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"A Jungian Revision of the Grail Myth in *The Left Hand of Darkness*"

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**Abstract:** The present paper studies the connection between Wolfram von Eschenbach's poem *Parzival* and Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* through the lens of Carl Jung's psychoanalysis. It focuses on the evolution of the main characters in both narratives and their psychological evolution from the Ego, embodied in Genly Ai and Perceval, towards the Self, manifested in Estraven and Parzival at the end of their journey. This essay reflects on the main conflict that appears in both narratives, such as the fear of the other or the corruption of the governments of a nation that transform a society into a psycho-social wasteland which requires from the Grail hero to achieve the Self in order to enlighten and to restore the balance to the land and its inhabitants. The analysis is approached from a theoretical framework that merges Myth-Criticism with Jungian psychoanalysis, employing works by Carl Jung, Emma Jung, Joseph Campbell or Ursula K. Le Guin, starting with Gethen; the Winter planet, and continuing with the figure of the Fisher Kings in both narratives, the Heroes, the travel through the Ice in comparison with the discovery of Grail castle, and the Grail, to emphasize the importance of the Anima and values associated to womanhood, to restore the balance in both societies and overcome the fear of the Other.

**Keywords:** Shadow, Anima, the Other, Jung, Fisher King, Grail.

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**"A Jungian Revision of the Grail Myth in The Left Hand of Darkness"**

**0. Introduction:**

Carl Jung was a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst whose ideas about the analytical psychologist have influenced fields such as anthropology, philosophy or literature. His main concept revolves around the principle of *Coincidentia Oppositorum*, an idea that was borrowed from Plato and other Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus, which consists in the union of opposing forces, such as life and death, to reestablish the balance in the universe, thus creating a wholeness. Jung recovered this idea and applied it in his work under the archetype of the *Hieros Gamos*; a divine marriage between the opposites of a person (Papadopoulos 307), which results in the state called the Self, "the totality of man, the sum total of his conscious and unconscious contents" (Papadopoulos 155). This final state represents the individuation of a person and his or her enlightenment for bringing the opposites together.

Jung applied and demonstrated his theories about the *Coincidentia Oppositorum* and the achievement of the Self in studies related to literary heroic characters, such as in his analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and redeeming figures, for instance Jesus Christ, focusing in their psychological evolution during their quests, which lead them to transcend the Ego: a small conscious part of the psyche of an individual which is influenced by society's standards, memories or desires (Papadopoulos 162), and reach the Self. According to Jung, after crossing the limits of the Ego, the hero can reencounter with different parts of his or her psyche that were repressed, such as the Shadow; the hidden part of a person's psyche that is repressed in the unconscious for representing ideas or feelings considered shameful or detrimental for society (Papadopoulos 103-4), the Anima "the female aspects of a man", or the Animus "the male aspects of a woman" (Papadopoulos 68). These sides of the human psyche are usually considered inappropriate for the social standards of a society, and, therefore, for the Ego of an individual. However, by synthesizing them in the consciousness, the hero liberates himself or herself from the limitations of the Ego and achieves the wisdom that was hidden in these parts.

Nevertheless, Jung warns against the repression of one of these sides of the psyche, as it could cause an imbalance at the individual and social level that might lead to external conflicts, e.g. wars, and internal conflicts, e.g. neurosis (Papadopoulos 99-104), only being the reconciliation with these opposite parts of the psyche what brings stability and progress to the individual, and therefore, to his or her society.

These ideas can be found portrayed in two stories from different eras: the epic poem *Parzival* by the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach; a medieval continuation of the romance *Perceval, the Story of the Grail* by Chrétien the Troyes, which could be considered one of the first manifestations of the hero's journey, i.e an allegory of the evolution of the soul and the Ego, that, applied in the romance of *Parzival*, drives the hero into a quest that compels him to transcend the Ego in order to find the Grail and restore the wasteland.

This motif is recovered in the speculative fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, converging both stories in the idea of a society psychologically damaged by the rule of an unfit King or government that defends political and social values which lead to an "imbalance of masculine and feminine spiritual principles" (Croft 122 ). Therefore, the denial of the Anima in the individual provokes, in both narratives, a repression of their fear for the otherness, their Shadow, in the unconscious mind. This rejection of a part of the human psyche causes the decadence of both worlds, as the Anima is not only important for the values of reconciliation that it embodies for being associated with female principles such as empathy or understanding. But also on account of the fact that it allows the individual to reconnect with the internal world (Papadopoulos 154), which allows the person to have access to the unconscious and to realize about his or her Shadow.

Thus, both narratives tell the reader a story about the reestablishing of the balance between these opposite sides: light and shadow, masculine and feminine, through the psychological journey that the heroes do from the Ego and its limitations, represented in Perceval and Genly Ai, to the Self, embodied in Parzival and Estraven. Hence, proving how the acceptance of the Anima and its values allows the heroes to integrate their Shadow and overcome the fear for the Other, transforming this fear into positive feelings of love and friendship that will allow the heroes to reach the redeeming state of the Self and to save their respective worlds.

