

TURBULENT TIMES: EPIC FANTASY IN ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

by

Karie Crawford

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of a thesis submitted by

Karie Crawford

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sally Taylor, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean Hughes, Reader

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth Wahlquist, Reader

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Edward Cutler, Graduate Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jesse Crisler, Area Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lance Larsen, Graduate Coordinator

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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Date

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Sally Taylor  
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

---

Lance Larsen  
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

---

Van C. Gessel  
Dean, College of Humanities

## ABSTRACT

### TURBULENT TIMES: EPIC FANTASY IN ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

Karie Crawford

Department of English

Master of English

This thesis is a development of the theories presented by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Bruno Bettelheim concerning archetypes, the anima/animus concept, the Hero Cycle, and identity development through fairy tales. I argue that there are vital rites of passage missing in Anglo-Saxon culture, and while bibliotherapy cannot replace them, it can help adolescents synthesize their experiences. The theories of Jung, Campbell, and Bettelheim demonstrate this concept by defining segments of the story and how they apply to the reader. Because of the applicability, readers, despite their age, can use the examples in the book to help reconcile their own experiences and understand life as it relates to them. The works I examine include J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Orson Scott Card's *Alvin Maker* series, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* trilogy, and David Eddings' *Belgariad*. Though it is impossible to test the effects of reading such works on readers, the possibility of those effects exists. Bettelheim's work, *The Uses of Enchantment*, discusses similar themes and he provides scientific support through his use of anecdotal evidence. Following his example, I have

tried to include evidence from my own life that exemplifies the effect reading epic fantasy has had on me.

The aspects of epic fantasy in relation to going through adolescence I examine include the concept of responsibility and its relation to progress and maturity; gaining a social identity; and reconciling oneself to the dark side within and without, in society. These aspects are found within the superstructure of the Hero Cycle and the actions and motivations of the characters—archetypes—within the cycle. They are also present in real life and necessary concepts to understand to be accepted into society as a mature contributor.

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## Introduction

In my thesis I will discuss the possible effects that reading epic fantasy can have on adolescents. Due to a lack of ritual and guidance in our culture, adolescents may not always get the understanding they need to move from immaturity to maturity, or to move from one developmental stage to another. It is possible, though impossible to prove, that reading literature they can identify with may provide the insights adolescents need to recognize that they are making these transitions or how to make them, as well as helping them understand their own experiences. This thesis is a development of the theories pointed out by Jung, Campbell, and Bettelheim in relation to fairy tales, myths, and archetypes. Where possible, I provide examples from my own experience of parallel learning and discovery with the characters in the series I have read. Their actions did not guide mine, but in reading them I realized retrospectively how my experiences fit into the cycle of life and helped me gain maturity, just as the characters' experiences fit into the cycle and prepared them for adulthood as well. I did not always consciously identify with the heroes, but I know that I enjoyed reading the novels because they meant something to me. That something is still quite indefinable, though I try to work it out here.

Also, the aspects I discuss apply in all the other novels I have examined. I have focused on certain topics for each series because their overall themes seemed to lean more in that aspect's direction. However, it is possible to find examples in all the novels of all the aspects that I cover—the stories would not be complete without them.

Fantasy author Diana Paxon once said, "If science fiction proclaims itself 'the literature of ideas' then fantasy might be called 'the literature of ethics'" (MacRae 6). Emma Bull, also a fantasy author, says, "For the few hours it takes to read a book, you get somebody else's idea of what's important, of the moral stance to take, of how one treats other people. When you've spent

several hours immersed in someone else's value system and culture, you'll come out looking at yours differently..." (MacRae 3). In fantasy works not only is a different world set up, but readers must also see it through eyes other than their own, allowing them to look at situations in a different light. This can give them and teach them perspective—learning how to see things from the other side, or from a point of view they have never considered before. This shift in perspective allows the author to speak through his or her characters and present to the readers his or her idea of acceptable behavior, models, and how the world works.

The recent release of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *The Lord of the Rings* as family movies are representative of this phenomena of teaching. These animated stories were most popular in 2001 because they were great movies, they appealed to all ages—not just children—and they came out at a time when families were closer and doing more things together, partially as a result of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Nell Minow says that families are

...using great stories as a way to connect with each other.... Now is a time for primal stories with all of those good, eternal, old-fashioned themes of loyalty, redemption, honor, quests, and courage. People will always come back to those stories as a way of working through fears and as a way of bringing families closer together. (1)

Connecting through the use of stories is a practice from the days before technology. Every culture has its collection of myths and legends passed from the older generation to the younger generation. It can be seen that these stories touch on the themes that Minow pointed out—loyalty, courage, and honor. "The adaptability of themes like this to children's literature should not be underestimated. They strike such a responsive chord in children because they are, as Frye said, so basic to human experience" (Patteson 242). The importance of the responsive chord is that children will identify with the work—they will take it in and make it a part of themselves.

Children and adolescents are in a stage of life where they have experienced little and as far as they are concerned, the world changes on a daily basis as they gain more experience. They find themselves in a world that is unfamiliar and insecure, allowing them to identify with a hero who also seems to encounter an unending series of challenges. Fairy tales, and by implication other kinds of fantasy, can aid children in working out their feelings of helplessness, discovering their identity, developing their character, and teaching them that life's inevitable conflicts can be survived and successfully passed through (Patteson 240-1). It can be said that some of the most introverted children and adolescents seem to be the ones wrapped up in fantasy and fairy tales. They may do this for a number of reasons, either to escape their own lives and their fears of reality, or perhaps because they see the heroes of the tales moving from the world of self to the world of society and wish to do the same thing. For instance, Harry Potter moves from the world of Muggles, where he is unaccepted and unacceptable, to the world of wizards, where he is famous and a hero. Children who are struggling with life and with figuring out who they are can look up to a hero like this, one who moves from being solitary to finding his niche.

Also, essayist Karen Schaafsma says:

Fantasy constructs a bridge between the natural and the supernatural, the human and the nonhuman, the objective, material world and a subjective, spiritual realm. The world view typical of fantasy is essentially religious, and it tends to be mystical in tone; the human hero confronts the Other directly without mediation of institution or ritual; the hero becomes the mediator between the other and the larger community. (62)

This dislocation of the fantasy reader from the familiar world allows them to identify more readily with the often dislocated hero (Zipes 259). Dislocation can also lead to the use of imagination and the expansion of the creative horizon. As children learn to use these creative

faculties they can come up with new and possibly better solutions to the obstacles they face. Tolkien, one of the most respected fantasy authors of our time, taught moral lessons in his high fantasy. Everywhere he implies reader assumption of the proper and improper elements of behavior (Stevens 252). His lessons in propriety put the story in the present while the fantastic elements move the action to an unlikely world, thereby teaching the children what he considered to be moral in a context they might find more appealing.

Noted child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim says that children need a “rich fantasy life” in order to properly learn how to function on a personal level. If children need it, adolescents need it more in order to learn how to cope on a social level. Just as fairy tales help children towards that fantasy life, so epic fantasy literature can guide adolescents to their own “rich fantasy life” because the genre is geared towards an adolescent level of understanding.

Within the turbulent period of adolescence, human beings must come to terms with the realities of life and themselves. They must learn how to be responsible and develop a social identity. They will experience a surge in physical growth—which leads to discoordination/awkwardness—and experience enough to be accepted into the world of adults, including how to discern between good and evil and determine which sort of choices they will make. In this fast-moving modern world of business, economics, and progress, there is little room left for adolescents to develop on their own terms. They are constantly being pushed to do better, to do more, and to be their best self, when oftentimes they don’t even know what form that best self might take. But as Ursula Le Guin says, an adolescent’s job in growing up is to become himself or herself (*Language* 70).

In tribal cultures, adolescents have the guidance of their elders. Their own memories of adolescence are helped by traditional tales—myths and legends—that have guided many tribe

members to their ultimate destiny, or at least reminded them of how to achieve it. In a first-world nation, these myths and legends are lacking, as are the rituals that accompanied them. In their place is self-initiation—not a bad thing but contemporary teens need guidance as they figure things out for themselves—peer-initiation, and sometimes the inability to progress in an acceptable or “correct” manner (becoming a single parent, a drug addict, etc.—losing control over life). Cassandra Delaney, author of “Rites of Passage in Adolescence,” suggests bibliotherapy as a replacement for these self-guided rites. I would contend that bibliotherapy would not replace actually going through real life and real rites of passage, but it could be a guide for adolescents through their progression—just as the tribal myths do. However, an adolescent still needs recognition by adults, preferably ceremonially so all recognize them as having crossed the threshold of their advancement—if that recognition is lacking, then there is no point to the ritual and it is possible that the adolescent will not value what they have learned. Recognition as a capable adult leads to acceptance and bolsters self-worth. It also helps adolescents realize that their self-identity is valued and helps them determine their function in society. Bettelheim says children indulge in fairy tales because often they feel that their parents underestimate their capabilities, but the heroes in fairy tales can conquer such underestimation through accomplishment and overcoming obstacles. Adolescents have to overcome obstacles and cross thresholds and increase their capabilities throughout the years of puberty. If these achievements are not recognized, the adolescent may not think that they are of worth and turn to other activities which will garner them attention—good or bad. When adolescents have been acknowledged as capable of taking care of themselves and functioning within the community, they may feel that their life becomes worth something because it is regarded as useful.

In reading fairy tales, fantasy stories, and myths, adolescents can realize that the recognition they get in reality for achieving progress may be minimal, but that they are progressing. The stories can become their teachers. Bettelheim introduces the idea that myths and fairy tales provide models for behavior (35), then immediately discredits myths as being too superhuman and unlikely, as well as pessimistic. He discusses the achievability of the fairy tale, mentioning that the leading figures in fairy tales are not usually extraordinarily gifted—they are emphatically normal, but are helped along the way by supernatural beings (39). The myth is exotic, unreachable—it involves gods, goddesses, and their progeny. The hero usually achieves divinity on completion of his quest—which has been aided by the most miraculous means. A fairy tale is simpler and has more human characters. The magic seems to be just around the corner from reality and the hero's situations are more normal—he or she interacts on a more human level. Epic fantasy is somewhere between fairy tale and myth. Heroes may not be gods, but they may interact with them. The magic is more flamboyant and unrealistic, but it's used for everyday purposes as well as unusual situations. And the unusual situations are few and extraordinary, while the ordinary day-to-day business of survival and learning is frequent. Myths and fairy tales focus on the monumental events—in their brevity—while epic fantasy may detail every small step on the journey. This detailing is important so that the reader can see the small actions that make up the character of the hero, the archetype a character may represent, or even the general path that can be taken to overcome a similar obstacle.

Bettelheim goes on to say that fairy tales symbolically imply solutions, allowing children to understand them and then work out their own solutions on their own terms (45). He says, “A child trusts what the fairy story tells, because its world view accords with his own” (45). In a similar manner, one assumes that an epic fantasy story speaks on the right level to adolescents.

Bettelheim discusses a child's animistic thinking and his struggle for personal identity, a sense of self in opposition to those around him. Adolescents move one step beyond that, gathering knowledge and observing those around them for clues on how to develop a social identity. It is safe to say, however, that adolescent thinking can be somewhat paranoid—as they examine those around them, they assume that they are being just as closely examined. Therefore they are self-conscious and awkward until they realize that they are not under scrutiny all the time.

