



**Myth in Fantasy: An Analysis of Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring" and "The Return of the King" using Archetypal Criticism**

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**22AAB02620**

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**UALZ 3023 - FYP2 REPORT**

**SUBMITTED IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**JAN 2025**

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## ABSTRACT

Mythology within English literature and fiction is a norm, as the centrifugal thematic settings, motifs and even symbols of most modern works resemble a myth in some way. This is seen in Tolkien's *Lord of the Ring* trilogy where different myths are compounded and turned into characters and different narrative elements. As such, the purpose of this study is to uncover the specific Arthurian myths and archetypes that reside within Tolkien's trilogy; specifically, within the first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and the last, *The Return of the King*. Using Archetypal Criticism, this study surmises that Tolkien's world is filled with different Arthurian archetypes that reside in its characters, symbolic objects and thematic settings. Furthermore, a textual analysis is conducted to analyse and interpret specific characters and symbols from the two books and comparing them with their Arthurian counterparts. Through this analysis, this study concludes that a resemblance between Arthurian myth and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is found at the forefront of Tolkien's work, thereby agreeing with past scholars' implications that Tolkien created the trilogy as a way to supplement Arthurian myth which he found was missing certain elements.

*Keywords: Tolkien, archetypes, modern fiction, mythology, Arthurian legend, fantasy, fiction*

PR1 – 9680: English Literature

PR471 – (473): 20<sup>th</sup> Century

PZ (1) – 90: Fiction in English

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

This paper will be an analysis of the different characters and the overall narrative elements of Tolkien's work namely, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, to uncover the Arthurian archetypes that reside in Tolkien's writings. Chapter 1 of this paper will cover the background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms and the scopes & limitations of this study.

### **Background of The Study**

Modern storytelling is a topic of almost pure subjective stances and inquiry, this is a norm as literature itself is a subjective form of study. This line of thought can be observed through the current state of modern storytelling which has had many influences ingrained or established within its plots, writing styles and even characters. These influences can be considered archetypes, an original pattern of which all things of the same type are copies or representations (Devika, 2016). In keeping with this line of thought, Tolkien's, *Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King*, will be the topic of the study due to the pervading Arthurian influence that can be found in Tolkien's work.

Storytelling throughout the ages, has had its fair share of influences ingrained into them, much like a palimpsest, no matter how hard erased, what has already been written still show through a newer façade. Whilst many literary theories attempt to decipher or uncover what has been written whether it be through social status [in the case of feminism or socialism], psychology or even concepts such as anthropism; these theories tend to only decipher what is shown through the newer façade without uncovering the prior influence that birthed the newer writing. In this regard, archetypal criticism paves the way for a deeper understanding of not

just the writing but the author's mind. Gaining traction in the 1950's and 60's, archetypal criticism is a literary theory that interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes in the symbols, narratives, and character types in a literary work (Devika, 2016).

Keeping in mind that archetypal criticism revolves around the concept of myths recurring throughout the ages, this can be typically observed in most fantasy literary works where attempts have been made in reimagining certain mythos; the *Percy Jackson* series of books come to mind, where Greek mythology is at the forefront of its plot, others such as Neil Gaiman's acclaimed "*American Gods*", reestablishes different myths and brings age old tales into modern times with a twist. This reimagining of myth can also be observed in Tolkien's work, that this study shall analyse.

This study's analysis on, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (Doughan, 2024) or simply known as J. R. R. Tolkien, one of the most notable writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A household name for any who enjoy fantasy, Tolkien was known for The Lord of the Rings trilogy along with *The Hobbit*, it was through the Lord of the Rings, trilogy that Tolkien established himself as not just a behemoth in writing, but a pioneer of the high fantasy genre. Tolkien's works can be considered a framework for most fantasy and medieval fiction, especially so in, "*The Lord of the Rings*" trilogy, which tells a story of a group of brave men fighting against evil, and the bonds that are made on that journey. The setting of a group forming and embarking on adventure alongside the theme of good against evil, is a prominent focus within Tolkien's work, which can be traced back to many a saga, but most notably within religious based works. It is no wonder then, that the most prominent influences found in Tolkien's work are the Arthurian Legends, the many tales and myths of King Arthur, the roundtable, Camelot, and the quest for the holy grail; a thought also shared by Jardillier (2003).

By using archetypal criticism to study the apparent Arthurian influences in Tolkien's work through his characters, settings, themes, symbolisms and plot; this study will shed light on how different archetypes are used in narrative works and how these archetypes are linked to their own myths and legends.

### **Statement of Problem**

Though Tolkien's work has been analysed and its effects on modern storytelling have been reviewed, most of the studies have focused on the gender aspects of Tolkien's female characters (Curry, 2015). Whilst others such as Hall (2005) and Jardillier (2003) simply mention Tolkien's work as popular culture or review his work and the Arthurian influence that pervades Tolkien's world. However, not much is studied in the way of how the Arthurian influence in Tolkien's works and worlds has kept Arthurian legends alive. The proposed study is important especially so in the field of literature. Whilst many studies have reviewed past works and classics, there is a void in the study of modern storytelling, especially so in the case of this study which aims to understand the different Arthurian archetypes in Tolkien's work and how these archetypes are linked to their own myths.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To uncover the different archetypes found in Tolkien's characters and how they resemble different Arthurian characters.
2. To discuss the Arthurian archetypes found in the overall narrative elements of Tolkien's work and how these archetypes are linked to their myth.

### **Research Questions**

1. What character archetypes are used in Tolkien's work?
2. How are the archetypes found in the narrative elements of Tolkien's work linked to its respective mythology?

## **Definition of Key Terms**

1. Arthurian Myth & Legend: A set of tales centring on King Arthur which began emerging in the twelfth century (Fulton, 2009).
2. Archetype: An innate nature that humans possess which shape their personalities and affect their psyche (Jung, 1919). Also refers to recurrent motifs and figures in a literary work.
3. The Collective Unconscious: The Jungian concept believed to be a collection of imagery and knowledge that every person is birthed with and shared by all human beings (Fritscher, 2023).
4. The Persona: A representation of all the different social “masks” a human being wears in various groups and situations, a barricade against an individual’s primitive impulses or otherwise socially unacceptable actions (Cherry, 2024).
5. The Shadow: A representation of human instinct, a container which holds all that is unacceptable whether it be societal or moral. Usually depicted in dreams in various darker or monstrous form (Roesler, 2022, p.23).
6. The Anima/animus: The feminine or masculine part of the psyche. Anima referring to the feminine psyche of a male, animus the masculine psyche of a female. The anima comprises of more emotional aspects of the mind while the animus relates to rationality (Jung, 1954/1969).
7. The Self: A representation of the unified consciousness and unconsciousness of an individual. The self occurs when an individual brings balance to his or her mind through a process known as individuation. (Cherry, 2024).

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is important especially so in the field of literature. Whilst many studies have reviewed past works and classics, there is a void in the study of modern storytelling, especially

so in the case of this proposed study which aims to uncover the archetypes found in Tolkien's work and link it to the Arthurian myth that pervades it.

Current theories on literature tend to expand on earlier theories such as Marxism, feminism, and post-modernism to name a few, which focus too much on the societal or political state of the time when analysing written works. The belief that literature is timeless loses meaning when the theories used to analyse past works or even current works are caged by the era the works are written in. By exploring the archetypes in Tolkien's work and how they are linked to their respective mythology [in this study's case Arthurian legend], a more comprehensive analysis of a literary text may be garnered along with how myths and legends are kept alive through narratives.

Future literary scholars, analyst and critics would benefit from this study as it shines a light on how archetypal criticism need not just be focused on psychological aspects but also the mythos that comes along with it. That myth and the human mind are able to meld and co-exist through storytelling and narrative, fostering a deeper analysis of literary works rather than simply stating that a story or poem was written due to the times that the author(s) was born in. For current scholars, the use of archetypal criticism in analysing a literary work will bring forth a newer perspective in the analysing and critiquing of modern storytelling rather than the current perspective which tends to focus on politics, history, and society. In a sense, treating literary works as art rather than a "piece of its time".

### **Scope and Limitations**

The scope of the study will mainly focus on two of Tolkien's works, namely: *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King*. These two books were chosen due to the study's intent of investigating the archetypes of Tolkien's work and how they are linked to Arthurian myth and legend. Thorough analysis of Arthurian myth and legends will also be done to ensure that the archetypes found in Tolkien's work corresponds to the relative themes

of Arthurian myth. A comparison will then be conducted to study the archetypes found in Tolkien's work, how they represent certain Jungian Archetypal figures and types how these archetypes are linked to Arthurian myth. Through this analysis, the archetypes found in Tolkien's work will provide insight into how Arthurian myth is able to spread through modern narratives.