Methodologically, this essay is approached from a theoretical framework that merges Myth-Criticism with Jungian psychoanalysis, employing books and essays written by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Emma Jung or Ursula K. Le Guin, to study and compare, from a Jungian viewpoint, the most relevant phases and characters of *Parzival*, with those in the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, being the essay divided into the most relevant sections of the Grail Legend, starting with an introduction of Gethen planet and its population, and continuing with the figures of the Fisher King in both narratives, the Grail heroes, the journey on the Ice or the Grail castle, and the Grail, with the aim to show that a great number of fears of the Middle Ages, such as the fear for the different, the decadence of society under a corrupt ruler, or the rejection of values associate to the feminine sphere, are still present in contemporary society.

### **1. Gethen: The Winter Planet.**

Gethen is a planet described as a wasteland where "humanity [...] lives on a strip of land between two white walls." (Le Guin *TLHD*<sup>1</sup> 256) due to the inhospitable environmental conditions of the planet. As a result, the Gethenians are a human society heavily influenced by the planet's glacial conditions which have shaped their biology, granting them the ability to withstand extremely low temperatures.

However, the main characteristic of this humanity is its androgyny, which transforms Gethenians' society into one that is "free of sexual roles, because there are no [...] physiological distinctions of sex" (Le Guin "Is Gender Necessary?" 160). This trait transforms Gethenians into a complex and unique human race, whose social life is divided into two main

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<sup>1</sup> Qtd. as *TLHD* when referring to *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

cycles: the Somer phase, in which "for 21 or 22 days the individual is [...] sexually inactive, latent." (Le Guin *TLHD* 118), and the Kemmer phase; the sexual phase that lasts a few days, in which the individual develops one of the two sexes randomly in order to reproduce (Le Guin *TLHD* 118).

From Jung's viewpoint, it would be possible to affirm that, in this society, each individual is formed by both an Animus and an Anima, which maintains a balance that not only translates into the individual level, but also into the social level, where both sides influence equally in the creation of their culture and in the development of it: "The driving linearity of the "male" pushing forwards to the limit, the logicity that admits no boundary – and the circularity of the "female", the valuing of patient, ripeness, practicality, livableness" (Le Guin, "Is Gender Necessary" 164-5).

This complete integration, both physical and psychological, is visible during the Somer phase, where both sides are continuously in balance and blended between themselves. However, during Kemmer, the individuals become more in contact with one of their sides, which allows them not only to reproduce with a partner, but also to acquire a greater understanding of themselves and their dominant side during the phase, its psychological and its physical characteristics. By doing so, the other side of their androgynous nature is projected in their Kemmer companion, which transforms the sexual partner into the different and the alien and prompts the urgency to reunite the opposites again in the physical world to create life. Thus, the balance is achieved again through the acceptance of the different, the alien, not only inside themselves through the acceptance of both their sides as one, but also in the external world, as an element that can enrich their lives, as is reflected in the Handara idea of "The unknown [...] as the foundation of thought" (Le Guin *TLHD* 95).

Therefore, although Gethenians are a very individualistic human race by prioritizing individualism over society, at the same time, this characteristic transforms them into a deeply connected society, where there are no gender differences, and everyone is considered necessary for it. This quality has transformed them into a society that, although they sometimes demonstrate violent behaviors towards others, they usually accept their differences as something positive, prioritizing the collaboration between themselves over the conflict, "I didn't talk about war, for good reason; there is no word for it in Karhidish." (Le Guin *TLHD* 53). Nonetheless, this idea is changing through the emergence of standards oppose to the idea of balance and the acceptance of the divergent.

There is no specific reason why this is happening on a planet that has always accepted duality and the unknown as something positive, complementary and necessary for the development of its people. Nevertheless, Genly Ai, the main narrator of the story, introduces a hypothesis of how this human race was created, which could shed light on this degeneration of social values, by suggesting that this humanity was the result of an experiment; the combination of human DNA "with its own proto-hominin autochthonous" (Le Guin *TLHD* 117) with the aim not only of living in extreme environments but also with the idea of "The elimination of war", (Le Guin *TLHD* 124) through the biological eradication of all attributes and instincts in humans that, in theory, induce violence towards everything that is considered different.

However, the emergence of a totalitarian state demonstrates that human violence towards the different was not totally eradicated in Gethenians, and that, as a result, they have inherited in their human DNA the Jungian Shadow of the colonizers: the unconscious fear for difference, the unknown and the Other, that drives society towards the collapse, as it is suggested by Genly Ai when he affirms that "All the central worlds are still recovering from a disastrous era a couple of centuries ago [...] the Age of the Enemy" (Le Guin *TLHD* 171).

This Jungian Shadow is also represented in a violent pre-yomesh legend about the creation of human life in Gethen's glacier: the Gobrin Ice, where a mythological giant, father and mother of Gethen's humanity, killed almost all their brothers and sisters, except for one of them, considering them alien to themselves. This act of violence proved that even in their ancient myths, Gethenians struggle with the fear for the other and its consequences. However, after the massacre, "Edondurath built a house of the frozen bodies of [their] brothers" (Le Guin *TLHD* 288) and entered in Kemmer, the moment when the creature got into deep contact with one of their sides, the Anima. This contact with the feminine side within themselves awakens feelings of empathy and curiosity in the creature, which helped them to integrate their Jungian Shadow and prompted the reunification with their other side in the physical world, their lost sibling, no longer considering them as a stranger, but as a partner and a lover when they manifested the Animus during Kemmer.