Fairy stories also provide the background and security for a child to explore the world on his own terms. The fairy tale explanations are replaced as the child learns the more “logical” ones—leading to progress, development, and maturity (Bettelheim 50). Epic fantasy has one foot in semi-reality and one in wonder. The genre's explanations relate more to human nature and personality development and may provide examples of action motivation. The fairy tale explanations help a child integrate his inner self with his outward reality—making the explanations provided by the fairy tale reasonable to a child (Bettelheim 64). Epic fantasy helps adolescents develop, understand and commit to their outward reality. Bettelheim also talks about the need for a child to reconcile opposites—within himself and in life (74)—concordant with mythologist Joseph Campbell's “atonement with the father.” Just as the fairy tale provides background and security for a child, epic fantasy literature can provide insight and guidance to an adolescent. Instead of explaining the strange events in their lives, epics draw a picture of someone else's life, someone who encounters similar obstacles in a fantastic realm. As adolescents read and synthesize, they begin to understand their personal identity in relation to their social identity—how they act in private or in their head versus how they perform in society.

Also, children are focused inward but adolescents must deal with the outward opposites displayed by other's behavior and their own. Bettelheim says a child sees the world simply, in

opposites. Adolescents then are building on those opposites to see the finer shades of black and white in the gray. Thus children's tales have simpler characters while the ones in adolescent fiction demonstrate more complexity. Bettelheim points out important steps in the fairy tale, including mastering the monster (120), separation anxiety (122), marriage as transcendence and a permanent solution to separation anxiety (128-9) and an end to adolescence (130). Villains are seen as alternate targets to reality, to the parental "villains" who will not let the child have his or her way or "be fair" (134), allowing the child to understand that it is possible for him or her to achieve autonomy (139). The good and bad parent exist, though in these terms, the parent is not necessarily evil, but he or she is not necessarily there for the child, affectionate toward the child, nor understanding or believing toward the child (Patteson 242). Bettelheim says that children feel their abilities are not valued by their parents and fairy stories show that there are situations which can be overcome by the children themselves (149). However, in order to become themselves, children must go through their trials without parental aid—just as adolescents or anyone in the cycle must (139). They also see justice as a key to the "rightness" of story (141), and assertion against the unquestioned "element of threat" (144) which leads to the happy ending (143). Adolescents reading epic fantasy work in the same manner, but with different issues—peer acceptance or rejection, role development, occupational choice, and so on. Epic fantasy also has a definable cycle which includes the themes of leaving home, learning, going through trials and overcoming obstacles, and returning home as a new person—or as the same person with a solidified identity. The cycle is the process that allows them to discover or develop that identity.

### *Developing Identity*

Finding an adult identity is difficult—which is why it takes the six to eight years for adolescents to do so. Pubescence is a time when adolescents must reconcile their ego identities

with their perceived role diffusion—who they are and their standards versus deciding who they will be and what roles they’ll play—and they seek leadership as they try to decide their social identity (Rathus 139). The process involves discovering their hidden dreams, their likes and dislikes, what makes them happy and what makes them angry, their competencies, knacks, limits, leanings—it’s not a finite process, but a person must start on that road before he or she can discover more. It is the time of the symbolic “death of an old, inadequate self” and the struggle to gain a “higher state of selfhood” (Bettelheim 35-36). At this time adolescents go through what psychologist and theorist C. G. Jung labeled as the “realization of the shadow” (80) when they come to the understanding that they are not what they think they are. They are imperfect, they sometimes have desires contrary to their morals, they are not always good. In addition, developmental psychologist Erik Erikson has said that the major challenge of adolescence is achieving an identity based on committing to a particular role or occupation in life (Rathus 139). No wonder Stanley Hall referred to adolescence as *Sturm and Drang*: Storm and Stress (Rathus 138). Any learning, any growing, requires a significant sacrifice and a marked change, often on par with major surgery. But this sacrifice and change are more than physical—they are determined by a change in behavior, beliefs, and knowledge of one’s inner self.

Adolescence is a time of seeking for independence, often marked by increased bickering with family members and a withdrawal from family time, which is usually replaced by alone time. Some distancing from parents is beneficial—it forces the adolescent to form relationships outside the family and broaden their social horizons—part of developing a social identity (Rathus 138). “The physical escape of the child from his parents’ domination is followed by a lengthy period of recovery, of gaining maturity” (Bettelheim 150). From friends and mentors they can learn appropriate behaviors and acceptable moral standards, but they still must reason

for themselves where they stand or they will become dissatisfied with their lives. Bettelheim drives home the point of individual experience: “To become himself, the child must face the trials of his life on his own; he cannot depend on the parent to rescue him from the consequences of his own weakness” (139). Children and adolescents also begin to explore themselves and their relation to the world at large. In order to explore fully and become more adapted, however, the adolescent

...needs self-knowledge. He needs to see himself and the shadow he casts. That is something he can face, his own shadow; and he can learn to control it and to be guided by it. So that, when he grows up into his strength and responsibility as an adult in society, he will be less inclined...to give up in despair.... (Le Guin, *Language* 70)

By learning first about the dark side of themselves, adolescents can be more prepared to handle the other negative things they encounter outside of themselves. They can learn that overcoming these negative things is possible, just as they overcame their own weaknesses.

However, withdrawal is vital to any part of mature development (Bettelheim 150). It allows adolescents time to think about the world at large and their own experiences in it. They may not actively think about such things, but by withdrawing from their regular activities, they give themselves time to synthesize and deal with the situations they face. Sometimes the dealing adolescents do with life comes in the form of reading stories—in their withdrawal—that relate to their experiences. Tolkien and Bettelheim agree that the “real” or original tales are more helpful and/or desirable to the developing child. The tales feel real—a child or an adolescent feels they can relate to the hero of such stories on their own level. Tolkien elaborates, though, saying that stories are always borrowing from one another—inescapable element borrowing. This borrowing could lead to archetype formation, model development, and increased use of similar story

patterns. Tolkien also emphasizes that a good fairy story must be embedded with an “inner consistency of reality” (Tolkien, *Tree* 46) and have a “turn” where things joyously start going right (Tolkien, *Tree* 72). The “reality” helps children integrate the ideas of right and wrong into their thinking (Tolkien, *Tree* 31).

### *Personal versus Social Identity and Development*

As children grow, they learn that they are, that they exist. According to Bettelheim’s theory in *The Uses of Enchantment*, their development is aided by stories and by fairy stories in particular. Through these stories they obtain the security of an explanation which also allows them to explore other possibilities without feeling overwhelmed. The explanations of why the world works the way it does—why some people die of cancer and why some don’t, why dogs bite sometimes—aren’t always on a child’s level. They understand that being nice is good and hitting is bad; their world is very much made up of opposites. Therefore, fairy stories work in a child’s mind because by nature they are very polar, black and white, just as a child’s thinking is.

However, adolescent thinking is more complex and needs more complex examples to understand the world. Epic fantasy can provide this because of its length, its more complex characters, and the multitude of situations that those characters find themselves in. As the adolescent sees how the characters function, he or she can take those examples and apply them to his or her own life.

According to C.G. Jung, the inner world of each person is expressed through a gender-opposite “soul” or inner personality. Jung says that if this soul isn’t allowed free expression or isn’t integrated into the persona (social ideal of a person), it will wreak havoc. These “souls” are collective images formed by exposure to the opposite sex and integrated into one’s inner psyche. Society demands that a person presents a stable outward character, but the “average” person has

many facets to express—thus the anima/animus presence. Repression of the anima/animus leads to social schizophrenia—being one person in public and another, often more terrifying person, in private. It is impossible to be purely what society expects—we must be human. Here Jung’s concept of individuation appears—we must distinguish between what we are and how we appear to ourselves and others. Also, we must establish and understand our relationship to our unconscious and we must realize our self and our persona are two different things. All of these concepts are a part of the adolescent process of learning about self in relation to others.

Therefore self-realization is more than understanding who we are—it also requires balancing who we are with who we are supposed to be; we must balance inner and outer demands. People are expressions—and models to adolescents—of the three positions: someone who is balanced inside and out, identifiable by their attractiveness; a person who is persona-oriented—also attractive but who has a terrible or terrifying personal life; and someone who “lives in a dream-world”—someone who responds purely to the anima/animus and is incapable of operating acceptably in the bounds of society. The healthiest position is the “union of opposites through the middle path”—somewhat like Tao. Being different from others around us equals consciousness and identity. Being similar to them equals unconsciousness and universality. The anima/animus is not so much an acceptance of the dark within us as the opposition within us. The opposition may be flawed, seemingly contrary to our natures, but it still a part of our beings. I think this is evident in Frodo of *The Lord of the Rings*—he nearly fails to fulfill the role he accepted (that of bearing and destroying the Ring) because the Ring pulls at the opposition within him, causing him to crave power. In a hobbit this isn’t normal; therefore it is his inner opposite. This provides a picture of what we all struggle with throughout puberty—figuring out who we are and how we fit into society.

### *Recognized Ritual*

The journey for most adolescents striving towards adulthood is complicated. There are rituals to participate in, to mark the progress from one stage to another and help the fledgling adult along. There are certain rites of passage to participate in, certain thresholds to cross before any teenager can attain recognition for achieving a more mature status. In our modern day world, the recognized ritual has boiled down to going to school and passing successfully from one grade to the next. Graduation from high school is the threshold that we cross to achieving our social destiny—the adult world. However, Cassandra Delaney believes that these rituals and thresholds “lack depth of meaning...as a result, the transition remains incomplete” (894). She says that instead initiation comes in the form of smoking a first cigarette, a first joint or giving up virginity—most likely because though the adult world doesn’t actively acknowledge these passages, their peers do. Recognition, in any form, is the vital aspect of the ritual. Delaney continues on to say “[young people] often are not equipped with the necessary components of a stable adult personality such as a well-reasoned moral code...[or] a positive and cohesive self-image” (894). This is not only because teenagers are taking it upon themselves to progress without the guidance of their parents or elders, but also because there is a lack of other, more distant people/figures to look up to. Due to a dearth of moral heroes in our current society, this is not surprising. Children and adults do not have adequate role models, or so the media would have us believe. The media often confuse celebrities—people one would like to meet—with heroes—people one would like to be like. The focus concentrated on such flawed people—celebrities—leads to a lack in reliable models to demonstrate the way to make realistic choices.

### *Contemporary Adolescent Rites of Passage*

Contemporary rites of passage include first kiss (introduction to personal sexuality), first conflict or brush with death (coming to terms with mortality), and first responsibility (first job, etc.). Development has changed in these days. In the past, brides have been as young as 14 (e.g. Juliet of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*), signifying their early ability—or forced ability—to be mature. However, as society has sped up, the rituals that mark the steps that adolescents take through their pubescent journey are largely missing or go unnoticed. This allows the adolescents to develop on their own timeline, but as in most things, no single adolescent will develop at the same pace as his or her peers. Also, as a group, adolescents may not develop as quickly as those who were coerced into it centuries ago, though the perception still seems to exist that adolescents are mature, or are supposed to be mature, once they've graduated high school—despite the missing rituals.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, there are no longer celebrations to mark a girl's first menses—instead it comes as a surprise to some girls and is not viewed as a positive thing. No one celebrates a boy's development of secondary sexual characteristics—the growth of underarm and groin hair, the filling out of their stature, their first stirrings of desire for a female. Again, these naturally occurring phenomena are suppressed, deemed negative and left unremarked. High school graduation is a stepping stone for most adolescents, celebrated and marked (in opposition to other rites), leading them to make more decisions on their own and allowing them to gain independence from their parents. But it is the solitary celebration of adolescent progression and retains a minimal amount of meaning. Because graduation occurs at such a late age, it delays the recognition of development that may have occurred years earlier.

