The Hero, The Shadow and The Wise Old Man

Archetypes in Fantasy

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

This essay examines how the main protagonists, in three separate novels which are *Phantastes*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *American Gods* evolve. These three novels were written by authors that are celebrated as pioneers in the fantasy genre, such as George MacDonald who influenced J.R.R. Tolkien who influenced Neil Gaiman. The first step was identifying what constitutes as a fantasy novel as well as different subgenres in the umbrella category of speculative fiction, this was done by examining different definitions of fantasy and applying them to the texts that were examined. To analyse how characters have evolved certain scenarios were selected from the books that fit the definition of each archetype and examined, these archetypes were the hero, the shadow and the wise old man. The definitions of the archetypes were defined by using Jung’s research detailed in his book *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, as well as Joseph Campbell’s book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The result of this analysis was that the hero archetype was present in each of the novels examined and that it is a relatively simple character. The shadow was more complex as it is comprised of two separate personifications, the spiritual represented by Anodos’ doubt, and the physical represented by Mr. Wednesday. The wise old man archetype was also present in each story, represented by Gandalf, Mr. Wednesday, as well as female version of the archetype in *Phantastes*. There was another interesting point that became clear in this essay, which is that a character that evolves or becomes more than one archetype gives the reader a sense of roundness. In essence, the character is not flat or one dimensional, an example of this is Aragon from *The Lord of The rings* and how he evolves from the guide to the hero.
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Introduction
What is considered to be modern day fantasy is believed to have begun in the late Victorian period and its ancestors are the historical novel as well as gothic romances (Sedlmayr and Waller 86). In order to ascertain what constitutes as fantasy a definition of the elements of fantasy must be defined, in general terms a fantasy story deals with magical, mythical, fairy tale or supernatural elements in the plot or story line (Haase 331). The stories can take place in a modern day city, such as Neil Gaiman’s Neverwhere and American Gods or in a make-believe world such as C.S. Lewis’ Narnia or J.R.R Tolkien’s Middle-Earth. By using the basic definition by Haase the fantasy genre is not only found in novels or stories. They can be found in poetry as well.

As it is with most forms of literature, the poetic partition can be categorized into several different forms such as the ballad, ode, sonnet and epic poetry to name a few. Epic poetry, which can be described as a long narrative poem where heroic deeds or events of epic proportions take place, such as Beowulf. Placed in the 8th century it is considered to be one of the oldest preserved poems, the poem tells the story of Beowulf, a heroic warrior who must fight a mythical beast called Grendel as well as other supernatural beings (David and Simpsons 36). Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, written in the late 14th century, tells the story of a valiant knight of the Round Table who accepts a duel with a mysterious green knight who seemingly cannot be killed by conventional methods (David and Simpsons 183). It has been argued that these poems, can indeed be categorized as fantasy stories by applying the definition of fantasy that Lucie Armitt discusses in her book Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction (Armitt 1). Both Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight are considered epic stories of heroism, they both face magical or supernatural elements, which is one of the requisite for a story to be categorized as a fantasy (Armitt 1). Although scholars differ in their opinions as to what constitutes a fantasy story, both Armitt and Haase agree on the basic definition of fantasy and the requisite a story must possess which are elements of magic, myth, fairy tale, or the supernatural.

1 Some scholars believe that both Beowulf and Gavin and the Green Knight are much older, this belief stems from the fact that the stories were first preserved in the oral tradition, where stories and poems were passed on verbally from generation to generation. It wasn’t until 1818 that the first known transcript of the original poem was created.
In order to get an idea of how fantasy has changed from what is considered to be the beginning of modern fantasy into contemporary fantasy, a brief examination of literary works specifically the characters in a story and how or if they evolve. The first work to be analysed is George MacDonald’s novel *Phantastes*, the reason is that the structure of the story inspired the works of various writers, such as Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. From there the focus will shift to the 20th century by examining the literary works of J.R.R Tolkien who is believed to have cemented the fantasy genre, with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, in the form that is popular today. These authors are very highly regarded in the literary world, their works frequent lists that show the most influential writers of the 20th century. The last work examined is *American Gods*, written in the beginning of the 21st century by Neil Gaiman, a story of gods and their interactions with the human world. Gaiman spoke very highly of Tolkien on his webpage where he admitted that he was inspired by the works of Tolkien and Lewis, although he is not as well-known as Tolkien he is considered to be a fairly successful writer of popular fantasy fiction. These three authors shaped the fantasy genre as it is known today with their stories as well as character creation. MacDonald inspired two of the greatest fantasy authors of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis and Tolkien and in turn they inspired Gaiman in his endeavour to write fantasy. To evaluate how fantasy, in respect to the story line or characters, has changed an analysis of each book is done by applying the tool provided in literary theory which is called literary criticism.

Literary criticism is the practical use of the theories in literary theory, in essence it is how the theories are used to examine and analyse texts in literature. There are a number of widely varying theories of literary criticisms practiced today, each of them have a specific purpose such as the critical theory of archetypal literary criticism, based on Jung’s archetypes theory it is a well-known form of analysing characters and scenarios in stories. Another scholar by the name of Joseph Campbell, an anthropologist, also uses the archetypes to examine myths from various parts of the world and analyses them using the archetype system, the findings of this research is detailed in the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Northrop Fry is also associated with the archetypal theory, having based his work on Jung’s theories with a few

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exceptions. Like the collective unconscious which Fry deemed was not important since it could not be researched because it was unknown (Abrams and Harpham 18).

