgana berates her for being weak. "But I fear you're more like Uther than you realise" ("His Father's Son"). (Nygård 2013: 26)

Morgana's purpose to become the queen is tainted since its inception because that is a power move that King Uther himself taught her. It might have been more fitting, in accordance with literary and cultural tropes of female interception, for a successful feminine quest to end with the protagonist becoming a priestess of a female deity, and, in this capacity, aim to help users of magic positively, instead of dismantling Uther's tactics with his own tools. This behaviour fits the pattern of a vicious circle, a repetition of a toxic behaviour until either Morgana or Uther die at the hands of one another.

When Morgana does become the high priestess of the Triple Goddess, as well as Queen of Camelot, her new position gives her courage and resources, but, as Murdock believes

When the unconscious masculine takes over, a woman may feel that no matter what she does or how she does it, it is never enough. She never feels satisfied with completing a task because he always urges her to pursue another. (Murdock 2013: 77)

Morgana never fully detaches herself from her ego, encapsulated in her desire to rule and prove her father, King Uther, wrong. Her quest seems to come to an end when she becomes queen, but she fails to realize that ruling a kingdom is a hard and continuous job. Moreover, she fails to keep the land safe for the old religion and for people with magic powers. Instead of her father as King, she crowns herself a Queen, but she is equally violent, twisted, and full of revenge. Morgana seizes the throne without reconciling with her feminine side, even if she performs functions of female intercession, being the High Priestess of the Triple Goddess, or even if she has the support of other female characters, such as her sister Morgause. Morgana's actions can be labelled masculine in the way they propagate the kind of violence that King Uther had initiated. Therefore, Morgana never realizes that in order to accomplish her personal quest she must depart from the patriarchal models that she has been unconsciously following. "Thus the heroine chooses not to be victim of forces beyond her control but to take her life into her own hands". (Murdock 2013: 85) From this step forward Morgana only partially follows the Heroine's Journey and never accomplishes self-fulfilment.

5. Into the belly of the whale

The descent, as a literary trope, can be presented as a journey to the underworld, the dark night of the soul, the belly of the whale, the meeting of the

dark goddess, or simply a state of depression. Murdock asserts that “This journey to the underworld is filled with confusion and grief, alienation and disillusion, rage and despair. A woman may feel naked and exposed, dry and brittle, or raw and turned inside-out”. (Murdock 2013: 96)

In season 5 Episode 8 “The Hollow Queen”, Morgana is imprisoned and held captive at the bottom of a well for two years. Physically this symbolizes a trip to the underworld after Morgana is fatally wounded, but metaphorically this is presented as a great opportunity for her to evaluate her life, her goals, and her relationship with her family. During her captivity, she shares her ‘cell’ with a baby dragon named Aithusa. The two bond and act as each other’s companions, but, after their release, we realize that Aithusa hasn’t grown properly and is dependent on Morgana, even though she could have already become a magnificent and powerful dragon. The pair is symbolic of Morgana’s journey, with her great potential, but the character’s life at this stage is presented in opposition with this potential. This crisis is something she brings upon herself, as she has been unable to overcome her past trauma. Instead of acknowledging her inner darkness and stepping towards the light, Morgana remains in the dark, unaware of herself, her powers, or her destiny. She is eternally bound to the vengeful quest King Uther had laid out for her.

Murdock writes that when a woman realises her patriarchy-enforced life trajectory is not beneficial, she feels “an urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine, whether that be the Goddess, the Mother, or her little girl within”. (Murdock 2013: 117) In the spirit of this observation, it can be argued that Morgana’s quest follows the Heroine’s Journey to the stage where she yearns to reconnect with her feminine side, “her body, her emotions, her spirit, her creative wisdom”. (Murdock 2013: 117) Unfortunately, in the absence of a positive female model in her life, Morgana is unable to make this transition. Her mother is absent from the narrative, her sister Morgause is as incomplete as Morgana herself, and her maid Guinevere chooses to be on the side of the male hero.