As a result of this union, the creature bred offspring. However, the story suggests that they inherited their mother's Jungian Shadow; their instinctive fear for what is alien from them "Because they were born in the house of flesh, therefore death follows at their heels." (Le Guin *TLHD* 288). Hence, the end of the myth is transformed into a warning about the inherited fear for the Other and its potential to disrupt human societies and bring them to their collapse, as later will be demonstrated in the states of Orgoreyn and Karhide, respectively.

## **2. The Fisher Government: Orgoreyn.**

Eschenbach recovers the figure of the Fisher King in his epic poem *Parzival*, where this mythological figure is called Anfortas, who is suffering from a wound that only the Grail Hero can heal. However, in Eschenbach's poem the figure of Anfortas is used to convey the idea that "In the Middle Ages [...] people are living in a manner that is not that of their nature: they are living according to a system of rules" (Campbell 149), which is represented in the figure of a wounded king "whose wound has turned the whole country to waste" (Campbell 149) and of an enchantment of decadence that affects his society.

This fight of the nature of the human being against the social conventions is portrayed in *The Left Hand of Darkness* in the two different kingdoms that are presented in the novel: Orgoreyn and Karhide. The state that most accurately reincarnates this idea is Orgoreyn, a Totalitarian state that rejects any idea associated with individualization or difference. By showing this resistance to accept the otherness, Orgoreyn proves that it shares the same Shadow that their creators tried to eradicate: the fear for the unknown and the different, which has led humanity in other worlds to wars and armed conflicts.

According to Jung, the repression of what shapes the Shadow, causes the individual or society to become unable to recognize their flaws, hence, being forced to repeat mistakes

in the external world by not being aware of them (Papadopoulos 105). Ironically, in Orgoreyn, the repression of their fears for the Otherness leads the Sarf, the secret police, and the commensals, to impose a set of values that go against the androgynous nature of this society. By enhancing ideas associated with the Animus e.g. patriotism, war or conquest, and undervaluing those related to their Anima, e.g. peace, empathy or flexibility, the latter is reduced to the recreational and reproductive sphere of society, being only considered necessary during Kemmer, and rejecting the integration of ideas such as compassion or flexibility in the social and political life of the country.

This situation not only destabilizes the androgynous mental life of its inhabitants, but also, because of the rejection of the Anima, whose principles contribute to a major comprehension and acceptance of the different, the influence and the repression of the Shadow increases in the unconscious mind. These circumstances transform Orgoreyn into the most violent and competitive state of the planet, which is driving the state towards the first war ever known in this world, against what they consider the Other, their neighboring state of Karhide, in the name of Patriotism, "Our shadow grows too long. It will cover Karhide too. [...] a feud between two nations? [...] that's a picture that has set fire to my sleep" (Le Guin *TLHD* 111-2).

In such circumstances, even religion becomes a tool of control and repression; contrary to the original religion of this society, the Handdara, which is "more occupied with the likenesses, the links, the whole of which living things are a part." (Le Guin *TLHD* 283), the new dominant religion of the state, the Yomesh cult, supports ideas of the destruction of the natural order by being a religion that "rejects all balance, and deny the right of darkness to exist" (Lake 159), only accepting the existence of the light, which represents only one possibility, one side, especially that related to masculinity, Ying, and rejecting everything that is different from it, Yang. Thus, the Yomesh cult condemns the complementation that comes from accepting the existence of the Other side within them, the feminine in this case, as it is considered alien for the new values of this society.

As a result of the psychological annulment of half of their nature, Orgotas are described as "not an unfriendly people, but incurious; [...] colorless, steady, subdued." (Le Guin *TLHD* 144) and Orgoreyn in general is described as a place where "There was something fluid, insubstantial, in the very heaviness of this city built of monoliths" (Le Guin *TLHD* 183). A place that has exterminated everything that is contrary to the new values of the Sarf, and where an alien, such as Genly Ai, is considered to be a threat for the *status quo*, instead of as a possibility to reinstall the natural order and to avoid a further psychological degeneration of society.

Parallel to the Grail legend, Anfortas, who represents the social conventions hostile to the feminine values in the Middle Ages, such as empathy or sensibility, found his Shadow projected in a Muslim who, by being a pagan, represents the Other. Had he accepted his Anima and its values before the encounter with his Shadow, he would not have succumbed to fear and hate for the different and killed the Muslim in combat (Jung 201-2). When yielding to his Shadow, Anfortas was wounded in the crotch during the combat, which proved him to be unfit for the role of Grail King, because the wound exposed that he had not achieved the enlightened

state of the Self, and, therefore, could not ensure the mental and physical prosperity of his kingdom that comes from the union of the opposites in the psyche (Jung 155).

Therefore, the Self becomes a redeeming state impossible to be achieved by Anfortas, nor by the Orgoreyn government who embodies Anfortas' decadence through the degeneration of a corrupt and barren government that provokes that "people's own inherent spirituality [to be cut down] by an order of values radically out of accord with the order of nature itself" (Campbell 152), which rejects the feminine part of themselves, thus, enhancing their Shadows and fears for the divergent.

