The Mists of Avalon: Re-Writing a Siblings’ Bond

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From the Mists of Legend: Arthur and Morgan

For the past centuries, Arthurian legends have remained a source of never-ending curiosity both for the academia and a worldwide audience. Having originated in Britain, the tales of Arthur and his brave Knights of the Round Table travelled across Europe becoming some of the most popular narratives read in the Middle Ages. Today, Arthurian characters are a part of our cultural inheritance and imagination, which might be why their adventures have been continuously re-written throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The most recent TV adaptation Merlin by BBC (2008-2012) proves there is still room to further explore the Matter of Britain¹. Interestingly characters who received little attention during the Middle Ages are now increasingly popular, especially the women of Arthurian legend.

During the medieval period female roles in romance (and other literary forms) were often reduced to stereotypes that vented society’s misogynist² view of women. In fact, throughout the Middle Ages, there

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¹ The tales of King Arthur were taken to French territory by conteurs (descendants from the Celts) who escaped from Britain after the Anglo-Saxon invasion. The term “Matter of Britain”, however, is due to Jean Bodel, a 12th century French poet.

² According to R. Howard Bloch in Medieval Mysogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love, misogyny “is a way of speaking about, as distinct from doing to, women, though speech can be a form of action and even of social practice, or at least its ideological component. (…) I propose, then, a definition of misogyny as a speech act in which woman is the subject of the sentence and the predicate a more general term (…)” (4).
were essentially two opposing visions of women: they were either sinners, as Eve, or virgins, like Mary. In addition, women were regarded as inferior or weaker and usually viewed as “deformed” or “defective” male[s], one who could not reach the male standard of perfection” (Blamires 2). Thus, women in Arthurian literature were generally depicted as the virtuous and chaste damsels in distress (such as Guinevere), the terrifying, and often seductive, villains (like Morgan le Fay) or they could perform a mother role\(^3\) (as for instance Igraine, Arthur and Morgan’s mother). Consequently, it should not be a surprise that, when compared to their male counterparts, female characters played significantly smaller roles in medieval narratives, often acting as a support to the hero(s). Notwithstanding, women and their actions could also be the driving force in the storyline, like the poem *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* (*SGGK*) in which it is Morgan le Fay who sends the Green Knight/Bertilak to King Arthur’s court. Today the sorceress Morgan, also known as Morgana or Morgaine, has been placed at the centre of many texts devoted to the retelling of Arthurian legends. These modern narratives shift the adventures’ focus, positioning women at the heart of centuries-old tales. As a result of her new found fame, numerous studies have been published about Morgan, her role in medieval and modern texts, and her relationships with other characters, namely Lancelot, Guinevere, Gawain and, of course, Arthur. However, of all the material published and debated upon, very few studies have paid attention to the emotional connection between the enchantress and her half-brother, namely in the famous work *Le Morte D’Arthur* (1470).

Written by Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur* is a unique text in the reference it makes to Morgan le Fay’s affection for Arthur. After Arthur’s war against his son and nephew Mordred, the enchantress, accompanied by other fair ladies, appears on a barge on the lake into which Excalibur has been thrown and receives the fatally wounded King in her arms. As she does so, Morgan expresses sincere sorrow and concern for her brother, crying “A, my dere brothir, why have ye taryed so longe frome

\(^3\) The term “mother role” does not necessarily refer to the male hero’s birth mother as it can include any female character that raises, helps or guides him throughout his adventures.
me? Alas, thy wounde on youre hede hath caught overmuch coulde (…)" (Malory 688-689). Such a reaction, though, is both unexpected and problematic as it stands in complete opposition to her determination to undermine Arthur's kingship throughout the narrative and the fratricidal character the sorceress is identified with by Malory. The above-mentioned episode effectively suggests the possibility of love between the two — a concept hardly ever discussed in Arthurian studies. Interestingly, although initially disregarded or frowned upon, the idea that Morgan and Arthur might have an affectionate brotherly bond has been a source for modern fantasy novels that explore the love-hate motif of their relationship.

