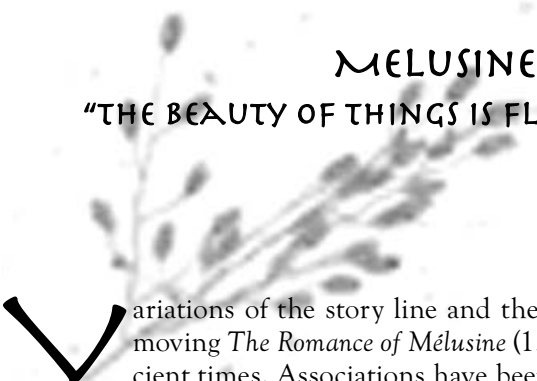


CHAPTER

1

MELUSINE

"THE BEAUTY OF THINGS IS FLEET AND SWIFT"



Variations of the story line and theme of Jean d'Arras's deeply moving *The Romance of Mélusine* (1392 or 1393) date back to ancient times. Associations have been made between the French protagonist, Mélusine, and the Vedic heroine Urvasi, a beautiful and voluptuous Apsara, or heavenly nymph; the Japanese Shinto Toyo-tama, daughter of the sea god, married to Hoori, deity of the hunt; to Psyche, Eros's wife, as depicted in Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, and others. Be it in Jean d'Arras's version of the Mélusine legend, or others appearing during the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and even prior to that time, couples who respected the pact into which they entered prior to their wedding were awarded joy, love, fulfillment, and prosperity. Violation of the contract cast misfortune and suffering on both.

ECTYPAL ANALYSIS

Duke Jean de Berry, count of Poitou and brother of Charles VI of France, ostensibly to amuse his sister, Marie, duchess of Bar, had commissioned Jean d'Arras to write *The Romance of Mélusine* (Nodot, *Histoire de Mélusine* vff.). In his prologue, the author cited a similar tale written in prose two centuries earlier by the monk Gervais of Tilbury (c. 1152–1234), first, a protégé of Henry II of England, then entering into the service of Otto IV of Brunswick. Mention must also be made of the rhymed octosyllabic version

of *The Romance of Mélusine* composed by Coudrette in c. 1401 for Jean Larchevêque, lord of Parthenay.

Poitiers, the ancient capital of the province of Poitou, was the seat of much of the action in *Mélusine*. A stronghold of orthodoxy under its first bishop, the fourth-century St. Hilary of Poitiers, the area was also known for its monasteries, Roman amphitheaters and baths, the baptistery of St. John (fourth to twelfth centuries), the Cathedral of St. Pierre (twelfth to fourteenth centuries), and the royal residence (twelfth to fifteenth centuries). Plundered by the Normans (ninth century), and twice by the English (1152–1204, 1360–1372), Poitiers was nonetheless as previously noted, the location of Eleanor of Aquitaine's brilliant court. Indeed, certain critics maintain that Eleanor of Aquitaine had been the inspiration for Jean d'Arras's protagonist, *Mélusine*.

Some scholars whose names appear in the vast literature on *Mélusine* theorize that the tale was strictly of Poitevin origin; others, that it was of Scythian provenance, having been brought to the West by returning Crusaders. These maintain that *Mélusine* (or *Mélisende*) is to be identified with one of the daughters of Baudoin II, king of Jerusalem (Marchant, *La Légende de Mélusine. Jean d'Arras* vii).

Jean d'Arras is divided into two parts: the first, focusing on *Présine*, and the second, on her daughter, *Mélusine*, the ancestress of the famed Lusignan family of Poitou. The stirring lives of these two hauntingly mysterious women veer from dream scheme to actuality, their earthly trajectories taking them from deeply forested areas to cleared terrains, from shadowy caves to mountainous heights and flat lands. Nor are the psyches or physical makeups of these two extraordinarily beautiful feminine figures clear cut. *Présine*, endowed with prescience, is blind to the realities of human nature. Like her mother, *Mélusine* is intuitive and provided with inner sight which, when subjectively motivated, dims her thinking principle, blinding her to otherwise evident truths. Unlike her mother—and most surprisingly—she takes on the form of a snake from her waist down, but only on Saturdays!

Due to the changing status in love relationships, as has been mentioned, women were acquiring greater equality vis-à-vis their husbands. Both *Présine* and *Mélusine* in Arras's *The Romance of Mélusine* (referred to henceforth as *Mélusine*) imposed ethical and social adjustments on their partners. Might their comportment be labeled intransigent? Just as knights of old had to learn to curb their ardor for fighting, hunting, and for sexual matters in general, so increasing restrictions were foisted on husbands in *Mélusine*, heightening tension in these changing times. On occasion, both partners gained physical and spiritual support from each other, each cognizant of the love, feeling, and respect due them as individuals and as an ideal/real couple. At other moments, mercurial changeableness prevailed, with dire results!

Présine and Mélusine, as well as the members of their families, were firm believers in Christianity and adherents of church ritual, yet were bogged down in superstition and taboos. Animism, a strikingly important factor in *Mélusine*, opens readers up to a universe in which natural phenomena are not only considered living entities, but are endowed with souls that, under certain circumstances, exist apart from their material bodies. The mélange of attributes of earth people and supernatural beings was acceptable not only to the masses in the Middle Ages, but also to certain highly placed individuals and, frequently, to the clergy. Hadn't Godefroy de Bouillon (1061–1100), leader of the first Crusade, prided himself on descent from a fairy on his maternal side? And hadn't Henry II Plantagenet claimed ancestry from King Arthur? Richard the Lion Heart asserted proudly that "the sons of demons" had been responsible for the birth of his dynasty (*Jean d'Arras, Le Roman de Mélusine. Mis en français moderne par Michèle Perret* 9).

Occult yet vitreous, audible although silent, static despite their motility, Présine and Mélusine were, like many archetypal figures, a complex of opposites who, although living in the Middle Ages, survive in our contemporary city-jungles and dwindling forests.

ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS

Part I: Présine

Our tale opens as the valiant King Elinas of Albania (the ancient name for Scotland), recent widower and father of several children—the eldest of which is Nathas (Mataquas)—has gone out hunting. Seeking distraction after the death of his beloved wife, he makes his way on horseback ever more deeply into a thickly forested area near the sea, loses all sense of direction and of time, realizes he is thirsty, and stops to drink at a fountain. No sooner does he approach the fountain than he hears a voice "more melodious than any siren" (*Mélusine* 18). The virtually hypnotized Elinas first believes he is listening to the music of angels on high. Deeply touched by its tender quality, he follows it to their source. Dismounting from his horse, which he secures to a tree, he walks closer to the fountain and notices the most beautiful woman he has ever seen standing next to it. He observes her from behind a cluster of trees. So mesmerized is he by the vision that he does not know whether he is awake or dreaming. Having forgotten his thirst and his hunt, he sinks ever more deeply into a state of seeming somnolence—or a hypnotic trance state—and awakens with a start to find his two dogs frolicking about him. Moments later, both his memory and his thirst return. He walks toward the fountain,

drinks its waters, is greeted by the lady, and is told her name—Présine. Soon her valet arrives to spirit her away. She mounts her horse and leaves.

So overwhelmed is Elinas by the aura of “The Lady of the Fountain,” that, after her departure, he follows her almost mechanically to her forest retreat. The two meet again. Much to his surprise, she knows his name, and asks him what brings him to the forest. He responds by requesting her love and good will. Not easily persuaded by amorous intent, she replies forcefully, that his intentions must be honest, for “no man will make her his mistress” (*Mélusine* 22). Aware that he is deeply smitten, she considers it appropriate to impose her conditions. If he seeks to marry her, she tells him, he must promise never to visit nor to look at her during her lying-in period. He swears to abide by her interdict. They marry and live out a profound love relationship. Not only is she a perfect wife, but she even surprises and delights Elinas’s “people” by her wise and ethical rule of her household domain (*Mélusine* 9). Only Mataquas, Elinas’s son by his first wife, despises her. In time, she gives birth to three daughters, Mélusine, Mélior and Palatine.

THE HUNT. Hunting, one of the most popular sports of medieval times, held special allure for knights, and the bereaved Elinas was no exception. Not only had the art of the hunt become a test of physical dexterity and endurance, it was of spiritual and psychological value as well; hunting was understood as the symbolic trapping and killing of the animal within each being. Only after expelling the beast within, or, paradigmatically, the aggressive instincts buried inside an individual, could one experience feelings of redemption. If the hunter Elinas was successful in catching his prey—the animal within—he would become master of his “mount” and would be able to encourage the rule of the rational and/or conscious. A new and more fruitful orientation of his life might very well lead him to his center, bringing balance and harmony to his now empty and one-sided world. As on a journey or pilgrimage, a knight such as Elinas, having entered the forest on horseback, was being put to the test: that is, to the search, or the quest (Lat. *quaestus*, and “question,” *quaestio*, the two being associated in this connection). Like Druid priests, poets, and knights of old, Elinas, the hunter entered his shadowy forest world on horseback, happened upon a fountain, and suddenly grew thirsty for want of its spiritually/psychologically nutritive regenerative power.

FOREST. Since time immemorial forests have been considered the habitat of an ever-nourishing, ever-thriving, ever-relational, and at times ever-voracious lunar force, that of the Great Mother. Fertility, in all of its colorations and manifestations—verdant green grasses, red, mauve, or yellow flowering or non-flowering plants, along with molds, mildew, and rot—luxuriate chaoti-

cally in her darkened domain. Identified at times with the nonregulated and hidden womb-like *unconscious*, the forest stands antipodally to the consciously cultivated solar-fed garden with its ordered, planned, and restricted vegetation. As the great dispenser of rain and water, the forest—or “green world”—and the animals thriving within its parameters, exists and flourishes thanks to the sustaining power of the Great Mother, as lunar force. Associated with the most primitive levels of the feminine psyche, this protective, relatively obscure maternal shelter holds many a lonely wanderer in its thrall.

Even as the forest’s uncultivated growth has become a paradigm for the regressive spheres of the psyche, its nonlinear time schemes and rhythmical behavioral patterns follow their own quixotic motifs as well. Understandably, then, did oracles, sybils, mediums, and other supernatural figures—including fairies—choose this relatively obscure and uninhabited realm to murmur their ambiguous prognostications. In this darkened liminal, no-time sphere, prophets, seers, and world creators were known to have lost their direction or rational outlook, thereby allowing them the luxury of tapping into their transpersonal spheres—or collective unconscious.

VISION. Visionaries, poets, philosophers, theologians, scientists, seers, and artists have for centuries chosen remote and sparsely inhabited realms to allow their resplendent inner materializations to take on concretion. Elinas’s visionary experience, having given him access to his collective unconscious, thrust a much-yearned for archetypal image into his mind’s eye. Overwhelmed by the sight of the beautiful woman standing next to the fountain, he felt himself inexplicably imbued with a sense of lightness and well-being. So powerfully had these sensations encapsulated his psyche, that he seemed to have fallen into a remarkably deep slumber, losing contact with reality. Was this the path chosen by the Great Mother to assuage his sorrow? By severing his ties with the empirical domain, was she ushering him into deeper subliminal dimensions, inviting him to cohabit with eternal and universal spheres? Having blocked out Elinas’s reason and concomitant feelings of loneliness, sorrow, and abandonment, the Great Mother had created a fertile field for his trance state, which served to release him from the troubling dichotomies in the differentiated world and the weight of his obsessive feelings of bereavement. Now capable of communicating with natural forces, he was attuned to his own matrix: that womblike, containing, and “dynamic aspect of the unconscious” which has the capacity to move and to “act on its own accord,” and is even responsible for the composition of dreams (Franz, *On Divination and Synchronicity* 20). As long as the “no-man’s land” of the collective unconscious prevailed, Elinas’s diminished intensities and reduced agitations, virtually cut him off from the domain of discord.