To compare, the tribal cultures of today celebrate adolescent development. Delaney mentions in her article that the Tukuna people of the Amazon celebrate a girl's first steps

towards womanhood. They begin the celebration with the onset of menstruation, and for the next month to three months, the girl is isolated as she comes to terms with and learns about her menstruation (893). In Native American tribes, the boys go on a vision quest: “[the boy] is taken to an isolated spot and left there to fast for four days. There he will pray, contemplate the words of the medicine man, and await a vision which will reveal to him his path in life as a man in native society” (894). These rites help the adolescents understand their social role and have certain elements that are missing from our own rituals—recognition of and the ability to bear responsibility, modeling, and how to deal with the dark or unknown.

### *Responsibility*

During adolescence teenagers learn the responsibilities that will carry them through to adulthood, including occupational responsibilities and the responsibilities related to their ultimate relationship—marriage. This helps them to develop the identity that becomes theirs for the rest of their life—the all-important mature role that marks their change from child to adult. However, learning this responsibility takes time, which is why it is learned during adolescence, when a person is in transition from childhood and adulthood. Adolescents are capable of understanding the sometimes complex concepts that go along with responsibility, but they are not always perfectly able to employ them. Achieving a sense of responsibility and proving that one can live up to it most of the time can lead to maturity and recognition as an adult. Adolescence can last into the early twenties—the time of transition from high school to college and from college to the real world—the true passage into responsibility.

### *Modeling*

Modeling is the process by which an adolescent can learn by example. Characters fill a certain role—such as archetypes define—and through their decisions and actions show the

adolescent how to deal with or fill a similar role. For a model to be accepted, Liebert says, it must be similar to the ‘observer’ or reader. “Perceived similarity informs observers about the likelihood that a behavior is appropriate and possible for them, in their own situation” (346). He goes on to say that models must be consistent in multiple situations and that the models must be competent. In Liebert’s exposition on models, he makes the clarification that a single model who acts consistently in multiple situations is more likely to be accepted by a reader. And the story is more exciting for the reader because with each novel more conflicts and climaxes can be introduced, the action can be developed further, and the author has time to go into detail; in essence, it allows the reader to become more personally involved and to more fully visualize the story.

### *Archetypes*

Northrup Frye, a noted mythic critic and theorist, says that archetypes unify meaning—they cut across the realm of experience to the very core and relate on a broader, less definable level. Archetypal criticism says that literature is a social fact and a mode of communication (99). Literature conveys the modes and ways of knowledge by models—archetypes—and examples of the rite of passage. Archetypes apply in their universalities to stories, not histories.

Jung, who developed the concept of archetypes, teaches his reader the general categories and characteristics of archetypes. He tells stories of people’s dreams, then interprets them according to their basic symbolic meaning and the archetypal role the main characters play. He goes through the archetypes of life, of meaning, and of the shadow. Life’s archetype is the anima/ animus, the essence that gives delight, caprice, and depth to existence. Meaning’s archetype is the wise old man, the guide or teacher who shows us the meaning of symbols, of the

play between good and evil, and so on. The archetype of the shadow is ourselves. This isn't the polished persona shown the world, but the gritty reality, the animus and persona combined, that we see when we look into the water (the unconscious' symbol). Jung says that when we finally embrace and accept the shadow, our minds open to understanding other archetypes, symbols, revelation—we are more likely to receive insights about life. Because of the general nature Jung ascribes to each of these archetypes, they can be models of good and bad and lend themselves easily to literary interpretation.

Archetypes are not themselves identifiable, according to Jung. One can only determine their existence through the archetypal image/ideal/representation. The archetype itself is too unconscious. However, through exposure to archetypes/images, one can pick up on their basic meaning. The concepts these images represent are universal. Whether they are a product of mythology or if mythology is a product of archetypes is debatable. However, Jung does present the idea of archetypes being a middle ground between our higher and lower impulses—between spirit and instinct. To live fully on one side or the other, Jung seems to imply, is to live half a life. When an individual finally accepts responsibility for himself—instead of blaming his psychic processes on the invisible “them”—he is confronted by archetypes, the dualities of life which have existed before but which he has not been able to see. The acceptance of these archetypal ideas is termed “the realization of the shadow.” Then man becomes a complete person, accepting of instinct but aware that his consciousness will put a check on such things. For a man to consider anything but his own instincts leads to abstract reasoning—the understanding of concepts beyond the physical/temporal realm. According to Jung, “The essential content of all mythologies and all religions and all isms is archetypal.” Because instinct and spirit are opposites, not only does the archetypal awareness create an openness to spirituality

but a way to mediate between the two, a new reality. Heroes need shamans (wise old men) to be their bridge to the supernatural—to accomplish what they cannot themselves (Schlobin 43).

Applied to *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf and his counterpart Saruman become the opposite sides of the archetype of meaning. Frodo and Gollum become the coin representing the shadow, and Galadriel encompasses both sides of the anima—she is an Elf, capable of great works of grace and beauty, but when she is offered the Ring by Frodo, her terrible, powerful face is shown.

### *The Shadow*

Ursula Le Guin says that realistic fiction's capability to teach children right from wrong is limited when good and evil are presented as simplistic, acceptable, sensational, or easily judged and resolved—"as if evil were a problem, something that can be solved, that has an answer, like a problem in fifth grade arithmetic" (*Language* 69). Therefore, for maximum identification, a character should be allowed plenty of time to experience many parts of life.

Le Guin also says that the only way children learn about good and evil is for adults to talk to children about themselves. She says that children's job in growing up is to become themselves, but that the task cannot be accomplished if they are led to believe it is hopeless (*Language* 70). Therefore they need ugly reality and truth in small doses so they can learn to differentiate between good and evil, choose for themselves, and begin to form their own identity. Patricia C. Wrede said, "...fantasy reflects not only ourselves and our shadows, but the truth of our hearts" (MacRae 7). "Fantasy is where you meet yourself, especially the shadow-self your conscious mind is so busy denying" (Talbot 147).

On the other hand, I must mention that the heroes are not the only important ones with dark sides. Luthi says “Even the villains of fairy tales...are useful, because they are ‘symbols of evil’ through which the child learns that evil can be conquered or perhaps even transformed” (Patteson 240). It is necessary that children and adolescents learn to distinguish evil in all its forms, even from the perspective of evil itself. As mentioned before, heroes must learn to deal with their dark sides. Says Le Guin:

[The adolescent] sees his shadow as much blacker, more wholly evil, than it is.

The only way for a youngster to get past the paralyzing self-blame and self-disgust of this stage is really to look at that shadow, to face it, warts and fangs and pimples and claws and all—to accept it as himself—as *part* of himself...For the shadow is the guide...The guide of the journey to self-knowledge, to adulthood, to the light. (*Language* 65)

When a person recognizes his or her shadow, it is no longer a weakness. They concurrently develop the knowledge to overcome it and the shame of having a weakness. Everyone has a shadow to overcome, but it’s not a shameful thing.

### *Life Cycles*

Every story follows a pattern, and every life is a story. Therefore it would make sense to find patterns and cycles in our own lives, as well as in the stories we tell and read. Joseph Campbell, Cassandra Delaney, and C. G. Jung all identified different cycles which can be integrated into one large Life Cycle, while Frye’s definition of mythological categories provides the frame for these cycles.

Delaney says that rites of passage must include the basic elements of a separation from society, preparation or instruction from an elder, a transition, and a welcoming back into society with acknowledgment of the initiate’s changed status. She mentions that the transition takes

place within the context of a ceremony that includes the elements of literal and spiritual cleansing, physical transformation, offerings, prayers, and blessings, traditional food and dress, and traditional instruments and songs (891-2). The required elements of these rites of passage are strikingly similar to the steps of the Hero Cycle Campbell discusses, which will be mentioned later.

Jung's version of the life cycle is more abstract, with the main events taking place within the psyche instead of in the physical world. First comes "individuation"—a coming to selfhood or self-realization. Parallel to or a major process of adolescence, achieving individual identity is the ultimate goal. The way not to go is to reject the self in favor of a social image—this rejection of one's true "essence" leads to neuroses. But adolescents still feel a need to fit in, to "be cool," and the *Sturm* and *Drang* of puberty is found in the division between social identity and social image.

Next in the process comes understanding individuation versus individualism—individuation allows for all variety within the self to be accepted; individualism is focusing on one peculiarity to "stand out." Individuation is difficult—adolescents must work through the "dark interior world" to reach self-realization—facing the dark side of their selves and accepting it as theirs. But individuation leads to a personality change (Jung 149). The change comes from a gradual process in the unconscious that leads to a sudden conscious realization—an epiphany of sorts. This personality change results in more self-regulations. The conscious breaks free of the "petty, oversensitive, personal world of the ego" and joins the "wider world of objective interests"—interests outside of self. This brings the adolescent into functioning society. Self-realization, self-regulation lead to awareness of the self in relation to society and society—

collective consciousness—influences an individual’s perception of the world through images—witch, wise man, etc.

There are specific elements in Jung’s cycle that must be present in order for the adolescent to develop properly. Good aspects and evil aspects need each other to highlight their natures and allow the adolescent to differentiate between the two. If these are not present, or if any of the steps of the process are not completed, it could lead to “retarded maturation of the personality” (Jung 158)—neuroses, *Sturm und Drang*—or it could finally be the tension before the dramatic change from child to adult. And lastly, the adolescent must be allowed to sift through his or her family influence to find his or her self.

Joseph Campbell, mythologist, defined life as a part of an overall pattern—the Hero Cycle. He makes the point that in modern society the hero cycle is contained within the unconsciousness—a place where bright jewels and dangerous genies live (8). Campbell then says that myth guided primitive people through their own rites of transformation.

The Hero Cycle may seem mythic, fantastic, until the realization dawns that most, if not all, of it can be applied to our own lives in many fashions. The call to adventure may not be dramatic, or even remarkable, but at some point in our lives we feel the urge to fulfill a dream or accept a challenge.

Briefly, the Hero Cycle is divided into three segments—Departure, Initiation, Return—and ends with the tangible marks of passage: The Keys. Within each division are several steps leading to the next segment of the journey.

The first step of the departure is the call to adventure. This may be through a mishap and an encounter with the weird/supernatural; it may also come in the form of a challenge. The call may be accepted or refused. If accepted, the hero is more likely to receive supernatural aid from

an elder (a wise old man or crone) along the way. However, if the call is refused it can lead to two ends: a dull life or the eventual acceptance of the call. If the call is continually refused it can lead to destruction—more likely mentally than physically—or if the hero is strong enough, to superconsciousness and superhuman self-control. The adventure then will be on the more abstract, fantastic realm—cf. Buddha. As the call is answered and aid received, the hero crosses the first threshold, crossing the guardians that hold vigil there. They enter the “world navel” where they must be cautious or a misstep will send them into the belly of the whale or the road of trials. Actually, no matter what, the hero will end up there—it represents necessary rebirth with powers for the Initiation.