In the 1950s, the Middle Ages started being reinvented by historians who "decided the Dark Ages were not so dark after all" (Henthorne 2004: 73). This new view on medieval societies quickly transformed not only the academia, but also popular culture. By the 70s and 80s neomedievalism had already become a part of mainstream culture and was present in movies, books, magazines, graphic novels, and so forth, which is particularly noticeable in the USA where restaurants, such as Round Table pizza parlour and White Castle hamburger, still common. Tom Henthorne, in the article "Boys to Men: Medievalism and Masculinity in Star Wars and E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial" claims that neomedievalism can be understood as a reaction to the social transformations that followed World War II. At a time when conventional moral values were being questioned, the Middle Ages were idealised as a time when peace, order and harmony prevailed:

(…) this new medievalism tended to affirm the existing social order by idealizing the Middle Ages as a period of peace and order, when both convention and authority were respected. It also promoted supposedly chivalric values — faith, loyalty, courage, and, for women at least, chastity (…). (73-74)

Simultaneously, women's rights were taking shape, a fact that tremendously contributed to how female characters were portrayed in general, but especially so in medieval-based romances. Such changes deeply affected the women of Arthurian tales, but none more than Morgan le Fay who now occupies a central position in the contemporary Arthurian pantheon. According to Elizabeth S. Sklar's article "Thoroughly Modern Morgan: Morgan le Fay in the Twentieth-Century Popular Arthuriana", the reasons
why the enchantress has gained such importance are connected not only with the changes in women's role in society, but also with the rediscovery of the character by modern fantasy writers. Today, Sklar claims, we are faced with two Morgans, both reflexes of the same cultural phenomenon; they are:

(...) the Morgan of fantasy fiction, where feminist ideology accords her varying degrees of sympathy; and the Morgan of texts designated for mass audiences — films, comic books, and role-playing games — a Morgan who, as the very embodiment of evil dedicated to the subversion of all forms of governance, expresses the fears that inevitably accompany the sort of radical cultural change represented by the social realities and ideological imperatives of escalating female power during this century. (25)

The first one is our subject here because Morgan's love-hate relationship with Arthur has been particularly explored by fantasy writers who often see the sorceress as an incarnation of Celtic goddesses, namely The Morrigan or the Welsh Modron. Considering the amount of work produced around the Arthurian legend, we shall analyse King Arthur's and his half-sister's bond in one specific fantasy novel: the acclaimed fiction of The Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

First published in 1983, the collection The Mists of Avalon is divided into four books, Mistress of Magic, The High Queen, The King Stag and The Prisoner in the Oak, and has been pointed out as “the most complex and satisfying revisioning of this tantalizing paradoxical fay [Morgan]” (Spivack 21). Each work pays special attention to specific female characters but, as a whole, the story is told from Morgan Le Fay's/Morgaine's⁴ point of view:

As I tell this tale I will speak at times of things that befell when I was too young to understand them, or of things which befell when I was not by; and my hearer will draw away, perhaps,
and say: This is her magic. But I have always held the gift of the Sight, and of looking within the minds of men and women; and in all this time I have been close to all of them. And so, at times, all that they thought was known to me in one way or another. And so I will tell this tale. (Bradley x)

On the first pages of Bradley’s novel, readers are immediately aware that, although the adventures might remain the same, this account will be told from a different perspective — one which has so far remained hidden. Additionally, by addressing the audience, Bradley recognizes the popularity of Arthurian legends while, at the same time, she creates empathy between her narrator and those who will read or listen to the sorceress’ words. Thus, from the very beginning, Morgaine, who has grown to become one of the most feared villains of the Arthurian world, is turned into a woman of mystical knowledge and insight whose behaviour might just have been misinterpreted (or not). In doing so, Marion Zimmer Bradley reshapes our perception of how the story goes by voicing the unheard female voices of medieval narratives, which is why the studies focused on The Mists of Avalon have been usually devoted to the author’s redefinition of women’s roles in Arthurian tales. The present research, though, hopes to show that Bradley’s work, besides its acknowledged quality and merit in uplifting the role of Arthurian female characters, is also ground-breaking when it comes to portraying Morgaine and Arthur’s relationship and, in particular, their sibling bond.

“I’ll take care of you, brother”: On Sibling Love

In the first book of the collection, Mistress of Magic, Marion Zimmer Bradley starts off by redefining Morgaine and Arthur’s mother, Igraine. While mostly described as a worthy and passive queen, first married to the Duke of Cornwall and, then, conquered by force by Uther Pendragon, in Bradley’s work, Lady Igraine descends from a line of holy women (and men for she is Taliesin’s daughter, the Merlin of Britain). She is sister to the Lady of the Lake, Viviene, was raised in Avalon and has the gift of foresight, emerging as a force to be reckoned with. In addition, unlike in most previous versions, Igraine unites herself to Uther out of love, betraying her husband, Gorlois, Morgaine’s father, and rebelling against the poised role
of a good Christian wife. Her affection for Uther is described as an all-consuming passion that it is in fact deeper than any other, surpassing even her care for her children. Consequently, when she becomes his spouse, Igraine discards her connection to Avalon as well as her duties towards her young daughter and infant son:

