6-15-1979

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Available at: https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol6/iss3/1

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Two Faces Of Eve: Galadriel and Shelob as Anima Figures

Abstract
Examines Galadriel as a Jungian anima figure, and Shelob as her opposite, the shadow anima, in The Lord of the Rings. Further, "each characteristic of Galadriel and its perversion in Shelob can be related to the characteristics of the anima."

Additional Keywords
Anima figures in literature; Jungian analysis of Irish mythology; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Galadriel; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Shelob; Valerie Protopapas
That loveliest lady there
on them glanced with eyes of grey;
that he found ever one more fair
in sooth might no man say.  

from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Occasionally she (the anima)... unleashes terrors in us not to be outdone by any manifestations of the devil.  

from C.G. Jung’s Archetypes of the Unconscious

From the goddess Isis to the Virgin Mary, the “fair queen” or, in psychological terms, the anima, has its manifestation in virtually all mythic cycles. Often seen as a link to the supernatural or divine, the anima was described by Marie-Louise von Franz as a “guide, or mediator, to the world within and to the self.” Under this benevolent aspect, the qualities of the anima are those of the mother to the child. The anima is seen as noble, beautiful, wise and compassionate.

Yet the anima is also ambivalent in its appearance and significance. This female principle takes two forms in the mind of man, and though as the Heavenly Queen or Virgin she is benevolent and beneficent, the shadow of the anima, its opposite or perversion, is represented throughout myths and legends as the witch or “femme fatale.” As such she deceives men, promising them heart’s delight but leading them on to ruin.

The invented mythology of Professor Tolkien is no exception in its portrayal of the anima and its shadow. In the Quenta Silmarillion it is Elbereth, Queen of the angelic Valar, who is portrayed as an anima figure, while the evil spider-spirit Ungoliant is the anima shadow. One orders the world for the sake of beauty and good, while the other seeks only the fulfillment of her own lusts at the expense of all else.

But the most developed case of anima and shadow can be seen in the characters of Galadriel, “the greatest of elven women,” and the evil spider Shelob. The Queen of Lorien is of high lineage, great beauty, and a wise and compassionate nature, while Shelob, as a spawn of Ungoliant, is a perversion of evil. Though Shelob wears an outward sign of antiquity, her links to the earliest days of Middle-Earth show just such conservative clinging.

Of all the elves of Middle-Earth in the Third Age, none is of greater nobility than Galadriel. She is the daughter of Finarfin, who was counted “the fairest, and the most wise of heart” of the sons of Finwe, first King of the Noldor in Aman, the land of the Valar. Only Galadriel, of all the leaders of Middle-Earth, is old enough to remember the light of the Two Trees of Valinor, which were destroyed before the birth of the moon and the sun.

But Shelob, too, is of ancient lineage, and of one which must have once been higher than that of any elf. For she is “Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant.” And of Ungoliant it is said in the Quenta Silmarillion that she “descended from the darkness that lies about Arda” (the Earth). Thus, it would seem that the origin of Ungoliant must have been as a spirit that existed before the Creation, when only “the Ainur, the Holy Ones” existed with Eru.

Great beauty (or great ugliness) is related by Jung in his discussion of the anima to the concept of the “Kalon Kagathon, the ‘beautiful and the good,’” which he says supposes the co-existence of goodness and beauty by necessity. Primitive man, he theorizes, saw an intimate connection between inner goodness or malice and outward beauty or ugliness. Though Jung goes on to show how man has grown out of this idea on the philosophical level, no doubt in dealing with spiritual beings who take on “appropriate” physical forms, one can see that beauty or its lack is essential in Tolkien’s use of the anima.

And in Galadriel we find a truly magnificent beauty even for one of her race. Though all of the Noldorin elves are fair (as, indeed, are all of the Eldar), yet in all of the ages of Middle-Earth, few were as fair as Galadriel. Looking once again at the Quenta Silmarillion, we read of Galadriel that she is “most beautiful of all the house of Finwe; her hair was lit with gold as though it had caught in a mesh the radiance of Laurelin.”

In Lorien, surrounded by those who had once been enemies of his people, Gimli feels threatened and without hope. But then he meets the highest of all the Elves in Middle-Earth:

She looked upon Gimli, who sat glowering and sad, and she smiled, And the Dwarf, hearing... his own ancient tongue, looked up and met her eyes; and it seemed to him that he looked suddenly into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding. Wonder came into his face, and then he smiled in answer.
And if such beauty were notable in Aman, where all is
fair, so much more beautiful must Galadriel have appeared to
the inhabitants of Middle-Earth in the Third Age. In her
revelation to the Ringbearer, we read that "She stood before
Frodo, seeming now tall beyond measurement, and beautiful
beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful." 