Explaining the “dynamic” aspects of the unconscious and its active participation in the composition of dreams, Franz writes:

One could say that composing dreams while one sleeps is an aspect of the spirit; some master spirit or mind composes a most ingenious series of pictures which, if one can decipher them, seem to convey a highly intelligent message. That is a dynamic manifestation of the unconscious, where the unconscious energetically does something on its own, it moves and creates on its own, and that is what Jung defines as spirit. (Franz 20)

When finally Elinas did awaken, or emerged from his inner-forest world, he was so disoriented that he was hard pressed to decide whether he had seen an actual woman before him, or whether, as previously mentioned, his vision of her was the outcome of a waking or sleeping dream. Either way, while giving birth to his vision, he also internalized a much-yearned-for *anima* or soul image which would serve to inject a new life principle into his depleted affective psyche.

Both his entry into the forest and his emerging vision of Présine may be looked upon as the outset of an initiation (Lat, *initiatus*, “gone within”) ceremony, a descent into the Self, defined psychologically as a submersion into the total psyche, or in religious parlance, into God. Elinas’s rite of passage had, therefore, taken him from one level of consciousness to another. His new sense of connectedness, experienced as a *katabasis*, or inner descent, would encourage him to link up with both his own personal past and with the primordial existence of humanity. His participation in the forest’s mysteries concretized his vision and invested it with broader perspectives: new qualities garnished his formerly limited understanding of truth and beauty.

The altering of one’s concepts following a traumatic visionary experience is in keeping with the propensity of medieval theologians and philosophers to link ethics with form. Indeed, as experienced by Elinas, the two had become virtually interchangeable. According to the thirteenth-century English Franciscan scholar, Alexander of Hales, “[T]ruth was the disposition of form in relation to the internal character of a thing; beauty was the disposition of form in relation to its external character” (Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* 23. From Hales, *Summa Theologica* I, no.3).

The greater were the feelings of love Elinas projected onto *form*, or onto his anima figure standing at the fountain, the more powerful was the hold this image would have on his psyche. Indeed, Présine’s power, even at the onset of his visionary experience, had succeeded in routing him from his hunt. Not that his life force had been depleted by his foray into his uncon-

scious—rather, the reverse had taken place. Her image, as associated with the fountain, may be said to have flowed into him, thereby renewing, nourishing, and sustaining his entire being.

The Greeks might have defined Elinas's sudden feelings for the feminine power standing before him as a case of overwhelming lovesickness, an example of Eros's powerful arrows having pierced his flesh. But his was an endopsychic experience, one "belonging to the subject," whose effect on the spirit became "transsubjective," that is, appearing as if from some spiritual or spirit world (Franz, *Projection and Recollection in Jungian Psychology* 34).

MUSIC. The melodious voice of Elinas's vision-lady produced in him nearly endless varieties of resonating pulsations, which increased his awareness of the myriad foreign elements in his mind's eye. The combination of the visual image and the oral sonorities altered the components of his psyche, reaching deeply into his inner void—that area of his subliminal sphere which had remained vacant following the death of his first wife. As the stirrings of the tonalities filled his inner vacuum, they catalyzed in him a need to involve himself with the apparently gentle woman appearing to him in his vision.

The mood-altering effect of the pitches, amplitudes, and rhythms flowing into him, moreover, aroused his body/psyche/mind complex to what we would today call a "high," actuating unknown contents within the folds of the psyche. Elinas's vulnerability and need of healing had virtually transformed him into a kind of receptacle, attracting him to the musical strains issuing forth from "The Lady of the Fountain." A parallel may be drawn between Elinas's reaction to music and the effect of the tones emanating from Orpheus's lyre—an instrument that was deemed to have the power of mesmerizing animals and moving stones.

The more Elinas was exposed to what he considered to be celestial harmonies, the greater was his devotion to his soul figure. Like hallowed tonal phrases of medieval music, so Présine's verbal sonorities drew Elinas's feelings toward supernal spheres, encouraging him to identify the strains he heard with angelic voices. His associations reflect St. Hildegarde of Bingen's "'symphonic' organization of nature, and how the experience of the Absolute unfolded in the manner of music" (Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* 36), as well as Boethius's notations on the connection between musical modes and their rhythms, which affects people in various ways. Boethius cited the Spartans who claimed that certain sonorities modified their souls, an effect which we may identify as changes in their moods! We may add that Pythagoreans "made use of certain lullabies to help them get to sleep, and when they awoke they shook the sleep from their eyes with the help of music" (Eco 31). As an advocate of "the music of the spheres," had not Pythagoras

connected micro and macrocosm, soul and body, love and hate, thus uniting the disparate in transcendence? (Eco 32).

The greater the reality of Elinas's fantasy figure, the greater the increase of her saintly attributes. Having previously allied ethics and form, he now assigned to tone and cadence moral and esthetic characteristics. How such a transformation constellated in him and how it may be explained, is moot. Jung compared "the musical movement of the unconscious" to "a sort of symphony" whose dynamics still remain unfathomable (Jung, *Seminar on Dream Analysis* 440).

MUSIC AND SIRENS. Elinas associated Présine's singing not only with the spiritual images of angels, but with the song of sirens, adding destructive sexual inuendoes to the heretofore godly ones.

As airborne and water-borne creatures, sirens allegedly were endowed at times with the heads of women, and at other instances, with their breasts. The rest of their bodies bore the shape of birds. Aristotle, Pliny, and Ovid, on the other hand, had depicted sirens as women endowed with fish or serpent tails. Of several types, many of these semi-human females were known for their mesmerizingly seductive powers. Although tantalizing the male, sirens were in all cases unable to fulfill their own or their partners' sexual desires. While Orpheus and Odysseus were said to have survived the hypnotic chants of bird-women, other navigators, less well centered did not.