Archetypal literary criticism is a part of the Critical Theory school of thought since it uses the teaching of psychology and social science to examine texts. Personal experiences are called upon in order to analyse and categorize the content, theme, style and characters in stories. This creates a link to Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious which is the foundation of archetypal criticism.

Using Jung’s theory of archetypes in the following chapters it will be examined if the creations of characters, specifically the hero, the shadow and the wise old man, has evolved within the fantasy genre? How has the character creation in fantasy literature changed since the early 19th century till the 21st century?
Speculative fiction
Speculative fiction is an umbrella term for different genres in literature that deal with fantasy, science fiction and horror type themes. In order to categorize a story into a specific genre a distinction has to be made between different forms of literature and the various subgenres. This is done by examining and identifying key elements for each genre and applying the result to a story in order to categorize it. The distinction is simplistic at first, for example to identify a romantic novel a key element in the story or theme of the book is identified, which relates to love, romance or companionship. A story can overlap two or more different genres, this can be done by using characters, locations, or the general mood of the story. In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien uses this tactic with numerous characters, such as Aragorn and Arwen, their courtship and marriage or the friendship of Frodo and Sam, which grows stronger as the story unfolds. By doing this Tolkien creates an overlap of two different themes, fantasy and romance, by showing a different side to the story that the character is a part of. This is also possible by combining two or more variations of subcategories of fantasy in a story, similar to what C.S. Lewis does with England and Narnia in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series.

The fantasy genre is extremely extensive, with various subcategories such as urban fantasy, high fantasy and steampunk fantasy to name a few. There are various distinctions between the different sub-genres in fantasy which can be identified by examining the structure of the book, key factors such as a make-believe world and other information like the history of the make-believe world, which is common in high fantasy. The term high fantasy first appeared in Lloyd Alexander’s essay *High Fantasy and Heroic Romance*, published in 1971. In order to categorize a story in the fantasy genre as high fantasy, the story has to be set on an epic scale where the outcome of the story will have consequences for the whole world. It is not uncommon for high fantasy stories or other fantasy subgenres to have a whole world created, with detailed historical accounts of ancient battles or a new language, which is done to give the story an epic feeling. Similar to the stories of authors such as Tolkien and his Middle-Earth or C.S. Lewis’ Narnia. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Ring* and *The Hobbit* are famous for their intricate history, which Tolkien created, as well as the languages of various species in his tales such as the language of the elves and dwarves.
There are also fantasies that take place in contemporary realities, such as *American Gods* and *Good Omens* by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. Their stories fall under the urban fantasy genre since they take place in contemporary setting such as London in *Neverwhere* or the United States of America like *American Gods*. Urban fantasy is a very popular branch of speculative fiction, authors such as Cassandra Clare and her *The Mortal Instruments* series and *Dead Until Dark* by Charlaine Harris and Simon R. Green’s *Nightside series* which brings together fantasy and science fiction along with various legends from the history books. Science fiction also has these variations regarding different versions of genres, consequently this distinction is not only relevant to the fantasy genre.

Science fiction, similar to fantasy, can take place in a contemporary world, a post-apocalyptic world, such as *Star Trek*, which happens in a very distant future or *Star Wars* that is set a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. An example of a contemporary world in science fiction is the television show *X-files* where the setting is the modern day world with the added elements of aliens and strange objects. Although both science fiction and fantasy are joined under the umbrella term of speculative fiction the difference between them is vast. The key difference being that the fantastic element in science fiction as Margret Atwood suggests is a possibility:

> I define science fiction as fiction in which things happen that are not possible today — that depend, for instance, on advanced space travel, time travel, the discovery of green monsters on other planets or galaxies, or that contain various technologies we have not yet developed (Atwood 92).

Both science fiction as well as fantasy, in general, are works of fiction that are created using the contemporary world as either a base for their story, such as *American Gods* or *Star Trek*, they can also take place in a world completely unconnected to the contemporary world like *Lord of the Rings*. These types of stories are not only influenced by historical events or location, they are also under the influence of the mythological and fairy tales. Donald Haase discusses this in his book where he argues that the fantasy genre is an eclectic genre, borrowing traits from myth, epic, romance, picaresque, gothic and other genres, he also mentions that picture books can be categorized as fantasy (Haase 3). This does further solidify the argument previously...
stated in the introduction, that poetry such as *Beowulf*, can indeed be categorized as works of fantasy.

Myth, is a term used in literary criticism, especially in historical criticism. The mythological elements that artists use in paintings, or writers in poems and stories are often depicted by gods or other forms of supernatural beings. Makaryk also mentions that myth is one of the elements in archetypal criticism (Makaryk 596). Subsequently the fantasy world is also influenced by the mythological world in respects to the supernatural elements and mythical creatures/beings that populate the stories. Mythical creatures have been appearing in stories, poems, and plays as early as 3000 BC. Joseph Campbell made these myths the focus of his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, where he analyses their origins and meaning using the archetypes. These archetypal myths are still relevant to this day as George MacDonald, J.R.R. Tolkien and Neil Gaiman exhibit in their works. These three authors were chosen as representatives of the past three centuries in the literary genre of fantasy, starting with the 19. century.

