October 2019

"What Man Am I?" The Hero's Journey, the Beginning of Individuation, and *Taran Wanderer*

Liam Butchart
Stony Brook University

SWOSU

Online Summer Seminar 2023

August 5-6, 2023: Fantasy Goes to Hell: Depictions of Hell in Modern Fantasy Texts

https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2023.htm

"What Man Am I?" The Hero's Journey, the Beginning of Individuation, and *Taran Wanderer*

Abstract

Norman Holland's entreaty to refocus psychoanalysis toward self-knowledge animates this study. Focusing on Lloyd Alexander's *Taran Wanderer* (part of the Chronicles of Prydain), the novel's location at the crossroads of human psychological development and myth is examined using Jung's concept of individuation and Campbell's Hero's Journey in order to extract an underlying thematic question. The lessons learned from answering this question, in turn, teach us more about ourselves, illustrating the value of psychoanalysis both to the study of mythopoeic literature and to ourselves.

Additional Keywords

Lloyd Alexander; Psychoanalysis; Joseph Campbell; Hero's Journey

"What Man Am I?" The Hero's Journey, the Beginning of Individuation, and *Taran Wanderer*

Liam Butchart

Norman Holland, in his essay entitled "The Mind and the Book: A Long Look at Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism," discusses psychoanalytic criticism's past and where he thinks its future should lie. After all, as he notes, few scholars—and even fewer lay readers—find much value in identifying Oedipus complexes and phallic symbols as they analyze texts; thus, it makes sense to look elsewhere for textual meaning if literary psychoanalysis is to move beyond psychopathology (Holland 18). Instead, he argues, psychoanalytic critics should aim to "enable both the critic and ordinary reader to obey the primary command above the temple of the Delphic Oracle: Know Thyself" (Holland 19). The literature of growing up—children's and young adult literature—seems to be a particularly fertile ground for the kind of criticism that Holland is envisioning; after all, these literatures have long histories of pedagogical use (Nikolajeva 3-4). But children's literature has much more to offer than just teaching young people about the growth experiences of others. It has a great deal to offer adult critics, too: the focus on growing up in children's literature can help people across the life span to face the next steps in their personal journeys (McGuire 145-146). Similarly, psychoanalysis offers a great many ways to help us to know ourselves, from professional development to therapeutic interventions to, really, any process that forces us to grow and change, emphasizing the parallel goals of the two discourses (Goldstein 8; Robertson and Lawrence 269-270).

But children's literature does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is formed by precursor literatures. Consider: the earliest forms of literature were myths, and these myths birthed the books we read and the stories we analyze today.

> Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, myths of man have flourished […]. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth. (Campbell 1)

And within myth, within the germinal seed of the cultural artifacts with which we are still trying to come to grips, is a focus on development and maturity: "it becomes apparent that the purpose and actual effect of these [stories] was to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life" (Campbell 6). The educational component of myth—connecting it most clearly to child audiences—is central to its identity (T. Hughes "Myth and Education" 55-56). Bascom offers an analysis of how myth and education are intertwined: following Malinowski, myth is one of the three main folk narrative genres, and folklore has a strong anthropological history of being pedagogical—teaching discipline, morals, culture and history (335, 344-346). Thus, it seems that children's literature and myth are deeply bound together, and that, by examining literatures inspired by myth that emphasize the process of growing up and maturing, we might be able to learn more about our pasts as children, as well as our presents and futures.

If we grant that psychoanalytic criticism can find utility and meaning by helping readers—including critics—consider stories of coming of age (as Holland desires), then we can begin to construct an intellectual project for ourselves: evaluating the ways in which maturing and psychoanalysis can interact. Of course, these connections are myriad, so I am going to limit myself to one locus of meaning in this paper. In order to demonstrate how the literature of growth and development can interdigitate with psychoanalysis meaningfully, I will examine a book that lies at the crossroads of myth, growth, and mind: Lloyd Alexander's 1967 novel *Taran Wanderer*. This novel lies at precisely the right point for our project because it encompasses all of the underlying discourses that we are seeking to synthesize. Within the genre of fantasy literature, there is a long tradition of stories written for child readers; this extends back through Lewis, Barrie, Carroll, and beyond (F. Hughes "Children's Literature" 552-553). Additionally, fantasy has also been deeply related to and influenced by myth (Berry). One of the clearest areas to see this union is in mythopoeic literature—the works of authors such as Tolkien, Lewis, or Lloyd Alexander (Winick 138).