In the Hero Cycle, a number of trials grouped together become an event labeled the “Belly of the Whale,” the major part of Initiation. The main characters find themselves in one of the darkest points of their journey and must get through on their own recognizance. They may have the supernatural aids given to them before they were very far into their journey, but they must learn how to use those aids effectively in order to get through the belly of the whale.

The Belly of the Whale and the Road of Trials are at the same point in the Hero Cycle, but they are different things. The Belly of the Whale—a frame of mind—refers to withdrawal from friends and family as the adolescent travels on the Road of Trials—the physical obstacles they must overcome to achieve adulthood. The experience of the Road of Trials is invalid if the adolescent is helped (or hindered) by a parent who cannot grant the adolescent the independence necessary to complete their journey.

Thus begins the Road of Trials—the first step on the journey of Initiation. This is the main part of myths: the hero employs his previously acquired supernatural ability to gain access to the road and pass the obstacles. The medicine man of tribal peoples is a good example of

this—he must traverse land of symbols to reach his goal (reaching maturity). Earlier people were guided by symbols and spiritual exercises—we have no such thing (Campbell 104). However, trials and initiation can lead the hero to the acceptance of his or her whole self (Campbell 108). Then comes the Meeting with the Goddess—the ultimate achievement—the obstacles have been overcome and the hero has proved to be worthy lover (with boon of love). The Goddess encompasses opposites within herself—also creator/nurturer, giving birth-creates, preserves, destroys (115). The hero accepting of her opposites becomes king of the world. “The hero’s adventures frequently constitute an initiation rite in which he learns, specifically, how to develop and exercise power both over himself and over the world without. It is through these powers that the hero discovers his identity” (Patteson 242).

However, the hero must also gain at-one-ment with the Father. Atonement with the father is not blasphemous self-sacrifice but a means of recognizing and understanding the opposites in the world and their purpose. Campbell says

Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id)...this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself...The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned.

(Campbell 130, 147)

This is followed by the apotheosis—the recognition and acceptance of opposites within ourselves, raising up to the higher self, achieving maturity/adulthood—and the ultimate boon: the gift or prize that the hero sought.

The Father has the ogre aspect and presents trials to hero testing his worth and maturity. The trials require abandonment of self to accept and understand the father. The understanding is that father and mother reflect each other, that life can be terrible but is life—this leads to at-onement with the father and maturity of perception. The trials with the father also prove physical maturity and proved social identity through initiation (Campbell 136). Also the hero learns that the father creates, though his creation is outward, external. Then is the hero ready for apotheosis. Apotheosis is the embracing, acceptance of, the taking within of our opposites and being at peace with them. Campbell discussed at length the male-female gods of Eastern religions and how the combination of the two represented light and dark, temporality and eternity, all together in one endless being. The hero who realizes apotheosis within himself achieves the end-goal of his quest—self-realization (163). The ultimate boon is what the hero seeks. Though he may say he seeks truth or some other insubstantial article, it is to lead to a substantial end—wealth, health, immortality. The boon is represented as an immortality drink.

Then comes the Return, with all of its possibilities. First is the refusal of the Return—the hero desires to no longer be of the world and moves on to the next one.

The next option is the Magic Flight—when the hero returns with the boon, he is either aided against enemies on his way home or he must outwit the supernatural that gave him the boon. Occasionally the hero needs Rescue from Without—sometimes the hero gets stuck or retreats and has to be saved by someone on the outside. Finally, however, comes the Crossing of the Return Threshold—the hero must come back from the mystical land to sorrowful life and come

to terms with his enlightened self in the face of reality. As he returns, he realizes his position—Master of the Two Worlds. The hero is capable of seeing manifestations of the other world while still maintaining his grip on the current one and he gains his Freedom to Live—the acceptance that knowledge of divine won't change life and acceptance of all of life. When heroes return, they bring with them the Keys, or the prizes or gifts that they went in search of and which can effect a solution for the problem that got them started on the journey in the first place. The double quest for home takes place in the reader's mind—where a psychological home is determined by the background and experience of the reader—and in a socialization process and the acquisition of values for participation in society. “In both quests the notion of home...retains a powerful progressive attraction for readers of fairy tales” (Zipes 260). “Philosophically, the real return home...is a move forward to what has been repressed and never fulfilled. That pattern in most fairy tales involves the reconstitution of home on a new plane, and this accounts for the power of its appeal to us both as children and adults” (Zipes 261).

For the framework of mythological imagery, Frye breaks down myths to their finest particles. He divides them into apocalyptic and demonic themes, with the corresponding analogies of innocence and experience. With this breakdown it becomes obvious that myths/stories cover all stories in all time periods. The importance of myths, however, is that they stand just outside of actuality, allowing the hearer to dream without disillusioning him. And myths transport meaning of a society into its parts and thereby into one symbol; e.g. the divine world represented by the Greco-Roman myths into a gaggle of gods, who are one God. Apocalyptic and demonic imagery are a huge part of that abstraction, while analogic imagery moves toward being based in a reality of sorts.

Apocalyptic imagery contains the heavenly, desirable world—water as birth, fire as purification, and identifying with the divine. Man is made of earth and air and must pass obstacles of fire and water (Lancelot and the sword bridges). The hellish, undesirable world is shaped through demonic imagery—the perversion of apocalyptic imagery and the picture of hopelessness, despair. Demonic imagery often shows the result of the dark side taking over and often parodies other literature. On the other hand, analogical imagery—the middle ground between apocalyptic and demonic imagery—is more human, with leanings either to apocalyptic or demonic imagery—the human counterpart. It is more romantic, mimetic, and easily defined, more childlike and courtly love-ish. In analogical literature, the divine/spiritual figures are parental—wise old men with magical powers (Frye 151). This framing of mythological presentation is necessary to understand its purpose. According to Frye, “The turning of literal act into play is a fundamental form of the liberalizing of life which appears in more intellectual levels as liberal education, the release of fact into imagination” (148). Ritual turns into play ritual, which still leads to maturity—understanding blowing the horn on a universal and individual level. But the experience itself has moved beyond the realm of apocalyptic or demonic imagery—it has come down to the more achievable, human level.

### *Conclusion*

In the following chapters I will examine five works of epic fantasy—the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, the books of *The Belgariad* by David Eddings, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, the original *Earthsea* trilogy by Ursula K. Le Guin, and the *Alvin Maker* series by Orson Scott Card—in relation to my own development as an adolescent, bringing out examples of their applicability to achieving maturity and how they possibly allow their readers

the freedom to find initiation wherever they may find it—or at least understand the experiences and the archetypal figures they have encountered on the journey towards maturity.

## Chapter 1: *Responsibility*

Responsibility is the mark of mature adulthood. What we do defines who we are and the role we play for others. The first thing people ask for after one's name is one's occupation. A full-time job not only defines who we are to the world but gives us responsibility in two areas: fulfilling our responsibilities at work to keep our jobs and allowing us to provide for our families—another major responsibility of life. Adolescence is the training ground where we receive the knowledge and skills that will get us through our occupational life.

In David Eddings' series *The Belgariad*, the main character, Garion, grows up unaware of his destiny as the fulfillment of a divided prophecy that has been trying to bring itself together for eons. However, when Garion reaches adolescence, he is uprooted from his comfortable home and sent on a quest with his relatives, Aunt Pol and his grandfather, who are more than they seem. After a series of adventures and mishaps, Garion defeats his greatest enemy, a god, and not with a weapon. He uses psychological information that he realized in an epiphany to defeat Torak, the renegade deity.

The roles of Aunt Pol and Grandfather, also known as Polgara and Belgarath, legendary sorcerers in their own right, constitute Garion's supernatural help. According to the Hero Cycle, Garion must receive supernatural aid in order to complete his quest. On the other hand, Garion himself, by lineage, must learn to become a sorcerer as well and control his power. Garion stubbornly refuses to acquiesce to learning control until he realizes what a danger it is to him and those around him. He is also informed by the "dry voice in his head"—an entity that came into existence to help the 'good' prophecy be the one fulfilled—that his only hope of saving all he loves is by learning discipline.

All of these situations lead to Garion taking on responsibility. This shouldering of burden leads to Garion's transformation from a child who continually asks "why?" to a young adult who fulfills his destiny and becomes a marriageable person. Marriage is the end of adolescence because the joining of two lives—making each person responsible for someone else outside himself or herself—is the ultimate responsibility.

Garion's journey to restore order to the world is the superimage of the rituals and journeys that all adolescents go through. Though Garion's adventures may have been more fantastic, in their most basic form they are strikingly similar to the passages that each adolescent goes through. He is removed from his comfort zone, the place where he grew up, and is forced to travel the world without knowing what it is that he's looking for. Along the way he encounters different people, good and bad, and must learn how to determine which they are.

It occurred to [Garion] as he waited that he had changed a great deal....

Everything had seemed simple then with the world neatly divided into friends and enemies. In the short time since they'd left, however, he'd begun to perceive complexities that he hadn't imagined before. He'd grown wary and distrustful and listened more frequently to that always advised caution.... He'd also learned not to accept anything at face value. Briefly he regretted the loss of his former innocence, but the dry voice told him that such regret was childish. (*Pawn* 100)

Garion also learns of his destiny to become king of a country as well as a powerful sorcerer and strives to learn as much as he can about that—taking responsibility for these unforeseen destinies and how to maintain control over them. Garion also learns about human nature, about telling people what they need to know and how to read what they're feeling.

As an adolescent, I didn't achieve much in the way of development. My memories of that time are either of school or being in my room, reading one of the interminable number of books that consumed my life and my time. Thinking back on it, I feel that a lack of transportation (part of the recognition of independence) contributed to my lack of sociability. In light of my hermitage, perhaps my development was delayed. In any case, my real progress, socially, did not come until college. It was during my junior year in college that I received my first kiss, had my first boyfriends, and felt that I finally had achieved independence from my parents.

Independence from one's parents and guardians is a hard thing to determine. They are the people most intimately connected to us during our formative years, shaping our ideas, our surroundings, and our very lives. Yet they are so involved in our boundaries and teaching us morals that it is easy for them to overstep those boundaries and control our lives. On the other hand, no matter how excellent the teachers, children learn responsibility with mixed results. Responsibility is not gained by proxy but by experience, and gaining maturity means accepting and handling responsibility well. It also means gaining a more adult perspective on the world and acting on it. That's where parents try to help us the most, much like the archetypal wise old men and women. They give us the meaning of the world; in my case, my parents let me determine what I was going to do with it. I learned the concepts of responsibility from them, but I learned the practice and consequences of responsibility on my own.

My parents separated in my sophomore year and were divorced by the end of the next year. During that time my mother and I, who had always been close, exchanged confidences and stayed close. I drifted from my father, blaming him for the pain that drove my mother to divorce him. It was easy to let all the fault rest on him. With those feelings I went through what Joseph Campbell calls "crossing the threshold." I was leaving the image of my "perfect" parents behind

and embarking on my own journey of discovery and learning responsibility. It would be years before I finally came to what Campbell terms the “atonement with the father,” a point in the journey where the main character comes to terms with the father figure and learns valuable information.