**19th Century Fantasy Literature**

During the 19th century the literary world was enriched by such authors as Charles Dickens, Emily and Charlotte Brontë and Edgar Allan Poe. These writers shaped the literary world and are, to this day, considered to be among the most influential authors of the 19th century. Their work range from beautiful love stories such as the Brontë sisters works *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven* a tale of regret and losses. Heroes, come in many shapes and sizes, from the classic knight defending his kingdom to the feminist story of *Jane Eyre*. George MacDonald’s *Phantastes* was first published in 1858 and was reprinted in 1970 by Ballantine Books, a publishing company based in New York. C.S. Lewis himself was very fond of George MacDonald as well as his work. Lewis was inspired by the novel *Phantastes*, “But now I saw the bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged (Burson and Walls 28). The statement made by Lewis is a good indication of how much George MacDonald inspired Lewis in his own works of fiction and how important George MacDonald was to the genre of fantasy. His book, *Phantastes*, has established itself as a cornerstone in fantasy.
**Phantastes**

*Phantastes* is a coming of age story about a young man who must grow up in order to function in the adult world, although this does not become clear until the end of the story. The story starts with Anodos who finds himself in possession of a set of keys to a secretary desk which was owned by his late father. In that desk Anodos is confronted by a fairy claiming to be his grandmother, here is the first indication that this is fantasy story. The fairy claims she can make his subconscious wish come true and grant him passage to Fairy Land (MacDonald 4). In this land he is faced with various characters which either hinder or help him on his various quests that will change Anodos. In the beginning of his journey in the Fairy Land, Anodos is given refuge by an old woman and a daughter. They feed him, allow him to rest and finally send him away with a few warnings to help him survive in the forest. He soon forgets these warnings and explores the forest, urged on by his own whims, which leads Anodos on various adventures which will change him as a person. The personal growth makes this a coming of age story, an allegory of human feelings and how a person must overcome them in order to function in society.

**20th Century Fantasy Literature**

In the 20th century fantasy literature was becoming popular fiction, with successful writers such as H.P. Lovecraft and his *Cthulhu Mythos* stories, Robert E. Howard the creator of *Conan the Barbarian*. C.S. Lewis and *The Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R. Tolkien with the fantastic world of Middle-Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien himself was well versed in myths and fairy tales having written numerous essays on the subject as well as being a key speaker in various lectures throughout England (White 175). J.R.R. Tolkien himself admits that he was influenced by the works of George MacDonald although other aspects influenced him as well when he was writing *The Hobbit* and later on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Drout 399). In the 20th century with the popular works of Lewis, Tolkien and Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Earthsea* series it was clear that high fantasy was here to stay and that it would keep on gaining popularity. In Great Britain, around the millennia, three major public surveys placed Tolkien as the author of the century, putting authors such as Jane Austen into second place with his work *The Lord of the Rings* (James 62).
**Lord of the Rings**

*The Lord of the Rings*, written by J.R.R. Tolkien, is categorized as a High-fantasy story. The story tells of the classic battle between good and evil. The first book of the trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring* was published in July, 1954 and was followed by *The Two Towers* in November that same year. The third instalment was published in October of 1955. They were well received in the United Kingdom and the United States, followed by increased interest in Europe. The books have been translated into numerous languages, ranging from Arabic to Korean. In Michael White’s Biography of Tolkien, he details some of the influences that Tolkien was under during the character creation on both *The Hobbit* as well as *The Lord of the Rings*. Those influences were from the stories, fairy tales and myths Tolkien read and was exposed to during his life (Drout 258). The story line of the trilogy follows a group of adventurers with the mission of destroying a ring created by an evil entity called Sauron in order to keep Sauron from taking possession of it. With the ring, Sauron would be able to rule over the whole of Middle-Earth giving him the power over life and death. As the story evolves the influence as well as the might of Sauron is made clear when great leaders of Middle-Earth fall under his spell and their lust for power lurks as a shadow in their minds. While the main mission remains the same the group is divided and numerous subplots see the light of day. These subplots involve personal growth in each member of the party and for some it even means rebirth. The group is comprised of humans, an elf, a dwarf, hobbits, and Maia. Each race shows different characteristics that are meant to be an identifying feature of their race similar to the archetypes where each archetype has a distinct feature that it can be recognized by. The story, created by Tolkien in the 20th century went on to influence numerous stories later in the 20th century and is continuing to have an impact on fantasy literature in the 21st century.