As Tunnell and Jacobs note, the story of Alexander's titular Taran is informed by (though not a retelling of) the Welsh *Mabinogion*, set in the secondary world of Prydain, concerned with magic and dwarves and wizards, all of which identify the novel as fantastic and mythopoeic (Tunnell and Jacobs, "Fantasy at its Best" 229). However, *Taran Wanderer* is the least inspired by the *Mabinogion* of the Prydain novels—it contains the mythological trappings, but the story developed from the decision by the author and editor to include an originally-unplanned fourth book that focused on Taran's maturation, moving the text away from the source material and toward the author's imagination

(Tunnell and Jacobs, "Twenty Years Later" 29). Intriguingly, this relationship—related but not derivative—is reflected in the choice of "Taran" as the protagonist. Fimi writes, "The central hero of the *Chronicles* […] is, originally, [an] obscure character. Taran is a name that occurs twice in the *Mabinogion*. […] In both cases, Taran is merely a name that appears on a list" (129).

Commonly described as a coming-of-age story, *Taran Wanderer* is situated in what Lois Kuznets describes as "an extended *Bildungsroman*" (Kuznets 27; see also House 953). Kuznets highlights what makes Alexander's work so useful as a test case for our project: "Alexander seems to have gauged his books so that his protagonist, Taran, grew up from pre-adolescence to late adolescence, alongside the first generation of readers" (26). In short, *Taran Wanderer* sits at the confluence of fantasy, myth, childhood, and adulthood, providing a test case for us to interrogate how these different discourses operate in close proximity to each other—and, perhaps, to synthesize them. Fundamentally, this is my goal with this project: to use the characteristics of the novel to inform our psychoanalytic reading, in order to learn more about ourselves and the human experience.

There have been many perspectives on the phenomenon of human development, but Jung's concept of individuation seems like the best approach for our goal of considering how the development of literary characters—in this case, Taran—complements psychoanalysis. This is because Jung's individuation is a process in addition to being a goal, allowing for greater flexibility than the stage-oriented theories of Freud, Erikson, et al (Wright 59-60). By avoiding the harsh delineations of stages, replete with criteria and definitions, Jung's theories seem to be more widely-applicable; they allow us to engage with the characters over the course of the text, rather than focusing on abstract clusters of symptoms. Jung posited that psychic development occurs through the individuation process, yielding finally a complete person—an individual (Jung, "Conscious, Unconscious" 288-289). However, individuation's status as a process implies a journey, as the person who is developing becomes the hero in their own internal drama. Taran, as Marion Carr compelling argues, certainly fits the criteria for heroism, as laid out by Jan de Vries (Wright 63-64; Carr 510-511). However, this means that we are still missing one vital piece of additional theorizing that will allow us to bridge the gap between the hero and psychoanalysis.

Jung's individuation, as a process, implies some kind of forward motion, even if that motion need not be linear. The hero intuitively presents us with that quality: each of us in our own mental lives exists as the protagonist, marching through the world on our own quests. But in order to engage with Taran, our chosen literary hero, we need a stable construction that we can use to analyze him and his story. In order to do that, I am going to adopt Joseph

Campbell's Hero's Journey. Campbell, it is worth noting, offers only one of multiple tellings of the archetypal monomyth. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Campbell presents what he considers to be the universal quest, upon which we can transpose many different stories and myths. Even though Campbell's stage-oriented model seems to lend itself to other stage theories, his reliance on archetypes and the circularity of the monomyth, I think, allow the monomyth to interlace with Jung's individuation process effectively; the synergy between the two methods led me to choose this template over the others (Campbell 12-14). I will examine Taran's Hero's Journey through this framework in order to conceptualize the narrative of his quest in *Taran Wanderer,* so that we can then consider his psychological development alongside his plot progression.

