

# CORDELIA'S PORTRAIT IN THE CONTEXT OF KING LEAR'S INDIVIDUATION\*

Paula M. Rodríguez Gómez\*\*

**Abstract:** This analysis attempts to show the relations between the individual psyche and the contents of the collective unconscious. Following Von Franz's analytical technique, the tragic action in *King Lear* will be read as an individuation process that will rescue archetypal contents and solve existential paradoxes that cause an imbalance between the ego and the self, leading to self-destruction. Once communication is eased and balance is restored, the transformation-seeking process that engaged the design of the play itself becomes resolved, and events can be led to a conventional tragic resolution. Jungian analysis will therefore provide a critical framework to unveil the subconscious contents that tear the character of the king between annihilation and survival, the anima complex that affects the king, responding thus for the action of the play and its centuries-old success.

**Keywords:** collective unconscious, myth, individuation, archetype, tragedy, anima.

**Resumen:** Este análisis pretende sacar a la luz las relaciones entre la psique individual y los contenidos del inconsciente colectivo. Siguiendo la técnica analítica de Von Franz, la acción trágica de *King Lear* será entendida a través del proceso de individuación que revierte sobre los contenidos arquetípicos y resuelve las paradojas existenciales que causan el desequilibrio entre ego y self. Una vez que la comunicación es facilitada y el equilibrio psíquico recuperado, el proceso transformativo que afecta la génesis de la trama se resuelve y el argumento alcanza una resolución convencional. El análisis junguiano ofrece el soporte crítico necesario para desvelar los contenidos del inconsciente que escinde el personaje central del monarca entre la supervivencia y la aniquilación. El complejo de ánima que afecta al rey responde de esta manera por la complejidad de la acción dramática y el éxito que ha hecho que esta obra perdure a través de los siglos.

**Palabras clave:** inconsciente colectivo, mito, individuación, arquetipo, tragedia, anima.

The conventional plot of a king who has three daughters and the charming language of fairy tales featured in *King Lear* could easily suggest the evocative realm of folk literature. Scholarly training, however, readily reminds us that *The Tragedy of King Lear* was first performed on stage at court on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1606. Well-known as the conflict of an aging father who, misled by vanity, makes the wrong choice, King Lear's tragedy is deeply located in the human self consciousness. In the following pages, we will pursue the emotional

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\*\* Profesora, Los Angeles Unified School District; ✉ paula-rodriguez@peoplepc.com.

cabrioles of a character who, dissatisfied with the achievements of his ego, decides to initiate a solitary quest into the unconscious. The itinerary of the king exemplifies thus the individual's quest for a transcendent reality deeply ingrained in his soul. Within the framework of archetypal criticism, we will first operate a decomposition of the plot into motifs to later analyze the functions of the *dramatis personae*. Once this task is accomplished, Junguian analysis of converging symbols will help us unveil the role of the three daughters in their archetypal representation. The objective is not so much to split the tale into its components as to ascertain the opposing forces that confer dynamism on the plot. It is this drive, easy to connect with the experience of the common man, that explains the actuality of the story and settles it in the untouchable reality of the collective unconscious, assuring its ever lasting freshness.

The sources of King Lear have been well delimited, among others, by Holzknecht, who establishes that,

The main plot of this tragedy is a free adaptation of an anonymous earlier play which has a happy ending and is called *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters* (published in 1605, but written about 1594). Shakespeare seems to have been familiar also with the story as originally told in Geoffrey of Monmouth's and Holinshed's chronicles; in *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), an Elizabethan narrative of the falls of illustrious persons; in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (Book II, canto 10), where the heroine is named Cordelia for the first time; and in Warner's *Albion's England* (1586), a popular historical poem. The parallel story of Gloucester and his sons is not in the old play nor in any other version, but is derived from the story of the unkind King of Paphlagonia in Book II, chapter 10 of Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590). Lear's madness, the tragic ending, and the character of the Fool are also Shakespeare's additions. The death of Cordelia may have been suggested by *The Mirror for Magistrates* or by Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, in both of which the nephews of that lady rebel against her and throw her into prison, where she dies by hanging (Holzknecht 1950: 244).

This material supplies essential elements of the plot, historical context and imagery, making them structural elements of the tragedy, rather than founding its relationships with other interconnected genres. In fact, the two most important sources for the play are on the one hand, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, "compiled by Raphael Holinshed, himself, like Shakespeare, a Warwickshire man, out of the works of earlier historians. The book was first published in 1577 and again in an augmented edition in 1587" (Holzknecht 1950: 224). This second edition, which portrays an account of the story of a certain "Lear, the son of Bladud [who] was admitted ruler over the Britons in the year of the world 3105" (Hosley 1968: 1) was the text known to Shakespeare, as well as some of its sources. One of these, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by a Welsh monk by the name of Geoffrey of Monmouth establishes the Welsh connection with *King Lear*, which in Act 3, scene 2 cites one of Merlin's prophecies, and locates the setting before this magician's time<sup>1</sup>. Monmouth's story, written in Latin in 1135, portrays a king that is deprived of his kingdom by the treachery of his daughters, although it also

<sup>1</sup> "This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time" (Shakespeare 1988: 3.2.95-96)

enjoys a happy ending. Fleming, Husain, Littleton and Malcor think, however, that Monmouth's story was ultimately drawn from the story of the Welsh King Llyr, father of Manawyddan by Penardun and of Bran and Branwen—one of the three matriarchs of Britain—by Iweriadd, as presented in the Mabinogi (Fleming *et al.* 2003: 81)

To the material described by Holz knecht, two additional sources must be added. On the one hand, Grimm's tale *The Goose Girl at the Well* similarly deals with the theme of fatherly love, the choice between three daughters and the consequences of making the wrong choice. Secondly, Donna Woodford finds parallels between the story told by Shakespeare and a legal case occurring in 1603 under the following circumstances:

In 1603 a gentleman named Sir Bryan Annesley found himself in a situation much like that of King Lear. Annesley had three daughters: Lady Grace Wildgoose (her married name, also spelled Wildgos, Wildgose, and Willgosse), Christian, and Cordell. Grace and her husband, John Wildgoose, wrote to Sir Robert Cecil, an influential member of the courts of both Queen Elizabeth and King James, and asked him to declare Annesley a lunatic so that they could gain control of his estate. Cordell protested on his behalf and was able to convince the court that her father, after his long years of service to the court, should not be declared insane. When he died Annesley left most of his estate to Cordell, and though the Wildgooses protested the will, it was upheld (Woodford 2004: 7).