### 3. The Fisher King: Argaven XV - Karhide.

While Orgoreyn has the structure of a totalitarian state masked in the form of a complex bureaucracy, Karhide has the structure of a feudal monarchy formed by several Domains where the king, Argaven XV, is a *primus inter pares*. Hence, Argaven embodies the mythical idea of the Fisher King not only by being the monarch of the state of Karhide, but also by being a king who is wounded and, on account of their<sup>2</sup> pain, is provoking the decadence of his kingdom.

However, instead of being physically wounded like Anfortas, Genly Ai introduces a fisher king mentally wounded, and usually named as "The Mad King" (Le Guin *TLHD* 43), being described as "neither sane nor shrewd" (Le Guin *TLHD* 51), and whose "sinister incoherence of his mind darkened the mood of his capital" (Le Guin *TLHD* 129), forcing their kingdom to live into "an image of his world that he has as a consequence of his fears and desires" a kind of enchantment that only the Grail hero can disenchant, or in this case, enlighten through the reconciliation with the Anima and the Shadow. (Campbell 155).

Thus, as occurs with Orgoreyn, this enchantment is related with the fear for the Other, represented, on the one hand, in the dread of being attacked and invaded by Orgoreyn. And, on the other hand, in the rise of Patriotic ideas that Tibe, the first minister of Karhide, is spreading through mimicking Orgoreyn's techniques. Hence, Tibe's role is similar to that of the Sarf, which, on account of their fears for the different, they are spreading ideas and values that enhance the influence of one side of their androgynous nature, the Animus, but, by doing so, imbalance their nature and enters in collision with the Anima. Due to rejection of principles such as empathy or flexibility, the fear for the Other raises, which results in an enhancement of masculine values or ideas such as homogenization or patriotism to eradicate the Other; "No, I don't mean love, when I say patriotism. I mean fear. The fear of the other. And its expressions are political. [...]: hate, rivalry, aggression. It grows in us, that fear" (Le Guin *TLHD* 36).

However, despite Tibe's attempts to break the natural order in Karhide, karhidiers show more resistance to this manipulation of their nature, as Estraven affirms, "Tibe wants to teach Karhide how to lie. [...] But I think we shall have trouble learning how to lie, having for so long practiced the art of going round and round the truth" (Le Guin *TLHD* 188). This idea is verified when Karhide is described as a place where "There was [...] clutter and contortion" (Le Guin *TLHD* 145) in contrast with the idea of order and clarity that Orgoreyn is trying to impose,

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<sup>2</sup> When referring to a Gethenian, since they are androgynous humans, the pronouns they/them will be used, as stated by Judith Butler, since they have no defined gender nor sex.

which manifests the psychological complexity of Gethenians' nature when the opposites, the Anima and the Animus, are unified into one within the individual, and allows the person to realize of their fears and overcome them.

Religion is, therefore, a force of union and acceptance in this state, where the Haddara cult maintains the balance between the darkness and light (Lake 159); the feminine and masculine values, conceiving both not as opposites but as a unity necessary for acquiring a major comprehension of the world which allow the self-realization in the individual. This rejection of the simplification of ideas that exists in Orgoreyn, and which accepts both genres and sexes as one, allows Karhidians not only to be more open-minded, but also to have an balance of both sides that allows them to accept the unknown, the alien, like Genly Ai, as an opportunity to grow and become wiser, thus, being, as a society, closer to the Self than Orgoreyn.

Despite of this fact, a beginning of decadence of this kingdom becomes evident in its king and its first minister, who are succumbing to the fears inherited from their human creators, and, as result, are trying to impose values and ideas that break with the duality in the androgynous nature of Karhideans.

#### **4. Genly Ai: The incomplete hero, Perceval.**

Perceval embodies the stereotype of a simpleton hero who is ignorant of himself but who has a brilliant future as the next Grail King (Jung 41). Yet, he fails during his most crucial task: the disenchantment of the wasteland and the restoration of the natural order during his encounter with the Fisher King because he is not able to ask the question that would have healed Anfortas' wound. The failure of his mission in the Grail castle leads him down a path of reflection and detachment from God, until his encounter with a hermit who unveils to him the causes of his failure and enlightens him with revelations about himself and the need to return to God to find the Grail castle. This part of the story could be interpreted as the end of Perceval as a character entrenched in his Ego and its limitations, and the beginning of his journey towards the Self, which is portrayed in Parzival.

Parallel to Perceval's story, Ursula K. Le Guin introduces a similar character in her novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*; Genly Ai, a terrestrial, who is chosen by the Ekumen, "a coordinator, a clearinghouse for trade and knowledge [...] between the worlds of men" (Le Guin *TLHD* 21) to become an envoy with the mission of convincing Gethen to join this alliance of human worlds. Genly Ai is, as Perceval, a misfit in this new environment which he does not understand nor like, "I was alone, with a stranger, inside the walls of a dark palace, in a strange snow-changed city, in the heart of the Ice Age of an alien world." (Le Guin *TLHD* 35).