The limitations of this study are very apparent, largely due to how niche the topic chosen by this study is. Research done on Tolkien tends to skew into either analysis [usually on feminism and narrative theory] or reviews of his many works. Due to this, past studies on the topics are almost non-existent making research on the topic difficult. Another limitation is this study's pure qualitative research approach. Despite all the analysing and comparison that will be done, it cannot be assured if this study will be accepted by other scholars due to its subjective nature. A bias will be found no matter how unbiased the paper is written.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the modules of Chapter 1 provide the general background of the study, along with its objectives and questions. Archetypal criticism will be used to analyse the characters and narrative elements of Tolkien's, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, to uncover the different archetypes in Tolkien's work and the linkage to Arthurian mythology. Moving forward, Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical framework of this paper alongside past studies that have contributed to this study's field.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 2 of this study will explore the myths prevalent in, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, along with past studies related to myth making in literary works and an overview of Arthurian myth. A discussion on Tolkien will also be included to help better understand the author's inspiration and the criticisms against his works.

#### **Review of Related Literature**

Archetypal criticism, as a theory has its roots in psychology, and is used primarily to identify the different “personalities” an individual may have in the form of Jung's archetypal figures (Cherry, 2024). Due to the theory's inherent pseudoscientific stance [whereby Jung's model of the collective unconscious cannot be determined through physical means] (Fritscher, 2023), archetypal criticism has instead become a literary theory involved with the finding and analysing of myth in literary texts (Gijo & George, 2021). This comes as no surprise as mythology in modern literature has become a norm, a useful plot device and tool in the makings of a story as myth itself is considered one of the earliest forms of storytelling (Pelt, 2018), a tradition, tale or belief that has been passed down through generations.

Literature and myth have been a widely acknowledged field of research; from various mythological motifs and themes, these aspects found within literary works provide rich symbolism and archetypes that resonate with readers across varying time periods and cultures (Chandrakar & Diwan, 2018). As theorised by Lovely (2019), literature and mythology are dependent on one another, with literature functioning as a repository for the expansion and passing on of myth to later generations. This state of myth and literature is seen in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, where various mythological themes from

Arthurian myth are compounded and turned into plot devices, settings and characters. Take for example the forming of the fellowship of the ring, where Frodo meets with his would-be questing group, this setting can be analysed as a recreation of Arthurian myth where Arthur assembles the roundtable.

In keeping with this view of myth and literature, a study by Jardillier (2003) which analysed the Lord of the Rings trilogy, found that Tolkien's world is full of Arthurian myth. From characters, themes and places, Jardillier (2003) surmised that *The Lord of the Rings* was a "distant relative" of Arthurian myth, a collection of "recessive genes". She goes on to prove this by comparing characters such as Gandalf to Merlin, Aragorn to Arthur and Galadriel to the Lady of the Lake. Thematically as well, similarities are seen in the trilogy's plot, where Frodo must embark on a quest to destroy the one ring, an object of temptation which resemble many an Arthurian tale of casting away temptation or fighting against it. These traits of the trilogy are so infused with Arthurian myth that one cannot simply discount its relation.

An analysis by Álvarez-Faedo (2007), echo Jardillier's sentiments as well. Using a mixture of Comparative Literature and Reader-Response Criticism, Álvarez-Faedo (2007), analysed *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy from both its literary works and movie forms, and found it to be brimming with not just Arthurian myth but an amalgamation of different influences ranging from Greek myth, Norse mythology, Beowulf and many more. While sharing the same sentiments as Jardillier, ultimately, Álvarez-Faedo's analysis is more comprehensive, viewing Tolkien's works as not just being influenced by Arthurian myth but follows the thought that "Tolkien created the mythology and history of Middle-earth to serve as the poetic legend he felt his homeland, England, lacked" (Nitzsche, 2001, as cited in Álvarez-Faedo, 2007).

This line of thought, can potentially explain Tolkien's inspiration in using Arthurian myth as a basis for *The Lord of the Rings*. As Álvarez-Faedo concluded in her analysis, she surmised that *The Lord of the Rings* was Tolkien's attempt at creating myth and used Arthurian

legend as a reference point. Similarly, Finn (2005), came to the same conclusion, believing that *The Lord of the Rings* is an attempt by Tolkien in creating [or recreating] Arthurian legend and filling in what he believed to be missing from the original myths.

In summary, from analysis by Jardillier (2003) and Álvarez-Faedo (2007), Tolkien's works are heavily influenced by Arthurian myth and legend. Its characters considered almost a recasting of the original and its themes a recreation. Whilst sharing the same sentiments however, there is a difference in thought between Jardiller (2003) and Álvarez-Faedo (2007) alongside Finn (2005); this difference in thought is related to Tolkien's goal in writing *The Lord of the Rings*. Jardillier believes that the trilogy is a "distant relative" of Arthurian myth while Álvares-Faedo (2007) and Finn (2005), share Nietzsche's thoughts on the trilogy [where Tolkien created *The Lord of the Rings* to fill in the gaps he was unsatisfied with in Arthurian myth]. What can be concluded from these three researchers, however different their thoughts are in relation to Tolkien's goal in writing the trilogy, is that Arthurian myth is a heavy influence throughout Tolkien's world.

### **Mythopoesis**

"Let us therefore call a myth a creation in language which somehow expresses the spirit of the people, who use it and pass it on until it pervades their society. So it becomes integral to the lives of many persons, through generations, at last through centuries and millennia" (Anderson, 1976).

Mythopoesis or mythmaking, refers to the word mythopoeia, a genre that integrates traditional mythological archetypes and themes into contemporary fiction (Kazlev, 2021). This is true for most fictional works, whether it be literary or audio-visual; a study by Kluckhohn (1959) on the recurrent themes in myths and mythmaking addresses the previous statement. The recurrence of themes in myth and myth making as Kluckhohn suggests is due to the similarities that all myths tend to share [though differences are found in cultural and

geographical aspects], in this regard the recurring themes that can be seen in contemporary fiction when authors employ mythmaking is evident as the original mythos that authors use as reference share similarities as well.

An example of a novel which uses mythopoesis in its creative process, other than the Lord of the Rings trilogy would be the popular Harry Potter series written by J.K. Rowling. In an analysis of the Harry Potter series by Dizayi and Bagirlar (2022), the two researchers found that the popular series was abound with myth and legend, from its characters to the setting the books take place in. Evident in its use of mythological creatures such as centaurs and griffons, even finding bits of myth in certain objects found in the books. The usage of myth in the Harry Potter series provides a glimpse of the importance of mythopoesis in fictional writing and in the prevalence or rather conveyance of myth into modern day.

The above use of mythopoesis is seen as well in modern audio-visual media. Research into medieval myth and Hollywood storytelling by Arriola (2003), provides an analysis on the popularisation of Arthurian myth into modern culture through film. Using three Arthurian texts, Arriola examines the three against their movie equivalents. Each text was recreated through their film versions in ways that critiqued the original texts while providing a contemporary twist that allowed modern audiences an opportunity to better understand them. Overall, Arriola (2003), found that the films recreation of the old myths appealing to public audiences as they provide a way for people to make sense of history and myth in a way that is “digestible”.

As seen in the above, the importance of mythopoesis in fictional works is staggering as it continues traditions and cultures that otherwise would be lost. The continued use of mythopoesis and the enduring genre of mythopoeia in modern fiction has allowed myth to sustain its presence even in today’s world.

## **An Overview of Arthurian Myth**

According to Fulton (2009), Arthurian myth or legend is a set of tales that centre around King Arthur and Camelot that began emerging in the twelfth century. Ever since, the tales of Arthur and the lore of Camelot have been in a constant state of reinvention and reproduction. As Fulton (2009), suggests the history of Arthurian myth is a complex matter, as scholars have debated the actual origins of Arthur [the titular character of Arthurian myth] himself. Jankulak and Wooding (2009), further approached this subject by delving into the history of Britain itself before Norman ruling. It was found then that Arthurian myth is an interpretation of the history of the fifth and sixth centuries of England but presented in terms of cultural nationalism (Jankulak & Wooding, 2009).

Historical context aside, Arthurian myth very early on, became a subject of postmodern interpretation; this is the case in America post-World War II, where aspects of medievalism and chivalry filled a void in American society which at the time was broken and its middle-class white males needed to assert their masculinity (Lamb, 2009). Using Mark Twain's "*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*", Lamb (2009) explores the relation between Twain's use of Arthurian themes and cross examines it with America's need for a less complicated time before technology and scientific discovery. On the other hand, postmodernist interpretations of Arthurian myth became a significant component in the revival of the Welsh language (Evans, 2009). Evans (2009) surmises that postmodern interpretation of Arthurian myth which branched from Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur* signalled new ways in which the figure of Arthur was being used in modern culture; and how these postmodern interpretations can revive the Welsh language and recentralise it as the paradigm of "Welshness".