In a further exploration of intertextuality, Dr. Freud reviews several other texts which similarly depict what he calls “the theme of the three caskets” (Freud 1958: 63-75), namely, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Gesta Romanorum*, and several myths and fairy tales such as the “Tale of Psyche” by Apuleius, “Cinderella”, and the Estonian epic “Kalewipoeg”. All these stories show, according to Freud, an equivalent scheme in what he calls an “idea from human life, a man's choice between three women” (Freud 1958: 65), which he later parallels with the plot in *King Lear* when he asks himself “Is not this [King Lear] once more a scene of choosing between three women, of whom the eldest is the best, the supreme one?” (Freud 1958: 65).

Undoubtedly, there is a recurrent pattern in all these stories belonging to different time periods and separate cultural traditions. This “coincidence” responds, as it is presented, to a concept—the archetype—explicitly denied by Freud, yet first introduced by Jung in 1912 “to designate mythologems, legendary and fairy-tale motifs, and other images that express universal modes of human perception and behavior” (Mattoon 1981: 38) and later redefined in 1919 as a “possibility of representation” [...], a predisposition to an image, that underlines and shapes a variety of specific images. Thus, it is not the archetype itself that is experienced but, rather, its effects” (Mattoon 1981: 39).

The scrutiny of the effects of the archetype in such a literary work as *King Lear* is relevant because it allows us to relate the collective unconscious to the personal unconscious, where interpretation takes place in the reader's mind. The analysis presented hereby must therefore follow three converging lines of action. On the one hand, the plot—which is culturally bound—provides a necessary context for the organization of the primordial images. On the second hand, the actors and their actions similarly hold certain significance because they are not round or flat characters, but images of the collective

unconscious. Finally, the symbols appearing in the story easily relate to the nature of the archetype, and therefore they represent primary indicators of the direction of the analysis.

## 1. THE PLOT AS AN INVITATION TO THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS.

Marie Louise Von Franz, a very prominent Jungian folklorist, states at the beginning of her volume *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* that

Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes. Therefore their value for the scientific investigation of the unconscious exceeds that of all other material. They represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest, and most concise form. In this pure form, the archetypal images afford us the best clues to the understanding of the processes going on in the collective psyche. In myths or legends, or any other more elaborate mythological material, we get at the basic patterns of the human psyche through an overlay of cultural material. But in fairy tales there is much less specific conscious cultural material, and therefore they mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly. In terms of Jung's concept, every archetype is in its essence an *unknown* psychic factor, and therefore there is no possibility of translating its content into intellectual terms. [...]. The fairy tale itself is its own best explanation; that is, its meaning is contained in the totality of its motifs connected by the thread of the story (Von Franz 1996: 1).

Since *King Lear* encompasses the advantage of being presented in the form of a fairy tale, it seems appropriate to apply Von Franz's analytical technique which she develops into four ascending steps coincidental with "the four stages of the classic drama"<sup>2</sup> (Von Franz 1996: 39). This method extends from an initial stage of exposition, dealing with the setting in *illud tempus* and the account of *dramatis personae*, a presentation of the conflict with its full range of *peripeteiai* accompanied by a reconstruction of the symbolic context and the final interpretation of amplified motifs (Von Franz 1996: 37-45). When we come to the analysis of *King Lear*, however, we encounter two inconveniences. The first one is based on the fact that the setting is not given *in illo tempore*, as would be natural in a fairy tale, but rather the story commences *in medias res*. The effect this has, from a merely analytical perspective, is that it shifts the position towards the conscious level, as opposed to fairy tales where, according to Von Franz "time and place are always evident because they begin with 'once upon a time' or something similar, which means in timelessness and spacelessness-the realm of the collective unconscious" (Von Franz 1996: 39).

The second malfunction is derived from the fact that the *dramatis personae* cannot be reliably counted at the beginning and at the end, following Von Franz's suggestion (Von Franz 1996: 39). This is due to the fact that one of the modifications that Shakespeare

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle's definition of these four stages, which have suffered a significant evolution, both in content and in form throughout the centuries, is heretofore quoted: "[...] The quantitative divisions of the genre can be listed as prologue, episode, *exodos*, choral unit. [...]. The prologue is the entire portion of a tragedy preceding the choral entry. An episode is an entire portion of a tragedy lying between complete choral odes. The *exodos* is the entire portion of a tragedy which follows the final choral ode. Of the choral elements, the *parodos* is the first entire choral utterance; a *stasimon* is a choral song in a metre other than anapestic or trochaic; while a *kommos* is a lamentation shared between chorus and actors" (Halliwell 1987: 43-44).

introduced in the original layout of the plot was a severe manipulation of the ending in order to achieve a successful adaptation of his play to Aristotelian tragedy. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, should be designed according to a fixed set of rules: its characters should be of a higher social status, their fortunes should shift from higher to lower levels of *pathos*, and *catharsis* should necessarily involve a catastrophic ending:

Tragedy [...] is a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude [...] and through arousal of pity and fear affecting the *katharsis* of such emotions. [...] Since tragedy is a representation of an action, and is enacted by agents, who must be characterized in both their character and their thought (for it is through these that we can also judge the qualities of their actions, and it is in their actions that all men either succeed or fail), we have the plot structure as the *mimesis* of the action [...] while characterization is what allows us to judge the nature of the agents, and “thought” represents the parts in which by their speech they put forward arguments or make statements (Halliwell 1987: 37).

This alteration, rather than any other, has a devastating effect in the archetypal analysis that we are attempting, since it aborts a clear understanding of the objective towards which the plot progresses. Yet, since we know the sources with great accuracy, it becomes easier to predict the direction of the events. Thus, we know that in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, as well as in Monmouth's *Historia Regum* the two evil sisters disappear at the end, and we are left solely with the father and the youngest daughter. Therefore, there are four characters at the beginning, and we end up with just two at the end: the male and the female, which is revealing of a structure that re-establishes the balance of opposing poles appearing lost at the beginning of the story. As to its implications, we will postpone all speculation till after we conclude the analysis of the plot in its different phases, in the hope that this will bring further clarity to this essay.

