<u>Tolkien and the Androgynous Reality,</u>
<u>A Study of Elves and Dwarves in Light</u>
<u>in Light of Jung's Personality Theories</u>

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Throughout the years that J. R.R. Tolkien has fascinated the child in all of us, he has become the legendary ferryman whose job it is to navigate us across our own mythical river Styx, into our own never-ending story. In this case we disembark in that land of fantasy called Middle Earth. Personally I have set out on this journey innumberable times, always with varied consequences both at journey's beginning and end. Admittedly there have been not a few mis-readings in the past. However, in this thesis I believe that I have mis-read my own mis-readings and have come upon a true reading of Tolkien and his works. As it stands, it is my intention in this thesis to prove that two of Tolkien's character types, elves and dwarves, are in fact personifications of Jung's Anima and Animus.

This attempt of comparing characters with psychological theories is not new. As a matter of fact critics of Poe have used this type of interpretation for years. However, this thesis is somewhat different in how it presents the characters in relation to Jung's personality theories. Instead of taking one single character in one single work into consideration, I intend to examine these two races of characters and how they affect the psychological realm of Middle Earth in a personal sense. Needless to say that this feat can only

be accomplished if three things are present on the part of you the reader. The first is a basic knowledge of Tolkien and Middle Earth, without which none of my arguments will make sense.

It is at this point that I make the assumption that the reader of this paper has read at least some of Tolkien's works concerning Middle Earth. However, it is not assumed that all readers of this paper have even begun to skim the surface of that deep pool of psychological knowledge we call Jung. As this is the second pre-requisite for understanding this paper I feel it is my duty to spend a few pages of this paper to examine the relevant Jungian concepts.

The first issue I would like to discuss here regards man as an androgynous being. Throughout philosophical and religious history mankind has often been portrayed as being created first as an androgynous being. This has even been understood to mean that man was completely androgynous, both physically and emotionally. Even in the Talmadic mythologies, or in our own Judeo-Christian culture, such a being is said to have existed. Plato mentions such a being in his Symposium, stating that this being, Anthropos, existed until the gods separated the male from the female out of pride and fear of what that being would become. As a result these two halves

have strived to reunite ever since the separation, striving again to be fully human.(1)

Although the aforementioned is for the most part based on religious and classical myth, we must remember that myth is simply a representation of reality. The question then arises, how does this myth represent this reality and what are the factors that contribute to it? The answer can be said to lie in the dual nature of man, that is the male and female in each of us. That is to say that each of us is bisexual in nature, with the biological traits usually being dominant. The strengths of the opposite as well as the biological, however, are learned and imprinted upon us by our environment and are learned by our orientation to the world.

In the past many philosophers, writers, and psychologists have claimed that man is indeed bisexual in nature, not the least of these is C.G. Jung. It is Jung who coined the term Archetype and by doing so classified the male and female divisions of the human personality.(2) These archetypes break down into the male, or Animus and the Anima which is the female inner being. What essentially is said here is that each sex possesses subconscious sex traits hidden within itself.(3) This subconscious self contains elements of the opposite sex which strive for control of the

personality. In other words the archetypes are constantly in conflict, each wishing to dominate the conscious other.(4)

This conflict takes many forms, the least of which is not a complex system of projection of the archetypes upon others of the opposite sex.(5) This subconscious dynamic can even be seen outside of the persona. By way of explanation I wish to present a classical example of just this in historical perspective.