I screamed for my mother, but she was on her way to the King, and she called back angrily, ‘Morgaine, I told you, look after the baby,’ and hurried on.
I picked him up, bawling, and wiped his chin with my veil. (…) I sat down with him in my lap, and he put up his little arms around my neck and buried his face in my tunic and after a time he sobbed himself to sleep (…)
‘Don’t cry,’ I said, ‘I’ll take you to nurse.’
‘Mother,’ he whimpered.
‘Mother’s gone, she’s with the King,’ I said, ‘but I’ll take care of you, brother.’ (Bradley 126-127)

Interestingly, Igraine’s indifference seems to be the trigger for Morgaine’s affection, who initially claims to hate Arthur, but ends up by becoming his caretaker, effectively taking on Igraine’s role as his mother. The emotional bond between the two, thus, appears to result both from the time Morgaine and Arthur spent together as children and from the neglect they suffered. What is more, their young age also contributes to the development of a deep, and almost primordial, attachment that none of them can break, which is why even though Morgaine and Arthur are separated at an early age — Arthur is taken to live with one of Uther’s trusted men and Morgaine leaves to be trained at the holy isle of Avalon — the affection between them is in no way diminished.

In *Le Morte D’Arthur*, Morgan le Fay and Arthur remain close friends until the sorceress betrays him by sending her lover, Sir Accolon, to fight Arthur to death. Once defeated, Accolon discloses he did not even know he was fighting his king and blames the whole scheme on Morgan,

(…) Morgan le Fay, Kyng Uryence wyff, sente hit me yestiday by a dwarfe to the entente to sle Kynge Arthure, hir brothir — for ye shall undirstonde that Kynge Arthur ys the man in the worlde that she hatyth moste, because he is moste
of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode. And she loveth me out of mesure as paramour — and I hir agayne — and if she myght bryng hit aboute to sle Arthure by hir crautfis, she wolde sle hir husbonde Kynge Uryence lyghtly. And than had she devysed to have me kynge in this londe, and so to reigne, and she be my quene. (Malory 90)

In The Mists of Avalon’s last book, The Prisoner in the Oak, the same events are re-enacted but Morgaine’s attempt to murder Arthur is justified by her brother’s failure to keep his loyalty and oath to Avalon. In Bradley’s version of the events, Morgaine, as a priestess of the holy island, feels it is her duty to punish Arthur and end his reign. Nevertheless, she is unable to kill her brother. Haunted by Igraine’s words, when given the chance the enchantress seems incapable of murdering Arthur herself and ends up stealing the mystical scabbard she had made for him instead:

She had killed before this. (...) ... he who lay sleeping before her was the greater traitor, surely. One stroke, swift and quiet... ah, but this was the child Igraine had placed in her arms, her first love, the father of her son, the Horned God, the King... Strike, fool! For this you came here!
No. There had been too much death. (...) knowing she moved at the very edge of madness, she heard Igraine calling impatiently, Morgaine, I told you to take care of the baby..."
(Bradley 862)

Arthur too is unable (and unwilling) to forget his love for his sister. He trusts her when he has no reasons to do so, “I have always trusted you, dear sister” (Bradley 840), and refrains from pursuing the sorceress when the enmity between the two is set. Furthermore, Arthur’s affection for Morgaine, Bradley seems to suggest, is of a different nature for he is also shown to be in love with her — an unexpected twist, indeed. In medieval

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5 At the beginning of his reign, Arthur promises the Lady of the Lake and high-priestess of Avalon, his aunt Viviene, to allow all people and creeds to live in peace within his kingdom — a pledge he fails to keep once he refrains from taking the Pendragon’s flag (a symbol of Avalon) into battle and embraces Christianity as the sole religion of his court.
(and modern) society such feelings among siblings were (are) certainly not socially acceptable so how does the author make them so?

By re-reading The Mists of Avalon, one realizes there are several points that substantiate Arthur’s un-brotherly love for Morgaine. First, they grow up separately, leading completely different lives as teenagers and young adults, which means they neither share the same space (home) nor dwell with the same family. In fact, due to his young age, Arthur does not even properly remember Morgaine, mistaking her for his mother. “(...) — is Igraine our mother much like you? ‘No, she is tall, red-haired,’ Morgaine said. Arthur sighed. ‘Then I suppose I do not remember her at all. For in my dreams it was someone like you — it was you—’” (Bradley 232). Second, when they finally reunite, it is during a symbolic fertility ritual.