Now that we have assembled our tools—our case study text (*Taran Wanderer*), our mode of literary analysis (Campbell's Hero's Journey) and our psychoanalytic method (Jungian individuation)—we can see how deeply interconnected they all are. The hero's path is implicitly his journey; the process of overcoming trials necessitates psychological development; and psychoanalytic archetypes reflect back into and inform literary theory, as Campbell notes as he describes the Hero's Journey (Campbell 12-13, 330). In fact, Northrop Frye tied together the quest of the hero, Jung's individuation, and mythopoeic literature (and lived experience), writing,

> Just as the 'individuation process' became the informing principle of his psychology, so the mythopoeic counterpart to it, the hero's quest, became the informing principle that Jung […] perceived in myth, folklore and literature. The heroic quest has the general shape of a descent into darkness and peril followed by a renewal of life. (614)

But we want to move beyond Frye's general observation in order to interrogate how these connections are useful to us as critics and as people. Thus, by examining *Taran Wanderer* through the construct of the Hero's Journey and Jung's concept of individuation, we can see how the novel's place at the crossroads of myth and development generates an answer to its animating question—"What man am I?"—and how that answer provides insight for readers of all ages.

<div align="center">⊰⊱</div>

Using Campbell's framework, we can trace Taran's path over the course of the novel. It is worth noting that the Hero's Journey can be broken into discrete stops, but the structure of a story inherently cannot fit perfectly into them. The novel, by proceeding linearly, will necessarily consist of more content—more dialogue, plot, imagery and thematic development—than the Hero's Journey

accounts for. That being said, *Taran Wanderer*, like many other novels, contains episodes of gradated importance, such that the structurally-important ones will be presented here. Thus, the steps of Taran's Hero's Journey:

The Call to Adventure: Taran begins the story distracted and distraught, no longer content to be Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper. He insists to Coll and Dallben that he must find out his parentage in order to ascertain whether he has the status to pursue and wed the beautiful Eilonwy, a princess (Alexander 3-6).

The Refusal of the Call: Taran does not outwardly attempt to refuse the call; after all, it is his own heart and mind that are pushing him to pursue this adventure. However, Taran comes very close to giving up almost as soon as his quest has begun: as Taran and Gurgi, his companion, draw closer to the Marshes of Morva, "the more he questioned the wisdom of his choice. […] There were moments where, Taran admitted to himself, had Gurgi spun the pony about and bolted homeward, he would have gladly done likewise" (10).

Supernatural Aid: Typically, supernatural aid comes from a mentor, a wise old man—think of Gandalf, Dumbledore or Obi-Wan Kenobi. However, an alternative mentor figure that Campbell identifies is that of the helpful crone, who often represents the power of destiny (Campbell 59). Alexander's novel falls into this latter category, and his three crones (Orddu, Orgoch, and Orwen) are clearly reminiscent of the Fates: "Orwen, if indeed it was Orwen, was turning a rather lopsided spinning wheel […]. [T]hough it seemed to him, as if by some trick of his eyes, that vague shapes, human and animal, moved and shifted through the weaving" (Alexander 12-13; Bisenieks 13). With the three witches, Taran gains a goal for his quest—he must seek out the Mirror of Llunet, which could show him "something of interest" (Alexander 19).

Crossing the First Threshold: Taran, over the course of the previous three books, has traversed a great deal of Prydain. Thus, he knows what to expect at home in Caer Dallben or even in the Marshes of Morva, morbid as they may be. After the Marshes, Taran and Gurgi cross over into a novel, unexplored world on their way to meet their ally King Smoit, lord of Caer Cadarn and king of Cantrev Cadiffor. And, like most crossings of the threshold, there are guardians that menace Taran as he tries to learn to navigate the wider world: Lords Goryon and Gast serve that purpose here, as Goryon's highwaymen steal Taran's horse and Gast wages war with Goryon over a stolen cow (Alexander 22-24, 48-49). In both cases, Taran is able to overcome the trials through cleverness and rhetorical skill (33-37, 60-61).

The Belly of the Whale: As Taran enters the Hill Cantrevs, he becomes entangled with the evil sorcerer Morda. Campbell notes that entering into the Belly of the Whale can swallow up the hero—Taran is enveloped and caught by Morda's magic shrubbery. Alexander writes, "A bent sapling sprang upright, pulling the ropes with it. Taran felt himself ripped from the brambles and […]

flung upward and over the barrier. […] He fell, and darkness swallowed him" (89). Similarly, Campbell describes an annihilation of the hero's body as a corollary component of the Belly of the Whale (Campbell 74-77). With Morda, Taran only comes close to being turned into an animal—his companions, on the other hand, lose their human forms, highlighting the transposability of the monomyth (Campbell 211-212).