In the days of the classical civilizations, the gods and goddesses dominated the physical and religious world in a metaphoric way. What man could not understand he projected upon the gods, i.e. rain, crops, and death. These attributes found themselves divided among the sexes of the ancient parthenons. For example, the goddess Venus was attributed with the miracle of romantic love, which is even today considered a feminine attribute. Mars, on the other hand, was given the honor of being the god of war, a realm that is even today given to the male.(6)

In a sense, we as human beings do the same thing among ourselves. Both males and females possess a part of each other within themselves that they as people cannot understand. This being the case we tend to follow the same pattern of projecting upon the other the

attributes of their respective archetypes. When this occurs in the positive sense we have what is commonly referred to as the state of being in love. On the other hand, when the positive effects have begun to face the partners soon begin to find fault with the negative side of the projected archetypes, thus finding fault with the person who is the recipient of the projected archetype. Therefore the relationship between the two beings to become oppressive as well as somewhat restrictive.(7)

More importantly to the theme of this paper is how this process affects the personality of the individual. The above mentioned dynamic is valid in this case. It seems that during a normal growth process the archetype will usually identify with the physical sex of the person involved.(8) However, when the sexual ego, or the sexual consciousness of the subject, is underdeveloped it is found that the stronger between either the sexual ego and the archetype will tend to project itself into the personality of the given individual, causing a form of homosexuality, meaning that there exists either a feminized masculinity or a masculine femininity. The operative phrase here would be: form of homosexuality; this form could take many forms ranging from the effeminiate man or the masculine woman to the sexually active homosexual.(9)

Setting aside these particular mechanics, we move on to the idea of a balanced androgyny. In order to achieve this Jung would state that there must be a certain integration into the self or these two forces.(10) In the male for example the female attributes must be able to survive in a coexistant manner with the physical and sexual self. The result would be a whole person able to cry and be soft and at the same time be able to hold his own in the male world.(11)

As stated before, this is the ideal and does not happen in most cases of human development. However, it is my job in this paper to prove that this development does occur in Tolkien's Middle Earth.

In order to do this it is important that the reader realize the third phase that I spoke of on page one. You must in fact place yourself in the reality of Middle Earth, but at the same time place yourself just outside of that same reality. In other words I am asking you to assume the role of the active observer, active in the sense that you are there and able to see, but inactive in the sense that you can think in terms of our present reality. In essence you will be on the crease of the fold between the repective realities.

The idea here is to get you, the reader, just enough into the story that you can understand what I mean when

I say that Middle Earth is not just a fictitious reality but is in fact a fictitious personality. Once this is established the facts presented should fall into place and my argument should in turn finally make sense.

It is at this point that I would like to introduce some of the ideas that Linda Olds presents in her work, Fully Human. Olds states that males tend to be assertive, intelligent and strong, while females tend to be "harmonizing, nurturant and passive."(12) Using these criteria one can begin to understand the male and female roles of the characters involved.

However, it is important to realize that although the male and female are different in these respects they each possess a certain amount of each other's characteristics.(13) Where the line is drawn, however, seems to stem from a fiction created by the human race in the form of sex roles. Since the beginning of time man has been the hunter and warrior, a role pressed upon him mainly due to two factors, the first being his physical strength and the second from the misconception that because the woman would be held back because of the child-rearing duties God has sought fit to inflict upon her.(14) In the beginning there may have been some truth to this concept, however, later as life became more industrialized and comfortable this concept has survived

mainly due to the fact that those who have control of the language and the social reality have sought to make it so.

The real fiction lies, however, in the fact that we tend to stereotype both the male and the female in the extremes forgetting that each sex and each individual possesses such traits in varying degrees. Without such realization there could not be an explanation for the young mother who in an extreme emergency pulls her infant son out from underneath an automobile or a man who's love for the earth and all things that grow devotes his life to the garden.

Such is true in the realm of Middle Earth. The dwarves, for example, show increased intelligence in the practicalities of the world in which they live. This can be shown through their understanding of mining, metal work, and their love of gadets in general. True, it can be said that they lack the wisdom of the folklore surrounding many of the mystical aspects of Middle Earth, but it could also be said that these do not apply to the practical aspects of their lives in Middle Earth.

In respect to their strength it is said in the Silmarillion that the dwarves were created to be, "strong and unyielding", in order for them to resist the Dark Lord and his works.(15) This can be seen best in

the Battle at Helm's Keep, where the dwarf Gimli not only battles on while others tire but is able to begin a temporary reconstruction of the defenses there following the battle.(16) This same example can be used to describe the assertive trait in the race. The dwarf does this by asserting his role and his assets to the benefit of the group as a whole.