To summarise, Arthurian mythology is a set of tales that emerged in the twelfth century. Though debated [in terms of historicity], through scholars such as Lamb (2009) and Evans (2009) have shown, Arthurian myth has been able to live on through the works of others who

have reinterpreted, reintroduced and even recreated the tales found within the myths allowing Arthurian myth to propagate in modern times.

### **A Pioneer of Fantasy: Background on Tolkien**

Born in 1892, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien or simply J.R.R. Tolkien was a scholar of the English language [specialising in Old and Middle English] and author. His writing career began early on in his years as a professor however his most notable work which would eventually bring him to fame was *The Hobbit* published in 1937. The immediate success of the book prompted Tolkien into developing more of *The Hobbit* world, eventually this culminated into the publishing of *The Lord of the Rings* in three parts from the years 1954 to 1955. From then on, Tolkien soon became a household name and an inspiration for the fantasy literature community that he had inadvertently revived. Despite his death in 1973, Tolkien is still a well-known name amongst fans of fantasy and the literary community, posthumously publications of his other works have emerged including but not limited to *Beowulf*, *Beren and Lúthien* and most recently *The Fall of Gondolin* which was published in 2018 (Doughan, 2024).

Tolkien's inspiration for *The Hobbit* came from the marking of exam papers where inspiration struck and from there, he set out writing a tale for his younger children. This soon became an impetus for Tolkien in his writing of *The Lord of the Rings* where kingdoms, magic and tales of heroism were created. The story he created from this inspiration was wholeheartedly infused with the many tales and myths that Tolkien was an expert of. His works heavy with religious motifs and mythic archetype.

Nevertheless, while Tolkien was and is adored by many, so too are criticisms against his work. Primarily, among more modern scholars is the feminist or lack of feminism within Tolkien's world of Middle-Earth.

### ***Criticism Against Tolkien: The Feminist Standpoint***

Modern critiques of Tolkien, come from scholars who believe that Tolkien and his works are misogynistic in nature, this misogyny is split into two categories: those who believe that Tolkien himself was overly patriarchal and those who believe that Tolkien's lack of female characters and the description of female characters are too traditional. In a study by Maddox (2018), which analyses the two female characters from *The Lord of the Rings*, Galadriel and Éowyn, she found that while the two characters are seldom mentioned in the books, they are ultimately very important in the overall plot of the story. However, while Maddox in some ways defends the use of female characters in *The Lord of the Rings* she herself cannot deny Tolkien's overtly misogynistic nature. Evident by how as Maddox (2018) describes Tolkien as a "friendly" sexist, not one to despise women but rather misrepresents them.

Story wise, the women of Middle-Earth are painted in a traditional manner, Maddox (2018) uses Galadriel as an example stating that despite the character's age, wisdom and power she is kept in Lothlórien, much like a caged bird as Tolkien himself believes this is how women should be kept safe. Pretorius (2002) in a previous study goes into deeper analysis of this depiction of women in Tolkien's work, finding binary and feminist issues in the way that Tolkien describes female characters. Pretorius (2002) brings to light the extremism of Tolkien's depictions using Shelob and Galadriel as examples. When considered good, Tolkien depicts his female characters as youthful and innocent, however, when evil describes them as ugly, bloated and fat. The duality at play here in depictions of characters largely conform to male traditionalists view of what a women should inherently look like.

The portrayal of Shelob, though described as gross and ugly is symbolic as Shelob herself stands at the epitome of female power, even Galadriel known as one of the most powerful elves is restricted by patriarchy. Ultimately, as the story goes, Shelob is slain by Sam

cementing again a patriarchal standpoint where female power is diminished (Pretorius, 2002, p. 38).

The criticisms found here on Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* are acknowledged by the researcher, however due to the oversaturation of feminist studies on Tolkien, and the objectives for this study, feminist theories will not be used in the analysis of characters.

### **Archetypal Criticism**

Archetypal theory is a literary criticism that interprets texts through analysing and seeking myth and archetypes in its narratives, symbols and characters (Devika 2016). As stipulated by Mambrol (2020), Archetypal Criticism has its foundation in psychology, primarily its framework was developed by C.G. Jung in his book *Psychology of the Unconscious*. While basing itself of Jung's work on archetypes and the unconscious mind, Archetypal Criticism instead gained traction in the twentieth century when Northrop Frye released his *Anatomy of Criticism* centring Archetypal Criticism on his belief that myth is at the heart of all literary works (Devika, 2016). Ever since and due to Jung's original framework of archetypes being considered pseudoscience, Archetypal Criticism has been used in the literary field as a means of discovering myth in literature.

The use of Archetypal Criticism in literature means two things as surmised by Roesler (2022): firstly, its use in the discovery and analysis of mythic archetypes found in a text and secondly, how that mythic archetype correlates with the psychological thought that a narrative describes the path to a solution. If thought of in a Jungian way the structural coherence of an individual's life and their fantasies draw a parallel and is a reason why Jung believed that every fairytale or myth depicted an individual's stage during the individuation process [the process in which an individual develops their sense of self] (Roesler, 2022).

Moving on from the more psychological aspects of Archetypal Criticism, in a paper by Gijo and George (2021), on the study of Archetypal Criticism, they found that its application

in literature is closely associated with symbolisms that are closely related with how humans draw inspiration from the natural world. The two researchers noted on how Frye classified these symbolisms into romance, comedy, satire and tragedy, and how when combined form the quest myth. In summary, Gijo and George (2021) provide a mainframe for how Archetypal Criticism is applied to literary works and how despite its critiques is still a valid criticism to be used in modern times.

The two aspects of Archetypal Criticism will be used in this study's analysis of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King* as they are interrelated to one another. The aspects of analysing myth and archetype will be used to discover the mythic archetypes found in the two books in terms of narrative elements and characters.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 2 of this study details a literature review of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*, a brief description on mythmaking, an overview of Arthurian myth, a background on Tolkien along with criticisms against him and a short description on the application of Archetypal Criticism related to the following study. Moving forward, chapter 3 will discuss the conceptual framework.

## **Chapter III**

### **Conceptual Framework**

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are many ways to analyse a text looking through its mythological motifs using an archetypal framework. This study will use Archetypal Criticism as its main framework in the analysing of Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Return of the King*. This paper's focus will be on analysing the characters and narrative elements of these two books and the mythological archetypes that reside within them. The two research questions will guide the researcher in completing the objectives of this study.

### **The History of Archetypal Criticism**

#### **Jungian Origins**

The first use of archetypes as defined by Jung was found in his paper *Instinct and the Unconscious*. In it, Jung (1919), defined archetypes as human instinct; the innate nature of humanity in its actions which resemble a form of things that has passed, in other words Jung defined an archetype as a hereditary form of intuition or knowledge that all humans possess. Jung's research into archetypes was formalised with a framework that subscribed these archetypes to what he called the 'collective unconscious', a repository of sorts that all humans shared which represented humanities mental inheritance (Roesler, 2022, p. 18). This first formed concept of archetypes that Jung created, held the belief that archetypes were an inherited part of the human psyche and affected the thought process of the primitive man who believed and created myths which would tie them to belief (Jung, 1954/1969).

Using archetypes, Jung would then introduce the process of individuation, the process in which an individual is able to reach "wholeness" in their personality and psyche (Jung, 1939/1969); this process was tied to the four archetypes he had discovered: the persona, the shadow, the anima and the animus (refer to the definition of key terms for a definitive

explanation). Despite Jung's archetypes revealing a world into the human unconscious, researchers found it pseudoscientific in the sense that too much of Jung's theory was centred on variables which could not be defined (Roesler, 2022, pp. 53 – 57). This however did not affect literary scholars in adapting and reforming Jung's framework into a literary criticism.

### **Bodkin's use of Archetypes in Analysing Poetry**

While the significance of Jung's Archetypes was debated in the psychologic field, a book by Bodkin (1934/1958) highlighted the use of Jung's archetypes in the analysing of poetry focusing on the rebirth, heaven and hell, anima and religious archetypes. In her book, Bodkin discovered the reoccurrence of themes and motifs from varying pieces of poetry that while unable to provide concrete evidence to Jung's archetypes in relation to the human psyche was instead able to an extent prove the existence of archetypes in the creation process related to fiction:

It is in the process of fantasy that the contemplated characters of things are broken from their historical setting and made available to express the needs and impulses of the experiencing mind (Bodkin, 1934/1958, p. 7)

Bodkin's, uncovering of this factor played a significant role in what Jung's archetypes was able to uncover, in so far as literature is concerned. That though pseudoscientific, Jung's archetypes are a viable method of analysing literature due to its elements that touch upon myth and the recurrence of mythic motif.