Despite the fact that Genly Ai knows the nature of his mission, contrary to Perceval, during his encounter with the Fisher King, he is still unable to complete his own quest, which would have resulted in Karhide's disenchantment from its Shadow and the restoration of the natural order in Gethen. His failure is due to two factors that stem from the issue that they "[cannot] break away from [their] Ego limitations" (Campbell 154): the rejection of the Anima and the repression of his Jungian Shadows.



On the one hand, the rejection of both character's Anima provokes that both Perceval and Genly suffer from a "lack of human sympathy" (Lawrence 129) derived from patriarchal teachings that promote values associated with masculinity and denies those related to femininity in men. This idea is confirmed in both stories; in the case of Perceval, his lack of compassion provokes that he "incurs in twofold guilt: he did not attend to his mother, and he did not ask about the Grail" (Jung 181), because he is concerned "with what others will think of him if he breaks what he believes to be the rules of polite society" (qtd. in Crow 122). Thus, his Ego forces him to reject attitudes associated with femininity as these are considered socially improper of a knight, although essential to heal the Fisher King and become the Grail King.

In the case of Genly Ai, his rejection towards any feminine principles in himself causes him a lack of sympathy and comprehension towards Gethenians, especially about issues related to their androgynous nature. These prejudices towards feminine values lead Genly Ai to fail in his enterprise, as he is incapable of understanding or sympathize with Argaven, who is described employing negative attributes associated to womanhood, "less kingly, less manly than he looked [...] he held his fierce lunatic head at an angle of bizarre arrogance" (Le Guin *TLHD* 48).

As a result of rejecting their Anima, no heroes can heal the Fisher Kings, but, especially in the case of Genly Ai, his rejection towards his feminine side also enhances his disdain and contempt towards Gethenians, as their values and standards differ from that of his Ego. Hence, without the redeeming qualities of the Anima, the contempt and suspicion towards everything that is different, increases in the protagonist of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, leading him to believe and trust in the simplification of ideas of Orgoreyn for being more similar to those of his own Ego, "everything was simple, grandly conceived, and orderly. I felt as if I had come out of a dark age and wished I had not wasted two years in Karhide." (Le Guin *TLHD* 145). His ignorance and his rejection towards anything that is different from his Ego's standards, allows the Sash to take advantage of this situation, and to banish him to a concentration camp to avoid any challenge to the *status quo*.

Nevertheless, this moment of the novel could be considered the protagonist's turning point, because after being rescued by Estraven, Genly Ai starts "the spiritual adventure, the one of asking the question, one that involves the [...] realization of compassion for all suffering beings" (Campbell 52) during the journey in Gobrin Ice with Estraven. It will be during this last adventure that he will start transcending his Ego by reconnecting with his Anima, which, thanks to the feminine principles associated with it, will allow him to realize about his prejudice about Gethenians' androgyny and to start reintegrating his Shadow. This evolution is depicted in his last conversation with Argaven after returning to Karhide, who is described no longer through negative characteristics associated with womanhood, but through empathy and compassion for their suffering: "He looked unwell, and old. [...] like a woman who has lost her baby, like a man who has lost his son." (Le Guin *TLHD* 348).

However, this evolution is not enough for Genly Ai to become a Grail Hero at the end of the novel, as he has not integrated his Shadow completely, idea that is manifested when he rejects his own people after accepting Gethenians' androgyny, "They were like a troupe of great, strange animals, of two different species: great apes with intelligent eyes, all of them in rut" (Le Guin *TLHD* 355-6). This repudiation suggests that, despite having begun to be

conscious of his Shadow, he has not incorporated it completely within his conscious mind. The fact that it is Estraven who is able to complete Genly's mission, proves that Genly Ai cannot reincarnate the role of savior and redeemer at the end of the novel: "All at once [...] I realized what my selfishness and Estraven's silence had kept from me, where he was going and what he was getting into." (Le Guin *TLHD* 340).

As a result, the last part of the novel places Genly Ai in a situation very akin to that of Perceval, who, once he realizes of his sins, suffers with the burden of his mother's death and of his failure with the Fisher King, starting a journey of redemption that results in the growth of consciousness (Jung 181), "No, God's forbid, what's this I hear!"/ [...] Were I now master o'er the Grail,/ Its glory could not compensate/ For what your lips to me relate." (Eschenbach 217). As Parzival, Genly Ai begins a pilgrimage journey to Estraven's home, as a way to atone for his wrongdoings and confesses them to Estraven's parents, "I had come on a fool's errand to Estre, hoping for solace. There was no solace; why should a pilgrimage to the place of my friend's childhood make any difference, fill any absence, soothe any remorse?" (Le Guin *TLHD* 360).

The ending of both stories at this point of repentance, represents the growth of these heroes who have started to transcend their Ego and encounter with parts of the psyche that were repressed in the unconscious mind, like the Anima, whose integration in the conscious mind will probably enrich them and provide them with the tools to integrate their Shadow.

##### **5. Thorem Harth re ir Estraven: The androgynous knight: Parzival.**

Parzival represents the completion of Perceval's journey towards the Self, which results in the disenchantment of the wasteland and the recovery of the Fisher King's wound after Parzival had inherited his role as the next king of the Grail. This deed is only achievable when the hero has enough experience to genuinely empathize and to try to help the unfortunate, such as the Fisher King (Lawrence 131). He is, therefore, a mature and sensitive version of the unconscious boy who started an adventure without knowing the real meaning of his quest.