For me the turning point came just before my brother Paul went on his mission. I was home in Arizona for Christmas and agreed to go to a temple session with my father and my brother. In order to participate in temple ceremonies, all parties must have good feeling towards one another so they may be full participants in the spirit of the ordinance. I hadn't thought about it much beforehand, but it occurred to me as we sat together in the temple that I needed to find forgiveness in my heart for my father before I could participate. My mind raced and I prayed quickly. I found that forgiveness in my heart and a sense of peace as well. It was an enlightening experience, and one that has guided my steps in the days since.

After that day in the temple, I knew that my changed feelings for my father would sometimes be in conflict with my mother, who was used to confiding to me all the wrongs she perceived my father perpetrating towards her. In the cycle this would be in the area of overcoming the trials from the ogre—a metaphorical term for balancing personal views and emotions against those of a parental figure. From my newfound perspective I realized that her perceptions were biased by strong emotion—such as the emotion that dwells in a marriage—and that my own view was quite different, having gone through the at-one-ment with my father. Oddly enough, I also realized that neither one of us was wrong; we just had our own ways of viewing the situation. My mother was torn apart by the lack of nurturing she felt in her relationship—often in response to what she perceived as hurtful neglect she would become angry with my father. On the other hand, my father is somewhat a reticent man, not given to overtly

expressing his emotions. When he perceived his failure to please my mother and her emotional response, he would withdraw, creating a greater rift between the two of them. The pattern grew into a rut over the years, leaving my parents unhappy and helpless.

This is the perception I personally have of my parents' relationship. I didn't necessarily deal with my parents' divorce well in the beginning. My grades slipped—I'd also begun working part-time during school—and my roommates and I didn't get along at all. This was my road of trials and I was having a hard time adjusting to the new responsibilities in my life. Garion had to deal with finding his identity, accepting the terrible power that was his by destiny, relating to people from his new position, and making sure that the right things happened so that the world would not suffer domination from an evil god. In Garion's case, it was his sudden flashes of insight into human nature that gave him the power to succeed in these trials. Garion chafes at not having an identity or a bond until he realizes that he and Polgara and Belgarath are remotely related. He's not comfortable with his ability to do things, to destroy things, until he realizes that the power he holds is neutral—he is the one who decides what to do with it, and his choices make the use of power good or evil.

Garion's defeat of Torak comes not in a sword blow, but in his rejection of Torak. He realized that the god was looking for someone to love him, but because of Torak's cruelty no one was able to love him—only fear him. Garion pointed this out to the god, frankly and somewhat brutally, and this weakened Torak to the point where Garion could then defeat Torak by the sword. The conflict represented the culmination of Garion's education in basic human nature. He learned the psychology of human nature from his fellowship in their constant effort to teach him everything they knew along the way.

For me, the gospel was my supernatural aid. By turning to the scriptures and regularly attending church I was able to come through that darkest year in my life relatively unscathed. My parents taught me to rely on the Lord in the first place, and my grounded testimony, developed from childhood onward, carried me through.

The strange legacy my parents left me through their own failed marriage taught me a lot about human nature and about my personal responsibility for my attitude and my behavior. Akin to the parable of the extraordinarily polite man who learned his excellent manners by eating with those who always committed *faux pas* at the table, I have learned from my parents' mistakes and from the advice they have given me in the years since their divorce. My father has happily remarried, showing that he has learned about human nature as well, and how to conquer the problems that come in a relationship instead of sidestepping them. My mother has learned as well, and the learning is reflected in the number of bad relationships she avoids due to the discernment she can now apply to the men she dates. I myself have learned to take responsibility for my own behavior and consider myself to be happily married. The advice and lessons I have obtained through my own 'belly of the whale' have led me to a good mate and a warm, open relationship—equivalent to the 'gifts' that a hero brings back when his journey is over.

In *The Belgariad* Garion has his own fellowship to help him. The driving forces are the prophecy, manifested by the dry voice in his head; Polgara and Belgarath as the wise old man and woman; Prince Kheldar (Silk) as the guide; Torak, Asharak, and Brill as the tormentors; and so on—akin to other characters who also fill archetypal roles in everyday life, ours and Garion's. Garion encounters all of these people not just once in a while, but repeatedly throughout his journey until he accepts or resolves his problems with each one. In some cases it means getting rid of them entirely, as Garion did to Asharak. In another case, it took realizing that his aunt and

grandfather were doing what seemed best for him, teaching him responsibility in subtle ways, no matter how annoying it seemed at the time. Granted, this is a natural part of adolescence until we learn to overcome our selfish pride and humbly accept that other people might be right.

The next step for Garion is marriage, having learned humility. To prepare for that ultimate of relationships, where one takes responsibility for another person, one must have some training. Not only must we know how to understand other people's natures, but we also have to understand what natures are compatible with ours, what we can live with, and what we must avoid at all costs. Garion has an enlightening encounter during his sojourn—he meets up with Queen Salmarissa. Salmarissa is the leader of the Nyssians, a people who worship the ways of the snake and have a very lazy—and therefore less involved—god over their affairs. Salmarissa, being in the form of the god's first love, is very sensuous and self-absorbed. She takes over Garion's mind with drugs and has him become her chief pet for a few hours. While nothing happens to him during that time, Garion does learn that women like Salmarissa are not for him and are very dangerous.

In another storyline, Garion's cousin is in love with one of his companions but does not disclose those emotions until she thinks she is near death. She tries to get Garion to help by using his power, but he knows by that point that he cannot change human nature and anything he did for his cousin would be unnatural in its results. Another of his companions is involved in a story that is the stuff of ancient courtly legends. He loves the wife of a neighboring baron but does nothing about it because she is married. The baron is quite aware of this and the three of them are together often because they enjoy each other's company. The baron is quite old and has already expressed his desire to have his wife marry Garion's companion on his death. From this Garion learns about the honor required in a relationship. From his cousin he learns that another person's

feeling cannot be forced. And from yet another companion, the bear-warrior Barak, he learns that sarcasm can seriously damage a relationship. Barak's wife Merel is a great beauty—the reason that Barak desired to marry her after all. But she turned out to be shallow and bitingly sarcastic, so Barak sought to be away from her as much as possible—not helping the situation. However, Barak does not use the opportunities when he is away to be with other women. Again this proves to be an example of honor for Garion. Barak is mystified as to why his wife treats him so badly, but he endures it the best he can, and their breakthrough comes when they are forced to stand together as witnesses for a report Garion makes. In this brief moment Garion sees the power of working together for a common cause.

On his journey, Garion becomes acquainted with his own emotions and his feelings towards the opposite sex. This sort of education began before Garion embarked with a stolen kiss in a barn, but those encounters were childish and the feelings he vaguely held on to easily put away after a return to home. Garion's devious aunt threw him together with his future wife nearly from the beginning of his journey so that they might actually fall in love, but few of us have that option. Many romances of this day and age have their beginning in the college-age period, or, more rarely, in the high school years. The enduring romances that end in the responsibility of caring for another require a great deal of maturity and common sense. On the other hand, beginning relationships and exposure to the wiles of the opposite sex are again a training ground for the lasting future. In Garion's case, he confided his ignorance to other male friends—though oftentimes they were little help. He stumbled through trying to understand Ce'Nedra, his intended, for a year or more before realizing that it actually took very little to make her happy. Both had to give up the aforementioned selfish pride and realize that the other did not have powers of mental comprehension above and beyond normal human beings—that

their partner couldn't read their mind. My husband and I struggled with this while we were still engaged. We discovered that though we are fairly similar in our beliefs and goals, being from different backgrounds and being of different genders often got in the way. We have preconceived notions of how things should be done and what we expect of our partner, though sometimes those things aren't necessarily reasonable or apparent. As we go along, however, we are learning to communicate more, to listen more, and to seek a compromise when possible. Garion eventually learns to compromise with Ce'Nedra, leading to a more responsible relationship.

I have learned about responsibility from the relationships and the non-relationships in my life as well. As I said before, I learned from my parents and their advice to me. However, this didn't sink in until I had my first real relationships. Through them I learned that indecisiveness was not for me—I had to have someone who could commit to the relationship fully. All of my previous relationships taught me not only about the people I was compatible with but about myself as well—what I was willing to give to a relationship and how overly attached I could become. In high school I knew none of this—I got asked out on my first guy-ask-girl date the day after I graduated. But as my college career progressed I learned a lot and became more sure of myself—of what I was capable of and of my own worth. These realizations gave me the confidence to accept myself as a flawed, struggling person with many good qualities and good desires. In this understanding I was able to become more myself and more happy with who I am. I soon found an attractive young man whose nature was compatible with mine and we became very committed to each other. We've learned to communicate well and to speak up if something is bothering us. And as I read *The Belgariad* again, I realized that I had learned what Garion had learned—the more you take the initiative, the responsibility, of making sure that the relationship goes well for the other person, the better your relationship is. I had realized that these were

necessary attributes in my previous relationships but wasn't able to employ them until this ultimate relationship.

With the ultimate relationship comes responsibility for another person's well being, but it is not the only responsibility in life we must take on. Other responsibilities in this life come with occupations which earn reward and a charge to follow the laws of the land. Around the same time that they get their driver's licenses, teenagers often get their first jobs. I remember my first paying jobs—I began baby-sitting at the age of twelve, putting up with obnoxious youngsters while still an obnoxious youngster myself for up to six hours a night at only two dollars an hour. By the time I was fourteen, however, I had saved enough money to buy my first set of contacts— independence from being considered nerdy and from my parents, who couldn't afford such a luxury. My first employment came the Christmas break of my fourteenth year and I got the biggest paycheck I had ever seen. I was financially independent. The thrill of independence is one that every adolescent cherishes and hopes for—Garion desires independence. He tries to get away from his overly protective aunt from time to time, though he cannot become free from her, financially or otherwise, until he accepts the birthright of becoming king of Riva. However, being king is akin to embarking on a full-time career and the taking on of a responsibility that marks entrance into adulthood, not progression through adolescence. Garion's training for such a position was limited, guided more by his general upbringing by a sensible smith than active participation in government work. Garion's real education was absorbed through association with his fellowship, but mainly from his aunt and grandfather. His birthright as a sorcerer could not be denied and was subtly trained from the time he was a child. As he journeys with his relatives, he learns to watch and feel how they manipulate their will to create events around them. After initial stubbornness and unwillingness to yield to direct training, Garion becomes

educated in a most practical way—by putting his talent to work. Through trial and error he learns how to responsibly control his power and use it for good.

Garion learns other things through his journeys as well. From the warriors around him he picks up fighting techniques, finally blending them into a unique style of his own, neither right nor wrong, but his—the hallmark of adolescent progression. Garion’s education in reading, writing, and history, usually from the hand of his future wife and a petulant child herself, is sporadic but comes together in Garion’s mind, giving him the understanding he needs not only to become king but to face his final battle with Torak.