### **Frye's Contribution: Archetypal Criticism as a form of both Literary and Mythological Analysis**

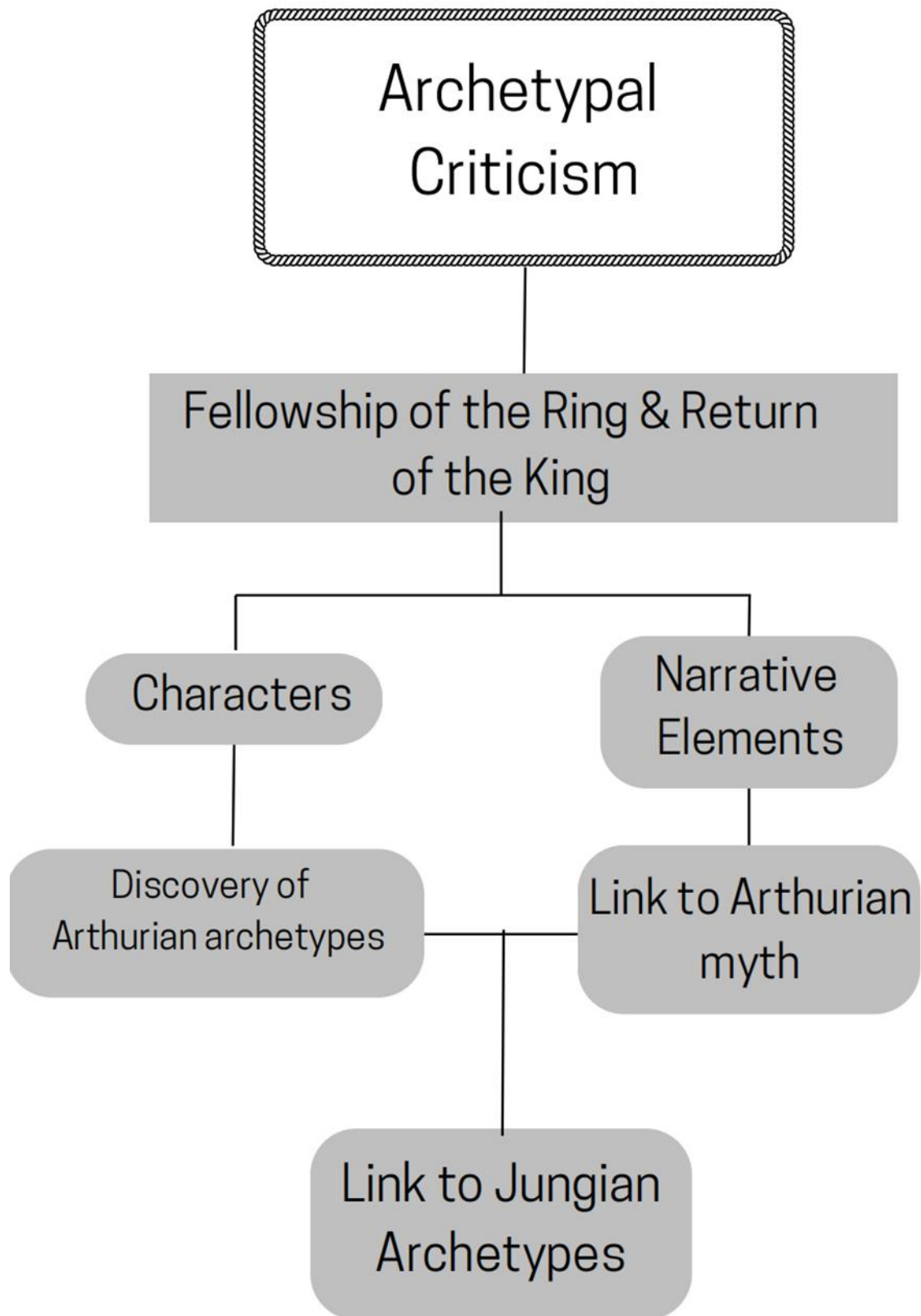
Through Northrop Frye, Jungian archetypes took a different turn; rather than simply adapting Jung's theory, Frye redefined archetypes by severing its connection to depth psychology (Mambrol, 2020). As Frye (1957/2020) defines it, an archetype in his definition is a literary occurrence, a recurring phenomenon. Through this definition of archetype, Frye

linked it to mythos, viewing mythology as a recurring convention in literary works in what he described as the utmost of human desire (Frye, 1957/2020, p. 185). This view of mythology would become the basis of modern Archetypal Criticism, a literary theory which seeks out recurrent mythic motifs and why these motifs are used within a literary work.

### **Methodology**

This study will implement a textual analysis on *The Lord of the Rings* and *Return of the King*. Textual analysis is a methodology, in which an interpretation of a text is made through seeking hidden or subjugated meaning (Baxter, 2020). According to Frey, et.al. (1999) there are four major approaches to textual analysis namely: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis and performance studies. This paper will only use the qualitative content analysis approach to extract and organise meaning from the text to draw practical conclusions.

Using Archetypal Criticism in a textual analysis of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and *Return of the King*, the researcher intends to discover the Arthurian archetypes found in Tolkien's characters and narrative elements. Firstly, an analysis of the two books will target specific characters that share similarities to their Arthurian myth counterparts. Once the character is found to have similar traits, the researcher will then compare the two characters [one from Tolkien's work and its counterpart from Arthurian mythology]; the comparison here will allow the researcher to determine if the character traits exhibited are able to be linked to the traditional Jungian archetypes and how these traits fit into Tolkien's overall narrative. The same will be done to the two books narrative elements, to uncover the link to Arthurian mythology.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 4 of this study will consist of character analyses in Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King*. The characters analysed are Frodo Baggins, Gandalf the Grey/White, Aragorn son of Arathorn and Galadriel, Lady of the Wood. Each analysis will determine the Jungian and Arthurian archetypes the characters resemble, following which an analysis of the different narrative elements of Tolkien's work will also be discussed mainly focusing on symbols and themes that resemble Arthurian myth.

#### **Analysis of Characters and their Arthurian archetypes from *Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King***

##### **Frodo**

##### **The Frodo-Arthur link in *The Fellowship of the Ring***

##### ***Physical appearance and personality traits in relation to the Hero Archetype***

Within literature there are clichés and tropes that are easily recognised, take for example the Hero archetype. The Hero, in any given story is usually a secondary or primary protagonist introduced at the beginning of a tale; usually described or given a background where he/she is determined and traditionally personified as a “good” person. Another telltale sign of the Hero archetype is of course through appearance, a common description of a Hero is laden with adjectives that provide a Hero character with traits such as a “strong” jaw line, “piercing” eyes or an “athletic” body; in this way, a reader easily affixes the Hero archetype on a character that is described as such. This, however, is not the case with the titular protagonist of the Lord of the Rings series, Frodo Baggins.

As far as Frodo is concerned, his physical description is not too different from any other hobbit as Tolkien (2001a) so describes:

For they are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is even when they are not actually much shorter. Their height is variable, ranging between two and four feet of our measure. They seldom now reach three feet; but they have dwindled, they say, and in ancient days they were taller. (p. 2)

In fact, it is not till chapter 10 of the *Fellowship of the Ring* that a more specific description of Frodo is given, “But this one is taller than some and fairer than most, and he has a cleft in his chin: perky chap with a bright eye” (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 220). Through this description, a Hero archetype can be more readily given to Frodo as he is now described to be more unique compared to other hobbits; the physical criteria of a Hero have been met, Frodo is taller than some hobbits and in particular the description of him being a *perky chap with a bright eye* (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 220) comes to mind. The bright eye concerning intelligence meets the traditional view of the Hero archetype.

Traditionally, a character’s appearance is very important when ascribing it the Hero archetype or Hero trope, this is due to the Hero being a centrifugal aspect of a story, he/she is burdened with duty to uphold goodness, to remain dutiful and loyal. These aspects of a Hero are interwoven very deeply into literature as far back as ancient Greek mythologies where stories such as Hercules and his 12 trials, Perseus and his slaying of Medusa, and so on played a role in the cliché that is now the Hero trope. Now, though appearance plays a role in the Hero trope, it must also be belied by an unwavering will to do right and uphold justice; this more modern telling of the Hero trope can be traced back to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Great Kings of Britain* (1966), where rather than describing King Arthur’s physical appearance noted instead the personality Arthur had:

Arthur was a young man only fifteen years old: but he was of outstanding courage and generosity, and his inborn goodness gave him such grace that he was loved by almost all the people. (Monmouth, 1966, p. 212)

It is through this description, that the link between Frodo and Arthur is established. Rather than physical traits, it is instead in personality where these two characters are similar. Personality wise, Frodo exhibits character traits which are heavily linked with the Hero archetype; this can be seen during the journey that Frodo first makes to Rivendell. The most resembled aspect of Arthur can be seen during this journey at the Council of Elrond, where Frodo displays courage and the willingness to uphold a great burden when he volunteers himself to be ring-bearer and carry the One Ring to Mordor to destroy it (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 73).