Similar to Parzival, Estraven embodies the idea of a hero who has learnt during their life and who is capable of reaching the Self. However, Estraven's figure is shrouded by a halo of mystery and darkness, especially at the beginning of the story, where they are described by Genly Ai as "a courtier, a politician" (Le Guin *TLHD* 12). Only through the recovery and translation of Estraven's journal it is possible to know them better, and to discover that they come from an old, noble lineage that stopped a blood feud between contrary Domains and restored the peace there, through the love of the heirs of the different regions, and their sacrifice for the peace. Hence, just like Parzival whose destiny is to become the new king of the Grail as it is his legacy (Lawrence 126) Estraven inherits this redeeming role from his ancestors.

Their destiny becomes more prominent when they are invested as prime minister of Karhide and meet Genly Ai, whose arrival would provide them with the solution to put an end to Argaven's madness as well as the ideas against the Other that Orgoreyn and Tibe were spreading, respectively, by convincing Karhide to join the Ekumen, whose union would provide Gethenians with the opportunity to overcome their Shadow and reintegrate the Anima and its values in their social and political day life.

In spite of their aspirations, Estraven, like Perceval and Genly Ai, would fail in their mission during their service to the Fisher King, being dashed by Tibe's conspiracy against them, which would force them to seek refuge in Orgoreyn, from where they would try to guide Genly Ai and to help him to accomplish his mission from the shadows, "it crossed my mind [...] that I had not come to Mishnory [...] of my own free will; nor had they brought me here. He had." (Le Guin *TLHD* 155), failing in their attempt to convince Orgoreyn to accept Genly's proposal of union with the Ekumen.

This chain of failures would lead them to a moment of reflection in which they would start to be conscious of the mistakes committed with Genly Ai, especially in the utilization of the Shiftregor<sup>3</sup> to communicate with an alien like Genly Ai. As a result, part of their Ego, represented in their Shitregor, was preventing them from being understood by Genly Ai. In view of this mistake, Estraven's decision to amend it by abandoning their Shifregor for the well-being of Genly's mission and of Gethen's future. Thus, their willingness to expand themselves beyond their Ego's limitation and to understand an alien, proves their value as the Grail Hero-to-be of the novel.

This desire to overcome their prejudices about the otherness and to accept the unknown as a possibility to enrich oneself is rooted in their cultural background by being a member of the Handdara cult. Through its teachings, Estraven proves to be a character closer to the wholeness and the enlightenment state of the Self than Orgotas or Tibe, which is demonstrated in the unification of their opposite sides within themselves, their Animus and their Anima. This balance between both their sides will allow them to gather the courage and determination to save Genly Ai from the labor camp, and the patience and compassion to heal him from his wounds.

However, despite being a character that has learnt to accept the otherness as something positive, Estraven is not completely immune to the influence of Gethen's and mankind's Shadow of fears of the different, as is demonstrated when they are uncomfortable with Genly Ai's presence and with his lack of knowledge, "His obtuseness is ignorance. His arrogance is ignorance. He is ignorant of us" (Le Guin *TLHD* 186), only taking Genly Ai into consideration for the future of Gethen. Nonetheless, contrary to the Sash and Tibe who repressed their Shadow out of fear to confront it, Estraven's willingness to recognise their prejudice about Genly Ai's nature for Gethen's well-being demonstrates that they are a character capable of reaching the Self, especially after the integration of their Shadow during the journey in the Gobrain Ice: "He is infinitely a stranger, and I a fool, to let my shadow cross the light of the hope he brings us." (Le Guin *TLHD* 186).

This integration of her Shadow will be possible to accomplish thanks to their Anima, which would create a closeness with Genly Ai that would allow them to develop feelings for him, no longer considering him just as the key to the salvation of their planet, but also as a brother, "There is a frailty about him. He is all unprotected, exposed, vulnerable" (Le Guin *TLHD* 277).

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<sup>3</sup> "Prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship, the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority in Karhide and all civilizations of Gethen." (Le Guin *TLHD* 29)

Parallel to Estraven, Parzival's inner evolution is proven when he encounters his Shadow projected in his half-brother, the muslim Feirefiz, who represents the Other, the different, for coming from a different religion and background. However, instead of repressing his Shadow as Anfortas did in the past, Parzival's acceptance of his Anima and its feminine values permit him not only to overcome his Shadow through love, but also to gain a brother: "Feirefiz and Parzival/ Kissed to put an end to hate. / Friendship was a fitter state/ For them than enmity of heart." (Eschenbach 308).

Thus, exemplifying in both narratives the importance of the Anima and principles traditionally associated with womanhood to overcome and integrate their fear for the different through empathy and understanding, which symbolizes the awakening of the heroes that precedes the disenchantment of the wasteland (Campbell 155).

## 6. What the Ice Said.

Having failed during his meetings with Argaven XV and Orgoreyn's commensals, Genly Ai and Estraven become fugitives whose only opportunity of salvation and of restoring the natural order consists in crossing the Gobrin Ice: an enormous glacier that connects the north of Orgoreyn with Karhide in order to reach the former destination, in which Genly Ai could sign the Ekumen's Star Ship through a public-use transmitter, forcing Karhide to join the Ekumen and providing Gethen with an opportunity to avoid the war.