The image of the siren throughout history—whether or not associated with aspects of the Great Mother Demeter/Ceres, Aphrodite/Venus/Cybele, to mention but a few—has come to indicate a handicapped physical and/or emotional condition. Because the charge for sexual failure always fell on the female, the siren image was created as a symbol of female deformity. Instead of assuming accountability for his acts, the male was forever pictured as devoured and enslaved by the female, victimized by a formidably evil temptress. Such a notion is fantasized in the biblical Book of Revelation with its depiction of the city of Babylon as woman:

Come hither; I will shew unto thee that judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication . . .

. . . and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Rev. 17:5)

The identification of woman with Evil/Eve, the greatest of temptresses for believers in ancient times and even today, was a reality for medieval man. In depictions of bird- or snake women in the bestiaries of the times, they were “deadly creatures” whose melodies served to “entice the hearing of . . . poor chaps by a wonderful sweetness of rhythm, and put them to sleep. At last, when they see that the sailors are deeply slumbering, they pounce upon them and tear them to bits” (*A Book of Beasts*, trans. T. H. White 134). Nor are images of these semi-human females lacking in chapel and church sculptures in France and elsewhere, as, for example, the carvings of two-tailed sirens on the tympanum of the chapel of St. Michel d’Aiguilhe at Le Puy; and siren-birds at Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire. Sirens, loreleis, ondines, and snake women are part of humanity’s archetypal heritage.

The connection in Elinas’s mind between Présine and the siren figure—or her semi-human nature—suggests not an inability on his part to experience sexual fulfillment, but rather indicates his complete submission to the dictates of this otherworldly lady. Not surprisingly does the onus of a woman-dominated relationship in patriarchal societies—such as those existing in medieval Europe—fall on the female. To assuage any sense of possible humiliation, the male, who by yielding to the madness of his love had already succumbed to temptation and to all of its concomitant evils, conjured these semi-divine or malformed female powers, thereby creating the ideal excuse to avoid responsibility for psychological and/or physiological sexual malfunctioning.

Although Présine’s physical appearance was not deformed, like that of the sirens perched on rocky crags jutting up from ancient Greek seas, she knew that music, an intermediary zone between the material, physical, and spiritual domains, had the capacity to generate an anima figure in a grieving widower. Her powerful intent at a time when women sought to elevate men from their formerly brutish, one-sided patriarchal comportment, was the acculturation of the male. To introduce Elinas to courtly standards, to feeling attitudes, and to seemly comportment toward women, may have been in part Présine’s motivation in establishing a love relationship. She sought to teach him—medieval man—respect and consideration for a woman in a marriage relationship. No longer would she, as was the case of so many other women of the time, be used simply as an object created to satisfy a husband’s sensual needs and/or provide him with children.

Aware of her attributes, Présine knew she could give Elinas companionship, understanding, and love, but she would remain unyielding in her

requirements. Sensing the effect her tonal gradations had on Elinas, Mother Nature or Mother Protectress activated the acculturation process by having sound strike deeply into the heart of Elinas's being, transforming the once valorous king and hunter into a courteous, thoughtful, but increasingly dependent man.

FOUNTAIN. Like the waters of the fountain where Présine stood when Elinas first glimpsed her, she came to symbolize the source, the center, the *fons et origo* of his life. Reminiscent of the Kabbalistic image of the fountain in the Zohar (*Book of Splendor*), indicating the mystery of the Infinite, the supernal point, or the center of Centers from which "the fount of all bliss and all blessings flow," so Présine was identified by Elinas with lustral waters.

From his newly found mystical Eden within the forest would be born his new reality. The fountain whose waters he imbibed would nourish his lonely and vacant heart. Its spiritual waters would redirect him into the great sea of life, comparable to the alchemist's first operation: that of *solutio*, involving the cleansing of the metals, or, psychologically, the purification of Elinas's unredeemed traits. The waters of the fountain revived him, injected him with sufficient energy to follow "The Lady of the Fountain" to her domain, thus allowing him to experience the precontaminated condition of the newborn through baptism: the sprinkling of water that, symbolically, washed away sin. Not surprisingly, alchemists often quoted Jesus' recommendation to purify oneself through waters: "Verily, verily, I say unto them, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The fountain's spray, arising from uncontaminated Mother Earth, quenched Elinas's thirst, and in so doing, ritualized the very mystery of baptism. Reminiscent of the alchemist's elixir of life, the waters of the fountain revived what had grown atrophied following Elinas's divestiture and his ensuing condition of morbidity.

THE LYING-IN TABOO. Taboos have existed since earliest times. Although conversant with those of Pandora and Cupid and Psyche, Westerners may be intrigued by a lesser-known Hindu myth related in the Catapatha-brahmana, about the peregrinations of a Puruvaras, or king, who fell in love with Urvasi. As an Apsara, this beautiful and voluptuous fairylike being who rose from the waters, was looked upon, as were her sisters, as both "a daughter of pleasure" and as a celestial musician (Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology* 483). Prior to her marriage, she was forbidden to look upon her husband in his nakedness. Tragedy likewise struck in the Kojiki, a Shinto text in which Toyo-tama ("Rich-jewel"), the daughter of the God of the Sea, married the hunter, Hoori.

After giving birth to a child, she turned into a dragon, slipped back into the sea in shame leaving her child behind (Davis, *Myths and Legends of Japan* 37).

The notion of taboo with regard to an object (tree, amulet, charm, particularly if it has been blessed by an awesome figure), or to an individual (Présine), inspires sacred dread. Touching or injuring the person(s) involved in this kind of prohibition would, it was believed, severely damage the object and/or persons.