Of the ugliness of Shelob, mention need scarcely be
made, for simply her spider-shape suggests loathsomeness.
But she is described in two passages of the chapter "Shelob's
Lair" in Book Four of *The Lord of the Rings* as having "mon-
strous and abominable eyes" and a "loathly shape... horrible
beyond the horror of an evil dream." Shelob is uglier than
even the great hunting-spiders of Mirkwood, for she is in
the shape of an animal, yet she is animated by a fierce,
malignant will.13

The wisdom and compassion of the anima, or the con-
ceit and manipulatory tricks of its shadow, have their roots
in the psychological role which the anima plays. As a link
to the supernatural world which is actually the hidden world
of man's mind, the anima is a more spiritual form of life with
powers and knowledge not given to man or man's ego. When
the anima is understood and accepted for what it is, it
assumes a benevolent role, hence the coupling of compassion
with wisdom. But the refusal of the anima, with its promise
of a higher form of life, brings to light its shadow manifesta-
tion, which does not guide but deceives, and which does not
act with compassion, but is merciless.

The great wisdom of Galadriel can be seen in her refusal
of the One Ring of Sauron. Though Frodo, as the Ring-
bearer, offers her the One Ring hoping that she will thus be
able to defeat Sauron, Galadriel knows that the ring would
only corrupt her to Sauron's will. This act grants her
the clemency of the Valar, against whom she revolted in the
First Age.14

A further example of her ability to guide can be seen in
her counsel to the members of the Company of the Ring.
For Galadriel tells them that she cannot counsel them "saying
do this or do that," but can aid them only "in knowing what
was and is, and in part also what shall be."15 And by the
advice and gifts which she gives to each, Galadriel sets
them on their road better prepared both to face trials and
hardships, and to escape the traps of Sauron.

And although the compassion of Galadriel is evident in
all that she has done to forestall and defeat Sauron - not to
benefit herself (indeed, the magic ring Nenya which she
wears will be destroyed in Sauron's defeat) but to aid all of
Middle-Earth - still, the best example of her compassion is
the befriending of Cimli the Dwarf. For though he later
became Galadriel's gallant defender, Cimli had formerly held
a great distrust of Elves.

No difference of race or nation can thus separate two who
have experienced pure spiritual love.

By contrast, Shelob exists for none save herself.
She is wholly merciless:

    and she served none but herself... for all
living things were her food, and her
vomit darkness... she... only desired
death for all others; mind and body, and
for herself a glut of life...

This is the anima in its most evil and destructive form,
swallowing up the individual in an ocean of selfishness.16

That Tolkien intended these two figures to be linked
in our minds as polar opposites is evident by the function
of the star-glass. Made by Galadriel, it held the light of
Earendil's Silmaril set in the water of her fountain; it was
"to be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights
are not told; and he draws out Galadriel's weapon to use against
Shelob. Brightened as its holder gathers courage, the star-
glass first disturbs the monster, and causes her to fall
back; then in Sam's fight with her, the light enters her
wounded head and pains her intolerably; it blinds her and
causes her to flee in defeat.

Whether Galadriel knew when she gave the talisman
that they would be passing thru Cirith Ungoi is not certain;
certainly she possessed supernormal knowledge, though she
claimed no omniscience. But evidently the providence governing
the events of Middle-Earth intended it.

It is also certain that for Tolkien the power of the
bright anima surpasses that of the dark one. Yet the
victory of light is not assured: necessary to tip the balance
are the humble virtues of courage and hope in a small,
supposedly insignificant mortal.

Clearly, the role of Galadriel and Shelob in Tolkien's
mythology is to illuminate the two poles of the female prin-
ciple. Like the shining angel and the "motherly ghost"
in C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*, Galadriel and Shelob
are the extremes in the wide spectrum of Spirit and Flesh,
Selflessness and Selfishness, and Good and Evil. While
one beckons us on to self-knowledge and Life, the other
uses our own desires to lead us onto the first slippery
and steep steps to a personal Death and Hell.