Initially in the series, Morgana is close with Guinevere and, on several occasions, they defend each other, emotionally and physically, a female bond symbolized by the sword fight scenes in which they secure each other’s backs. Gradually Morgana starts showing cracks in her friendly façade so Guinevere loses her trust. At the same time, Morgana realizes that Guinevere no longer shares her mentality and values. Therefore, Morgana chooses another ally, her half-sister Morgause, who is also a fellow witch and, most importantly, a woman determined to exterminate King Uther. Though the sisters became close and Morgause even sacrifices herself, in season four in the episode ‘The Darkest Hour’ (Merlin Fandom 2012), the glue that brought them together in the first place was their shared hatred and lust for revenge, rather than sisterly love.

From a feminist standpoint, it is disheartening that the feminine community and friendship that existed between Morgana and Guinevere, on the one hand, and between Morgana and her half-sister Morgause, on the other, came to a tragic end as both these relationships were based on ulterior motives. Morgana appears to be lonely and without any female support on multiple occasions. When these women cooperated peacefully, they succeeded in their plans, but each of them fails without the support of their friends. Therefore, I would like to argue that *Merlin* proposes the idea that women are stronger when they are working together towards a common goal. When Morgana takes on the role of the villainess of the

series, she is separated from her former female partners, losing the support, loyalty and friendship that could help her in her personal journey towards betterment. Instead, Morgana chooses the road towards revenge, which proves to be a lonely and treacherous one

Once again, Morgana fails to connect with the other characters, whether her maid and friend Guinevere or her half-sister Morgause. Morgana allows herself to be carried away by her revenge plan and neglects herself and her mental and psychological needs. As a tragic result, she never manages to reconnect with her feminine side.

6. Mother and daughter reunited

Murdock further comments on the heroine's journey and argues that the next step "involves healing...the split from one's feminine nature". (Murdock 2013: 136) Morgana's attempt to heal herself, her feminine and masculine side, is signalled by her alliance with Mordred. Mordred's story starts as a druid child in desperate need of protection, and Morgana gladly assists him and exhibits motherly behaviour. The two reunite when Mordred is an adult, heartbroken over the death of his girlfriend, and hell-bent on revenge against Arthur. However, Morgana's and Mordred's alliance is superficial with the common goal of revenge, yet again.

Repeatedly Morgana falls into the trap (and trope) of revenge, instead of choosing to heal herself and her feminine and masculine side. Mordred acts as a lost opportunity for connection between Morgana and the motherly side she could have exhibited. It is disheartening to realize that the trauma of not being raised by her mother is repeated once again, as her feelings towards Mordred have an ulterior motive.

For Murdock, "The masculine is an archetypal force; it is not a gender. When it becomes unbalanced and unrelated to life it becomes combative, critical, and destructive". (Murdock 2013: 158) If transferred to Morgana's journey, this perspective indicates that Morgana has lost her positive masculine traits, and only recreates the negative ones that her father taught her, like violence, vindictiveness, and hatred. Prince Arthur and Merlin try on several occasions to positively influence Morgana and help her grow as a person, but she remains stuck in a vicious cycle, repeating the acts of King Uther, and never moving forward.

The final step of the journey is the merging between the masculine and feminine sides of the heroine, coming to the true realization that, in order for a person to be complete, one must grasp and nurture one's two natures. On this topic Murdock believes that the heroine

must develop a positive relationship with her inner Man with Heart and find the voice of her Woman of Wisdom to heal her estrangement from the sacred feminine. As she honours her body and soul as well as her mind, she heals the split within herself and the culture. (Murdock 2013: 183)

In the TV series *Merlin*, the four main characters are symmetrical toward each other. For example, both Merlin and Morgana have magical powers, but their practice is different. Merlin defends the kingdom, and the innocent, while Morgana wishes to destroy everything that King Uther created. On the other hand, Prince Arthur and Guinevere act as a successful power couple, who think tactically, but always with compassion.