Why a lying-in taboo in Présine's case? A mysterious connection has existed since ancient times between a woman and the moon (Gr. *mene*, moon) because of the rhythms of her monthly cycle (Lat. *menstruus*, from *mensis*, month), as in menstruation.¹ Because women in most Western and Eastern societies were considered unclean during their menstrual periods, they were placed under certain restrictions—or taboos. Compelled to live in a room apart from others, or in special houses located at the outskirts of villages, they remained frequently without care and were obliged to fend for themselves. Similar exclusionary conditions awaited birthing women, who were forced to withdraw to another house or town. To even look upon their shadows, it was believed, might infect an onlooker. Although food could be brought to them, it had to be left at a distance from the pregnant woman to avoid contamination of the bringer. Infractions of these governing rules were severely punished. As late as the early twentieth century, in certain areas in England, a mother at the conclusion of her birthing period, which lasted one month, had to participate in a special Anglican and/or Roman Catholic ritual that would disinfect her, “not surgically, but religiously,” from her contaminated condition (Harding, *Woman's Mysteries* 55ff.).

The vacuum in the household by physical separation during the birth of a child, working in tandem with psychological ostracism, created a void in both empirical and psychological realms. The ensuing emptiness catalyzed feelings of fear, awe, and envy in the male because of the power of creation that had been invested only in the female.

That Elinas had unthinkingly agreed to Présine's taboo which forbade him to look at her during and following her lying-in-period, suggests the valuation of an ideal, notably, the sacrality of an oath taken by a knight of the Round Table. One may wonder why the preservation of Elinas's oath represented a more difficult task for him than the risking of his life in the capture of the Holy Sepulchre. The injunction to which he agreed to abide required dominion over his instinctual and affective world, a virtually impossible task to accomplish when under emotional stress.

During the birth of his three beautiful daughters—Mélusine, Mélior, and Palatine—Elinas, in keeping with the interdict, remained away from his palace. His immediate anxieties were alleviated when his son, Mataquas,

informed him of the infants's perfections. Jealous of Présine's power over his father, Mataquas encouraged him to repair to Présine's rooms to see for himself the beauty of his three daughters. Forgetting his vow, Elinas entered the birthing room as Présine was bathing her daughters and blessed her. Présine's response was wrathful: "Felon you failed to keep your word," she shouted, blaming Mataquas alone, for the future of sorrows Elinas and his family were to know (*Mélusine* 23). That the lying-in taboo was extracted by Présine, and not by Elinas, indicated the empowerment of the woman not only over herself, but over the man as well, particularly with regard to matters of birthing. No longer willing to abdicate or subvert her destiny to a man's will, Présine demanded that her goals, her prerogatives, her attitudes and feelings be recognized. Intransigent to the extreme, she may have unconsciously believed that a single infraction of the rule would be sufficient to destroy the world of amity and togetherness she and her husband had created. While Présine's love for Elinas had in no way diminished, she was unable to forgive his disregard of his oath. Ethics, more importantly than sexuality or marital status, remained uppermost in her mind. Breaking a sacred promise under emotional stress indicated a lack of self-control, an inability to live up to a commitment, the destruction of the high values placed on their marital relationship. A woman of her word, Présine demonstrated, despite the emotional cost, a highly tuned will-power and ability to discern right from wrong. Was she adhering to the dictum of the ninth-century Christian theologian, Duns Scotus, who wrote that "the will controls its act just as the intellect controls its act" (Eco 72. From *Opus oxoniense*). If so, Présine's intransigence revealed an extremist's lack of malleability and understanding, particularly of a husband's natural instinct to see his newborns. Moreover, by punishing her husband, she was not only depriving herself of love, but her daughters of a father, thereby instilling in them by extension an inner rage to the male principle.

She immediately took her three daughters to Avalon, or "the Lost Isle," so called because one gained access to it only by chance. Mélusine, Mélior, and Palatine were brought up with the knowledge of their father's transgression and its ramifications for their lifestyle. Remaining in exile with their mother until the age of fifteen, they never again set eyes on their father. Mataquas was given the kingship and ruled well.

MOTHER/DAUGHTER IDENTIFICATION. As mother figure, Présine emphasized not a father's love for his wife, but rather his "felony," blaming Elinas for her isolation, suffering, and penury. She assured her daughters that at Judgment Day, God would punish evil doers, namely, their father, and recompense good people.

Bearing her mother's words in mind, the reasonable and protective young girl that Mélusine had become identified with her mother and rejected her father. She took her sisters aside, suggesting to them how best they might reveal their love for their mother while at the same time punish their father for having reduced them to virtual penury. The two sisters would act as one to assure the success of their planned vengeance. Their adroit schemings having come to fruition, their father was shut up for the rest of his life in the enchanted mountain of Brumborenlion in Northumberland.

Subsequently, the daughters returned to their mother and, expecting to be praised for their action, met with her wrath. Aghast at her daughters' cruelty, Présine told them that, by incarcerating their father, they had destroyed the only happiness she had ever experienced—his love for her. The punishments she meted out to her daughters were severe: Mélusine, who had initiated the horrendous act, would, like Cain who killed his brother, go through life with the knowledge of her transgression and pain of its consequences. Her father alone could absolve her from her "fairy destiny," a terrible punishment that would be hers throughout her existence: every Saturday the lower half of her body, from the umbilicus down, would assume the form of a serpent. If she found a man willing to marry her, he would have to promise not to look at her on Saturdays, nor ever reveal the taboo to anyone. As long as he adhered to the pact, Mélusine would be capable of extraordinary achievements: the building of great fortresses, multiple towns, the amassing of inordinate wealth. She would bear many children, thus creating the great Lusignan lineage. If, on the other hand, her husband violated the oath, she would not only return to and retain her serpent form until Judgment Day, but each time the Lusignan fortresses changed hands or a descendent died, she would appear in the environs in her serpentine form for three days of painful lamentation.