Within this same setting, another resemblance to Arthurian myth is found in the forming of the Fellowship of the Ring. Where Frodo, as the centrifugal figure is joined by eight others to be his companions in his journey to destroy the One Ring (Tolkien, 2001b, pp. 80 – 81); this scenario is reminiscent of Arthur's own Knights of the Round Table, where after his coronation as king he forms a gathering of his most trusted knights (Malory, 2015). Symbolically, there are similarities between King Arthur's sword and the One Ring that Frodo carries, however these similarities are centred on the thematic setting of burden and responsibility; the objects themselves represent two very different symbolic meanings, the sword being a symbol of Arthurs ascension to king, and the One Ring representing power, tyranny and greed.

### **The Frodo-Galahad Resemblance in the Return of the King**

#### ***From unassuming to hero, the cornerstones of the underdog Hero Archetype***

As has been touched upon in the previous sub-topic, the traditional Hero Archetype is associated with physical “good” looks and a personality which is willing to accept burden, responsibility and in some cases a will to sacrifice oneself. While most stories tend to set its heroes up from the beginning, a more common trope in modern narratives is the story of the underdog. The unassuming character that is overlooked, ends up becoming the hero of the story through determination and will. In the case of Frodo Baggins, as seen in the *Fellowship of the*

*Ring*, he is described as taller than the other hobbits but a hobbit, nonetheless. Within Tolkien's world of Middle Earth, hobbits are a race of being which are described as an unobtrusive, ancient and peaceful race who hated modern machine and kept a large distance from the rest of the world (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 1).

Keeping in mind these traits of the hobbits, Frodo as a hero can then fulfil two distinct Hero tropes. Firstly, as has been mentioned in the previous sub-topic, Frodo with his physical features which describe him as being taller and fairer than most hobbits settles neatly within what is expected of a traditional Hero. His traits as a hobbit [the overall nature of hobbits] then also tie him to the underdog Hero archetype, allowing the unassuming to play a critical role in Tolkien's story; this is seen when Frodo volunteers himself to be the Ring bearer during the Council of Elrond where the other races argue amongst themselves. This underdog persona of Frodo's is most clearly seen in the *Return of the King* where Frodo and Samwise Gamgee break off from the fellowship to journey to Mordor alone along with Gollum.

Throughout the trio's trek to Mordor, Frodo becomes more burdened as the Ring slowly corrupts his mind, despite this corruption however, Frodo remains stalwart in his task to dispose of the Ring (Tolkien, 2001c); mostly seen in *The Return of the King*, Frodo battles against the corruption that carrying the Ring causes ensuring that corruption does not take hold of him while trekking to Mordor with Sam and Gollum (Tolkien, 2001d, pp. 5 – 29). This personality trait of Frodo greatly resembles Galahad, a knight from Arthur's Round Table; a knight pure of heart, and compared to others of the Round Table, considered unassuming till his journey to find the Grail (Malory, 2015). Galahad within the Arthurian legends is mentioned in passing through most of the tales, that is until the quest to find the Holy Grail is started; there Galahad takes centre stage and is found to be of pure heart and resolute in his faith (Malory, 2015, pp. 244 – 257). The resemblances do not simply end with the two characters personalities,

scenarios within the characters respective worlds are also similar; the resemblance found in Frodo's and Galahad's departure from their worlds.

In the case of Frodo, after his journey comes to an end rather than stay in the shire he leaves alongside Bilbo, Gandalf, Elrond and Galadriel to the Undying Lands [the land of elves], where he lives till the end of his days as the burden from carrying the One Ring has injured him heavily:

And the ship went out into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back. (Tolkien, 2001d, pp. 181 – 182)

This is similar to Galahad's departure as well, where after his journey to find and claim the Grail, he is crowned king but does not remain king for long as he soon decides to leave the Earth for Heaven as Malory (2015) states:

Galahad kissed his companions and said to Bors, "My lord, commend me to Sir Lancelot, my father, and bid him never to trust in this unsteadfast world." A host of angels bore Sir Galahad's soul to heaven while the two other knights watched. A hand came down and carried the spear and the Grail to heaven as well. No man has seen the Sangrail since. (p. 257)

To surmise, after analysing Frodo's character and the Arthurian characters that he resembles, it can be concluded that Frodo, whilst sharing certain features of the more traditional Hero Archetype [good looks, a sense of justice, etc.] he is more inclined to the underdog Hero Archetype. A personality which is pure and innocent, and the willingness to sacrifice himself for the cause he has chosen to undertake. This overall archetype serves well in Tolkien's work which emphasizes good against evil, purity against corruption.

## **Gandalf**

### **Gandalf the Grey and Merlin, the trusted Advisor**

#### ***Magic, age and wisdom: Traits of the Magician Archetype***

Fantasy and magic have been an interwoven tale for as long as the genre has existed; this is no surprise as much of the fantasy genre is one that is based on folklore, mythology and the imagination. From the times of mythologies as old as Egypt to the epic that is Beowulf, magic and fantasy have become an entity so tightly interwoven it is hard to separate. Following through this line of thought, it is no surprise then that Tolkien's works which heavily make use of mythology in its narrative elements, is steeped in magic; from the lands that have been formed, to the races that existed in his world.

When speaking then of magic and fantasy none can dismiss a secondary protagonist in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, a wizard by the name of Gandalf the Grey; a character which embodies the Magician Archetype. Characterised by traits which seek to transform unfavourable situations to something that would benefit them, the Magician Archetype is typically an advisor, or sage that would rather work in the background of a story instead of centre stage. Within literature [of the fantasy genre], those of the Magician Archetype are characterized by the ability to use magic, a physical description that emphasizes old age, and wisdom that has been garnered through the long life of the character.

First described as an old man, wearing a grey cloak and a pointed hat (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 32), Gandalf the Grey plays the role of advisor to not just the Fellowship of the Ring but also to many rulers of most races in Tolkien's world of Middle-Earth. Physically and mentally, Gandalf melds well into the Magician Archetype's construct of being an advisor; this is seen most explicitly in *The Fellowship of the Ring* on two occasions. The first was when Gandalf advised Frodo of the One Ring and provided directions to Rivendell (Tolkien, 2001a, p.87); the

second occasion is during the Council of Elrond, where Gandalf speaks of Bombadil and deters the others from sending the One Ring to him:

‘No, I should not put it so,’ said Gandalf. ‘Say rather that the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master. But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others. And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.’ (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 66)

These two scenarios, provide a solid glimpse into what Tolkien had in mind for Gandalf as a character, setting him up as an advisor as well as a wise sage.

Gandalf’s overall character which embodies the Magician Archetype also resembles a character from Arthurian myth which share the same traits; a character which uses magic, is wise, old and above all plays advisor to Arthur, Merlin the Magus of Flowers. Within Arthurian myth other than the Knights of the Round Table, Merlin played an important role in the advising and guiding of Arthur in his younger days and even after his ascension to the throne. In fact, it was through Merlin’s own schemes that Arthur was able to become king. As early as Merlin’s first meeting with Uther [the current king of the time] he had requested that Uther give him his first-born son in exchange for providing the king a favour (Malory, 2015, pp. 2 – 3).

Whilst scheming, Merlin was indeed a faithful advisor to Arthur, during the feast of Arthur’s coronation where a rebel army attacked it was Merlin who came to them and pacified most of the rebel forces while giving Arthur advice:

Some, like King Lot, scorned Merlin’s words, but others believed him. The besiegers called a truce to talk with Arthur, and Merlin advised him speak out like their true king. “You will rule them, my lord,” he said, “whether they will or not.” (Malory, 2015, p. 6)

Throughout, Arthur’s reign Merlin remained loyal and despite being an advisor played a significant part in many of the wars that Arthur waged. Whether through deception or negotiation, Merlin was a cornerstone in much of the Arthurian myths as Arthur’s right-hand man. Though, the resemblance between Gandalf and Merlin seems little, other than the fact both characters are classified as Magician Archetypes; their allegiances to their respective

camp, their roles as advisors and the courage to take centre stage in pivotal moments provide enough evidence that despite the characters more nuanced differences, a general resemblance can be found.