The most efficient way to commence the analysis of the plot structure is by appealing to formalist studies of folklore. In this context, Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* constitutes a landmark for its pioneering work and its effort at systematization of the tale structure; therefore, it will be our framework to disentangle the curious plot relations within the structure of *King Lear*. Before we proceed any further, however, it seems relevant to establish the relationship between formalism and archetypal criticism. In his chapter “On the History of the Problem”, Propp asserts that:

Finally, just as all rivers flow into the sea, all questions relating to the study of tales lead to the solution of the highly important, yet unresolved problem of the similarity of tales throughout the world. How is one to explain the similarity of the tale about the frog queen in Russia, Germany, France, India, in America among the Indians and in New Zealand when the contact of peoples cannot be proven historically? (Propp 2000: 16).

Jung himself could not have presented a better summary of the concept of archetype. The mythologem that persists diachronically and that becomes culturally influenced is the germ of Propp's comparative study. If we consider strictly the scheme presented in the principal plot of *King Lear*, we encounter a tale of a single move. The first act, which is divided into five scenes, covers by itself the majority of what Propp considered as mandatory

elements in a fairy tale. These include the initial situation —comprehending introduction of the setting as well as the *dramatis personae*— and the preparatory section comprising the absention of a family member: “[...] we/ have no such daughter, nor shall ever see/ that face of hers again. Therefore begone/ without our love, our grace our benison” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.266-269) the interdiction: “Ourself, by monthly course,/ with reservation of a hundred nights/ by you to be sustained shall our abode/ make with you by due turns” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.132-135) the violation: “Be then desired,/ by her that else will take the thing she begs,/ a little to disquantity your train,/ and the reminders that shall still depend/ to be such men as may besort your age.” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.4. 244-248) and the first appearance of the villain<sup>3</sup>: “Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,/ more hideous when thou show’st thee in a child/ than the sea monster!” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.4.257-259).

The second act considerably slows down the action in the play because it is not until scene four that Lear reappears with his appeal to his second daughter:

Against my coming in. Thou better know’st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.  
Thy half o’ the kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endowed (Shakespeare 1988: 2.4.178-181)

This constitutes a clear indicator that the playwright has not yet changed the move, dilating thus the time he consumes on the relevant issue of the violation of the interdiction implicit in the initial situation, namely, that once the kingdom was divided, the king would be taken care of. Because such an interdiction was violated, we have what Propp calls *zavjázka* (complication) showing most of the elements relevant to it, i.e. the villainy<sup>4</sup> and “the conjunctive moment”<sup>5</sup>:

She hath abated me of half my train,  
Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue  
Most serpentlike upon the very heart. (Shakespeare 1988: 2.4.159-162)

The hero’s re-entry into the action will not be resumed until the fourth act, since the third act is merely concerned with the monologues that show that King Lear finally becomes conscious of the situation resulting from his decision, although paradoxically mad to reason<sup>6</sup>. We will go further into these factors once we undertake the analysis of motives; for now, it seems important to keep focusing on the morphology of the plot. After the first two scenes, primarily concerned with Gloucester’s blindness and the two sisters’ evil spirit, Cordelia is newly introduced into the action (Shakespeare 1988: 4.3.11-15). This represents what Propp identifies as the hero’s entry into the tale, which is accompanied by several associated

<sup>3</sup> In the double form of the king’s elder daughters, Goneril and Regan.

<sup>4</sup> Villainy, according to Propp includes the person performing it, the act itself, the motivation of the villain, the final object of the villainy, and the disappearance of the actor (Propp 2000: 122).

<sup>5</sup> This represents the intermission of the dispatcher who seeks for the hero’s help.

<sup>6</sup> This issue will be discussed at length further into this essay.

elements, namely, some form of inclusion in the course of action—in this case by means of letters—a form of hero's consent: "Peruse this letter./ [...] I know 'tis from Cordelia,/ who hath most fortunately been informed/ of my obscured course and shall find time/ from this enormous state, seeking to give/ looses their remedies" (Shakespeare 1988: 2.3.168-173), a dispatch of the hero from home: "But true it is, from France there comes a power/ into this scattered kingdom, who already,/ wise in our negligence, have secret feet/ in some of our best ports and are at point/ to show their open banner" (Shakespeare 1988: 3.1.30-34), and a setting of goals: "No blown ambition doth our arms incite,/ but love, dear love, and our aged father's right./ Soon may I hear and see him!" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4. 27-29)

This fourth act determines the commencement of the *lysis* in the play because in its subsequent scenes we witness the reunion of father and daughter, as well as Propp's revenge: "O dear Father,/it is thy business that I go about;/ Therefore great France/ my mourning and importuned tears hath pitied./ No blown ambition doth our arms incite,/ but love, dear love, and our aged father's right." (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4. 23-28). These intentions, however, are not finally fulfilled in the *denouement*, because the final act, consisting of, merely, three scenes, is concerned with the confrontation between the sisters as well as the death of all four main characters in the final scene. First the two evil sisters slay one another: "Your lady [is dead], sir, your lady! And her sister/ by her is poisoned; she confesses it" (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3.230-231). Secondly, Cordelia is murdered by a conspiracy between Goneril and Edmund: "He hath commission from thy wife and me/to hang Cordelia in the prison/ and to lay the blame upon her own despair,/ that she fordid herself." (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3. 257-260). Finally, Lear himself dies while still holding Cordelia in his arms and, as Kent marvels, "The wonder is he hath endured so long./ He but usurped his life." (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3.323-324)

## 2. THE CHARACTER IN ITS ARCHETYPAL VALUE

As we can see, Shakespeare's tampering with the original plot has been so severe that it becomes difficult at times to identify the elements appertaining to the original structure. One thing is clear, however: the text, as we have it, presents a series of motifs deeply entangled in the collective unconscious. One of these motifs is the figure of the father-king. In general terms, one is easily tempted to associate this character with the relevance of a godhead, which becomes justified by the fact that Lear is endowed with primordial powers over life and death: "When I do stare see how the subject quakes./ I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause? Adultery?/ Thou shalt not die" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.6.108-110). Yet, this father—who, if undifferentiated would not represent more than an aspect of the archetype—is also a king, and that detail widens his archetypal value to a symbol of renewal, as Marie Louise Von Franz points: "he represents the central principle of collective consciousness which wears out periodically" (Von Franz 1993: 88). From this perspective, it not only represents an elder in need, but he is also responsible for the well being of his subjects in the antique fashion of sacral kingship<sup>7</sup> and therefore, his relevance within the

<sup>7</sup> Sacral Kingship is a neolithic concept of sovereign according to which, the king is consort to Mother Earth and on his shoulders lies the fecundity of it. Several rites to guarantee this fecundity were practiced across Ancient Europe.

context of the play is directly related to the individuation process taking place. In other words, the powerful ego complex experienced by the king progressively displaces its center towards the set of values governed by the self, as we will discuss later.