The elves on the other hand fit readily into the mold we have set for the female. To begin with, they are very nurtriant, almost to the extent of considering themselves mothers of Middle Earth. This can best be shown by using the example of the three rings that are put into their care and how the elves use them. To break this example down even further let's examine the ring used by Galadriel. Although the ring can be used for many purposes she uses the power it possesses to protect and preserve the corner of Middle Earth in which she lives. Because of her ring and its power time seems not to exist in the realm called Lothlorien, it in fact seems to stand still.(17) Elrond too uses his ring for much the same purpose, the power stands in order to preserve the Middle Earth that they have come to know and in many ways love.(18)

This fact bleeds over into the realm of the second trait which is that of harmonization. The elves are

represented as being in harmony with nature and their surroundings. They become in fact almost tied to the earth in a sense. This can be seen best in the environment in which they choose to live, i.e. in woodland areas which due to their care become rarely accessible to mankind.

They too can be called passive although this can be taken in two ways. The first being that in as far as the world of mankind they have little to do with the outside world unless it threatens Middle Earth itself. However, I believe that their tendency to be passive goes beyond this outer relationship with the world as a whole. The elves are known throughout the works as the First Born, or the first to set foot on the realm of Middle Earth. Since this is the case, they also know that when the time comes they must relinquish their rights to Middle Earth after the closing of the Third Age. Knowing this fact does not make them bitter or even miscontent, instead they as a race take an open part in the ending of the age by fighting in the War of The Ring that is to be the end of their stewardship of Middle Earth.(19)

Taking these facts into consideration I now present the argument that the human fiction mentioned before holds true here as well. Each of the races discussed in this paper possess in different degrees and different

ways the character traits of the other. Examples of this would be how the dwarf Gimli describes what a population of dwarves could do to the caves of Helm's Deep. In essence he says that they would develop and nurture the caves in such a way as to bring out their true beauty and depth.(20) This shows that his love and respect, as well as those of his brethren, for the land is real and does exist. The elves too show characteristics of such role reversal when they share the knowledge of the lore of the mystical aspect of Middle Earth with those that strive to save this realm from destruction by the Dark Lord.

It is at this point I believe it necessary to skip much of the story line and jump to a relevant fact in the appendix of the Return of the King; however, let it be said that the forces of good prevail and the Third Age draws to a close.

Before this fact is introduced, though, there happens to be a certain amount of background that must be covered before its meaning can be fully understood. Stated simply the elves and dwarves in the past had gotten along fairly well, this fact can be seen throughout the works concerning early Middle Earth. There came a time, however, when the races split. This can be attributed to a few factors but the most

significant one deals with the awakening of the Evil
under the mountain of Khazad-dum.(21) It is interesting
to note at this point that the dwarves merely awakened
this evil and did not create it. This fact is important
mainly because the dwarves were given full responsiblity
for its presence in Middle Earth. It was the elves in
their turn that blamed the dwarves for this evil and the
result was hostility between the two races.(22)

Putting this event into Jungian concepts and terms
it is possible to say that this breakup very much
resembles the projection process discussed earlier in
this paper. If you remember, when the party or parties
involved in a projection process begin to see through
the brighter side of their projection to the shadow side
of their reality. The only way to overcome such a
misperception of a misperception is to honestly face the
shadow and eventually overcome the fear involved.

If this part of Middle Earthian history can be
realized as part of the projection process then it will
be a simple matter to recognize the cure that is used,
that is, the facing or confronting the dark side of the
personality. This is done by introducing two new
characters into the saga of Middle Earth, i.e. Gimli,
the dwarf, and Legolas, the elf. These two characters
become for us and for Middle Earth the personifications

of their race and their interaction serves to bring about the balance of the male and female in Middle Earth.