Her sister, Mélior, would be banished to the richly provided Sparrowhawk Castle in Armenia, and remain there as a virgin throughout her earthly days. Once a year (from June 23 to June 25), if a knight succeeded in remaining awake during the entire three-day interval, she would grant him a lavish earthly gift, provided he asked neither for her love nor for her hand in marriage. Failing this, malediction would be meted out to him and to nine generations thereafter. As for Palatine, she would be imprisoned in Guigo (Canigou), the mountain in which her father's treasure had been stored, until a knight of the same lineage used the treasure therein to conquer the Holy Land.

On Elinas's death, Présine returned to the enchanted mountain, buried him in a richly outfitted coffin, and garnished the mortuary chamber with golden candelabras destined to burn night and day for eternity. At the foot of his tomb, she had a statue erected of him, holding a golden tablet on which

his life story had been engraved. A horribly fearsome giant was hired to guard both the tomb and the statue.

Part II: Mélusine

Following her mother's searing chastisement, Mélusine went her own way. That she had become emotionally divested of her personal mother, may have accounted for her choice in settling in the domain of the Great Mother—the Coulombiers forest near Poitiers. The uncontrolled and disorderly vegetation in her new habitat mirrored Mélusine's own psychological condition of disarray. Deprived of the sun, associated with consciousness and the rational sphere, the exile's inner moon-drenched topography cast an eerie glow on the surroundings. Nonetheless, the fundamentally strong and well-intentioned Mélusine was aware of the difficulties facing her, particularly those involving men.

At this point in the story a Breton nobleman, Raimondin, astride his horse, like the bereaved Elinas who had penetrated the forest's *temenos*, entered the Great Mother's shadowy or unconscious sylvan realm. The reader learns that the trauma Raimondin had experienced after accidentally killing his uncle and benefactor, Count Aimery of Poitiers, had incapacitated him psychologically. Dazed, unable to focus on anything, he allowed his horse to guide him through the thick forest. His destiny paralleled that of his father, the Count of Forez (Forest), who, after having guilelessly killed the nephew of a Breton king in a youthful skirmish, then sought refuge in a forest.

What were the circumstances that led Raimondin to murder his beloved uncle? Chance or destiny, he lamented, decreed his murderous act. The solid relationship that existed between the knight's father and his uncle dated back to the former's marriage to the sister of the Count of Poitiers. The handsome and gracious Raimondin, one of three children born to the couple, so favorably impressed the Count of Poitiers that when he had reached adolescence he took him under his wing. It was during a wild boar hunt that the trackers, most notably the count and Raimondin, grew so hostile to one boar in particular—excited by its huge size, its ferocious comportment, and what they considered to be its increasingly defiant ability to elude them—that they, and the other knights to a lesser degree, took the entire venture as a personal challenge.

A millennial object of fascination, the wild boar was regarded by the Hindus as an avatar of Vishnu. The Babylonians considered the animal sacred, the Romans and Gauls represented it as a military insignia, and the Druids used it as sacrificial food for their "intensely spiritual" feast of Samhain (Halloween today), a time when "the Other-world became visible"

to humankind (Ellis, *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology* 205). The boars' range of attributes for medieval man was varied and contradictory: courageous, rash, debauched, and brutal, but also spiritual. The image of the boar as constellated in Raimondin's psyche had taken on such power as to make his knightly prowess dependent on his ability to hunt down this animal.

His sense of humiliation and defeat following his repeated ineffective lungings at the wild boar suggest the misplaced vanity of an adolescent—a frustration that turned into rage when he saw himself outmaneuvered by what he personified as his duplicitous foe. In blind pursuit of his prey, he made for the heart of the forest. Fearing for the lad's life, the altruistic count of Poitiers ordered him to return. Unheeding, Raimondin bolted further into the darkness of the forest. The uncle, mounting his steed, rode in pursuit of his beloved nephew. When finally he reached him the two stopped to rest.

During the pause, the count studied the contours and movements of the brilliantly incised moon set against a blackened sky filled with constellations. An artful astronomer/astrologer, he read and interpreted the mysteries revealed to him by God, basing his judgments on the configurations and placements of the stars. Raimondin, taken aback by the count's repeated sighs, begged him to share with him the arcana hidden within these distant bodies. Reluctantly, the uncle complied, revealing in deeply disturbing terms his future betrayal and murder by a young vassal, who, in turn, would be enriched and honored as founder of a noble lineage.

Aghast at the thought of anyone killing his beloved uncle, Raimondin refused to believe the prognostications. As the two continued on their way, noises from a thickly wooded area made the boar's presence known, both men thought, as they seized their swords. A dangerous tussle ensued. Although Raimondin urged his uncle to seek shelter in the branches of a high tree, he refused to do so. While pursuing his chase, Raimondin cast his spear at the boar with such violence that the weapon ricocheted, striking the count in the navel and killing him instantly.

Only after the boar's death, indicating symbolically the temporal world's invasion of the spiritual domain, did Raimondin realize what had occurred. Rather than accept his guilt, as behooves a knight, he blamed "treacherous Fortune" for having destroyed a man who "had done him so much good" (*Mélusine* 37). Anxious as always about his own reputation and fearing the punishment that would surely be meted out to him by the count's family and entourage, Raimondin mounted his horse and, increasingly oblivious to the outer world, rode away from the murder scene.