As a priestess of Avalon, it is Morgaine who is given the responsibility of performing the role of the Virgin Huntress at Arthur’s crowning with the oldest Tribes of Britain. At this magical moment Arthur must fight and defeat the King Stag\(^6\), a symbol of strength, speed and the forest, in order to take his role as king, protector of the land and ruler of the fairy folk. However, Arthur is only able to slay the King Stag if he has the help (and strength) of the Virgin Huntress, the living incarnation of the land and of the Mother-Goddess. The fertility ritual described by Bradley seems to invoke elements of the Celtic worship of an all-powerful great Mother-Goddess who was the incarnation of the land itself. The Goddess could appear cold, heartless and ugly, like winter, or lovely, warm and beautiful, like spring, for she represented nature and life. To ensure prosperity and fertility, it was believed there had to be harmony between the Goddess and the land’s male monarch; otherwise a period of destruction and death would begin. As a result, the king was often ritually married to the Great

\(^6\) The King Stag has been associated to the Celtic god Cernunnos. According to Thierry Bordas, Cernunnos, “the god of the stag wood” (28), was half man, half animal and ruled over the animal world. Nowadays, Cernunnos is worshipped by the Wiccan as a god of prosperity and abundance, but also death. Cernunnos is the companion of the Great Goddess who could have two (or three) forms, maiden and mother (and crone). This divinity is a fertility goddess, mother to all living beings; she is responsible for life and its end. Cernunnos and the Goddess are, therefore, gods of creation and destruction — the makers of the universe.
Goddess. While he promised to protect the realm and its people, the Goddess gave him gifts that would enable the sovereign to keep his oath. In addition, the author was also inspired by Wiccan7 beliefs, namely as promoted by Starhawk (Miriam Simos), writer of *The Spiral Dance*. According to Starhawk, the Earth is a representation of the Great Goddess, a life force that embodies the waters, the air, the land, and all living things — a belief Marion Zimmer Bradley admitted as a source of inspiration8 when portraying Avalon’s religious practices.

Considering this perspective, Arthur and Morgaine’s union is much more than intercourse — it stands for the alliance between the king (Arthur) and the great Mother-Goddess (Morgaine). During the sexual encounter, Arthur is, then, symbolically seeding the land so that the realm can prosper and bear fruits (life). Since they are both possessed by supernatural forces, the intentional or evil-mindedness of the incestuous act is re-evaluated and, to all purposes, erased. Moreover, because they grew up separately, Arthur and Morgaine do not recognise each other right away which is why they end up making love once again, this time as man and woman:

This time in full awareness she could savor it, the softness and hardness, the strong young hands and the surprising gentleness behind his bold approach. She laughed in delight at the unexpected pleasure, fully open to him, sensing his enjoyment as her own. She had never been so happy in her life. Spent, they lay, limbs twined, caressing each other in pleasant fatigue. (Bradley 208)

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7 The Wicca religion began in the first decades of the 20th century, a period during which there was increasing curiosity about old pagan rites. Wicca spread quickly throughout England, especially after the Witchcraft Act (which condemned any citizen caught pretending to have magical powers to pay a fine or even go to jail) was abolished in 1951. In 1954, Gerald Gardner, today considered the father of Wicca, published *Witchcraft Today*, an extremely influential book which would eventually lead to the development of Gardnerian Wicca.

8 In the “Acknowledgments”, Bradley states that *The Spiral Dance* was “invaluable to me in helping deduce much about the training of a priestess” (viii).
While Morgaine sees their first union as a ritual in which they were not
themselves but avatars to a higher power, the events of the next morning
come as a shock. Even though she was brought up in Avalon, where blood
ties are not considered relevant, the priestess cannot disregard the social
(and Christian) norms she received during her childhood years in Tintagel
and at Uther’s court:

With my brother, my brother. It did not matter when we
were priest and priestess, God and Goddess joining under
the power of ritual. But in the morning, when we wakened
and were man and woman together... that was real, that was
sin... (Bradley 219)

Horrified, but aware of her aunt Vivien’s manipulation, whose goal is the
birth of a child of the royal line of Avalon, Morgaine leaves Avalon,
renounces her role as a priestess of the Goddess and goes to Orkney. There
she gives birth to Mordred. Although Morgaine loves her half-brother, their
union and the child born of it are seen as a cruel outcome of what is hinted
to be Vivien’s political manoeuvring as Lady of Avalon. Nevertheless, Morgaine’s devotion to the Great Goddess, whose worship
she strives to uphold, does not end with her departure from Avalon.