However, the voyage through the Gobrin Ice would become their last and most perilous task in the novel while they travel towards a wasteland through "deep, cold porridge of rain-sodden snow" (Le Guin *TLHD* 262), furious volcanoes similar to "worms of fire crawl down its black sides" (Le Guin *TLHD* 275), until they finally enter into the Gobrin Ice; a desert of ice and snow associated with prehistoric legends about the beginning of life and the end of it, such as the legend of Edondurath, and full of phantasmagoric apparitions that bring to life the fears of its visitors.

These characteristics may transform the glacier into "the region of the unconscious which [...] can be looked as a sort of underworld" (Jung 68), a role that it shares with the Grail castle in Parzival's legend, as both places represent a challenge for the hero who wants to achieve the Self and, in order to do so, has to descend to the hidden world of the unconscious to achieve enlightenment by confronting his fears and to unify the opposites within him (Jung 68). Therefore, by reflecting the unconscious mind of Gethenians, the glacier also represents their androgynous nature through the play of light and shadow that occurs there; where the light can blind the heroes, and the darkness can bestow light in their journey, being only when both elements are combined when the heroes can advance faster in their journey: "It's queer that daylight's not enough. We need the shadows, in order to walk." (Le Guin *TLHD* 320).

Thus, the Gobrin Ice is described as a living place that tests the resolution of the person who enters there, and their capacity to transcend their physical and psychological limits by revealing their fears and traumas in a hostile environment, only surviving the experienced ones who can outgrow their fears. It will be in the Ice where Estraven and Genly Ai will confront their prejudice and traumas, projected in their partner, and only overcoming those and working together as one, will they be able to return alive to Karhide.

In the case of Genly Ai, he confronts his preconception towards women when Estraven enters in a feminine Kemmer. As Estraven embodies the qualities of the Anima, Genly Ai is forced to face his prejudice towards his own Anima, starting to esteem this part of himself when he observes the positive qualities of it, such as patience or flexibility, and its importance to survive in the Ice, in Estraven. As a result, he will be able to accept his Anima and Estraven's androgynous nature with it, "And I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see [...]: that he was a woman as well as a man. [...] Until then I had rejected him, refused him his own reality." (Le Guin *TLHD* 297). On account of this integration with the Anima, Genly Ai will start transcending his Ego and outgrowing his prejudice towards the otherness, which culminates with the capacity to communicate mentally with Estraven as a proof of their closeness.

However, Estraven confronts their Shadow in the Ice during their phase of Kemmer which prompts the closeness with Genly Ai. This situation will favor the rapprochement between both heroes and the reconciliation and comprehension of both in the Ice, to the extent that they will start developing feelings for each other. Nevertheless, these strong emotions will awaken in them memories of their dead sibling Arek and the trauma of their death, that has been haunting them, and manifests itself in the Ice, when they confuse Genly Ai's mental voice with Arek's, which symbolizes the projection of Estraven's feelings for Arek in Genly Ai.

This confrontation with their Shadow will cause in them a sudden rejection towards Genly Ai on account of the feelings of guilt and desolation that his presence will arise in them, "He heard my voice bespeaking him as [...], his brother's voice [...] and I knew that whenever I bespoke him something in him winced away as if I touched a wound." (Le Guin *TLDH* 306). Despite these feelings, Estraven's willingness to save their world will lead them not only to accept their personal Shadow, affronting what happened to their brother, but also Gethen's Shadow accepting their feelings towards Genly Ai, no longer considering him a stranger or an alien, but a reincarnation of their feelings for Arek.

Therefore, through this love and positive feelings born during a feminine Kemmer, both heroes will be able to transcend their limitation by unifying the opposites: Estraven with their Shadow, and Genly Ai with his Anima, which will allow them to return to Karhide alive by helping each other during their journey as one, and to finally complete their mission.

However, only Estraven, by integrating the last part that remained in their unconsciousness, their Shadow, which indicates that "the gap in the circle is filled, [their] wholeness is complete" (Jung 388), achieves the Self, which will allow them to carry out the last test selflessly. Therefore, just like Parzival who welcomed his brother Feirefiz despite their different background (Jung 387), Estraven finds himself in the same position in which "out of loyalty to his love, in the midst of temptation, he is not seduced. And in combat, he is never afraid. He is without fear and without desire - in the name of love" (Campbell 75), which would allow them to return to their home as the Grail heroine, having obtained the enlightenment represented in the Self.

## **7. The Grail: What Afflicts Thee, Uncle Dear?**

The completion of Parzival's journeys occurs when the character succeeds Anfortas' role as Grail King and obtains the Grail as a proof of his fitness for the position. Thus, the Grail,

although it is described in Eschenbach's poem as a stone: the *Lapis exilist*, capable of producing "The best for drinking and eating/That Eden once was meeting." (Eschenbach 213) which keeps the Fisher King alive even though it does not relieve him of his pain. It can also be considered as a symbol of the Self (Jung 158), only attainable by the hero when he "achieves the center of the personality which transcends the opposites and integrates them" (Papadopoulos 86).