**21st Century Fantasy Literature**

Influence of iconic writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin and her *Earthsea* series, C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* and Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* paved the way for very successful fantasy works of the new age. Writers like J.K. Rowling and her *Harry Potter* series were a great success, both as written works as well as the film adaptations in the beginning of the 21st century. George R. R. Martin’s series *Song of Ice and Fire* is also very well known in the fantasy genre, the series gained greater traction with the
HBO television adaption by the name of *Game of Thrones* in the early 21st century. With the success of the influential writers of the 20th century as well as the increased availability of books, new writers were put in the spotlight, authors that were not internationally famous until the 21st century. There is also a relatively new market that emerged in the 21st century which is fanfiction, in essence they are stories created by fans and often based on books that have been previously published. Neil Gaiman began his writing career in the late 20th century with the collaboration with Terry Pratchett on their novel *Good Omens*. Later on he wrote *Neverwhere* in 1996 and *Stardust* in 1999 followed by the novel *American Gods* was published in London in 2001.

**American Gods**

Neil Gaiman sought his influence, like so many before him, in the myths and religions of the world while working on his novel *American Gods*, which is clear when various characters are examined. The main protagonist is Shadow, recently released from prison and on his journey home he meets a man that calls himself Mr. Wednesday. This character is going to occupy two different roles in the story, the protagonist and antagonist, while Shadow will follow one path throughout the story, the role of the hero. In *American Gods* there are two different types of gods; the new and the old. The new gods represent the non-religious part of society, they came into being with technology such as the internet and television. The old gods are a mix of beings that came to America with immigrants and other travellers, such as the Vikings which is how Mr. Wednesday came to the country. (Gaiman 69). One of the key factors in the power of the gods is the worship they require to stay strong, due to this fact the god of the Internet and the god of Media are very prominent in the novel, while also being very powerful gods due to their popularity in the world. Mr. Wednesday has devised a plan to regain his former power by orchestrating a war between the old and the new gods. Here Gaiman is referencing the myth from Norse mythology where Odin gains power from the fallen in war (Davidson 98). Shadow’s character evolves from the helper to the hero as the story unfolds and he becomes wiser to the plan of Mr. Wednesday.

When a writer is creating a story he is often influenced by stories around him, an example of this is Tolkien and Gaiman. Their source of influence in their fantasy stories are a mix of various elements such as myths, fairy tales, or religious legends from various faiths, which is also what inspired the archetype theory developed by Jung.
Archetypes
Throughout history literary critics have used their knowledge and experience to understand, explain, or analyse literature. Ancient texts such as Aristotle’s *Poetics* written in 335 BC, which is the earliest known work on dramatic theory, and Bharata Muni’s *Natya Shastra* written between 200 BC and 200 AD, a criticism on ancient Sanskrit and Indian literature, are some of the oldest recorded texts dealing with the analysis of literature. Other forms of literary criticism were created by the works of philosophers, feminists, socialist and even from the distinguished field of psychology such as Carl Gustav Jung.

Carl Gustav Jung was born July 26, 1875 in a small village in Switzerland. His father was a pastor and the rest of his extended family was fairly well educated as well. At an early age his father started teaching him Latin which got him interested in language and literature. Jung was a very active student of language and even spoke several ancient ones, such as Sanskrit. His fascination with history made him pursue archaeology, however his course was altered and he went into the field of medicine where he studied under a neurologist by the name of Krafft-Ebing (Leitch 987). Eventually he settled on psychiatry and after graduation he started working at Burghoeltzli Mental Hospital under Eugene Bleuler, an expert in schizophrenia and a very influential psychiatrist at the time (Casement 9). Sigmund Fraud, the noted psychiatrist, considered Carl Jung to be a worthy heir to his own self-acclaimed throne of psychoanalysis after they met in Vienna in 1907. In 1914, the friendship ended, suggested it was due to the fact that Jung was never entirely convinced of Fraud’s theories, mainly Freud’s conclusion on the sexual basis of neurosis as Jung discusses in his essay *Psychology of the Unconscious* (Leitch 987). Jung’s career as a psychiatrist was very distinguished, he pioneered several theories in the field of analytical psychology such as the theories of extrovert and introvert, the theory of the Unconscious. In 1959 Jung published his book *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* where he explains, in detail the archetypes present in the unconscious as well as how they can be identified (Leitch 988). These archetypes would later become a branch in literary criticism and affect the literary world of fantasy books as well as other forms of entertainment such as movies.
Carl Jung made it his life work to explore the inner space of the mind. He was well acquainted with the symbolism of the mystical and was well versed in various religions and symbols (Leitch 987). Jung’s fascination with religion and symbols led him to create a theory in psychology that was derived from symbols such as the archetypes. Archetypes, as Jung described them, are in essence a link to our past selves, furthermore Jung discusses how different cultures can have similarities or even a sameness, this is because they are formed from archetypes which the whole of mankind has in common (Jung 58). In his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell comes to the same conclusion, although he explores these archetypes in myths and stories, he uses the same definition as Jung. Although Jung defined several archetypes he placed special focus on the four he considered the most significant, the persona, the anima/animus, the shadow and the self as Jung explains in *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* (Jung 41). The archetypes that will be highlighted in this thesis will be the hero, the shadow and the wise old man due to the fact that these archetypes are easily identified and they are often the main characters or attached to the story in works of fiction. A character’s actions and decisions throughout the story need to be examined with an open mind in order to judge their role in the story as evil, heroic, or misguided. A literary example of this is Boromir in *The Lord of the Rings*, a scenario where he tries to take possession of the ring from Frodo, during a deathly battle with orcs (Tolkien 390). His endeavour is fuelled by the belief that the Ring can save his city, as well as the world. Although the attempt is misguided, Boromir is showing the sign of the shadow archetype, in essence, he is doing what he considers to be the right course of action.  