Related to this instance is the second archetypal motif appearing in *King Lear*, namely, the presentation of a difficult choice with three options. Having reached the near end of his living cycle, the king comes up with the idea that his kingdom needs a younger monarch, and consequent with this, he decides to base his decision on love and love alone:

[...] Tell me, my daughters—  
 Since now we divest us both of rule,  
 Interests of territory, cares of state—  
 Which of you shall we say doth love us most,  
 That we our largest bounty may extend  
 Where nature doth with merit challenge? (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.48-53).

In tangible terms, an action like this might well be regarded as psychotic, but from the perspective of the archetype, it seems rather reasonable. If the responsibility of a king is to be married to the earth goddess and produce natural richness, once he cannot perform this function for reasons of his advanced age, love must be the drive that commences again the natural cycle under more suitable circumstances.

The third relevant motif is related to the feminine archetype. The choice in this play falls on Cordelia, which is the reason why we consider her the prominent head of the group of sisters. On the one hand, there is a profound identification between the king and Cordelia which becomes evident from the very first act when Lear laments that: “I [Lear] loved her most, and thought to set my rest/ on her kind nursery [...]” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.123-124) up to the fourth one, when Cordelia takes upon herself all those functions which *strictu sensu* correspond to the hero, i.e. achievement of goal and return<sup>8</sup>. As a matter of fact, according to Propp’s analysis of the distribution of functions among *dramatis personae* in the fairy tale, most of the functions occurring in *King Lear* belong to the sphere of action of the princess, and they include: “the assignment of difficult tasks (M); branding (I); exposure (Ex); recognition (Q); punishment of a second villain (U); marriage (W)” with a final recommendation given by Propp: “The princess and her father cannot be exactly delineated from each other according to functions” (Propp 2000: 79-80). In summary, both theme and structure point to Cordelia’s prominence, and consequently it becomes essential to analyze her significance.

Once agreed that Cordelia is so relevant that understanding *King Lear* involves understanding “she whom even but now was your best object,/ the argument of your praise, balm of your age, the best, the dearest [...]” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.217-219) an analysis of this character becomes imperative. The motif of the three sisters is such a constant in the Indo-European oral tradition that Freud himself questions the symbolic nature of this character. His answer, however, is determined by the psychoanalytic symbols

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, their origin is not that clear, since in the same work, Hesiod also states that Nyx—the Night—“also bore the ruthless Keres and the Moirai./ Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who when men are born/ give them their share of things good and bad” (Hesiod 2003: 217-219).

that he encounters in his analysis of this and other interrelated texts, namely disappearance from view, which he interprets as an indication of death:

If we follow these indications, then, the third one of the sisters between whom the choice lies would be a dead woman. She may, however, be something else, namely, Death itself, the goddess of Death. By virtue of a displacement that is not infrequent, the qualities that a deity imparts to men are ascribed to the deity himself. [...]. But if the third of the sisters is the Goddess of Death, we know the sisters. They are the Fates, the Moerae, the Parcae or the Norns, the third of whom is called Atropos, the inexorable (Freud 1958: 69).

As earlier stated, this triple representation of the divine figure is common ground in all Indo-European cosmogonies. The Celts, for example, celebrated the warrior goddess Morrigan in her triple figure as Babd, Macha and Nemain and the Norse named their Norns—who “control destiny, have the gift of prophecy, live near Yggdrasil, care for the great tree, and have one of the magical springs of Yggdrasil at their disposal” (Welch 2001: 63)—Urd, Verdani and Skuld. In essence, all these deities refer us back to Indra-Mihtra-Varuna which the Acchaeans possibly brought with them from Asia Minor when they invaded the Greek Islands (Graves 1948: 51). Most important is the fact that the moirae have preserved their female character as associated to the moon trinity, “the New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the Old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination” (Graves 1948: 61) and that they bestow a scale of values that ranges from the white symbolism of the elder sister to the dark imagery of the youngest.

According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Fates Klotho, Lachesis and Atropos, who “give mortals their share of good and evil” are the daughters of Zeus and Themis (Hesiod 2003: 901-906)<sup>9</sup>. Like their sisters, the Horae, and their half sisters, the Graeiae—Aglaiia, Euphrosine and Thalia, daughters of Zeus and Eurynome—they come in a triad. These cases, however, are not unusual in Greek mythology. As a matter of fact, it is possible to identify nine groups of female goddesses that are presented in triadic form: the Harpies, the Hesperides, the Nymphs<sup>10</sup>, the Muses, the Gorgones, the Horae, the Graeiae, the Moirae and the Erinyes. All these goddesses, except for the Muses, who are nine<sup>11</sup>, are grouped in triads, and if we add the total number, we come up with thirty-three or, in other words, the

<sup>9</sup> Hesiod (2003: 240-264) establishes that Nereid and Doris had fifty daughters, but in reality the Nereids are only a group of nymphs related to the ocean. As a group, they conform a triad together with the Dryads (nymphs of the trees), and the Naiads (water nymphs).

<sup>10</sup> According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant “since three is the number of innovation, its square stands for universality”, and later, they further state that “The number nine often recurs in the world picture painted by Hesiod's *Theogony*. Nine days and nights is the space of time between Heaven and Earth and Earth and Hell” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 704). This symbolism is equally transferable to the muses Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania.

<sup>11</sup> Von Franz acknowledges the confusion that this question represents: “[...] if you read many psychological interpretations of myths, you will soon see that there is a constant shift between interpreting the hero as a symbol of the Self and as a symbol of the ego.” (Von Franz 1996: 57), but she later clarifies: “The hero, therefore, is the restorer of a healthy, conscious situation. [...]. It can therefore be said that the hero is an archetypal figure which presents a model of an ego functioning in accord with the Self” (Von Franz 1996: 62-63).

repetition of the magic number. It is undeniable that in the Western sphere of thought, the number three has a considerable symbolic weight as an expression of spirituality, yet, its field of action widens considerably if we agree with Chevalier and Gheerbrant when they assert that “three is regarded universally as a fundamental number, expressive of an intellectual and spiritual order in God, the cosmos or mankind, and either synthesizes the three-in-one of all living beings or else results from the conjunction of one and two produced, in this case, from the marriage of Heaven and Earth” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 993).