This idea can be corroborated when Parzival, after many tribulations and adventures, understands the value of his Anima, and thanks to its knowledge, is capable to consolidate his Shadow, projected in Feirefiz. As a result, he is able to avoid repeating mistakes related to this dark side of humanity that rendered Anfortas impotent and brought disgrace to his kingdom. By doing so, he becomes "the Grail King without inheriting the wound" (Campbell 79) when he returns to Grail castle to amend his previous mistakes, and formulates a question that proves his evolution and acquisition of human values: "'What afflicts thee, uncle dear?'" (Eschenbach 328), becoming Parzival the enlightened one capable of restoring the natural order.

Parallel to these events, *The Left Hand of Darkness* illustrates the idea of the Grail not in the form of a magical stone, but in a Star Ship that is "'orbiting the sun, somewhere between Gethen and Kuhn." (Le Guin *TLHD* 174), waiting for Genly Ai to "receive the slightest sign of welcome" (Le Guin *TLHD* 310) from the Gethenians to land on the planet. Therefore, the Star Ship symbolizes the union of Gethenian's society with an ideal confederation of many human worlds whose aim is the evolution and achievement of humanity's full potential through the "trade not only in goods, of course, but in knowledge, technologies, ideas, philosophies, art, medicine, science, theory" (Le Guin *TLFD* 171). Therefore, the Star Ship, like the Grail, symbolizes the union between the Divinity or the Self and humanity (Papadopoulos 107).

However, this deed is not achieved by Gethen's society, united as one, but by a single person, Estraven, who represents Gethenians's individual capacity to recover this union within themselves and with the others. Nevertheless, instead of embodying Parzival's redeeming role through the asking of a question, Estraven fulfills it through the sacrifice of their life after reaching the Self, which triggers, on the one hand, Karhide's disenchantment from the patriotism spell casted by Tibe and their Shadow by forcing the first minister to abandon their office, thus, freeing Argaven of their presence, and allowing Genly Ai to convince Karhide to welcome the Star Ship and to join the Ekumen. And, on the other hand, by exposing Orgoreyn, especially the Sarf' lies about the death of Genly Ai, which stripped the state of Orgoreyn from its Shiftregor and forced it to forget about the conflict with Karhide.

Hence, Estraven, at the end of the novel, embodies the figure of The Fisher of Men: a redeeming figure who sacrifices their life by becoming a bait to restore the love of humanity and, through it, the natural order: their last act of love for humanity (Campbell 161)

*"He loved his country very dearly, sir, but he did not serve it, or you. He served the master I serve."*

*"[...] Mankind. (Le Guin *TLHD* 143).*

Their figure not only achieved the Self just like Parzival "not in direct pursuit but through the integrity of [her] character" (Campbell 78), but they also extol the importance of the Anima and feminine principles, rejected in Orgoreyn and by Tibe in Karhide, to restore the fertility

and balance in the wasteland, by reaching the Self during their journey in the Gobrin Ice where they turn into a woman and become a heroine of the Grail. Owing to this reconciliation with the Anima, Genly Ai and Estraven forged a friendship and love capable of outgrowing their prejudice and fears, and to provide Gethen's with an opportunity of salvation by Genly Ai convincing Argaven to join the Ekumen after Estraven's death.

Thus, as occurs at the end of *Parzival* "which becomes an expression of the Western concept of a united world" (Campbell 80), Le Guin's novel also brings back to life this idea of a union between different worlds and cultures through love and understanding, not only as a way to save humanity, but also as a way of enlightening it through the knowledge that different cultures, people and societies, can bring along.

### **8. Conclusion.**

The ideas of psychoanalysis developed by Carl Jung have been used to study and understand a wide variety of books and their characters, especially those related to the hero and redeeming figures, such as the analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and those of redeeming figures, for instance Jesus Christ, as their figure is capable of unifying the opposites, such as Anima in men, or Shadow with Ego, to achieve the state of the Self and enlighten society by becoming the guide of humanity.

Among the books to which Jungian analysis can be applied are the romance of *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach and *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, both of which present us with heroes who have to face very similar situations in order to reach the Self and to bring hope to their worlds, such as the encounter with the Fisher Kings or the Jungian Shadow.

This essay has studied how the characters evolve and mature, going from the Ego, depicted in Perceval and Genly Ai, to the Self, portrayed in *Parzival* and Estraven, as they travel through a psycho-social wasteland in which only the reconciliation with their Anima and the feminine values such as empathy, solidarity or flexibility, can turn the Shadow of humanity, the fear of the other, into a friendship that manages to bring hope to their societies and enrich them.

In order to show this journey, the works of Carl Jung, Ursula K. Le Guin, Emma Jung and Joseph Campbell among others, have been used to demonstrate the evolution of the heroes in both stories, and how the speculative novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, recovers ideas and fears of the Middle Ages portrayed in *Parzival*, such as the corruption of institutions and how this imbalance the psychology of a society, the rejection of values traditionally associated with femininity in men, the fear for the otherness and the difference, and the importance to restore the balance by reuniting the opposites to overcome mankind's fears and enrich society.

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