Throughout the narrative, it becomes clear that there are two main
religious forces at conflict, the Catholic Church and the pagan religion of
the Goddess. These two are symbolised by several characters, but their
strong opposition is more clearly shown in Morgaine and Gwenvhyfar
(Guinevere). A high-priestess of Avalon, Morgaine stands for a society in
which women are the keepers of knowledge, thus rejecting any connection
between the female gender and sin. On the contrary, like most of the female
characters, Gwenvhyfar is Christian. Raised in a monastery, Arthur’s
Queen is obedient, humble, chaste and silent — all the virtues of a good
Christian woman. By following the Church’s dogma without questioning,
Gwenvhyfar often misjudges others and cannot accept alternative
viewpoints. Nonetheless, the queen is divided; she hesitates between her
moral code and her love for Lancelet, with whom she has an affair. While
both characters’ opinion as to religion and women’s role in society differ,
they share a common trait: they are equally blinded by their faith.
Gwenvhyfar cannot come to terms with her feelings for Lancelet and the
Church’s teachings, but Morgaine is likewise unable to see beyond Avalon’s
cause and soon becomes merciless and kills those who stand in her path. Perhaps this is why the priestess can only see the advantages of her union to Arthur when she becomes older.

Arthur too is appalled to find out it was his sister whom he made love to, but he is incapable of forgetting she was his first love and seems less concerned with the sinful implications of their union: “I think of you all the time. I cannot help myself. It was true what I said, Morgaine — that all my life I shall remember you because you were the first, and I shall always think of you and love you —” (Bradley 232). His love for Morgaine is so deep-seated that even after being betrayed and nearly killed at her orders, Arthur still nurtures a strong affection for the enchantress. Such emotional ties are acknowledged by the author, not through Arthur himself, but through his wife, “Gwenhwyfar knew, with her sure instinct, what he did not want to say out loud that he loved Morgaine still and that he missed her” (Bradley 899). The fact that Morgaine is Arthur’s mother figure and first love serves to explain why he finds it so difficult to reject all ties. Furthermore, Arthur Pendragon, who embodies the benevolent king, develops a personality that fits his kingdom’s needs but is unwilling to deal with the problems of his personal life. When confronted with Gwenhwyfar’s interest in Lancelet, for instance, Arthur turns a blind eye to their affair, choosing the difficult path of trying to make everyone happy. It is only when Mordred’s hatred has spread through Camelot, revealing the Queen’s infidelity with her husband’s best friend and noblest knight, that Arthur is forced into battle.

Closely following medieval Arthurian legend, at the end of The Prisoner in the Oak the final battle between Arthur and Modred ensues, leading to their death at each other’s hands, and ultimately to the downfall of Camelot. The sword Excalibur is returned to the lake and the King is freed from his responsibilities as a leader and he no longer needs to worry about the well-being of the people. What is more, Arthur may openly reattach his relationship with Morgaine, his sister and mother to his only son. As Arthur lies dying, Morgaine appears; no longer restrained by their former roles, they may now be at peace. The final scenes of The Mists of Avalon are particularly relevant for they confirm the love ties between the siblings:
His head was heavy on my breast, heavy as the child in my own childish arms, heavy as the King Stag who had come to me in triumph. Morgaine, my mother had called impatiently, take care of the baby... and all my life I had borne him with me. I held him close and wiped away his tears with my veil, and he reached up and caught at my hand with his own.

‘But it is really you,’ he murmured, ‘it is you, Morgaine... you have come back to me... and you are so young and fair... I will always see the Goddess with your face... Morgaine, you will not leave me again, will you?’

‘I will never leave you again, my brother, my baby, my love,’
I whispered to him, and I kissed his eyes. (Bradley 1000)

Morgaine’s love for Arthur appears to be a sister’s affection, or perhaps one might say it is a mother’s love, since even more than Mordred, Arthur is her baby. According to Raymond Thompson in “The First and Last Love: Morgan le Fay and Arthur”, a love bond between Arthur and Morgan le Fay emerged as a new trend within Arthurian tradition mostly in the 1980s. The author suggests different reasons to justify this. First, an empathy for Arthur who is betrayed by his wife and best friend; second, the increased interest in pagan religion and the occult; third, most of the modern writers of Arthurian novels are women with a particular interest in a romance between Arthur and Morgan9; and, finally, the impact of the medieval image depicting the King resting on his sister’s lap when travelling to Avalon. In fact, the scene in which the enchantress arrives to take her brother to Avalon has been repeated throughout the centuries and might well be, as Thompson claims, the source of modern views of an un-brotherly affection between Arthur and Morgan. Whether one accepts this view or not, it is undeniable that Marion Zimmer Bradley’s extraordinary collection has helped reshape our view of both Morgaine/Morgan le Fay and Arthur and the ties that bind them.