How this is done is really quite interesting. It seems that the elements of nature that each character loves is despised by his opposite, thus resembling the shadow side of each character's dark side. The confrontation takes place when they each confront the shadow side of the other's reality. Thus Gimli visits the deep forest of Fanghorn while Legolas visits the depths of Helms Deep.(23) It is only by this confrontation that the two characters complete the process of understanding that is theirs to complete.

Now at long last we get to the point where I tell you the point that I wish to take from the passage in the appendix of the Return of the King. Quite simply this passage states that after all other elves left Middle Earth Gimli and Legolas leave Middle Earth together. This is important mainly because it shows a unity and balance that has long been strived for.(24)

This unity and balance shows itself in another sense as well. It seems that after the War of the Ring, Minas Ithil, the capital city of the new fully human rule of Middle Earth, happened to be in a state of disrepair. It was by the combined efforts to men elves and dwarves

that the city was rebuilt. This too points to the balance achieved between the two races.(24)

If you as a reader can accept that the elves and dwarves represent the male and female in each of us through the previous presentation, then the next step will come a little easier. So far I have attempted to present Middle Earth as a personality within itself with the elf and dwarf representing the male and female within us all. Since this is the case, I would like to point out that it is here that this fiction takes a turn toward meta-fiction. Through our study of Jung we are able to perceive this growth process and relate it to the characters involved in the process itself, and in turn relate this process and the characters involved in it to a personal level. This means that Middle Earth can be perceived as a single personality undergoing a growth process.

However, if we look further and take into consideration Tolkien's religious literary style we can begin to understand this in another light. The first thing that we should be aware of is that Tolkien was a Christian author who would not hesitate to use biblical metaphors in order to describe reality. In the realm of Middle Earth this includes creation by word,(25) Armagedon and the new Jerusalem metaphors. He does this

by using creation in the form of song, the battle of the
Ring, and the reestablishment of Minas Ithil as the new
Kingdom. If the reader can accept the preceding facts it
will not be difficult for the reader to realize that
Tolkien is describing reality as a whole. In other
words, his fiction of Middle Earth relates to our
reality just as our reality relates to Middle Earth. My
argument is that Tolkien is telling us that in order for
creation to become fully human we must accept and use
both the masculine and the feminine traits in our own
reality. This can only be done when we face the reality
of the shadow of each type and accept it for what it is.
Once this is accomplished we can bring about a fully
human or androygnous world or social reality. Or,
putting it in Tolkienian terms, it will be after our own
war of the ring or Amegedon that we will begin to see
the new Jerusalem in our own social and physical
reality. We will become whole and, as St. Paul says,
"there will be no man or woman, only those who believe."

ENDNOTES

[1] John A. Sanford, <u>The Invisible Partners: How the Male and Female in Each of Us Affects Our Relationships</u> (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) p. 4.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 6.

[3] Linda Olds, <u>Fully Human: How Everyone Can Integrate the Benefits of Masculine and Feminine Sex Roles</u> (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981) p. 164.

[4] Sanford, p. 13.

[5] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 13-17.

[6] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.10.

[7] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 17.

[8] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 12.

[9] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 13.

[10] Olds, p. 165.

[11] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 28.

[12] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 3.

[13] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 164.

[14] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 4.

[15] J.R.R. Tolkien, <u>The Silmarillion</u> (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983) p. 40.

[16] J.R.R. Tolkien, <u>The Two Towers</u> (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) p. 179.

[17] Tolkien, <u>Silmarillion</u>, p. 370.

[18] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 370-71.

[19] Olds, p. 352.

[20] Tolkien, <u>Towers</u>, pp. 194-95.

[21] J.R.R. Tolkien, <u>Fellowship of the Ring</u> (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) p. 461.

[22] J.R.R. Tolkien, _Return of the King_ (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) p. 320.

[23] _Ibid._, p. 451.

[24] _Ibid._, p. 304.

[25] Tolkien, _Silmarillion_, p. 3.

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