ASTROLOGY/ASTRONOMY. That the Count of Poitiers was knowledgeable in plotting the movements of celestial bodies in order to divine future events

was neither unusual nor surprising for the times. On the contrary, astrology/astronomy was a relatively popular art/science among nobles and the intelligentsia in the Middle Ages. Not only were translations of Greek and Arabic scientific and philosophical texts available in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe, but chairs in astrology were being awarded increasingly in its universities. Famous astrologers included Guido Bonatti, advisor to the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II (b. 1194); Albertus Magnus (1190–1280), the much revered teacher of Thomas Aquinas, an astrologer and an alchemist as well as a theologian; and the Franciscan scientist and philosopher Roger Bacon (1214–1294), a believer in the influence of astral powers on earthly happenings, a practitioner of alchemy. Some contemporaries believed he had even performed successful wonder-working feats. Muslim philosophers such as Alkindi declared certain stars and planets to be endowed with the power to radiate negative influences on humans, thus serving to explain seemingly magical events. Even more significant was the determination that certain constellations could be identified with specific personality types, disclosing, thereby, “a complete projected theory of human character” (Franz, *Projection and Re-Collection* 74).

The science of astronomy or the pseudo-science of astrology, dating back to Chaldean, Assyrian, and Egyptian cultures, had been studied and explored for the most part by priests who made no attempt to separate the two. Practitioners in ancient as well as in medieval times were particularly drawn to detailed studies of planetary positions in the preparation of horoscopes. Numerative schemes used in prognosticating events were based on or inspired by biblical examples, such as the Three Wise Men who followed the Star of Bethlehem and announced the coming of The Divine Child; or the sign of the scorpion, which suggested death and resurrection.

Although no information is given the reader regarding the count’s astrological calculations, the certainty of his forwarnings indicates that he was privy to the latest scientific learning on the subject. The nature of his astrological readings was to trigger what Jung referred to as a synchronistic (or acausal) happening: when “concrete events take place in the individual’s outer environment that have a meaningful connection with the inner psychic contents that are constellated at about the same time” (Jung, *C.W.* 8, #855). While observing the constellations, the count was in effect projecting his psychic contents onto matter, that is, interpreting his own inner darkness and morbid fears according to the light of the astral movements and designs he had learned. His intuitive ability to project, to penetrate, and to experience the luminosities emerging from within the blackness of the heavens indicated his recognition of a nonlinear experience, which he recorded in a future time frame and to which he related.

Moreover, the count was dictated by his feeling tones, for why else would he have taken his nephew under his protection when he had children of his own? Why else would he have followed him into the heart of the forest if not to protect the imprudent young man from the wild boar? His emotions expanded in power and density on that fateful night, the resulting reactive charges flowing into his psyche opened him up to a whole numinous sphere—to his inner cosmos. The horoscopic findings and the explanations he offered his nephew reflected the weight of the disabling and disheartening moods flaring in his own unconscious (Franz, *Projection and Re-Collection* 73,91). His affects spoke first, and his thinking function acted only later, making his painful intuitions audible in the form of lamentations and sighs. As M. L. von Franz notes: “[A]ffects lift *one* content, which occupies the forefront of consciousness, into *super-normal* clarity, but at the same time darken the rest of the field of consciousness. This brings about a lowering of the orientation to the external world and therewith a relativization of time and space.” (Franz 91).

FROM TRANCE TO EXTASIS. Raimondin’s irremediable feelings of bereavement at his uncle’s passing soon took on an understandable personal cast: he became what he considered a fugitive from justice and the trauma over his own future became a dominant in his psyche. Victimized by his increasingly corrosive feelings of guilt and loss, the dazed and crazed Raimondin erred into an ever-thickening no man’s land, or forest. Lamenting his fate, begging to be imprisoned with the angel Lucifer, then yearning for death, he finally asked Mother Earth to swallow him up, take him back into her protective womb.

Although the brilliantly shining moon lighted Raimondin’s outer world, he grew increasingly encased in the semiconsciousness of his trance state. Like Elinas, he arrived at about midnight at the “Fountain of Thirst” or “The Enchanted Fountain.” Unlike his predecessor who had stopped at the sight of Présine, our sleeping knight, unaware of Mélusine’s existence, breached the knightly code by not even seeing her or the two beautiful ladies flanking her. His lack of courtliness moved the exquisite Mélusine to approach the intruder and, when out of sight of her companions, rebuke him for his lack of civility and disregard of etiquette. Upon realizing that he had been in a deep sleep—that is, withdrawn into himself or deaf to the outer world—she took hold of his hand, thus awakening him to life in all senses of the word.

Startled, the guilt-ridden Raimondin, believing his uncle’s men were after him, grabbed his sword. As for Mélusine, she could only laugh at the sight of this helplessly disoriented young man. Dazzled by her beauty, the knight dismounted and admitted that he had neither seen nor heard her, and excused himself for his “villainy.” While attempting to justify his inappropriate behavior, he was interrupted by Mélusine, who addressed him by his

name and, much to his embarrassment, told him that she was cognizant of his crime, adding boldly that second to God, she was the best person to advise him as to how to profit from his tragic experience. Nor must he, she added, think her a phantom, nor some diabolical creature. To the contrary, she was flesh-and-blood and a good Catholic.

Mélusine's gift of prescience, like the astrological prowess of the count of Poitiers, gave her access to transpersonal realms. Identified with "The Fountain of Thirst" or "The Enchanted Fountain," she was confident of her ever-flowing source of inner knowledge. With nearly contractual precision, she told Raimondin that if he took her advice and agreed to her conditions, he would not only become the richest and the most powerful man of his kingdom, but would be the progenitor of a great lineage. Entranced by Mélusine's beauty, the nonrational and grieving Raimondin could not help but remain spellbound by the archetypal anima figure standing before him. Deeply feeling, but unthinking as to the consequences of the pact into which he was about to enter, he agreed to wed this fascinating and all-comforting avatar of the Great Mother who promised in exchange for the marriage bond to care for him throughout his life. There were, however, ramifications to their agreement. While Mélusine promised to put his empirical travails to an end, Raimondin had to swear never to divulge her identity, nor her heritage, nor attempt to see her on Saturdays. Curiously, no mention is made of her attraction, if any, to Raimondin, or whether her offer to help him is motivated by altruism or her need for a husband. Let us recall that Présine's curse—placing the onus of finding a mate on Mélusine—was the only means at her daughter's disposal of becoming completely humanized and ridding herself of her partially serpent form.