Though the Great Dragon described Morgana to Merlin as "... the darkness to your light, the hatred to your love" (*Merlin*: "The Tears of Uther Pendragon"), it is not Merlin who is Morgana's true opposite: Guinevere is. They start out as lady and lady's maid, one high and one low, only to switch when Guinevere becomes Queen while Morgana becomes a hunted outcast. (Nygård 2013: 30)

Morgana is presented in the TV series as a woman who is imperfect but who sets out to find her destiny and purpose in life, getting lost in the way. She did not face her demons, in this case, her father King Uther, the lack of a mother figure and its failed replacement with Guinevere, or the fact that her supposed friends Merlin and Arthur went against her in the end. Her refusal to accept her problems and fears led her to believe that she has none, therefore she continued her life's quest, but her unresolved psychological traumas caught up with her in each step of her quest. Ultimately, her life's journey may be regarded as a warning for the audience to bring our mental and psychological issues to the forefront of our lives, if we want to achieve mental, physical, and psychological wholeness.

7. Conclusion

Morgana never achieves her quest. On a realistic level, she does not manage to help the followers of the old religion and magic or her allies, on the contrary, most of them die assisting her in her futile quest, and, symbolically speaking, Morgana sadly never manages to heal and to merge her masculine and feminine sides.

Her growth as Arthur's antagonist is crucial for the narrative and develops in a highly sophisticated manner. Through Morgana, the audience are acquainted with a realistic character, with feelings, traumas, and insecurities. In our inclusive age, 'flawed' characters contribute to a both more balanced and more realistic representation of society. From the beginning of the story, we know that Morgana is bound to fail, because of the predictability of her journey, familiar to us from the Arthurian legends, which always described her as Arthur's enemy. This TV series, though, chooses to give Morgana a full life and representation in order to show that there are more aspects to her character than just being Arthur's antagonist. In an entertaining manner, we are encouraged to acknowledge the importance of the feminine and masculine sides of a character, the power and influence the mother as well as the father have on children, or the importance of mother/father figures, and, last but not least, the importance of allies, or friends, who can make or break someone.

When it comes to the issue of female representation and emancipation, Morgana is received with mixed feelings. On the one hand, she gradually becomes more independent and free thinking, but, on the other hand, she is too single-minded, set on revenge and not caring what she had to sacrifice in order to achieve it Morgana wants to become the queen of Camelot as she was the firstborn child of King Uther, but her determination to get the throne comes from a selfish desire to rule instead of her brother, not because she really wants to make a difference for herself or the other women who were wronged. She uses her magical skills as a way to empower herself, but she does not make any effort for the empowerment of other women as well. This may justify her portrayal as lonely and isolated from the female community around her. Morgana shows how her magic can be subversive and used against Merlin's male magic, or even against the knights and their

strength. Some critics claim that the series and its portrayal of Morgana are not sensitive enough to feminist issues since she is shown dying, without having achieved her goal to become the queen of Camelot. Technically, this fact is the absolute truth, but is it really success that defines the value of a character, or the effort and persistence of the quest? Morgana starts off in the series as a vain, beautiful, and spoiled princess living in a castle, but by the end, she gains enough strength, determination, influence, and to fight for her beliefs, even if those beliefs are not beneficial for her or the people of the kingdom.

The TV series *Merlin* manages to reverse the notion of the ‘witch hunt’ to the ‘witch hunting’ of those who wronged the witches them, as in the case of Morgana who set out to take her revenge on King Uther who banned the use of magic in the kingdom and persecuted all practitioners of magic. Though violence and revenge are never considered the right way to correct any problem, we have to acknowledge the fact that Morgana is ready to reject the psychological abuse inflicted upon her by her father King Uther and to stand up to him. Finally, the series portrays Morgana as a woman who ends up in the position of the villainess of the story due to the hardships and abandonment issues that she had to face her entire life, while demonstrating unequivocally that she is not inherently evil, as the tendency is in most Arthurian film adaptations. This point acts as the connection to the theory of the ‘heroine’s journey’ which has been analysed in this article as it adds shades to an otherwise negative portrayal, arguing that our past traumas follow us indefinitely if we do not seek to heal them. Ultimately, Morgana escapes the stereotypical representation of the witch either as an old ‘hag’ or as a seductress and carries herself as an educated woman, who uses her magical skills, her social position, and her wits for justified (or justifiable) political and social purposes.

The TV adaptation *Merlin* (2008-2012) brings the Arthurian legend back to life in a modern context, relevant for the contemporary audience, with characters easily identifiable, thus giving a new life to this old story.

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