NOTES

1J.R.R. Tolkien, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
(Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), p. 27

Violet S. deLaszIo (New York, Randon House, 1959), p. 31
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strange. She intentionally confuses Irene. When Irene first meets her, she learns that her grandmother's name is also Irene, and that the grandmother has allowed Irene to have her name. She thanks the lady, but the lady replies: "A name is one of those things one can give away and keep all the same." Then she tells Irene who she is, Irene's "father's mother's father's mother." This confuses Irene, but the grandmother says she expected Irene would not understand. This same use of paradox and riddle is evident when the grandmother presents Irene with the ball of finely spun spider's thread. She first throws it into the fire and then places it in her cabinet. Irene exclaims:

"I thought you had spun it for me."
"So I did, my child. And you've got it."
"No, it's burnt in the fire!"

Have I done anything to vex you, grandmother?" said Irene pitifully.
"No, my darling. But you must understand that no one ever gives anything to another properly and really without keeping it. That ball is yours."
"But what use can I make of it, if it lies in your cabinet?"
"That is what I will explain to you. It would be of no use to you - it wouldn't be yours at all if it did not lie in my cabinet."

Strange explanation! And yet MacDonald is serious. Only by grappling with this kind of problem can Irene learn to think independently. This teaching is antithetical to that of the McChoacumchild school. It asks for both faith and intellectual struggle, faith in the grandmother's goodness and intellectual struggle to reconcile the paradoxes. Irene will grow to understand her grandmother's meaning that our imaginations are useless unless tied to an ideal, a vision; that a unity of mind is necessary for fulfillment.

This brings us to the final paradox reconciled by the grandmother: dream and reality. The grandmother, shut away in her tower, appears to offer little that is practical for the reader. She suggests fairy tale escape. Positivists would see little value in offering her seriously as a "true" character to children. Fairy godmothers do not exist; nor do mystic balls of thread that help us out of danger. The grandmother is closer to dream than to reality. Dream may tell us something about our neuroses, but they are of little practical use unless we can either explain them away, or find moral truths in them to help us program our lives. Irene can neither explain her grandmother away, nor extract moral truths from her cryptic remarks. Neither can we if we wish to remain faithful to the spirit of the book.

For much of the book Irene worries that her grandmother is a dream, and MacDonald hints that Irene's worries have foundation. After her father's first visit Irene concludes that her grandmother is a dream although she "often and often wishes that her huge great grandmother had not been a dream." Her next visit to the grandmother follows the accident with the old brooch when Irene cuts herself. Her sleep that night is troubled with dreams. Finally she searches for her grandmother "not quite sure that she was not dreaming." She finds her grandmother who heals Irene's hand and ties a handkerchief around the wound. She waves her hands over him three times.

Curdie is on his way to this awakened condition, but as yet he has not reached it. So he dreams, but we remember: "Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one." The grandmother is both dream and reality, nature and supernature. She reconciles the two.

"A name is one of those things one can give away and keep all the same," and we conclude that the grandmother is merely a figment of Irene's overactive imagination. After all, the grandmother tells Irene that she has been in the tower only as long as Irene has lived in the house. She is Irene's conception of her missing mother, a private creation Irene desperately wishes to share, but can't. This is why Curdicle cannot see the grandmother when Irene takes him to the tower.

But there is the fact of the healed wound; there is the pigeon that lands on Irene's head in Chapter 10; there is the thread that enables Irene to invent convention and rescue Curdicle; there is Mrs. Peterson's experience with the goblins; and there is Curdicle's strange experience while delirious. Hearing goblins breaking into the King's house, Curdicle who has been wounded in the leg tries to get out of bed. But he is dreaming and his repeated efforts to rise are futile. MacDonald clearly states: "In fact he was not awake, only dreaming that he was." His despair mounts until there came, as he thought, a hand upon the lock of his door. It opened, and, looking up he saw a lady with white hair carrying a silver box in her hand, enter the room. She came to his bed, he thought, stroked his head and face with cool, soft hands, took the dressing from his leg, rubbed it with something that smelt like roses, and then waved her hands over him three times.

He falls deeper into sleep and later wakes to find himself healthy again. When MacDonald says that Curdicle was "only dreaming" he was awake we must take care about reading this too literally. The awakened condition, in MacDonald as in Blake, is the condition of cleansed perception. Irene is awake; she sees her grandmother. Lootie is not awake; she cannot see or believe in the grandmother. Curdicle is on his way to this awakened condition, but as yet he has not reached it. So he dreams, but we remember: "Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one." The grandmother is both dream and reality, nature and supernature. She reconciles the two.

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