On the one hand, Bradley rewrote Morgan le Fay’s role in Arthurian legends and, even though she is still commonly portrayed as a villain, The

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9 In his article, though, Raymon Thompson fails to explain why these female authors are so fascinated by such a romance.
Mists of Avalon doubtlessly shed a new light on the sorceress’ erratic behaviour. Bradley’s Morgaine may not be a hero, and is sometimes rather cold-hearted, but she can be hardly regarded as a villain. Above all else, the sorceress is human and that is why readers (and TV viewers\textsuperscript{10}) find her such a compelling character — she makes mistakes and tries to mend them, as we all do. By providing a voice to one who is today regarded as one of Arthur’s greatest opponents, Marion Zimmer Bradley also paved the way to rebuilding the brothers’ relationship and explored the possibility of there being more than sibling affection between the two. On the other hand, Arthur is also seen from a different angle. Trying to mediate two opposing and conflicting religious views (Christian and pagan), Arthur comes across as a generous, beneficent king who strives to keep all his subjects happy. King Arthur’s connection to his sister is, in Bradley’s retelling, genuine and strong so when he meets her again as an adult, he is unable to resist its pull. Seeing as they did not grow up together and lost their virginity to each other, their relationship grows into unforeseen territory and, while Morgaine cannot refrain from protecting Arthur even when she resents him the most, he is not able to stop loving her.

Works cited


\textsuperscript{10} In 2001 the collection The Mists of Avalon was adapted, as a mini-series with the same name, by American cable channel TNT. Directed by Uli Edel, the series’ cast included Julianne Margulies as Morgaine, Angelica Houston playing the Lady of the Lake, Vivienne, and Caroline Goodall portraying Igraine.


**Abstract**

The tales of King Arthur and his brave Knights of the Round Table were possibly the most popular narratives read in the Middle Ages and have remained a source of never-ending curiosity both for the academia and a worldwide audience. However, of the numerous articles published on the Matter of Britain, very few studies have paid attention to the emotional connection between two of its best-known characters: King Arthur and his half-sister, the sorceress commonly known as Morgan le Fay. Therefore, our goal is to analyse the sibling bond between the two. First, we will take a closer look at their representation during the medieval period, namely in the work of Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morté D’Arthur* (1420). Second, we shall focus on how Arthur and Morgan/Morgaine’s relationship is depicted in the internationally acclaimed collection *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

This paper aims to show how Bradley’s retelling has not only helped redefine women’s role in Arthurian tales, but has also shed a new light when it comes to portraying Morgan le Fay/Morgaine and Arthur’s relationship and, in particular, the love ties that bind them as sister and brother, mother and son, and as lovers.

**Keywords**

Arthurian Legend; Modern Retellings; Arthur; Morgan le Fay.

**Resumo**

As histórias sobre o Rei Artur e os corajosos Cavaleiros da Távola Redonda foram, provavelmente, as narrativas mais populares na Idade Média e desde então continuam a ser uma fonte de inesgotável curiosidade tanto para a academia, como para o público em geral. Contudo, de entre os inúmeros artigos publicados sobre a Matéria da Bretanha, poucos dedicaram qualquer atenção à ligação emocional entre duas das personagens mais conhecidas: o Rei Artur e a sua irmã, a feiticeira conhecida como Morgan le Fay. Assim, o nosso objectivo neste estudo é analisar o vínculo afectivo estabelecido entre os dois enquanto irmãos. Primeiro, iremos

Este artigo pretende demonstrar como a reinterpretação feita por Bradley não só ajudou a redefinir o papel da mulher nos contos Arturianos, como também contribuiu para o desenvolver de uma nova visão quando se trata de narrar a relação entre Morgan le Fay/Morgaine e Artur e, em particular, o amor que os une enquanto irmãos, mãe e filho e como amantes.

**Palavras-Chave**

Lenda Arturiana; Reinterpretações Contemporâneas; Artur; Morgan le Fay.