Aside from the training adolescents receive from their first jobs, they also are trained for their futures. Like Garion, they sporadically pick up history, the arts, and the techniques of some trade they wish to pursue. Because of the breadth of its education, never going into depth on any one subject, high school is inadequate to prepare any teenager for the difficulties or the career choices he or she will face in the real world. On the other hand, the high school curriculum, with its variety of required studies, provides a broad base of knowledge for those same youngsters to draw from, affording them the opportunity to find a way or an emphasis of their own. It was in my high school English courses that I determined that I loved working with the written word, not just reading it. Only in college would I realize that I loved shaping text into a form. When that determination came I realized my future in “the real world” or the world where I can employ my talents for good. But without the direction of college and the maturity and perspective I gained in my college years, my discovery would have been incomplete. For Garion, without the direction of Polgara and Belgarath, his discovery of his true responsibility and identity would have been meaningless.

Though we lack surface similarities, Garion and I are similar in our adolescences. We went from being obnoxious teenagers who always were asking “Why me?” to more responsible, and thereby more mature, adults capable of handling the greatest responsibility—becoming responsible for another person. Just seeing that Garion could get through it, especially with a wife that he perceived as being so difficult, and knowing that he made it a happy relationship because he chose to take responsibility for it, gives me hope for my marriage. I am not basing my future happiness on Garion’s example, but to know that someone could write about a successful marriage and tell their readers how they did it—through Garion’s actions—makes me more hopeful that I can do it too.

## **Chapter 2: *Identity: Special Powers Do Not an Adolescent Make***

The envy of all children of the new millennium, Harry Potter gets to run around waving a magic wand, riding a broom that responds to his voice, and getting into all sorts of pre-wizardly mischief with two of his best friends. Orson Scott Card's creation, Alvin Maker, can cut stones out of mountains, heal people, and run faster than a horse. What adolescent wouldn't want to do any or all of the above? But as Spencer Rathus has written, "adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood" (136). The desires for stuffed animals, pretend tea parties, and special powers become childish. This attitude is replaced by a desire to discover one's self and how one fits into society—learning our identity, so to speak.

Harry Potter and Alvin Maker have their social identities cut out for them: wizard and maker. I've created mine through extensive college work as a writer and an editor. The stories of Harry and Alvin are more apotheosis stories than anything else, as is the story of Garion. My story will ultimately be an apotheosis story, but I will not come to apotheosis, or the gaining of supernatural/divine power, until after this life. For all of us, though, our destinies are determinable by the circumstances of our birth and our personality traits. Our destinies end up being matched with our abilities and our temperaments and allow us to become greater than we see ourselves.

However, the dark side of our selves allows us to see where we must never go. Harry cannot—and does not want to—go into Slytherin, though he has the capabilities, e.g. parseltongue, the Sorting Hat's endorsement. Alvin cannot unmake lest he give the Unmaker ultimate power over himself. I cannot be anything less than honest. These things all demonstrate that the hero cannot be someone he is not—in order to remain ourselves, we cannot give in to our

dark sides. But that side also shows us what we are capable of, for if we are capable of very dark works, we are also capable of very light works—only we must choose. And Bettelheim tells us fairy tales warn of the consequences of choosing the dark side: “The message is that evil intentions are the evil person’s own undoing” (141).

On the other hand, *Harry Potter* seems to be filling in a gap of sorts. In an NBC Dateline special, Katie Couric reported that two-thirds of all American children have read the *Harry Potter* books, an astonishing figure considering the many entertaining alternatives there are to reading: TV, video games, surfing the internet, and so on. But the reason that these books are so popular seems to escape most people at first glance: the children (and the other readers, e.g. adults) identify with Harry, or Ron, or Hermione. Why? Many possible reasons come to mind: these main characters are inherently, obviously, recognizably good, though they do have their problem spots. They have the opportunity to operate outside the boundaries of their society—often because they need learning experiences to round them out. The children also take their consequences well—they don’t try to shift blame to others. In fact, one of their primary motivations is the help and preservation of others, just as when Harry rescues Neville’s Rememberall or when Ron and Harry go to warn Hermione about the mountain troll. But most of all, Harry, Ron, and Hermione must struggle with their own obstacles, just as we have or will have to do, and they overcome.

Each of the heroes must answer what Campbell termed “the call to adventure.” For Harry Potter, the call comes in the form of an invitation to attend Hogwarts. In Alvin’s case, it is revealed to him gradually through contact with his powers, the time he spends learning from Taleswapper, and Tenska-Tawa’s vision. In my own situation, it was naturally the next step to take after graduating from high school.

To illustrate the rest of the Departure segment, Harry doesn't refuse the call, necessarily. However, his uncle does, protesting the cost of the school, its oddity and unnaturalness, and at the end, out of pure frustration, stating simply that Harry can't go. But Harry does go with the supernatural aid of Hagrid, who carries a birthday cake—a symbol of his affection for Harry, which the boy had not known growing up. This incidence makes it easier for Harry to accept Hagrid's help—it isn't a desperate attempt to escape his situation, but living with the Dursleys has taught Harry good from bad and he recognizes Hagrid's good intentions. However, Harry must cross the first thresholds of the cycle without Hagrid, such as discerning which are the “right sort” of friends for a wizard to have. Harry Potter, when he encounters Draco Malfoy, is strongly reminded of Dudley Dursley, the cousin who tormented him for the first part of his life. Malfoy's first remarks about discriminating between wizards from wizarding families and wizards from Muggle families stand out in Harry's brain. But he instinctively makes friends with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, the “wrong sort” according to Malfoy (*Sorcerer's Stone* 108), but who are kindred spirits to Harry. Hagrid also cannot really help Harry with the belly of his whale: Voldemort, the rogue wizard who killed his parents, couldn't kill him, but is continually trying. Harry has to deal with Voldemort himself, for only he can determine by what means Voldemort can be destroyed.

Alvin's experience with Departure is quite different from Harry's. He also doesn't necessarily refuse the call to become a blacksmith, and by proxy learn how to master his making, but he does get delayed a bit by getting kidnapped, stopping a war, hanging out with some Indians and learning his future, and accompanying Ta-Kumsaw across the country to recruit Indians for the French and Indian war. But through all this, Alvin is granted the ability to help by going up the Eight-Sided Mound so that he can quickly travel to help those he needs to, and he is

able to determine his ultimate task in life: building the Crystal City. His first threshold finally comes months later, when he leaves his family and travels to his apprenticeship in Hatrack River. Alvin already knows what his belly of the whale is at that point—defeating the Unmaker by making—but his worst encounter with the Unmaker comes when Alvin loses his temper and vents his anger by creating something that will harm another person’s reputation. He realizes his error and amends it, but the initial damage is done and Alvin must eventually overcome its aftereffects.

My call to adventure came when I was accepted to Brigham Young University, twelve hours away from my home. The seeming impossibility of getting there and paying for things intimidated me, but my dream was to graduate with at least one degree. Everything kept falling into place, though; we found plane tickets on sale to move me up to Utah, I got a scholarship for the first year, a fair number of my friends from high school would be in the same dorm, and my grandmother left me an unlooked-for inheritance on her death, allowing me to pay off the entirety of my student loans—my own version of supernatural aid. But the belly of the whale soon came in the form of unbelievably weird roommates, traumatizing French classes, my parents’ divorce, and my own inability to accept a lacking social life.

For Harry Potter, the road includes Snape and his obvious dislike of Harry, surviving Snape’s Potions class, and dealing with obnoxious Draco Malfoy—a member of Slytherin House and self-proclaimed tormentor of Harry. But Harry has his friends to accompany him on the road, just as we Muggles do.

The meeting with the goddess is an interesting point for Harry. The goddess is not necessarily a powerful female but the expression of our inmost desires. For Harry, that is knowing who his family is, meeting his parents, and understanding his heritage. He accidentally

stumbles upon the mirror of Erised, which shows to the person gazing within it what he truly wants to see. But because Harry could waste away looking into the mirror, as Dumbledore warns him, Erised becomes the temptress as well, by luring him away from his true path—currently, his studies. To overcome this temptation, Harry must reach an accord with himself and his heritage—the atonement with the father. This atonement is not necessarily a physical suffering, but an acceptance of our past and its legacy to us, whether we like it or not, and its connection with our present and the future we choose. Harry, with the help of Dumbledore, realizes that the best thing for him—and probably what his parents would have had him do—is to return to his daily life and not get caught up in trying to ‘find’ his parents.

As for the rest of Harry’s initiation and his Return, as far as the books go, they haven’t come for him yet. He has learned that he has the ability to do dark works within himself—the Sorting Hat mentioned it when it said he could do great things if he was in Slytherin—and he later learns he can speak parseltongue, the language of the snakes and usually classified as a dark art. Harry will have to come to terms with the possibility of darkness within himself—apotheosis—before he can become a fully realized wizard. But when he does, he’ll be able to return to his home, wherever that may be, as a master of two worlds: the Muggle world and the wizardly one, with the keys of being able to wield magic when he needs to and possibly with the defeat of Voldemort under his belt.

Because *Alvin Maker* was finished as a series nearly a decade before Harry Potter came into existence—1989—it is possible to trace his journey through the rest of the Hero Cycle. Alvin’s Initiation segment is less developed because the focus of the novel turns more to the secondary characters, but his road of trials is clear: the disrespect of his tutor. No matter what Alvin does, no matter how well he works, Makepeace refuses to acknowledge Alvin’s smithing

talent. Other than that, Alvin is doing all right—he even decides to challenge himself by not using his talent to aid his smithing, determined to do it the normal way. His meeting with the goddess comes early one morning after digging the well with his power—an act that would humiliate the man who dowsed the original one, unaware of the rock shelf in the way. Such an act went against his promise to the Shining Man never to use his knack but for other’s good; so by digging that well he had invited the Unmaker in. Alvin finally defeats the Unmaker by going into the middle of the forest and basically commanding the Unmaker to leave. While he is in the forest, a redbird speaks to him: “The Maker is the one who is part of what he makes” (*Maker* 565). It is the answer to Alvin’s most burning question: How do I become a Maker? It becomes part of who he is and the key to receiving his boon.

Since the meeting with the goddess actually was a meeting with Redbird, there was no alternate woman to tempt Alvin, at least not one that he or the narrator noticed. Alvin finally does come to atonement with the father through understanding Makepeace’s character. Despite the consequences, Alvin shows Makepeace respect and trust, telling Makepeace of his special ability, though Makepeace may not deserve it. Alvin’s apotheosis came when he gives to the golden plow, forged by his own hands, a life essence. This is also Alvin’s ultimate boon, the successful forging of his plow and his first real success as a Maker.

I have experienced my own road of trials. I’ve coped with difficult classes, the most noteworthy being physical science and French; I’ve had roommates with whom I just could not get along; my parents separated the same year that I took some of my hardest classes, started working to support myself, and had five total roommates that didn’t get along with anyone, including me. Deciding what I wanted to do with my life was distressing too, and I put off the decision in a number of ways—I concentrated on my social life, I indulged my reading habit—

my own meeting with the goddess/temptation—and I went into the Masters' program. The real desire of my life was to get married and have a family; however, fulfilling that desire often seemed remote and unachievable on a good day. Thankfully, I met my husband—coincidentally just as I started the Master's program—and found in him all the qualities that had been lacking in my previous relationships.