**The Hero**  
The first of the archetypes that will be examined here is the hero. In almost every fantasy novel, epic poem, or play there is a character that is considered to be a hero. This hero comes in many forms and their greatness is defined by the danger or villain

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4 Family archetypes  
The father, the mother, the child:  
Story archetypes  
The hero, the maiden, the wise old man, the magician, the earth mother, the witch or sorceress, the trickster  
Animal archetypes  
The faithful dog, the enduring horse, the devious cat
they face in each story. The everyday hero such as a police officer in a crime series that risks his own life in order to protect civilians from the criminals, to the epic hero, such as Superman, who battles enemies, that wield the power to wipe out planets, at the cost of his own life. This is the simple version of the hero as it is known today. The archetypal characteristic of a hero, as defined by Jung in *The Archetypes and the Collective unconscious* is more complex as it touches on primal feelings and thoughts regarding what it means to be a hero as well as how the other archetypes influence the hero’s action and the story.

The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious. Day and light are synonyms for consciousness, night and dark for the unconscious. (Jung 167)

By Jung’s definition the hero is the source of hope and is expected to triumph over the unconscious. The hero’s symbol as the conscious, is light and day while the unconscious’s symbols are darkness and night. The triumph of the conscious over the unconscious, which Jung speaks of, can be interpreted as the hero’s triumph over the villain. Joseph Campbell notices the same pattern with the hero archetype in myths from around the world as he mentions in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

He is the one who appears and points to the magic shining sword that will kill the dragon-terror, tells of the waiting bride and the castle of many treasures, applies healing balm to the almost fatal wounds, and finally dismisses the conqueror, back into the world of normal life, following the great adventure into the enchanted night (Campbell 9-10).

According to Jung and Campbell this is the purpose of the hero, to vanquish the darkness, save the maiden and save the world.

In *Phantastes* the main protagonist, Anodos, travels to a fictional world and helps solve problems that other characters are having. Anodos does this out of a sense of duty and his good nature, similar to the hero definition of Jung’s and Campbell’s theories. The story of Anodos is not of a hero that saves the world, but a story of a young man who saves small parts of the worlds he travels through. As the story unfolds Anodos is introduced to various persons who offer him assistance, like the old woman, the Knight and the two brothers. Each of these characters can be categorized by the
archetypal system, such as the two brothers who fight to save their kingdom with the help of Anodos. The brothers fit within the criteria of the hero as Jung mentions by bringing the light, safety, to their kingdom and saving the villagers from the giants who terrorise them. Anodos himself also takes on the mantle of the hero in regards to the fact that he endangers himself to save people he does not know, by aiding the brothers in their war with the giants (MacDonald 169). The Knight is searching for his lover, The White Lady, who also captures the heart and mind of the main protagonist but, through personal growth he lets her go and she joins with her lover, The Knight (MacDonald 131). This example of self-sacrifice on Anodos’ is another characteristic of the hero where the wellbeing of others is the primary concern of the hero. George Macdonald’s style of character creations in Phantastes is fairly simplistic. The main protagonist does not show significant depth. Anodos does not appear to be anything other than the hero. He does not show the characteristic of the helper or the wise old man.

*Lord of the Rings* is a good example of depth in character creations, the main protagonists are layered and complex, comprising of more than one archetype. An example of this is when the hero evolves into another archetype while keeping its original archetype. Such as the helper who turns into the unwilling hero or the wise old man who gives into the shadow. Aragorn is the first example of a character that develops from one archetype and to another. This development happens when Frodo, Sam, Pippin and Merry leave the Prancing Pony and they stay a night atop of Weathertop, an old watchtower long forgotten by most. There the fellowship is besieged by the enemy and Aragorn’s character shifts from the guide into the hero when he battles the Ringwraiths on top of Weathertop (Tolkien 191). Joseph Campbell mentions the guide in context to the supernatural aid that the hero receives during his journey as a being, or a person that gives advice that the hero needs to survive or triumph (Campbell 72). This is Aragorn’s role throughout the story, to act as both a guide and a hero. Frodo, the ring-bearer, begins the story as an unwilling hero. He denies ownership of the ring and attempts to give it to Gandalf (Tolkien 60). This is an indication of an individual who fears, or denies, the evil forces and the corruption it brings, in essence, he manages to resist the temptation of the ring for an extended period of time. Much longer time than Frodo’s human counterparts who had carried the ring before him. The character of Frodo does not evolve as the story moves forward in respect to the fact that
Frodo’s sole objective is destroying the ring and he exhibits no other leading characteristics of the other archetypes as they are described by Jung. Frodo, as are Legolas the elf and Gimli the dwarf, are the only companions of the fellowship that do not evolve beyond their original archetypes. However, there are other aspects of their characters that make them loveable such as, humour, empathy and heroic actions.