The Meeting with the Goddess: Once Taran emerges from the Belly of the Whale having slain Morda, Campbell's Journey would have him pass from the Departure phase into the Initiation. However, what had seemed like a clear path through the stages of the Hero's Journey can become more circuitous than the outline implies; myths are inherently malleable and complex, so it is of no concern that the stages of Taran's Hero's Journey becomes out of order at this point (Campbell 211-213). At first glance, it seems that Taran does not meet the Goddess—after all, Eilonwy is not in *Taran Wanderer* beside a few passing memories and trinkets, and there are few other major female characters. But, as Campbell notes, the importance of the Meeting with the Goddess can lie in a gift for the hero, rather than a grand liaison (98-99). Eilonwy had given a battle horn to Taran, and it is not until Doli informs the hero of the magical utility of the horn—it can summon the Fair Folk for aid—does its value become clear; the gift, in this tale, is a symbol of love, housed in an object of yet-unknown utility (Alexander 112-113; Fierce 81-82).

Road of Trials I: Once Doli departs, Taran fully enters into the road of trials. One of the first ordeals that Taran has to overcome in this stage of his Journey is his fight with Dorath. As Taran, Gurgi and his other companion, Fflewddur Fflam, press on towards the Mirror of Llunet, they meet a band of outlaws whose leader is a cruel, dangerous figure, a major antagonist of the story. Dorath and Taran make a wager—safe passage or Taran's sword, depending on the victor of their duel—and Dorath wins the fight through trickery, leaving Taran with just an empty scabbard to accompany his torn cloak and the battle horn that he had chosen not to use (Alexander 130-131).

Atonement with the Father: Interestingly, Taran's Road of Trials abruptly truncates; this is because his goal is ostensibly to discover his parentage, not to slay a dragon or overcome a villain like Dorath, and he finds his father (or, at least, thinks he does) (Campbell 90). The Atonement with the Father is quite literal for Taran, as he meets Craddoc, an old farmer and shepherd who claims Taran as his long-lost son (Alexander 137-138). Campbell writes, "Atonement […] consists in no more than abandonment of […] the attachment to ego itself; and that is what is difficult" (107-110). And, for Taran, the process of abandoning his attachments is indeed very difficult, as he feels that he has lost his chance to wed Eilonwy, and becomes resentful of the old man: "'Are there two herdsmen in this valley?' Taran cried to himself. 'One I can only love, and one I can only

hate?'" (Alexander 141-144, 147). Then, just as many other heroes have labored in their atonement, Taran works for the better part of a year with Craddoc, tending to the sheep, fixing the house, and mending the broken tools, building a relationship and proving his worth (145-146, 149).

Apotheosis: Taran's relationship with his new father then leads to his Apotheosis—his moment of supersedence and epiphany, where new knowledge is gained through this experience of the Hero's Journey. For Taran, this moment occurs as he is pondering what to do after Craddoc has fallen from a cliff and lies dying:

> His hands were shaking. It was not despair that filled him, but terror, black terror at the thoughts whispering in his mind. Was there the slimmest hope of saving the stricken herdsman? If not, even Prince Gwydion would not reproach Taran's decision. Nor would any man. Instead, they would grieve with him at his loss. Free of his burden, free of the alley, the door of his cage opened wide, and all his life awaited him; Eilonwy, Caer Dallben. He seemed to hear his own voice speak these words, and he listened in shame and horror.
>
> Then, as if his heart would burst with it, he cried out in terrible rage, *"What man am I?"* (Alexander 152-153, emph. mine)

It is in this moment that Taran faces himself, his worst thoughts and impulses, and chooses to rise above them, leaping down to save his father. Of course, Craddoc then reveals that they are not truly related, tempering Taran's moment of apotheosis, as the young man begins to realize that questions of parenthood may fundamentally be elusive; he chooses to call himself Taran Wanderer from then on (155, 164). The battle horn—the gift from the Goddess—is used during this episode, helping him overcome his darkest hour and coldest night as he and Craddoc lie on the ledge. It shows its value, as it saves him from the abyss.