We are therefore confronted here with the issue of the *coniunctio*, the union of opposites, and if it is true that all the above mentioned ladies owe their triadic character to this divine nature, it is equally accurate that their nature fundamentally differs. From the petrifying nature of Medusa and her sisters, Eutyale and Stheno, who force Perseus to protect himself with a mirror-like shield to the irresistible appeal of the nymphs, there is a whole ethical range that covers every corner from the positive to the negative. In an effort to synthesize these triads in an undifferentiated whole, Graves points to the commonalities between Graeae, goddesses of Love, and the Moirae, goddesses of Death:

The Three Nymphs must be understood as the Three Graces, that is to say, the Triple Love-goddess. The Graeae were also known as the Phorcides, which means the daughters of Phorcus, or Orcus, and according to the Scholiast on Aeschylus had the form of swams. [...]. They were, in fact, the Three Fates. Phorcus or Orcus, became a synonym for the Underworld; it is the same word as porcus, a pig, the beast sacred to the Death-goddess, and perhaps as Parcae, a title for the Three Fates, usually called Moirae, ‘the distributors’. Orc is ‘pig’ in Irish; hence the Orcades, or Orkneys, abodes of the Death-goddess (Graves 1948: 244).

This brings us back to the last of the three sisters, Cordelia, the one known to the Celts as Morrigan “The maleficent Ana was the leading person of the Fate Trinity, Ana, Babb, and Macha, together known as the Morrigan, or Great Queen” (Graves 1948: 409). This figure, worshipped as the Muse of Death in Renaissance poetry is well known to distinguished poets of Shakespeare’s day who remember her in their verse:

Spenser addresses the Muses as “Virgins of Helicon”; he might equally have called them ‘witches’ for the witches of his day worshipped the same White Goddess—in Macbeth called Hecate—performed the same fertility dances on their Sabbaths, and were similarly gifted in incantatory magic and knowledge of herbs [...]. Skelton in his “Garland of Laurell” thus describes the Triple Goddess in her Three characters as Goddess of the Sky, Earth and Underworld [...]. But it must never be forgotten that the Triple Goddess, as worshipped for example at Stynphalus, was a personification of primitive woman—woman the creatress and destructress. As the New Moon or Spring, she was a girl; as the Full Moon or Summer she was a woman; as the Old Moon or Winter, she was a hag (Graves 1948: 418).

Even Shakespeare himself was not unaware of the Three Fates whom he invokes repeatedly from the lines of *Midsummer's Night Dream*, as the fairies Peaseblossom, Cobweb and Mustardseed; from *Macbeth*, as the witches who instigate Lady Macbeth into crime or from the pages of *King Lear*. The question remains: who then, is the third sister?

The question of Cordelia's identity is easily settled if we consider all four main characters—i.e. the three sisters and the father—as differentiated aspects of the human psyche. On the one hand, we know that the hero who initiates a journey is approximately<sup>12</sup> associated with the ego, and we know that King Lear exhibits a number of traits identifiable as symptoms of a powerful ego complex, for instance on his own notion of his command on life and death: “When I do stare, see how the subject quakes./ I pardon that man's life” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.6.108-109). This ego inflation arises as a consequence of the social role that needs to be performed—in Jungian terms, the *persona*. This inflation requires compensation in the unconscious: “The *persona*, the ideal picture of a man as he should be, is inwardly compensated by feminine weakness, and as the individual outwardly plays the strong man, so he becomes inwardly a woman, i.e., the anima, for it is the anima that reacts to the persona” (Storr 1983: 96). Let it be reminded, however, that the unconscious is structured at two different levels: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, which is where the archetype occurs. In this realm, Hillman observes, “As the persona presides over adaptation to collective consciousness, so the anima rules the inner world of the collective unconscious. As male psychology, according to Jung, shifts after mid-life toward its female opposite, so there is a physiological and social softening and weakening toward “the feminine”, all of which are occasioned by the anima” (Hillman 1985: 11).

In other words, when the individual, overwhelmed by the needs imposed by his ego-persona, longs for a deeper acquaintance with the self, he naturally makes attempts to penetrate the cave of his own unconscious. That voyage is not that easy because the contents of the unconscious, by definition, cannot be known. Therefore, there occurs a phenomenon of projection of archetypal images onto an outside object that is characteristic of myths and fairy tales as manifestations of archetypal images: hence Cordelia<sup>13</sup>.

Now that we are in the realm of the self, it seems appropriate to discuss the ethical implications of the behavior traits presented by these three sisters. It is true that from a merely logical point of view, when Goneril feels weary of her father's train's riotous manners in her property, one cannot help but sympathize with her, for, who would like to put up with guests who “grow riotous, and himself upbraid [Goneril] in every trifle”(Shakespeare 1988: 1.3.7-8)? However, one has to check one's judgment and remember that the ethics of the situation must be pondered from a strictly archetypal perspective and from this standpoint, a daughter who hypocritically claims love and then doesn't abide by her commitment must be crossed out as evil. Opposed to her, we are offered an image of Cordelia that responds to the ideal of truth, loyalty and fairness: “those

<sup>12</sup> Jung points that the anima itself is the “projection-making factor” (Storr 1983: 110) since she is a “product of the unconscious” rather than an “invention of the conscious”, meaning that the archetype is innate and only later does it become concrete.

<sup>13</sup> The feminine archetype is a pattern in the collective unconscious which can acquire different realizations, the most common ones being the Mother and the Anima. Yates-Hammett summarizes Neuman's view of the feminine archetype as follows: “Eric Neuman has diagrammed two basic aspects of the feminine archetype, the Great Mother and the Anima. [...] The Mother belongs to the underground where the seed falls into earth and returns in every tree and fruit; Anima belongs to the underworld, the descent into the depths of the psyche and into the madness of our time, and to the return in the creative vision of poetic existence” (Yates-Hammett, 1975: 76).

happy smilets/ that played on her ripe lip seemed not to know/ what guests were in her eyes, which parted thence/ as pearls from diamonds dropped” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.3.19-22) and who, most importantly, represents “The daughter-anima [who] comes to save his soul, carry him to his grave and teach him the manner in which he should die [...]” By ingratiating themselves with the old man, the eldest daughters devalue the psychic significance of the father-daughter complex” (Ebenstein 1980: 126). Thus, the projection of Lear’s anima in two different directions as an attempt to shift consciousness towards the self, seems a feasible symptom of an individual’s struggle between positive and negative anima, causing thus a swinging between “madness and ecstatic vision at the meeting point of the poles of positive and negative Anima. The archetype at each pole can so attract that the ego is overwhelmed and consciousness lost” (Yates-Hammett 1975: 76).