*American Gods* by Neil Gaiman, written in 2005 depicts the main protagonist, Shadow, as a pawn in a big chess game. His journey starts with him being a companion to Mr. Wednesday, but as the story evolves Shadow shows the common traits of the hero when he decides not to bring his recently deceased fiancé back to life (Gaiman 527). Other characters in the novel pass on by, with the sole purpose of helping the story along with advice or directing Shadow in the right direction. This scenario in *American Gods* is similar to *Phantastes’* and the old woman in the cottage, gave Anodos advice on the dangers ahead and directions so his journey could continue. Both stories have single heroes and heroes which receive aid from other characters. There is a slight difference in the fact that Shadow starts to take control of his own life and discards the wise old man who gave him aid from the beginning of the story.

Anodos in *Phantastes* exhibits the same characteristics as Frodo, Legolas and Gimli, in regards to the role the character play, do not change as the story progresses. *Phantastes, Lord of the Rings* and *American Gods* show common characteristics regarding the main protagonist, that the hero does not have to be layered in order to give the story depth or relatability. Other characters or the storyline can function as that tool. Since the hero is the saviour then the shadow would be his counterpart. The conscious element that is the hero cannot come to be if the shadow is not there to challenge him (Campbell 245).

**The shadow**
The shadow, according to Jung, is a part of the unconscious, it has been with mankind from the very beginning as a representation of sexual urges and life instincts of the human being. Jung considers the shadow to be a part of our prehuman, animal past when mankind’s only focus was surviving (Jung 153). Subsequently, the shadow is not to be perceived as inherently evil or good, but completely amoral.
The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness (Jung 20)

The shadow, in literature is represented by characters that are considered evil, Sauron for example, seeks to destroy the world of men and elves for his own gain. For him, this seems to be the right course of action. Gollum seeks to regain possession of the one ring by either force or deception, while this is seen as a gesture of evil Gollum is only doing what he, or his unconscious self, deems to be right. Jung considers the shadow a necessary being or force in order for the hero to exist as he states in his book “Consciousness can only exist through continual recognition of the unconscious, just as everything that lives must pass through many deaths” (Jung 96). Campbell does as well, however, it only becomes apparent when the whole text is reviewed. It stands to reason that the shadow will always exist in literature, regardless of genre since it is a part of the unconscious and can therefore be a part of any character or force that is relevant to a story.

In Phantastes Anodos is confronted by different versions of the shadow, one where he confronts his own shadows and another where a symbol of the shadow is in the form of a mirror. During Anodos’ stay in the library he stumbled upon a book that told of a young man and a mirror that caught the young man’s eyes. This mirror had the unique ability to show its onlooker a different version of the real world.

The mirror has lifted it [the room] out of the region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome (MacDonald 98).

Even though the mirror is not the only shadow in the story it is a significant part of Anodos’ story since it is a symbol of the shadow that is similar to the shadow archetype as Jung discusses in his book. The mirror, is a representation of the shadow as Jung describes it. An object or force that is neither good nor evil, it exists in the unconscious. The Shadow can also cripple the hero with doubt, grief, or any other emotion that stops the progress of the hero. In Phantastes, Anodos is faced with the challenge of self-realisation symbolised by four doors in a cottage. These four doors each represent a
state of emotion or thought that Anodos must confront in order to rid himself of his own shadow (MacDonald 149). There are different versions of the shadow archetype in literature, the villain who is constantly trying to defeat the hero or at least stop the hero from succeeding. The other is the crippling doubt the hero feels which is brought on by dark thoughts (Jung 21). In Phantastes, the shadow comes in both literal forms of dark thoughts like the test he faces with the four doors, it also manifests in the classic villain role, an example of this is are the giants.

*Lord of the Rings* is essentially a battle between the shadow and the hero both archetypes come to life in various forms. There are subplots in the story that show different versions of the shadow archetype, generally in the form of the villain, other variations of the shadow in the story are spiritual instead of a physical personification, like Sauron or Saruman. The One Ring, for example, is a spiritual version of the shadow archetype in the sense that it creates doubt and paranoia in the wearer. In the *Return of the King*, the third instalment of the series, Frodo finally falls under the control of the ring and refuses to destroy it (Tolkien 925) This is the work of the ring, using powers of corruption received from its creator Sauron. Saruman, who once was the leader of the wizard council has turned to the shadow of Sauron, this change in the character is another example of how the shadow archetype is frequently displayed in fantasy (Tolkien 576). Sméagol is another version of the shadow in the story, he possessed the ring for a very long time and during that time it altered his mind. Creating an alter ego, named Gollum, that is constantly fighting for control of his actions (Tolkien 708). The similarities between Phantastes and *The Lord of the Rings* regarding the shadow are the spiritual versions of the shadow which seem to effect the main protagonists on the unconscious level. Anodos has to overcome his own faults while Frodo fights to keep his identity and not turn into another Gollum.

Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods* shows similar conflicts within the main protagonist, Shadow, in regards to the fact that he starts out as a helper for Mr. Wednesday but evolves into the hero by overcoming his own shadows. His shadows are not physical at first but spiritual and emotional but later on he must confront the physical form of the shadow as well. This evolution of the character from the help to the hero is a clear indication of how important the shadow is for the story. The physical manifestations of the shadow in the novel are represented by various characters who are
the obvious shadows and those who are revealed to be the shadow. Mr. Wednesday, who is the American doppelganger of Odin as well as Shadow’s father, starts out as the archetype of the wise old man. Offering his son advice and assisting him in his endeavour to resurrect his wife. As the story moves on his motives become clear, he plans on instigating war between the new and old gods in order to regain his former power (Gaiman 539) he possessed when he was brought to America with the Vikings (Gaiman 69). Other physical versions of the shadow are simple manifestations represented by Mr. Wednesday’s henchmen, the men in black who bear simple names in order to hide their identities. The evolution of Mr. Wednesday is similar to that of the change that is witnessed in *The Lord of the Rings* character Saruman, who was once considered to be a great leader of the wizards and counsellor to Gandalf in essence, he was the archetype of the wise old man to Gandalf.

**Wise old man**

When Jung mentions the archetype of the wise old man in his book, it is in connection to Jesus, the son God, this is due to the fact that Jesus offers words of advice or comfort while similar to the characters in fantasy who advise the hero on their mission. The wise old man can be portrayed in many different ways, ranging from Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* to a mother who soothes a child after it has scraped a knee with words of wisdom that the pain will pass and then kisses the pain away.

> The wise old man of the myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure. He is the one who appears and points to the magic shining sword that will kill the dragon-terror, tells of the waiting bride and the castle of many treasures, applies healing balm to the almost fatal wounds, and finally dismisses the conqueror into the world of normal life, following the great adventure into the enchanted night. (Campbell 9)

As Campbell suggests in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the wise old man seems to be essential to every story in the fantasy genre. He often joins the hero on his quest to vanquish the shadow or save the damsel in distress. In *Phantastes*, the role of the wise old man is simple by Campbell’s definition, however the definition of Jung displays him as a caregiver as well as a wise old man.
Phantastes, written in the Victorian era, portrays the wise old man as an old woman in a cottage that Anodos visits when he takes his first step in the Fairy Land. She takes on the role of pointing Anodos in the right direction through the forest and giving him advice on what he must avoid in order to survive his trek through Fairy Land. In MacDonald’s novel the role of the woman as an advisor is prominent, such as the old fairy who leads him to the Fairy Land. While the role men are more physical, an example is heroes, such as Sir. Percival, the two brothers or even Anodos himself. The archetype of the wise old man is not prominent in Phantastes, there is no magician directing Anodos to a magic sword to slay the dragon and he does not help Anodos with the tasks in other ways than giving advice.

In the foregoing I tried to indicate the general psychological conditions in which such an experience arises. But what I conveyed were only abstract generalizations. One could, or rather should, really give a description of the process as it occurs in immediate experience (Jung 37-38).

Both Campbell and Jung speak of the archetype as a male figure, although Jung does offer insight into the fact that the archetypes are personifications of the unconscious, subsequently it could be argued that the role of the wise old man could be played by a woman. There are similar notions of female wise old men in Tolkien’s works as well as the typical wizard, giving advice and handing out magic swords.

Frodo’s mission to journey to Rivendell in the first instalment of The Lord of the Rings would not have happened if he had not been urged to do so by his friend Gandalf (Tolkien 61). The role of Gandalf in Tolkien’s stories is pivotal, without him the hobbits would never have left the Shire and the ring would possibly be on the finger of Sauron. Gandalf the Grey, as he is called in the beginning of the story, is a character similar to that of Merlin, in Arthurian literature, a wise old man, possessing great power that few can match and inspires greatness in those he gives council to. There are other variations of the archetype in Middle-Earth that match both Campbell’s and Jung’s definitions such as Elrond of Rivendell, the leader of the elves and one of the oldest beings in Middle-Earth. His roles in the story is short, compared to Gandalf, but it is crucial for the story to evolve. Similar to Phantastes, there is a female version of the wise old man present in Tolkien’s work, represented by the character Galadriel the ruler of Lothlórien.
and friend of Gandalf. When the Balrog seemingly kills Gandalf (Tolkien 322), the fellowship seeks refuge in the woods of Lothlórien where they get council and rest from its ruler, the Lady Galadriel. As they prepare to leave her safe haven she offers them gifts that are of a magical nature, such as the Light of Eärendil (Tolkien 367). The archetype of the wise old man in Tolkien’s work only present on the physical plane, not the spiritual world. Neil Gaiman versions of the archetypes are similar to those of Tolkien, however in *American Gods* the wise old man is also present in the spiritual world.

*American Gods* is influenced by folklore, myths as well as religion, therefore, the presence of archetypes are made very clear when the characters are examined in regards to their actions as well as history. The wise old man archetype in the novel is represented by two different forms, the physical, which is Mr. Wednesday as well as the spiritual, which is Buffalo Man. The physical aspect of the archetype similar to the definition that Jung and Campbell discuss in their respective works in regards to how it manifests itself in the story. Mr. Wednesday is described as an older man, with grey eyes, greyish-red hair and is smaller in stature than Shadow, his role in the beginning is to guide Shadow as he is acquainted with the world of the gods that is connected to the modern world in the story. As the story unfolds, Shadow starts to adapt to his new role as a helper with the aid of Mr. Wednesday who introduces him to various deities, such as Easter, the goddess of dawn from Germanic lore. Mr. Wednesday’s plan is eventually revealed and his character evolves from the wise old man archetype to the shadow archetype. The spiritual version of the archetype is represented in the character of Buffalo man, who never takes on a physical form in the world and only speaks to Shadow through dreams. Shadow and Buffalo man meet near the beginning of the story in a dream where Buffalo man gives Shadow the advice that he must believe in order to survive, referring to Mr. Wednesday’s story of the gods in America (Gaiman 18). Although Buffalo man has a small role in the novel he is a pivotal character regarding the story line, this is made clear when he comes to Shadow’s dream and informs him that he is in fact, not a god, he is the land itself and it is his decision that the gods are allowed to live there as well (Gaiman 549).