Was Mélusine the answer to Raimondin's previous unconscious death wish—to be embraced by Mother Earth and be taken back into her womb? Perhaps, since the trancelike state to which he had succumbed, in addition to his synchronistic meeting with Mélusine, so markedly diminished his responsiveness to environmental stimuli that it paradoxically brought on a prolonged condition of ecstasy. In keeping with the Greek meaning of the word *extasis*—to derange, to cause to stand out—Raimondin had allowed himself to come under the spell of a savior figure. While such instant dedication to Mélusine presaged a need on his part to blur his own unacceptable reality, it also suggested a complete divestiture of his identity and surrender of his field of consciousness.

MELUSINE AS PSYCHOPOMP AND ANIMA. So rich an archetypal figure was Mélusine, so powerfully did she answer Raimondin's need for healing and for guidance that her aura alone, paradoxically, took on reality for him (Jung, 91,

#102). As a dominant in his psyche, she, like “an immortal daemon that pierces the chaotic darkness of brute life with the light of meaning,” became his psychopomp (Jung, 91, #77).

That Mélusine, like her mother, is associated with a fountain located in the heart of a forest, suggests a capacity in both of them to alter, cleanse, heal, and regenerate an ailing psyche. The ever-renewing waters from a fountain, emerging from the depths of the earth (the unconscious), rising into the air (consciousness), may indicate a timeless as well as a restless and continuously mobile quality in mother and daughter. Never would Raimondin know stasis with Mélusine. The fountain’s gushing, upwardly thrusting waters were paradigmatic of her ability as an anima figure to nourish and help the bereaved and deeply depressed Raimondin to participate in a new life she would create for him, her first task being to heal the malady that had brought on his cognitive dismemberment. As psychopomp, representing an otherworldly sphere, she revealed herself to him as a thrilling, perceptive, and loving presence, an animating power that both lived off itself and generated life as well. Had Mélusine not been endowed with strong, dogmatic, and authoritarian tendencies, she might never have succeeded in luring Raimondin into her world of snares from which, it would become clear, he would never disentangle himself. As Mélusine’s relationship with the young knight endured, she, unlike the nixie, mermaid, siren, or wood-nymph, would be able to acquire the characteristics of a lamia or succubus, those supernatural forces to whom young men—so myths and fairy tales inform us—become emotionally enslaved.

For the immediate present, however, Mélusine functioned for Raimondin as the embodiment of the ancient Moon Goddess, advising him how to proceed in the dark, that is, in deceit and secrecy. As a pledge of her love, she gave him two rings decorated with entwined staffs encrusted with stone. Upon them she had bestowed the power to protect him from death by combat and, should his cause be righteous, bring him victory over those who wished him evil. Her wise yet deceitful counsel to Raimondin was to return to Poitiers, meet with the hunters he had left behind, dissimulate the truth about his uncle’s death, convincing them that he had lost sight of him while chasing the boar, and feign shock upon hearing of the count’s disappearance. Once his uncle’s body would be found, he must persuade his entourage that the boar, and not a human, had been the instrument of death. Everything went as Mélusine had predicted. The entire court mourned the count’s passing. The barons, and rightly so, declared their allegiance to his son, Bertrand.

In keeping with Mélusine’s commandment, Raimondin returned to her abode, startled to note that during his absence an entire stone chapel had

been erected where there had heretofore been an empty prairie; that luxurious surroundings, as well as beautifully clothed damsels, knights, and squires, also appeared on the scene as if by miracle. Before he could assess the marvels that greeted him, he was taken to Mélusine's quarters, where he found her seated in a richly furnished pavilion. She welcomed him and the two dined together. Speaking to him in strong but loving terms, she urged him to first return to Poitiers for Bertrand's installation, then to ask his cousin to grant him a gift of land with no strings attached in return for everything he had done for the count. Raimondin, she added, would have to emphasize the fact that the piece of property, located on the rock above "The Fountain of Thirst," should be only as large as a deer's hide could encircle, and should cost him nothing. On his way home to her, he would meet a man carrying a deer's hide. He must buy it, then have it cut lengthwise into as thin a leather strip as possible, enabling it to encompass a large tract of land. Within its circumference there would be space enough for a river, streams, mountains, valleys, fortresses, castles, windmills, and, indeed, a whole city complex. Wealth and pleasure for concerned citizens would be generated thanks to the future burgeoning of industries and fertile farmlands.

After fulfilling Mélusine's directives, Raimondin was to return to Poitiers and invite the newly installed count, his mother, and friends to their wedding on Monday (moon day) next. Like a refrain, the terms of his pledge and its consequences were reiterated: if his acts and speech remained veiled in secrecy, and he did not view her or come near her on Saturdays, everything he asked for would be granted. If he broke his pact, poverty, failure, sorrow, and dispossession would ensue.

Mélusine's predictions again came to pass. The couple's wedding took place in breathtaking surroundings: pavilions draped in gold and decorated with pearls and precious stones; exquisitely arranged foods served on gold and silver platters to the accompaniment of multiple instrumentalists; jousting bouts for entertainment. During the two weeks of memorable celebrations, the awestruck guests attempted to discover the secrets of Mélusine's illustrious ancestry and how she had amassed such wealth. Their questions were greeted with silence.

As an active living power in Raimondin's psyche, Mélusine was mystery. Her presence not only accentuated the supernatural or fairy tale nature of his depressed and dependent psyche, but nourished it as well. On the other hand, it also suggested that buried within the complexities of Raimondin's hidden tropological (moral) and analogic (mystical) realms, lay an inner and all-important wisdom, which encouraged him to follow Mélusine's dictates as psychopomp and anima figure. For these, he sensed, would allow him to participate in an otherwise unattainable life experience.