In summary, King Lear starts from the identification with the anima figure which is later refined as a projection into a triple form, corresponding to the archetypal image of the goddess of destiny. This projection, however, fails, because of the king’s fixation on the archetype: “According to the image he had of her [Cordelia], she should have spoken words of love and flattery. She acted, however, as a woman of independent will and thought. The realization of the vast difference between his anima and the real Cordelia plunged him into a deep abyss because the anima projection instantly broke down” (Kirsh 1966: 220). As a consequence of this, there occurs a retrieval of the anima figure consisting of the replacement of the feminine archetype<sup>14</sup> with Nature which now appears as the image of the terrible Mother shaped as a storm:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!  
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
 You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
 Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
 Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ the world!  
 Crack nature’s molds, all germens spill at once  
 That makes ingrateful man! (Shakespeare 1988: 3.2.1-9).

In other words, the projection continues to operate, but it becomes centered on a different object: “The first step in the withdrawal of the projection of the anima image is its symbolization as Nature. Lear now addresses Nature as his ‘goddess’ [...]. Lear’s appeal is passionate. He asks Nature to withhold her outstanding quality, that of giving life bountifully” (Kirsh 1966: 220-221). At this point, the Fool’s diagnosis is ultimate: “Thou hast pared thy wit o’ both sides and left nothing i’ the middle” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.4.184-185), signifying what we today call dissociation of personality<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare’s text colorfully alludes to this clinical diagnosis in a variety of ways: “indisposed and sickly fit” (Shakespeare 1988: 2.4.109-110), “His wits are gone” (Shakespeare 1988: 3.6.87), “lunatic King” (Shakespeare 1988: 3.7.47), “he is mad.” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.1.46), and “bereaved sense” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4.9).

<sup>15</sup> As opposed to Freud who defines libido exclusively on sexual terms, Jung considers it purely as the energy emerging from the notion of desire in the classical sense: “Subjectively and psychologically, this

During the lapse of time that he is deprived of his senses, Lear's symptoms are clearly indicative of the type of mental illness that he suffers. In act three, Lear is induced by Mad Tom into nakedness (Shakespeare 1988: 3.4.105-109), and later in the same act he is presented singing aloud (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4.2), hiding in a field (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4.7), and "crowned with rank fumiter and furrow weeds" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.4.3). Based on textual evidence, Kirsh, in consonance with Hillman's views, establishes Lear's verdict from a modern psychoanalytical perspective in the following terms: "Clinically speaking, we might diagnose his mental condition as a traumatic psychosis. From an inner point of view, this intense introversion is actually a healing process, a process that will lead to increasing consciousness in Lear." (Kirsh 1966: 244). In the course of his analysis of Lear's case, Kirsh concludes that the threshold between the conscious and the unconscious can be trespassed if the libido<sup>16</sup> component is active. Lear's consciousness is powerfully populated by images of the unconscious, and consequently, "he is compelled to act them out" (Kirsh 1996: 269). Conversely, Jung finds that,

"[...] Psychotic material cannot be derived from the conscious mind, because the latter lacks the premises which would help to explain the strangeness of the ideas. Neurotic contents can be integrated without appreciable injury to the ego, but psychotic ideas cannot. They remain inaccessible, and ego-consciousness is more or less swamped by them. They even show a distinct tendency to draw the ego into their *system*" (Storr 1983: 215).

### 3. SYMBOLS AND TRANSFORMATION

While this process is in progress, King Lear is forcefully living the archetype throughout the activation of a number of symbols. This course of action is totally coherent with the nature of the plot. According to Jungian theory, symbols perform a compensatory function between the conscious and the collective unconscious (Philipson 1992: 226) and Edinger further points that "symbols are spontaneous products of the archetypal psyche [...]. The

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energy is conceived as *desire*. I call it *libido*, using the word in its original sense, which is by no means only sexual" (Storr 1983: 50-51).

<sup>16</sup> Other examples of vision imagery are as follows: "[...] even for want of that for which I am richer: a still-soliciting eye and such a tongue" (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.234-235); "old fond eyes, bewep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out and cast you, with the waters that you loose, to temper clay" (Shakespeare 1988: 1.4.300-302); "thus, out of season, threading dark-eyed night" (Shakespeare 1988: 2.1.121); "That things might change or cease; tears his white hair, which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage catch in their fury and make nothing of" (Shakespeare 1988: 3.1.7-9); "I have no way, and therefore want no eyes" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.1.18); "'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind." (Shakespeare 1988: 4.1.46); "Milk-livered man [...] who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning thine honor from thy suffering" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.2.51-54); "There she shook the holy water from her heavenly eyes, and clamor-moistened, then away she started to deal with grief alone" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.3.30-34); "It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out. To let him live" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.5.11-12); "why, then, your other senses grow imperfect by your eyes anguish" (Shakespeare 1988: 4.6.5-6); "No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light." (Shakespeare 1988: 4.6.145-147); "Why, this would make a man a man of salt to use his eyes for garden waterpots." (Shakespeare 1988: 4.6.195-196); "Met I my father with his bleeding rings, their precious stones now lost." (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3. 193-194); "Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so that heaven's vault should crack." (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3.263-264)

archetypal psyche is constantly creating a steady stream of living symbolic imagery” (Edinger 1992: 110). The question becomes now why it does so. Evidence indicates that symbol codification is a mechanism that the collective unconscious uses to transfer motivation to the ego, so that it can “act them out unconsciously” (Edinger 1992: 110). From a merely clinical perspective, furthermore, the fact that King Lear is living his dissociation throughout symbols entails that there is still a connection between ego and self, and therefore, he is capable of becoming sound again, as in fact, he does.