### **Gandalf the White an evolution of the Magician Archetype**

#### ***Character change to symbolic change: A hybrid Warrior & Magician Archetype***

By the time of the third book the *Return of the King*, Gandalf goes through a complete character change in both mind and appearance. Rather than the grey cloak and pointed hat, Gandalf now appears with a white cloak, absence of a pointed hat, and rides a white steed (Tolkien, 2001e). Along with this changed appearance comes a change in personality, the usual Gandalf who is considered more feeble returns as a powerful force of good and is no longer a pure advisor, though he does retain this trait. Gandalf now, upholds a greater responsibility towards the beings of Middle-Earth, his role changed from advisor to something akin to a “knight-advisor” not so content any longer to simply help in the background.

This change is seen during the Siege of Gondor, where Gandalf atop his white steed awaits the enemy:

All save one. There waiting, silent and still in the space before the Gate, sat Gandalf upon Shadowfax: Shadowfax who alone among the free horses of the earth endured the terror, unmoving, steadfast as a graven image in Rath Dínen. (Tolkien, 2001c, p. 113)

This change alters Gandalf’s initial Magician Archetype as the change in character also alters the symbolic meaning behind Gandalf’s existence that was set up in the first book. From advisor to now something akin to a warrior. The courage that Gandalf shows here is in some senses a minor departing from the Magician Archetype, yet the age and wisdom Gandalf has as a character is still in play.

Furthermore, the symbolic change from grey to white must also be mentioned as instead of Gandalf simply being an observer, he now becomes an active participant in the tidings of Middle-Earth [such as when he participates in the Siege of Gondor] and provides hope and

good to people in his allegiance. However, this symbolic change while not departing the Magician Archetype completely [as he still plays the role of advisor with his age and wisdom] is a complete disengagement from his Arthurian resemblance, Merlin. As the Arthurian legend goes, Merlin constantly retains his Archetype as the Magician and eventually ends up becoming trapped due to his lustful desires (Malory, 2015, pp. 40 – 55). Merlin's ending is very different compared to Gandalf's, who at the end of the trilogy travels to the Undying Lands with Frodo and Bilbo (Tolkien, 2001d, p. 181).

In summary, after an analysis of Gandalf and his Arthurian counterpart; it can be concluded that Gandalf fits into two distinct Magician Archetypes. One that traditionally is an advisor that guides and helps his people from behind the scenes; the other, a hybrid Warrior and Magician Archetype, that while still playing the role of advisor is more forefront in his dealings.

### **Aragorn/Strider**

#### **Aragorn and Arthur: From humble beginnings to royalty**

##### ***Aragorn in The Fellowship of the Ring: Before king, a warrior***

When imagining a warrior, tales of valour come to mind: of men decked in armours fighting against a swarm of enemies or maybe even a lone knight standing against an army. While these imaginations do in some sense describe a warrior, the Warrior Archetype is much more nuanced. Yes, there is a need for those of the Warrior Archetype to have martial mastery and a commanding presence but also the intelligence to understand when one is overwhelmed and the courage to use that intelligence to turn the tide. The Warrior Archetype is not simply describing a warrior who foolishly dives headfirst into a battle, but rather a tactician that understands their enemies, themselves and the overall situation at hand while having enough bravery to stand against the odds.

Keeping in mind these traits, a character from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that perfectly matches such traits is Aragorn, son of Arathorn the heir to the throne of Gondor (Tolkien, 2001b, pp.7 – 8). First introduced in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Aragorn was known as Strider, a ranger from the north whom on Gandalf's orders was to meet Frodo and accompany him on his journey to Rivendell (Tolkien, 2001a, pp. 215 – 231). During the fellowship's journey to Mordor, especially so in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Aragorn displayed many points of bravery and the intelligence of a tactician; one such example was during the company's trek through a dwarf stronghold, where they were ambushed, at this time Aragorn displayed the courage typical of the Warrior Archetype and as Tolkien described slayed many of the enemies (Tolkien, 2001b, pp.144 – 145).

The Aragorn of *The Fellowship of the Ring* shares a striking resemblance to the titular character of Arthurian myth, king Arthur himself. They both share similarities in terms of their humble beginnings with Aragorn being raised as a Ranger and Arthur being raised by a knight away from the royal family (Malory, 2015, pp. 4 – 5). The link between these two characters do not end there of course as Arthur himself is of the Warrior Archetype; this is seen during Arthur's first victory as he rallies his knights and charges with them in the battle that occurred during his coronation (Malory, 2015, p. 7). An account by Geoffrey of Monmouth also echoes Arthur's courage in battle:

He did not slacken his onslaught until he had dispatched four hundred and seventy men with his sword Caliburn. When the Britons saw this, they poured after him in close formation, dealing death on every side. (Monmouth, 1966, p. 217)

Of course, it was not just bravery that Arthur showed, as has been mentioned the Warrior Archetype must also be met with intelligence for battle. In the case of Arthur this is clearly seen in his plans to defeat the Saxons where he manoeuvred his forces to starve the enemy, before besieging them (Monmouth, 1966, p. 215). This intelligence for battle is likewise shared

by Aragorn who during the company's journey displayed great strategic thinking in outmanoeuvring the enemies that were pursuing them (Tolkien, 2001b, pp.237 – 247).

### ***Aragorn in the Return of the King: A true ruler***

Throughout the journey Aragorn takes in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Aragorn wrestles with his identity as the heir to the throne of Gondor, to become king of all man. Whilst the Aragorn in *The Fellowship of the Ring* is still that of Strider, a Ranger from the North; the Aragorn depicted in the *Return of the King* is more readily accepting of his role as he comes to terms with the duty and responsibility that comes with his lineage. This is seen multiple times throughout the *Return of the King*, the one incident that most embodies this change is just before the Siege of Gondor, where Aragorn summons the Oathbreakers [ghosts of a distant past that did not fulfil their duties during the first war against Sauron] and commands them to adhere to their original promise as heir to the throne of Gondor:

Then Aragorn said; 'The hour has come at last. Now I go to Pelargir upon Anduin, and ye shall come after me. And when all this land is clean of the servants of Sauron, I will hold the oath fulfilled, and ye shall have peace and depart for ever. For I am Elessar, Isildur's heir of Gondor.' (Tolkien, 2001c, p. 62)

This scenario is important in Aragorn's growth from simple Ranger to king as the Oathbreakers may only follow and fulfil their promise to the rightful heir of Gondor.

The change that Aragorn goes through in the *Return of the King* signifies a change in his character Archetype, from Warrior to Ruler. The Ruler Archetype is defined by character traits which emphasize structure, stability and responsibility; there is no actual need for someone to rule or govern to fit into the Ruler Archetype construct. That being the case, it is telling if a character is destined to rule or rather destined to be a "good" ruler if the traits of the Ruler Archetype are found in their personalities; this is due to the Ruler Archetype's emphasis on the importance of fair governance and stability amongst the people they rule over.

Again, the Arthurian resemblance which mirrors Aragorn even in the *Return of the King* is Arthur. Both share similarities in background and personalities that in some cases they can be treated one and the same. Arthur, as king is shown to be fair and kind to his people; caring of the safety of those under him as seen when Arthur assures his Sir Ector that he would only see him and his wife as his true parents (Malory, 2015, p. 5).

However, while sharing many similarities with each other a juxtaposition arises when considering at which point in their journeys Aragorn and Arthur become king. For Aragorn, his journey to become king is laden with hard fought battles and a need to prove to himself that he is ready to take on the mantle; this culminates in an ending where by the time Sauron is defeated and the One Ring is destroyed for good, only then does Aragorn feel confident enough to be crowned the King of Gondor (Tolkien, 2001d, pp. 80 – 81). On the other hand, Arthur becomes king as soon as he comes of age and is brought to lift the sword from the stone nearly at the beginning of *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Malory, 2015, p. 4 – 5). The contrast here provides a different meaning into what both kings end up facing in their turns as royalty, Aragorn is given a happy ending, his coronation as king symbolising an end to his inner troubles and the long journey he has undertaken; whereas Arthur's coronation symbolises a beginning of a journey and the troubles he will have to face.

All in all, the analysis written here shows that Aragorn is a character of two distinct archetypes, the Warrior and Ruler Archetypes. The Aragorn in the beginning of the trilogy being a warrior suiting the tone of the first book as protector of Frodo, and by the end a ruler who has journeyed through much to become a king for the people.