When the fantasy genre is examined, there is a notable pattern that emerges, namely the hero is present in every work of fantasy fiction as well as the shadow,
however, the wise old man does not appear as often or is not a male, an example of this is the novel *Phantastes* where the wise old man is portrayed by a female character instead of a god or a wizard.

When Jung defined the archetypes, his objective was probably not to create a tool for literary criticism, the main objective was possibly to help him understand how the inner workings of the mind functioned by using these archetypes.
Conclusion
When modern day fantasy literature emerged in the late Victorian era, its impact was going to shape the world of literature for future generations, fantasy as a genre had been around much longer, with works such as *Beowulf* and *Sir. Gawain and the Green Knight* which were written in the 8th century and the 14th century. Speculative fiction is the umbrella term for fantasy, which has various subcategories such as urban fantasy and high fantasy, the term is also relevant for other genres as well, such as science fiction and horror. The stories in the category have one or more variations of elements that are considered impossible, such as in fantasy with magic and supernatural elements, or the possible as it is in science fiction.

In the 19th century George MacDonald published his book *Phantastes*, a work of fiction that influenced great writers such as Tolkien and Lewis in their own writing careers. With the popularity of works such as Tolkien’s trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* or C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* in the 20th century the fantasy genre was firmly established as a genre that would keep on growing. Neil Gaiman spoke very highly on both Tolkien and Lewis, indicating that they had inspired him to establish himself as a writer in the fantasy literature world, which he has done with his novels, *Neverwhere* and *Stardust* in the late 20th century and *American Gods* written in the early 21st century.

Literary criticism has been a factor in literature for a very long time, as early as 335 BC with Aristotle's *Poetics*, it being one of the oldest known text on dramatic theory. Various theories have come to life since then, one of them being the archetype theory researched by Carl Gustav Jung. With the theory, an analysis is possible of certain characteristics of the archetypes which are present in the unconscious. Jung’s theory was later applied to the world of literature and used to analyse characters in various texts such as fantasy.

The goal of this essay was to attempt to analyse the characters of three different fantasy stories; *Phantastes*, *The Lord of the Rings* and finally *American Gods*, each of these stories are considered to be instrumental in how the fantasy genre evolved. By applying Jung’s theory of archetypes, specifically the three archetypes of the hero, the shadow and the wise old man the evolution of the characters was made possible.
The hero archetype is present in every work of fiction analysed in this story, what was noteworthy was the fact that in *Phantastes* the main protagonist does not evolve, in essence he stays the same throughout the book. In *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo is similar to Anodos in *Phantastes* in regards to the fact that he does not change or evolve from one archetype to another. Aragorn evolves from the guide or helper archetype into the hero archetype, a similar change is also apparent in Shadow, the main character in *American Gods*.

The shadow archetype is also apparent in *Phantastes*, where it is displayed as the spiritual version of the shadow, when Anodos has to come to terms with various feelings and dark thoughts. There are physical versions as well in the form of the villain which Anodos defeats as well. *The Lord of the Rings* have similar shadow archetypes, which are the ring of Sauron, Sauron himself and Gollum. In both stories, the spiritual shadow archetype is present and are a key element in the book. In Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, the shadow is both present in the spiritual and physical form. First, in the form of doubt and later Mr. Wednesday when he is revealed to be the villain in the story.

The wise old man archetype is visible in each of the stories analysed in this essay, the difference between this archetype and the two mentioned before is that in *Phantastes* the wise old man is personified in a female, subsequently going against the literal interpretation of the name which is the wise old man. It is easier to detect the wise old man in *The Lord of the Rings* because the character, Gandalf, seems to be created using the definition of the archetype as it is defined by Jung and Campbell. *American Gods* is the only story where the wise old man is not physical being in the world of the story, it is however, in the spiritual world and due to that fact it can only act as an advisor and guide instead of aiding the hero in a more direct way. The other wise old man in the story is Mr. Wednesday who aids Shadow in his quest, but evolves into the shadow archetype as the story unfolds.

By applying Jung’s theory of archetypes it becomes clear that the characters have been evolving parallel to the fantasy genre from its birth in the Victorian era to the modern day fantasy that is well known today. The novel from the 19th century shows a protagonist that is so relatively simple and does not change while the 20th century story has more depth and the 21st century fantasy story shows a similar development as its
predecessor. It would be interesting to perform a similar analysis on the fantasy novel in
the distant future in order ascertain whether the characters keep on developing or if the
perfect character has already emerged?
Works cited