Since that is the case, it seems convenient to broaden in the analysis of the symbols appearing in the Shakespearian text before we progress any further. All the symbolism appearing in the play can be distributed according to three separate sets. On the one hand, Kirsh explicitly alludes to “the frequent use of the imagery of vision” (Kirsh 1966: 199) which becomes evident when Gloucester’s eyes are plucked out by Cornwall: “upon these eyes of thine I’ll set my foot” (Shakespeare 1988: 3.7.71) and which is completed by numerous other references throughout the material<sup>17</sup>. In a similar symbolic context, we can add parallel references to orbs: “By all the operation of the orbs/ from whom we do exist and cease to be,/ here I disclaim all my paternal care,/ propinquity and property of blood” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.111-114) and spheres: “Thou out of Heaven’s benediction com’st/ to the warm sun! approach, thou beacon to this under globe,/ that by thy comfortable beams I may/ peruse this letter” (Shakespeare 1988: 2.2.163-168). Finally three types of wheels make their appearance in this material; the earliest, being folkloric, provides an anchor for the coming parable “Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after.” (Shakespeare 1988: 2.4.70-73). This wheel, reminiscent of the Gallic festivals held in honor of Teutates-Esus-Tarannis<sup>18</sup>, is complemented by another wheel of fire appearing in act four: “You do me wrong to take me out o’ the grave./ Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound/ upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears/ do scald like molten lead” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.7.46-49), and by a later one in act five that closes the cycle: “The wheel is come full circle; I am here” (Shakespeare 1988: 5.3.177).

The connection between these symbols is clearly indicative of the kind of process Lear undergoes. In his dictionary of symbols, Fontana states that “the eye takes the outside world into the inner, and can also project the inner world into the outer.” (Fontana 1994: 58) suggesting thus a connection between the conscious and the unconscious. Yet, it is Chevalier and Gheerbrant who best research eye imagery tracing it back to the Arabic world, where it becomes directly linked to the psychic powers of intuition through the term “*‘ayn ul-yaqu+n*, one of the levels of knowledge and perhaps used in the sense of ‘intuition’ in both accepted meanings of the word: in its pre-rational sense of intuitive comprehension of the first principles of philosophy and in its post-rational sense of the intuitive comprehension of mystical truth beyond the powers of reasoning” (Chevalier &

<sup>17</sup> In *The Conquest of Gaul*, Caesar writes about wicker wheels that roll down a hill with sacrificial victims inside in the following terms: “Some tribes have colossal images made of wickerwork, the limbs of which they fill with living men; they are then set on fire, and the victims burnt to death” (Caesar 1952: 141).

<sup>18</sup> This is a relatively simplistic formula. Authors such as Edinger prefer to speak about a circular pattern, like a life cycle, determined by the opposing forces of ego-self separation and ego-self reunification, which would not neglect empirical observations in both adult and child psychology (Edinger 5-7).

Gheerbrant 1996: 364-365). In other words, the eye brings to the surface the contents of the unconscious psyche causing thus a reunification between the ego and the self.

In similar circumstances, Lear's Platonic appeal to the orbs points to this connection between ego and self as carried forth into a higher level. In her *Illustrated Book of Signs and Symbols*, Bruce-Mitford points that "crystal spheres can concentrate the rays of the sun and so have come to represent divine light and celestial powers" (Bruce-Mitford 2004: 110), acting as a sort of third eye which, again, stands for the self. In the Shakespearean text, however, this globe appeals to either the sun or other celestial bodies. The sun stands across cultures for a representation of the godhead which extends into a prolific number of associated images linking the symbolism of vision and light to that of center: "The Sun is the center of the Heavens, just as the heart is the center of the body; but in this context it is a spiritual Sun which Vedic symbolism depicted as stationary at its zenith and which was also termed the Heart or Eye of the World" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 946) and finally to sovereignty: "Similarly, the sun is a universal symbol of the monarch at the heart of an empire" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 947). For these reasons, this symbol stands among all others as a perfect summary for the imagery contained in *King Lear*.

Considered a solar symbol in most traditions, the wheel goes deeper into the symbolism of the self, be it known that "solar symbolism is not, however, the whole meaning of the wheel, which is also and above all else, a representation of the world" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 1101). According to Kirsh,

When Lear is reunited with Cordelia, his rage has already been transformed and the intensity of his affectivity now appears as an inner image, as a "wheel of fire". It reminds us of the Lamaistic Vajra-Mandala reproduced in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, where the outermost circle of the mandala is represented as a wheel of fire. It also brings to mind the story of Ixion, who was bound to a fiery wheel which whirled him perpetually through the sky. Ixion is chastised or coveting the goddess Hera. Lear's suffering, however, is more similar to the suffering of Christ. Lear's libido is no longer attached to the world; it is almost completely introverted. His affects are now contained. They are all within him and are symbolized as a wheel. "Bound on a wheel of fire" then expresses the psychological status in which his ego is bound on the wheel of his affects (Kirsh 1966: 283-284).

The wheel symbolizes "*samsara*, the endless round of existence" (Bruce-Mitford, 2004: 104), in other words, the eternal cycle of renewal of life, and it is "a solar symbol, the wheel of life and death following on one another's heels throughout the cosmos and, at a human level, perpetual mutability and eternal homecoming" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 1104). It has already been stated that life renewal is one of the most important functions of sacral kingship. In this context, the king, as a human representation of the godhead, acquires the responsibility of reconciling eternal opposites, i.e. life and death as symbolized in the renewal of the cycle. Lear's wheel of fortune, which following these two authors, is equivalent to his horoscope and an easy reminder of the tarot card that predicts one's fate, essentially dramatizes the painful process of reunification of ego and self that is substantial to the archetypal figure incarnated by the wise old king.

In summary, the symbols appearing in the play conform what in Jungian analysis is called a coherent symbolic set, that is, an imagistic group the meaning of which points to

the same primordial image. In this case, the circular pattern of eyes, spheres and wheels and their relevance in the connection between ego and self operating over the king and his three daughters, point to the *mandala* archetype. Jung defined this figure as follows: “The Sanskrit word *mandala* means ‘circle’ in the ordinary sense of the word. In the sphere of religious practices and in psychology it denotes circular images, which are drawn, painted, modelled, or danced. [...] Very frequently they contain a quaternity or a multiple of four, in the form of a cross, a star, a square, an octagon, etc. In alchemy we encounter this motif in the form of the *quadratura circuli*” (Storr 1983: 235). Essentially, the mandala is an archetype of wholeness, equivalent to the self. It includes the *temenos*, or sacred circle, and the four functions of consciousness (thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition) in a pattern permanent across cultural boundaries. Edinger remarks *a propos* the quaternity that “even numbers are traditionally considered feminine while odd numbers are thought of as male. This suggests that the quaternity may be predominantly an expression of the mother archetype or feminine principle with emphasis on static support and containment” (Edinger 1992: 189).