## **Galadriel**

### **Galadriel and the Lady of the Lake: Providers of help and comfort**

#### ***A small part that provides help in pivotal ways: The Caregiver Archetype***

Throughout the *Lord of the Ring* trilogy, the protagonists that travel to Mordor receive various help from many side characters; whether it be Tom Bombadil, Elrond or the King of Rohan, these characters have provided aid to the company in the form of shelter or military might. To a certain extent, these characters here fulfil the archetype of the Caregiver; an archetype that places emphasis on a person's will to help those in need and provide aid both emotional and physical. However, there is one character which truly embodies the Caregiver Archetype construct and that is Galadriel, the Lady of the Wood.

Described as tall, grave and beautiful, Galadriel was first introduced in *The Fellowship of the Ring* during the protagonists visit to Lothlorien [a land of elves nestled deep in the forests]; here wearing full white, with long golden hair, Galadriel welcomed the company (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 183). It is here that, Galadriel provides the comfort of her lands to the protagonists, allowing them rest from their weary travels along with helping Frodo in his quest to destroy the One Ring.

The visit to Lothlorien can be broken into two parts that serve the company; the first is the help Galadriel provided Frodo by allowing him a glimpse into a magic mirror to aid him in understanding what the future holds if he were to fail his quest (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 195 – 199). This scenario holds much weight in assigning Galadriel the Caregiver Archetype as it shows a more emotional form of comfort rather than physical, which many other side characters in the trilogy have not provided; the talk between Galadriel and Frodo, hardens his resolve allowing him to truly make the decision to trek to Mordor and most possibly is one of the reasons why Frodo decided to separate from the fellowship during the end of the first book.

Moving on, the second way Galadriel served the company was through the giving of gifts at the end of the fellowship's visit to Lothlorien. Here she provided each member of the fellowship with a gift most suitable for them in their times of need; as the story progresses the gifts play very important roles in each of the company's most dire moments allowing them safety (Tolkien, 2001b, pp. 204 – 213). This act of providing gifts to those who need it along with the advice given to Frodo distinctly sets Galadriel apart from other minor characters in the trilogy thus fitting the Caregiver Archetype.

The manner in which Galadriel provides aid to the fellowship resembles a character from Arthurian myth as well, the Lady of the Lake. Playing a minor part in the Arthurian myths, the Lady of the Lake is the sole reason as to why Arthur was able to gain Excalibur (Malory, 2015, p. 17), a sword that would follow Arthur in his journey as king and provide aid to him in his most dangerous moments. Similarly, though minor the part that the Lady of the Lake plays in providing this sword to Arthur at the moment in time, Excalibur soon becomes a symbol of Arthur's reign and an object of significant symbolism in *Le Morte D'Arthur*.

In short, though only a minor character within the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Galadriel and her support plays a large role in the overall journey of the protagonist though it is not shown so forthrightly at the time the event happens. Tolkien's use of Galadriel in this way turns the Caregiver Archetype into a quieter role where only in moments of true danger that the aid of the Caregiver is critical in ensuring victory and safety.

### **Analysis of narrative elements and their Arthurian archetypes in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the King***

#### **The One Ring, Excalibur and the Holy Grail**

##### ***Object symbolism: The link between a ring, a sword and a cup***

Nestled within Tolkien's world are a variety of objects that have its own significance in his stories; whether it be Gandalf's staff, Aragorn's sword Andúril or the Phial of Galadriel that

was given to Frodo, each of these items had their parts to play in the backdrop of Tolkien's world. However, there is one item in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy which held a higher significance than any other, the One Ring. Forged in the fires of Mount Doom by Sauron himself, the One Ring is described as a plain gold ring (Tolkien, 2001a) but when heated under fire reveal its secrets:

As Frodo did so, he now saw fine lines, finer than the finest pen-strokes, running along the ring, outside and inside: lines of fire that seemed to form the letters of a flowing script. They shone piercingly bright, and yet remote, as if out of a great depth. (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 66) (refer to Appendix A for inscription)

Once revealed, the inscription written in the language of Mordor reads, 'One ring to rule them all, One Ring to find, One Ring to find them all and in the darkness bind them.' (Tolkien, 2001a, p.66).

The One Ring, in the context of the trilogy is the catalyst in which the antagonist of the series, Sauron, needs to regain his powers of old. Interestingly, while merely an object the One Ring is described as being alive, a tool that seeks its original master and will corrupt and betray any other person who lays claim to it; this is seen many time in the books but is also explicitly mentioned by Gandalf who regales Frodo with the tale of Gollum and Isildur and how the One Ring betrayed them (Tolkien, 2001a, pp. 67 – 74). After the confirmation that Frodo indeed has the One Ring, it is then decided, that to keep the ring hidden from Sauron, Frodo would have to leave the Shire (Tolkien, 2001a, pp. 83 – 85).

From this point on along with the description that Tolkien has assigned to the One Ring, its significance within the trilogy becomes a focal plot point; how long will Frodo be able to last against the corruption of the ring and whether he will succeed in the quest to destroy it. Symbolically, the One Ring now becomes an object of burden, responsibility, greed, betrayal, power and corruption. Burden and responsibility hailing from the fact that Frodo, who now carries the ring must make an arduous journey to destroy the ring, a quest only he can fulfil. The stakes high as failure to do so will bring calamity to all who live in Middle-Earth.

In terms of greed and betrayal, this is seen in how those who covet the ring will do anything for it, going so far as to kill close friends simply for the chance to own it, as in the case for Gollum who murdered his friend Deagol (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 70). The ring's representation as a symbol of power is most notably seen in the inscription that the ring has; it is the most powerful of the Rings of Power and is able to dominate them when used by Sauron (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 68). Corruption, is the One Ring's most notable symbolic trait as it is a key point in many of the trilogy's storyline, one prominent example is the corruption of Frodo as he makes it to Mount Doom, and in the final moments before destroying the ring, Frodo makes the same mistake as Isildur and intends to keep it:

‘I have come,’ he said, ‘But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. ‘I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!’ And suddenly as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight. (Tolkien, 2001d, p.69).

It is only through luck that the One Ring is destroyed and Frodo free from the ring's corruption is able to live albeit severely wounded.

The symbolic traits that the One Ring had is tantamount of course to the trilogy's overall thematic setting of good versus evil, purity and corruption. It is also these traits that reveal the ring's Arthurian resemblances to Excalibur and the Holy Grail or as Malory (2015) called it the Sangrail. Now, in the case of Excalibur [king Arthur's legendary sword], while scholars such as Finn (2005) consider Excalibur the Arthurian archetype of Aragorn's sword Andúril, due to the resemblance found in the way both swords represent right to rulership; a deeper reading of the trilogy will find that it is the One Ring that shares a closer resemblance to Arthur's sword of legend. This is due to the symbolic representation of Excalibur outside its thematic setting in the Arthurian tales.

Excalibur has distinct symbolic traits which link it to responsibility, power, betrayal and temptation; in terms of responsibility and power this comes from the fact that Excalibur is the king's sword. From the time it is pulled from the stone by Arthur to when it shatters in a duel,

and finally to when Arthur receives a sword called Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake (Malory, 2015), it is this sword that represents the king's authority and power to rule over Briton. Betrayal is most notably seen across two instances of the Arthurian tales, while not a principal symbol of Excalibur, the betrayals that occur while Excalibur is in Arthur's possession are crucial towards Arthur's death. The first instance occurs when Morgan le Fay, Arthur's own sister steals Excalibur's scabbard after a duel where Arthur kills her lover Accolon (Malory, 2015, p. 47) signifying betrayal; the second comes from Arthur's own trusted knight Sir Bedivere, who after seeing Arthur near death intends to keep the sword rather than following Arthur's orders of throwing it into a lake (Malory, 2015, p. 303), though eventually Sir Bedivere does comply; signifying temptation.

The key symbol of betrayal surrounding Excalibur and even its returning to the lake mirrors the One Ring's end as well. Both are objects that spark betrayal and eventually are returned [in the ring's case destroyed] in the very place they were first created or received.

As for the Holy Grail, described by Malory (2015) as being a cup, draped in white silk which filled a gathering hall with a sweet scent and provided each their favourite foods (p. 216). Traditionally the Holy Grail in Arthurian myth is an object of temptation to the Knights of the Round table; though presented as holy and of religious themes, the Grail itself causes much trouble in the knights' quest to find it, causing death and greed (Malory, 2015, pp. 243 – 257). If viewed through a religious lens, the Holy Grail is an object of the highest purity representing unattainable spiritualism, yet as seen in the quest for the Grail in Arthurian legend, it is more akin to an object of greed and desire. This is seen in *Le Morte D'Arthur* when the Knights of the Roundtable due to a desire to claim the Grail head out on a quest (Malory, 2015, pp. 216 – 217).