After the divorce, on the other hand, my relationship with my father suffered a great deal. I knew I had to come to terms with it eventually and that coming to terms—at-one-ment—was a fantastic turning point. It allowed me to see my parents as people and the failure of their relationship as something understandable and preventable in my own life. On the way to discovering my parents as people I finally understood them in their own terms. I could see why they would give me the advice they did on marriage and all other aspects of life. I may have resented their implications that I was young and inexperienced, but as I achieve understanding, I realize that they don't know me as well as they used to. Since I have left home, I have learned that I am capable of loathing (for my roommates) and deep love (for my husband), honesty and deceit (I once told my roommates I hated peanut butter, for no reason), desire and fear, and so forth. I accept myself as imperfect while making progress towards being the best version of imperfect I can be. The university eventually recognized my ultimate perfection of imperfection and awarded me a degree—my ultimate boon.

Harry's Return to the adult world has not happened yet, but he experiences a couple of different Returns every year—he must go to the Dursleys' for the summer and he Returns to Hogwarts for each school year. These Returns may just be practice for the ultimate Return, but they are accompanied by a great deal of emotion—apprehension on one hand, relief on the other.

As Harry continues through the cycle, these Returns become more commonplace and he begins to accept his lot as a orphan when he goes “home” for the summer.

As the Cycle continues, we go back to Alvin, whose Return is a fairly straightforward affair. He does not refuse to return at all, but by magic flight—also known as running through the woods like an Indian—he returns home within just a few days and manages this without needing to be rescued. The crossing of the return threshold occurs, not when Alvin steps foot in his hometown, but when he is recognized—by his brother Measure—as a changed person and given his own place to live. Alvin is now the master of two worlds—his own home life, where he is welcomed with loving arms and finds a place immediately; and the world of his knack, which he has mastered to help others. Because of the recognition Measure gives him, Alvin is free to live—though he does have to eventually resolve things with the Unmaker. His Key is the knowledge he has gained and the mastery he has achieved over his power.

Perhaps my refusal to return was pursuit of an advanced degree. Eventually, however, I did take that magic flight home and crossed that return threshold by walking in the door of my mother’s house. I am the master of two worlds, namely myself and the society I can now wholly participate in, and I can assert my freedom to live by moving away from my parents permanently and establishing my own household somewhere else. My keys are my degrees, my self-respect, and my newfound respect and tolerance for others and their ideas. In essence, I hopefully have finally achieved adulthood.

By putting these three heroes side by side, I hope I have shown that what we have all gone through is not dissimilar. While Harry and Alvin may have special powers and more dramatic lives, my life still followed the same cycle theirs did. I can identify with them because they all had difficult people to deal with on their road of trials—Draco Malfoy, Snape,

Makepeace Smith, my roommates— and because we had similar obstacles I felt a companionship to them. Though our situations are wildly different, I can take my cues from what they did and handle my situations with the same assertiveness and possibly with more understanding. Because of the challenges we overcame, we came away with a better knowledge of ourselves and our capabilities. Now whether I save the world or build a crystal city is not important, but no matter what, I know my life is significant because I lived it.

I compared Harry Potter and Alvin Maker with Karie the College Student instead of Karie the Adolescent because, as Delaney pointed out previously, there is a serious lack of recognized, celebrated ritual throughout our adolescence. Personally, I was asked on my first real date the day after I graduated high school. I was asked to my first dance as a junior in college and received my first kiss a scant six weeks before I turned 21. It is generally accepted that adolescence ends with high school graduation, but I wasn't finished developing by that point—in fact, I was just beginning to cross my thresholds. For society in general, achieving one grade after another is relatively insignificant, because no matter what the grades are, the student usually moves on. There is no struggle to achieve, to perform. High school graduation has become more of a release than a celebration, and oftentimes the most challenging aspects of our lives lie outside the school system. So what can we do to recognize the significance of these rituals? Delaney suggested we use bibliotherapy. Within the world of books, adolescents can vicariously experience the rites of passage their favorite characters are subjected to, whether it is a young man with wizardly powers or a teenage girl who has a huge crush on the most popular guy in school. The point is that adolescents identify with these characters and can use their heroes' experiences to their own advantage, recognizing their own rites of passage and the similar experiences they have gone through.

But given the fictional status of Harry Potter and Alvin Maker, it doesn't seem possible for adolescents to emulate them. However, Harry and Alvin fulfill all of the previously discussed modeling requirements in one way or another. They are adolescent and going to school—for Alvin it's a school of sorts; he has a teacher or two—things that every adolescent must go through. Both Harry and Alvin readily identify people as good or bad and choose, based on those identifications, whether to trust or to associate with them. I went to school too—a higher learning institution, but I still have teachers that I like or dislike and who feel the same about me, and I've learned how to identify people as the “right sort” or not.

Harry and Alvin are also competent. According to Alyce Cheska “...these modern (sporting) rituals embrace the same components as those found in tribal cultures. These are, principally, repetition, regularity, emotionality, drama and symbolism” (Strugnell 181). Harry and Alvin seem to be good learners, though not excessively grade-hungry, and they excel at a sport. Harry is an awesome Quidditch player, drafted for the Gryffindor team while still in his first year, and Alvin can ‘wrassle’ almost anyone. Thus any adolescent who reads about Harry or Alvin gets an idea of why sports are important. They can learn about team loyalty, honesty in play, and attention to goals (no pun intended), and apply these things to their own lives—in sports or any other social situation. Due to my late development, high school was not a time of outward competency for me, except when it came to English or standardized tests. In those areas I was a whiz. Now I like to think that my competency lies in being a good listener as well as a good student.

Achieving social identity is on par with committing to a social role. Harry Potter, by attending Hogwarts, commits to becoming a wizard, and by desiring participation in the house of Gryffindor, known for its heroes, also commits to upholding moral standards. On the other hand,

Alvin Maker seems to have no choice in his occupation—he has the knack for shaping things and making them, helping them fulfill their potential. But Alvin does commit to the Shining Man that he will only use that power to help others. And along the way, Alvin learns about physical making—with his hands instead of his mind—through his role as a blacksmith’s apprentice. I’ve committed to be a wife, and eventually a mother, as well as an editor. Through these commitments we have become the person that we present to society—we have identified ourselves externally after determining who we are internally.

### **Chapter 3: *The Darkness in Ourselves and in Life Itself:***

#### ***The Experience of Frodo and Ged***

The dark side, the shadow, the anima/animus—these concepts affect our very beings. We are not perfect beings, thrown onto this earth for the mere responsibility of getting bodies. We have free will and the ability, mental and physical, to make well-informed or impulsive choices. How these choices are made depends on our feeling, our instinct, and our cognition. It also depends on our discipline—our strength of will.

The dark side of our souls is something that most of us are usually unaware of in childhood and unwilling to openly express in adulthood. But in adolescence we become aware of its pervasive presence and its effect on our thought process. We have learned enough from life to recognize the opposites in life—happiness and sadness, anger and calm, pain and well being, good and evil. These opposites, when taken by themselves, are not complex—they seem cut and dry to the youngest child. In nursery, “sharing is nice.” If you don’t share, you are behaving badly. At an early age children learn that taking something that does not belong to them is wrong, but giving gifts is good. It seems simple. In adolescence, however, we are confronted with the challenge of doing what is right, what feels good, or being a rebel—personal values versus selfish wants or peer values. In childhood they were the same. In adolescence the world suddenly develops shades of gray, less discernible to the untrained eye. As Gabriel Marcel said, “...evil is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be encountered and lived through” (Strugnell 174).

So what can the adolescent do to learn the finer shades of white and black, good and evil? Trial and error is an excellent teacher, but having more experienced people guide us through has

always been a better way to go—it's less painful to learn from other people's mistakes than our own. In the Hero Cycle, Campbell represents such helpers as Wise Old Men or Women. They have been through the Hero Cycle themselves once or twice and they know how to show the hero the way taking over the hero's ability to make his or her own choices.

Frodo, of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Ged, the main character in Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* trilogy, are interesting combinations of heroes and Wise Old Men. They are not common heroes in that they don't have a happy ending—they don't get the girl, they don't get the reward, and they don't feel the need to claim a right to any of that. Both of these unusual heroes have learned something about darkness—within themselves and within life itself. “[Ged] is the quintessential fairy tale youth—cast adrift, homeless, in search of a place in life to call his own.... Consequently, children who read the trilogy can identify not only with the youthful characters but also with a hero they see grow up and grow old” (Patteson 243, 245). Ged learned his first lesson when he let loose the *gebbeth* that haunted his first years and caused the death of his first mentor, Nemmerle. In conflict, Ged's deceiver says that “Only shadow can fight shadow. Only darkness can defeat the dark.” Ged clears his head and replies, almost as if he has encountered an epiphany: “It is light that defeats the dark, light” (Le Guin, *Wizard* 118-119). However, “[o]nly in silence the word, only in dark the light, only in dying life....” The balance of the world cannot exist without opposites—Ged must have his shadow (Le Guin, *Wizard* 179). Ged finally understands that the shadow he released was his own, thus gaining power over it by realizing its true name. Often people avoid the true name of their shadows, instead assigning blame to society around them, “uncontrollable” addictions, genetics, their parents, their neuroses—anything to keep from accepting the blame, the flaws, themselves.

Frodo seems to realize that he is weak within himself. He continually offers his role as Ring-bearer to other, more capable (in his mind) people. They knew that he would and considered it a test of their integrity, their discipline—their very wills—to withstand all that the Ring had to offer. “For Tolkien...good and evil are always present, in any age, as real possibilities: the nature of temptation does not change, nor do the roles played by ambition and greed, the tendency of power to corrupt, or the tension between submission to divine will and the lust to aggrandise one’s own identity in terms of opposition to divine will” (Huttar 94). Perhaps Tolkien knew what he was hinting at when he titled his epic *The Lord of the Rings*. Though he may have been talking about the power of the ring itself, the title could also refer to Sauron, the ultimate figure of evil in the book. Frodo has to defeat Sauron, but not through face-to-face combat, just as Garion uses no physical weapon but the weapon of understanding. Instead Frodo must take the Ring to its beginning and throw it back in—the mother eating her child, in a sense, though the evil creation and the mountain that was involved in the spawning of it can hardly be considered mother and offspring. But this return to the beginning is also representative of the full cycle that Frodo must go through, and his inability to escape it. In the end, Frodo does not reap the rewards of his feat. Instead, he returns home weakened by his adventure and unable to fully participate in any more.

Interestingly enough is the fact that Frodo didn’t have to face Sauron at all. In the book, Sauron doesn’t even have a face—merely a flaming eye that shows up at dramatic points in the story. Does Tolkien mean that evil doesn’t have a face, that it has many faces, or that the outward representation of evil doesn’t even compare with the evil we must face within? I think that all of these options could apply in a number of different situations. “However, one might want to argue these evil creations are the result of a genuine desire to recognise that evil is a

force in human life” (Strugnell 174). Temptation wears many faces, but doesn’t really have a single identifiable face of its own. For Frodo and Bilbo to survive possessing the Ring, they have to begin their possession with an act of good—sparing Gollum’s life and allowing them to better survive possessing it. However, Gollum killed his friend to get the Ring—thus the reason it had a complete hold over him (Calabrese 138). And the evil is in ourselves—even Frodo had to conquer it, and in the end he didn’t. Only in being defeated by his own “dark side”—Gollum—can Frodo fulfill the mission he is sent to perform. Therefore, the destruction of the Ring—the most vital act in the story—is inadvertently performed by the one person who seeks its destruction the least. “[T]he defeat of evil is never accomplished without sacrifice. The hero in fantasy is always called upon to relinquish the very thing the antagonist is unwilling to give up...” (Schaafsma 69).