This brings us back to King Lear, whom we left immersed in Nature and deprived of reason. Once his crisis is over and understanding comes upon him, he revives utterly transformed. He is not the egotistical king who gives something in the hope that his favors will be returned in one way or another, but an individual who enjoys a reunification with his self, in its personified form, that is, Cordelia, with whom he is reunited by means of this simple formula: “You must bear with me./ Pray you now, forget and forgive./ I am old and foolish” (Shakespeare 1988: 4.7.88-90). Kirsh comments on this fact in the following terms: “Now, in Scene 6, all the fire of these affects is within him and his ego is irretrievably bound on it. We cannot help but see a cross within the wheel, or Lear with his outstretched arms forming a cross within the wheel. This cross would be an equilateral cross, in contradistinction to the Christian cross. Furthermore, the emphasis would undoubtedly lie on the wheel rather than on the cross” (Kirsh 1966: 286).

This image is so easily evocative that one cannot avoid the thought of Christ nailed to the cross, and in point of fact the resemblance is significant. In “Christ, a symbol of the Self”, Jung pointed to Christian symbolism, in such aspects as consubstantiality with the Father, co-eternity, filiation, parthenogenesis, crucifixion, Lamb sacrificed between opposites, One divided into Many, and so on (Storr 1983: 299-300), as evidence of the validity of Christ as symbol of the Self. In fact, Christ's quest can be understood with Jung and Edinger in the context of the symbols of quaternity appearing around him —the four evangelists, the twelve apostles, and the cross— as a process known in Jungian psychology as individuation, as a consequence of which “Jesus as ego and Christ as Self merge” (Edinger 1992: 150). The rationale of this process is based on the initial archetype of *uroboros*, the serpent that swallows its own tail, standing as a symbol of totality. From this state that the human psyche enjoys after birth, there occurs a progressive differentiation between ego and self. During the first half of life, the ego development alternates between inflation and alienation, yet, towards the second half of life, the conquests of the ego induce an unavoidable emptiness and that causes a growing interest in spiritual matters. This quest essentially consists of the restoration of totality as the ego relates to the self<sup>19</sup>.

*King Lear* is essentially the drama of an individuation process where the individual fails to realize that neither the conscious nor the unconscious *per se* are the objective. Totality is the goal. The circular scheme of initial ego inflation towards final self abnegation marks a conflict that is better centered in “a continuous confrontation of the ego with inner psychological factors, and not a confrontation of man with society” (Kirsh 1966: 314). Other factors point in the same direction. The transcendence of such symbols of totality as wheels, spheres or vision imagery has already been pointed. Two additional features complement the symbolism of individuation: the sacrifice performed by the king, and the dramatic role of his three daughters.

On the one hand, the idea of sacrifice is immanent to the quest. In most ritualistic societies, sacrifice is contemplated as a commitment towards the divine world with a view to obtaining some benefit of a superior order. Hillman establishes the effects that this form of self-sacrifice has once the individual selects his own symbols and interiorizes his own codification:

It is not an immolation but a consecration. Sacrifice takes on its original sense of returning some event in the human world to the Gods, thereby raising the *value* (not the substance) of that event; and where internalizing means working into the interior of that event so that its value, and thus its sacredness, appears to insight. And, curiously, what appears during this sacrificial procedure called “internalization” and what enables insight to happen at all is the personified voice or figure of an anima (Hillman 1985: 121).

In essence, Hillman adheres to Edinger's interpretation of quaternity, when he affirms that “the quaternity may be predominantly an expression of the mother archetype or feminine principle with emphasis on static support and containment” (Edinger 1992: 189). Yet, when one counts characters in *King Lear*, one doesn't end up with four, but with three plus one, the symbolical significance of this addition being substantially different. The transcendence of the number three has already been commented upon when observing the anthropological relevance of the divine trilogies. Perhaps it would be relevant to recall Edinger's remarks on this number: “Trinity is a manifestation of the father archetype or masculine principle which emphasizes movement, activity, initiative” (Edinger 1992: 189).

The role of the three sisters has a double utility. On the one hand, these characters mirror the image of the father. It is an axiomatic truth that the unconscious manifests itself in such subtle manners as symbols —appearing in dream imagery, for example— or, most commonly, behavior. If we carefully observe the discourse, it is not difficult to notice the cause and effect relationship between the appearance of Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, and the actions that move the plot: Cordelia confesses that she loves her father according to her duties and the king disinherits her: “Here I disclaim all my paternal care,/ propinquity and property of blood,/ and as a stranger to my heart and me/ hold thee from this forever” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.1.113-116); Goneril cuts his train and he leaves: “Th' untended woundings of a father's curse pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,/ beweepe this cause again. I'll pluck ye out” (Shakespeare 1988: 1.4.299-300); Cordelia comes back and he recovers consciousness: “Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?” (Shakespeare

1988: 4.7.53). The function of these three sisters, therefore, consists of inducing behavior in the king and confronting his unconscious.

Secondarily, the ethical divergence between Cordelia on one side and Regan and Goneril, on the other, is just as relevant. Cordelia represents the positive side of the psyche, whereas her two evil sisters represent the destructive part of it. The conjunction of these two halves is what gives totality to the unconscious while at the same time it gives it dynamism. This struggle between opposing forces is the same element that introduces the conflict and induces its final *catharsis*. Yet, not only are the three sisters relevant in their function as *dramatis personae*, but their importance lies in the fact that all three together, represent the alter ego of the king. Lear's anima, Cordelia in its positive aspect, develops with him, dies with him, and during the time she is separate from him, deprives him of reason. What better proof is there of the indissoluble character of the individual ego and self once individuation sets its course?

In the previous pages, we have pursued the tragedy of the individual who, weary of the conditions imposed by his social role, decides to follow his human impulse and dive into the inner self. The story of his deception, his betrayal and his obscure fate arises as a consequence of his failure to adapt to the overwhelming images of the unconscious. Eventually, when epiphany occurs, it is too late and death only awaits. His final embrace with Cordelia, however, marks his ultimate triumph and projects a light of hope onto his agony. Lear's sacrifice, goes further from the tale of an individuation; the struggle between Lear and Cordelia recalls that of Eros and Logos, the marriage of which can only result in annihilation. What the tragedy of King Lear essentially shows is that the fragile relationship of Eros and Logos will always be threatened by a no less important Thanatos, and in self-destruction must end King Lear's passion for marrying poles.

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