The temptation and greed that is observed from the Knights of the Roundtable in their desire to claim the Holy Grail as their own is the linking factor that brings the One Ring and

Excalibur together. Symbolically these three objects represent greed and temptation, they are objects which bring out the obsession of ownership and want, regardless of whether it is moral to do so. Another way of viewing these objects from the perspective of Jungian Archetypes would be to assign them the Shadow Archetype, the dark recess of the human mind where what is unacceptable or unmoral is held (refer to definition of key terms for The Shadow); though in the case of Excalibur and the Holy Grail the objects themselves do not principally represent this archetype they do however, amplify these dark thoughts proving that even the Knights of the Roundtable are fallible.

Overall, the analysis of these three objects, though different in shape, form a clear link between Arthurian myth and Tolkien's world through object symbolism. That even the most holy object may symbolise greed and temptation, proving that the characters or rather mortals in both stories are flawed no matter how mighty or pure they may set out to be.

### **Overall thematic setting of Tolkien's *Lord of the Ring* trilogy and its relation to Arthurian mythology**

#### ***Good versus evil, purity and corruption, and forbearance against temptation***

Every story has its thematic setting, the oldest of which have focused heavily on good versus evil. Though the argument can be made for many of the older Greek and Norse mythologies which are set in a greyer moral spectrum; tales that have emerged post Christianity are centred on good winning against evil. This religious variant in themes is seen heavily in Tolkien's works.

Story wise, the plot itself is set up to accommodate the theme by setting up a story centred on an evil that must be vanquished to ensure peace reigns in the world. This is also met with very distinct character descriptions that separate the good and the bad; take for example the Elves of Middle-Earth, who are described as immortal, beautiful and graceful (Tolkien, 1999), symbolising good; while Orcs who serve under Sauron are ugly, of greenish scales and

toeless feet (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 143). These physical depictions of good and evil are seen all throughout Tolkien's trilogy, providing emphasis on a traditional thematic setting where beauty is a sign of good and ugliness evil.

Furthermore, the overall theme of good and evil is backed by two subordinate themes that strengthen the good versus evil plot, these are: purity and corruption, and forbearance against temptation. These two subordinate themes are centred around specific character storylines during and after the fellowship of the ring splits due to Frodo choosing to leave the fellowship with Sam (Tolkien, 2001b, pp. 252 – 253). Purity and corruption are seen mostly during Frodo's journey to Mordor with Sam and Gollum, as the One Ring slowly corrupts Frodo's heart and mind (Tolkien, 2001c). The central idea with this theme in Tolkien's world is to belly the fact that good must be met with purity of heart and mind while evil is a form of corruption that slowly eats away at it.

As for forbearance against temptation, this theme is prominently displayed by two characters which have been analysed in this study, namely: Gandalf and Galadriel. In Gandalf's case, the very first time the One Ring is revealed to Frodo; Frodo who believes the ring is safer in Gandalf's hands offers it to him only to be vehemently rejected as Gandalf himself understands the severity of what would happen should the ring end up in his hands (Tolkien, 2001a, p. 81). The same happens with Galadriel, who also rejects taking the ring when offered by Frodo showing resistance towards the One Ring's power (Tolkien, 2001b, p. 198). Again, this subordinate theme is used in Tolkien's world to emphasize how good should triumph against evil; that good is pure and stalwart, while evil corrupt and tempting.

These central and subordinate themes found in Tolkien's work are undoubtedly a mirror of Arthurian legend. This is no surprise as much of Arthurian myth is centred on traditional religious philosophies and old fantasized medieval chivalries. Good versus evil is a central theme of Arthurian myth, as the legend goes Arthur ultimately goes to war with his son Mordred

who rebels against his father (Malory, 2015, pp. 299 – 304). The subordinate themes of purity and corruption, as well as forbearance against temptation are also found in the tales of Sir Galahad (Malory, 2015, pp. 243 – 257) and Merlin and Nimue (Malory, 2015, pp. 40 – 55).

While the resemblances can be found in these stories there is an overall juxtaposition between Tolkien's trilogy and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. In the case of good versus evil, while Tolkien ends his books with good triumphing against evil, the end of the Arthurian myths is left in a rather grey spectrum; while Arthur does indeed defeat Mordred, he too dies at his own son's hand (Malory, 2015, pp. 302 – 304). Here the theme of good versus evil then has no true ending as one does not triumph over the other. This contrast can also be found in the subordinate theme of forbearance against temptation as in Merlin's story he becomes trapped due to his overzealous desire in lusting after Nimue, causing him to be manipulated (Malory, 2015, pp. 40 – 41).

It can be said then that Tolkien's trilogy while mirroring Arthurian myth in terms of overall thematic setting branches away from the myth's thematic effect on its characters. If looked at from a Jungian perspective, other than a select few; most characters from the Arthurian tales have failed to reach the Self (refer to Definition of Key terms for the Self), meaning that they were not able to reach balance in their minds before the end of the Arthurian myths. On the other hand, Tolkien's characters [the "good" ones] reach this stage by the end of his books, ensuring a happy ending.

## **Conclusion**

To surmise, by the end of this analysis it can be agreed that Jardillier's (2003) assertion that the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a so called "distant relative" of Arthurian myth to be true. The characters analysed here, show a remarkable resemblance to their Arthurian counterparts but different enough that they are indeed their own persons. This is the same even with the symbolic objects that were found to be similar to each other; yet the One Ring is able to

combine the Arthurian myth's symbol into one object that represents temptation. Thematically as well, the two stories have striking similarities only for these similarities to be cast away as Tolkien ensures that the world he has created reaches a peaceful and happy end. In closing, the analysis written here proves that Arthurian archetypes indeed do exist within Tolkien's work but are varied and changed to suit the author's want for a conclusive traditional happy end.

## Chapter V

### Discussion and Conclusion

The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is an undeniable behemoth in fantasy writing and a prime example of the use of mythology in the fantasy genre. Tolkien's use of Arthurian themes and symbolisms as seen in the textual analysis in the previous section help create a world that is reminiscent of folklore, yet original enough to be its own separate story. His use of Arthurian myth is cleverly integrated into his world blatant enough that those familiar with the mythology find a sense of familiarity, but varied in the way it is portrayed; overarching themes are used to all in all tell an epic tale of heroes and villains that clash against each other and the importance of a pure heart and determination in fighting against corruption and evil.

What is most curious however with Tolkien's use of the Arthurian myth is the way that his characters all stray away from it. Beginning with very heavy similarities, the characters that Tolkien writes soon stray from their Arthurian counterparts. This phenomenon that occurs implies two things; the first as has been mentioned in previous sections, is that Tolkien's work is simply a "distant relative" to Arthurian myth (Jardillier, 2003), that while similar, Tolkien intended for his characters to be a "better" version of their Arthurian counterparts. As shown in the analysis, many of the Arthurian characters met bad or horrible ends due to a lapse in judgement, martyrdom (as in the case of Sir Galahad) or simply giving in to temptation.

The second implication arises from scholars Álvarez-Faedo (2007) and Finn (2005) who concluded that Tolkien's trilogy was an attempt at creating his own myth that could replace Arthurian legend as he found the original myths to be missing certain factors. While the researcher of this study agrees with both implications, this study leans more toward Álvarez-Faedo's (2007) and Finn's (2005) thoughts, that Tolkien wrote the trilogy in an attempt to fill in the gaps he believed were missing from Arthurian mythology.

This is evident within this study's character analysis where despite the large similarities that are found in both tales' characters, there is a contrast in their endings. Tolkien's characters are written in a way that allows them to improve and better themselves [such as Gandalf the Grey becoming Gandalf the White or Aragorn coming to terms with his lineage]. On the other hand, characters from Arthurian myth are set in their ways; once introduced there is no change in mentality or personality throughout the myth's tales. The contrast found here supports Álvarez-Faedo's (2007) and Finn's (2005) thoughts on the reason why Tolkien created the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Finally, it must be addressed that this study only analysed two books of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, specifically the first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and the last, *The Return of the King*, as such certain more pivotal moments of the trilogy that shaped the characters and the story's themes may be omitted from this study. It must also be noted that due to this study's focus on finding Arthurian myth using archetypal criticism and textual analysis, that the conclusion that this study's analysis has reached will only conclusively reveal Arthurian archetypes without considering other mythologies and aspects of the story. As such, for a more conclusive analysis that takes into consideration the full trilogy and other factors of the story, research should be conducted using a theory which is not so centred on mythological aspects that is able to meld both myth and other factors of Tolkien's work. This recommendation should be taken into consideration by future researchers who intend to analyse and study Tolkien's work as a completely different analysis of the characters and narrative elements of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy may arise.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Inscription on the One Ring