On the other hand, the vital sacrificial act in Ged’s life is performed by himself, under his own power and influence. Ged seeks for guidance on defeating his shadow from Ogion, who only replies, “You must seek what seeks you” (Le Guin, *Wizard* 128). Ged must face his own shadow—just as an adolescent reader would. He is able to defeat/accept his shadow under his own power—there was no older hand there guiding his actions. Ged had to take full responsibility for his actions and that led to his receiving the shadow into himself. He says, “...a wizard...calls on no power greater than himself...” (Le Guin, *Wizard* 163). Ged had already come to terms with his flaws and their consequences, allowing him to face his nemesis without the lure, the promise of immortality tempting him. Somehow dealing with one’s demons allows one to clearly see the world—another passage of adolescence. However, Frodo and Ged both had to give up something vital to themselves to save their respective worlds. Frodo gave up his hometown, his finger, and his health. Ged gave up his wizardly power, but he went into the

conflict realizing that might be the consequence, while Frodo had no idea what he was getting into—the possible difference between early and late adolescence. In early adolescence one does not have the experience to understand the depth, the range of consequences of one's actions. After many trials and errors, however, one gains an appreciation for the outcomes of one's decisions and is able to come to terms with them more fully. This foresight leads to wholeness through acceptance of the harsh realities of life and the flawed, yet usable and valuable, inner self.

Having learned this lesson, Ged tells Arren "...each deed you do, each act, binds you to itself and to its consequences..." (Le Guin, *Shore* 45). Adolescents must learn that each action they take part in has its consequences and those consequences will stay with them throughout their lives. Ged refuses to let others' acts rule him. He tells Arren about the balance of action, that picking up a rock and throwing it doesn't just affect its location. The hand lifting the rock is heavier and the earth is lighter—all actions have an effect on the environment around them, whether the person creating the action is aware of them or not (Le Guin, *Shore* 86-7).

Ged says "For discipline is the channel in which our acts run strong and deep; where there is no direction, the deeds of men run shallow and wander and are wasted" (Le Guin, *Shore* 94). Ged has obviously learned this lesson through his own experience and through watching the experiences of others, and now is passing that wisdom on to Arren, his young princely charge. Ged is whole, but Frodo does not become whole until after his journey. Only then does he understand that he was in the role of the Ring-bearer, that his health would never really improve, that he was susceptible to the influence of the Ring.

The wholeness created when one accepts both sides of oneself is a rite of passage. Only when one is whole can one fully participate in the role of adult, not only taking on responsibility

but also becoming a person with whom other adults can associate on an equal level. It is not uncommon for children of less chronological years to make friends with adults, not only because of their maturity, but because of their understanding as well. They may not perceive that they fully comprehend themselves, but they go through life with a confidence born of self-knowledge. Harry Potter is one of those—he knows who he is, though his fame isn't important to him. He is not complete—he still longs for his family—but he knows that he wants to do good and to help others. This instinctiveness serves Harry and his friends in good stead, supporting their strong sense of integrity and moving them beyond the limitations of their society to the greater bounds of a world of heroes.

Often acceptance of one's dark side leads one beyond the accepted bounds of one's society. Ged had to leave the safety of Roke and the civilization of the Archipelago before he could conquer his dark side. Later he would lead others beyond the bounds of their civilizations to help them achieve themselves—out of tombs, through the land of death, and so on. The dark side must be accepted but then passed through. Frodo had to go to the land of shadows—Mordor—before his encounter with the shadow within and without himself. The shadow within took over in its native land, however, and only Frodo's external shadow archetype—Gollum—could complete the task he began. In essence, Frodo was the one to accomplish the end goal of the Ring-bearer, even though it was Gollum, in his capriciousness, who brought the physical event about. Even Gollum has his momentary lapse into his opposite characteristics—he comes upon Sam and Frodo sleeping and instead of attacking them, he shows his affection for Frodo by touching him gently (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 699). Spiritually, Frodo and Gollum were parts of the same soul, separated by birth and time but brought together by events to save the world from everlasting darkness.

As one of Ged's protégées struggles with her two identities Ged says, "To be reborn one must die..." (Le Guin, *Tombs* 139), showing her that she must choose an identity, a self, and stay with it. Ged says concerning the Nameless Ones that his protégée serves: "All their power is darken and destroy.... They should not be denied nor forgotten, but neither should they be worshipped" (Le Guin, *Tombs* 129). Dark things have their place in this life, often to contrast that which is good, but they should not be ignored. To deny the dark, ugly side is to deny the whole. In *The Lord of the Rings*, a capable but wise warrior states, "War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, not the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend..." (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 656). Sam comes to the realization that having adventures isn't really all that glamorous, and that people don't normally go looking for them for a bit of excitement—they usually find them by walking their everyday paths, and must continue through the adventure to stay on their path (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 696). But the adventure, though it may not change the direction of the path, will change the person walking it, preparing them for other things the path may have to offer.

In primitive ritual, acceptance of the dark side was a part of the initiation ritual. Delaney comments on the puberty ritual of the Okiek, a tribal people of Kenya:

The most important knowledge concerns the cemaasiit—a mythical beast that haunts the initiates during their time in seclusion. At night its roar can be heard, and the initiation is complete when each youth has seen and held the instrument used for producing the roar and then produced the roar themselves. (891)

The ritual is not complete until adolescents understand that they are producers of the dark, the frightening, themselves. They also understand that it is nothing to be afraid of. A key factor in

the ritual is the presence of the adults to guide them. In our own society, Delaney points out, adolescents are separated out and sent to associate almost exclusively with their peers. Because of this isolation adolescents get their guidance from each other instead of their more knowledgeable elders. Thus the transfer in society of ritual from community practice to individual participation.

The rites common to teenagers—first kiss, first date, first sexual encounter, first job—are accomplished by the teenager alone with approval from his or her peers. The approbation of adults is fleeting at best—a pat on the back for getting a job or a lecture for losing virginity. The necessary community recognition comes instead from adolescents' peers—and having been told by their elders that their peers are not acceptable judges of behavior, adolescents cannot attach legitimacy to their self-initiations. Yet adolescents have no one but each other to turn to, having been isolated from the rest of society.

In a way, Ged and Frodo also lack this recognition and end up being isolated from their respective societies as well. When Frodo returns to Hobbiton, he finds it has been taken over by evil men and wizards. His friends restore order while he tries to restrain them from shedding any blood. In the end, he doesn't even return to his former home in the hill for long. Instead he gives it to Sam and leaves for ends unknown with the Elves, Gandalf, and Bilbo—his actual fate is indeterminate and unsolved, an unsettling end to a novel so sharply divided between good and evil. Sam is left to carry on the heritage and does so admirably, even restoring trees to the ravaged town, but he carries the memory of Frodo in him, as well as Frodo's desire to return things to the way they were.

Ged returns from his ultimate quest only with the help of Arren, the young man he took with him. In teaching Arren about the balance of life, Ged discusses life and death: "Death and

life are the same thing...And still...are not the same...They can be neither separated, nor mixed” (Le Guin, *Shore* 97). So are the dark and the light, the good and the bad, death and rebirth intimately connected. The adolescent who begins to understand this can see more clearly into difficult and conflicted situations in their life and make better choices.

As many adolescents do who interact with their role models, Arren fears to let Ged down, to fail him (Le Guin, *Shore* 38). However, Ged’s final trip seemed to be mostly for Arren’s benefit—all Ged got out of it was the loss of his wizardly power and a couple of songs made up about his life. Arren remains prominent, becoming the crowned king of the Archipelago, while Ged retires to his home island and quietly disappears out of life—again an unsettling and unfinished ending. The reader does get the sense that perhaps Ged is content with his new lot—as the doorkeeper says, Ged “has done with doing. He goes home” (Le Guin, *Shore* 258). The Master Summoner says, “...the truth is that as a man’s real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower: until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he *must do*...” (Le Guin, *Wizard* 71). Ged had to follow the path of destiny and make things right—his occupational role in society.

But what does this mean for adolescent ritual? This pseudo-death of the heroes after they have accepted their dark sides leaves nothing for the adolescent to understand—though in their wake the heroes did leave a new society, a kind of rebirth of themselves on a global scale. Then perhaps the acceptance of the dark side, for adolescents, leads to a death of their former, childish selves and sets them on the path of adulthood—a new being who is more mature and capable of handling the obstacles on this journey. Akin to the belly of the whale or the road of trials, this death and rebirth is a common part of the heroic journey. It is necessary for the hero to shed the old, unnecessary parts of himself in order to progress smoothly. When a person is held back in

his or her progression by neuroses, it is often the result of some former life obstacle unresolved—a sibling rivalry, the inability to deal with death or the great outdoors, fear of small dark spaces (the womb)—and signals a need to come to terms with these minor shadows, to accept them, in order to progress.

## Conclusion

Though the journey metaphor seems finite, when drawn it encompasses a circle, for as we go through life, we are called upon to follow many paths, go on many journeys, and to seek different solutions to the problems in our lives. Also, we play different roles in the cycle. In some of them we are the questing heroes, but as we mature and progress, we play the role of the guide, the tormentor, the supernatural aid, and so on. Each hero cycle passes through a fairly intimately connected society that propels the hero on his way.

Often, I feel, adolescents identify with the fiction they read because it expresses what they cannot—just as Harry moves from the Muggle world to the wizard world and from outcast to hero, so they may desire to become more social and more accepted in their society. I did. The stories I told in each chapter I felt were parallel to the journeys the protagonists were experiencing. We didn't have the same adventures, the same obstacles, or even the same mentors. But because I went through my own journey, then read as Garion, Harry, Alvin, Ged, and Frodo went through their own, it helped me realize that I had accomplished a significant thing—I had experienced life. Moreover, watching them go through their trials gave me hope that I could get through my own—though that hope may have been mostly unconscious, it was there. And if I feel that reading these books, and the numerous others that I have been exposed to, helped me—even if I have discovered in hindsight that they helped me on some unexplainable level—then perhaps it is possible that these stories, these journeys, and others like them can do something significant for other young, developing people on other journeys towards maturity.

However, bibliotherapy—as Delaney suggests it—may not be the way to help adolescents develop or pass through rites of passage. Campbell states strongly that myths are not

reality but demonstrations of reality—an object lesson—and I must agree. Instead I think tales like myth and epic fantasy are definitely a way to understand experience, not to have it. Fantasy has a strong moral tone to it, as Diana Paxon and Emma Bull pointed out, and Tolkien exploited that, but just as in parenting the result may be mixed. The readers may pick up on what the author is saying, the passive persuasion the author employs by creating a moral or ethical story, or they may lay the book aside thinking that it is a wonderful story, then go on choosing to play whatever role they want to play in life—father or mother, trickster or wise old man, hero or villain. The point is that the choice is up to them.





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