



## Dion Fortune and Morgen le Fay

Other aspects of Morgen emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the magical work of Dion Fortune and members of her Fraternity of the Inner Light. Fortune worked closely with the Moon Mysteries of the Great Goddess, enshrining her magical experiences in two novels written in the 1930s and 40s, *The Sea Priestess* and *Moon Magic*. In the first book, the chief character is the mysterious Vivien le Fay Morgen, a skilled adept who believes herself to be a reincarnation of Morgen le Fay. It has been suggested that this powerful figure was Fortune's alter ego, and indeed she often affected her character's flamboyant dress, wearing richly-coloured robes and a wide-brimmed, floppy black hat. The action takes place at a house on a hill overlooking the sea on the Somerset coast, clearly identifiable as Brean Down, the westernmost of a line of ancient hills that includes Glastonbury Tor. Here, 'Miss Le Fay' teaches the narrator, the sickly and ineffectual Wilfred Maxwell, the mysteries of the Moon Goddess as Isis, through becoming her priestess and ritually invoking her presence within herself. On the moonlit shore, she sings a haunting song which actually formed part of a ritual she performed with her magical order :



A tarot card from the Waite deck shows the High Priestess seated between the pillars of polarity with the moon at her feet and the sea behind the veil.

I am that soundless, boundless, bitter sea.  
All tides are mine, and answer unto me.  
Tides of the airs, tides of the inner earth;  
The secret, silent tides of death and birth.  
Tides of men's souls, and dreams, and destiny –  
Isis Veiled, and Ea, Binah, Ge. <sup>1</sup>

Ea is the Mother of Time, while Ge is the Mother of Earth, giving us words such as geography and geology. Binah refers to the supernal feminine principle on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. Through Morgen's magic, Wilfred finally understands the power and wisdom of the Great Goddess, whom he describes in one of the loveliest and well-known passages:

All the gods are one god, and all the goddesses are one goddess, and there is one initiator.

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<sup>1</sup> Fortune, Dion. *The Sea Priestess*. Maine: Samuel Weiser, inc., 1978. p.215





In the beginning was space and darkness and stillness, older than time and forgotten of the gods. The sea of infinite space was the source of all being; life arose therein like a tide in the soundless sea. All shall return thereto when the night of the gods draws in. This is the Great Sea, Marah, the Bitter One, the Great Mother. And because of the inertia of space ere movement arose as a tide, she is called by the wise the passive principle in nature, and is thought of as cosmic water, or space that flows.

She is called by many names by many men; but to all she is the Great Goddess – space and earth and water. As space she is called Ea, parent of the gods that made the gods; she is more old than time; she is the matrix of matter, the root-substance of all existence, undifferentiated, pure. She is also Binah, the Supernal Mother, that receiveth Chokmah, the Supernal Father. She is the giver of form to the formless force whereby it can build. She is also the bringer-in of death, for that which has form must die, outworn, in order that it may be born again to fuller life. All that is born must die, but that which dies shall be reborn. Therefore she is called Marah, the Bitter One, Our Lady of Sorrows. . . Likewise she is called Ge, for she is the most ancient earth, the first-formed from the formless. All these is she, and they are seen in her, and whatsoever is of their nature answers unto her and she hath dominion over it. Her tides are its tides, her ways are its ways, and whoso knoweth the one, knoweth the other.<sup>2</sup>

The veil of the Goddess is highly significant. It refers to her aspect in the material world – as The Earth in all its loveliness. Yet the beauty of the earth is merely the outer covering of her true underlying nature whose power and glory is rarely glimpsed by humans. As Isis, the goddess wears the veil to show that she is widowed from her husband Osiris, who was killed by his brother Set. The widowhood of Isis signifies the separate nature of all living beings in this world of opposites. Union with another is only ever a temporary affair until we move beyond duality into unity consciousness. Until then, we are ever mourning our separation from the Beloved One. The sorrow of Isis is *our* sorrow, and also the sorrow of the material universe which was created at the time of the separation from God, known as the Fall. She is Sophia, (Wisdom) separated from her heavenly consort and forced to wander the Earth alone.

Yet the sense of separation is illusory. The veil of the Goddess is the space-time fabric of the cosmos. The weave of the veil unifies all existence into oneness. As we approach Her mysteries, we

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p.227





see only partially the totality of the beauty and truth of the Divine Feminine, but when we have gained the true sight of the initiate, the veil is lifted and we see her glory revealed.

In Dion Fortune's view, the original Morgen LeFay was a priestess of the Great Goddess from Atlantis. She believed Morgen's name meant 'daughter of the sea-people,' referring to that ancient race who left their island kingdom when it was irrevocably destroyed by a cataclysm brought on by their misuse of technology. This perspective sees all the references to Morgen in Arthurian legend as a jumble of mostly-forgotten racial memories. As Fortune saw it, Ygerna or Igraine, the mother of Arthur, was a pure-bred Atlantean sea-princess. After her second husband, Uther Pendragon, died, and Arthur became king, Ygerna returned to her own people and married a man of the 'sacred clan,' the royal Atlantean line of priest-kings. By him, she had a daughter, Morgen, who was trained in the magical arts. The medieval chroniclers of Arthurian legend garbled this story when they described Morgen being sent to a 'nunnery' as a young girl, where she learned to become 'a great clerk of nigromancy.'

#### **A Priestess of Morgen**

An initiated priestess of Dion Fortune's magical order, Christine Campbell-Thomas, gave her version of Morgen's Atlantean origins in her book, *The Western Mystery Tradition*, written under the name of Christine Hartley. She puts forth the view that 'Morgen' and 'Merlin' were not personal names, but titles given to Atlantean priestesses and priests, an idea since taken up by some authors of modern Arthurian fiction.

When the final great eruption took place the last of those who were to be saved took ship from the island and fared northwards. Imagine for a moment the scene on the reef-encrusted shore of lost Lyonesse, when the great waves that had overwhelmed the centre of culture and religion of the whole of the known world swept on their storm-tossed crests the little boats that had survived the deluge and brought the last of the survivors to the islands. Priest and priestess, they scrambled ashore on that strange coastline – on the southwest of Ireland, on the lost land of Lyonesse, on the indentured bays of Wales.

And among those who came to rest were two – a priest and a priestess – one of whom was called Merlin and the other Morgen, known later as Le Fay. Now, Merlin means simply the man from the sea and Morgen, equally simply, means the woman from the sea and because she was a priestess and skilled in magic art they later called her Le Fay or the Fairy, or the witch.





I need not, I feel sure, remind you that these were generic names and that there have been cycles of Merlins and cycles of Morgens, and indeed, cycles of Arthur...<sup>3</sup>

Christine worked with Morgen extensively in the Fraternity's London temple, and so we give her the last words on this great goddess of the Celtic shores:

Of her there is little that we can say, for she is ever the hidden one, the shadowy woman who stands behind, giving of her power from the inner planes. . . Like all women, she is all things, and her aspects are infinite. The Church was afraid of Morgen and left her alone, contenting itself with calling her the Witch-woman. But always she draws us back to the primordial sea from which she came, to the old mysteries of Atlantis, whence our own have derived their life; she is that strange and lovely lady whom we can sometimes glimpse on a rocky seashore, rising out of the water, shadowy in the sea mist and foam. She has all wisdom and knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hartley, Christine. *The Western Mystery Tradition*. London: The Aquarian Press, 1968. p.12

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* p. 57