Woman as Temptress: As with many other heroes before him, Taran is tempted to give up his quest, which has now morphed into a quest for self-identity rather than parentage, as a result of the Apotheosis. Though often a woman, the temptress may be a man when he is connected to the life-giving earth (Campbell 101-102). For Taran, this character is Llonio—an eccentric whose needs are provided by the forest, the river, by natural providence. Taran realizes the joy of the simple life; to pick a particularly mundane example, Llonio's eggs are the "most delicious […] he ever tasted" (Alexander 167). This respite is highly attractive to Taran—his "heart was easier than it had been since he chose to abandon his quest," but, like the heroes before him, Taran must leave, urged on from his rest by the pull of his quest (Alexander 171; Campbell 102). Taran says to Gurgi, "I should be more than happy to dwell here all my life. I've found peace and friendship—and a kind of hope, as well. […] Yet,

somehow Llonio's way is not mine. A spur drives me to seek more than what Small Avren brings. What I seek, I do not know, But, alas, I know it is not here" (Alexander 174).

Road of Trials II: Now that Taran has passed beyond Llonio and his peaceful temptations, Taran re-enters the world of his quest, just as Odysseus re-enters his journey after reposing with Circe. And continuing on the quest requires overcoming more trials, which, in true Campbellian fashion, are tripartite (Campbell 90). Taran meets, works under, and befriends three craftsmen in the Free Commots: Hevydd the Smith, Dwyvach Weaver-Woman and Annlaw Clay-Shaper. In each episode, Taran learns about the craft and about life, too—life is a forge, or a loom, or that it sometimes holds sorrow and failure (Alexander 181, 188, 198). In overcoming these trials of character, Taran gains additional gifts—a new sword to replace the one Dorath had taken, a cloak to replace the one that had been ripped, and knowledge about his identity as a man—that serve him in his final confrontation and heroic victory. After these three trials, Taran once again encounters Dorath and his group; the villagers of Commot Isav, under Taran's leadership, repel the intruders, though Dorath himself escapes (202-207).

The Ultimate Boon: Campbell notes that at this stage "The ease with which the adventure is here accomplished signifies that the hero is a superior man" (148). Taran, in this penultimate step of his Journey, exemplifies this evolution. In this duel with Dorath, Taran wins where he had once lost, wielding his new sword to defeat the one that Dorath had taken: "The blades met with a grating, ringing clash. Taran's weapon shuddered in his hand, the shock threw him to earth. Yet his blade held. The sword of Dorath shattered on it" (Alexander 215). Thus, by overcoming the final guardian, the story's villain, Taran has come to the waters of knowledge—the Mirror of Llunet—and learned the truth: that his parentage is unknown, and that it does not matter. In Campbell's words, the "font of life is the core of the individual, and within himself he will find it—if he can tear the coverings away" (164). Taran tears away the shame and doubt that have plagued him and has become a young man and a full member of the world, more completely coming to terms with the knowledge that he had glimpsed in the Apotheosis.

The Return: Freedom to Live: Campbell describes a number of stages in the hero's Return; however, Taran really only experiences one of them in *Taran Wanderer*: Freedom to Live. This stage emphasizes the mastery of the hero over his fears and his acceptance of his place in the shifting sands of time (Campbell 209). Taran, having solved the puzzle of his parenthood, is now at peace with his identity; the voices shouting, "Remember us!" as he rides away underscore how these experiences are now part of his identity, as much as his past at Caer

Dallben is and his future in the larger world of Prydain will be (Alexander 217-218).

But what about the rest of the stages of the Journey? *Taran Wanderer* is the penultimate book in the Chronicles of Prydain; thus, in order for Taran's Hero's Journey to truly be completed—with the rest of Campbell's return stages potentially included—he needs to experience the story described in the next book, *The High King.* This illustrates Carr's point that the two novels are contiguous in plot and complementary in theme; the journey is not complete until the events of both have transpired (Carr 512). *Taran Wanderer* is focused on the process of maturing, rather than its impacts, so the seemingly truncated return part of the Journey fulfills a narrative purpose, both internally to this book and at the level of the series as a whole; it is not a fault that the maturing process is examined prior to the final confrontation and resolution ("Twenty Years Later" 29).

Now that we have outlined Taran's own Hero's Journey, we can see more clearly where Taran's travels take him, both physically and psychologically. Beginning at Caer Dallben, home, Taran traverses the Marshes of Morva and the Valley Cantrevs (specifically Cantrev Cadiffor), where he passes from the known world into the unknown. There, he is accosted by Goryon, Gast, and Morda, fights Dorath, meets and loses an assumed father and then is waylaid by the beauty of the simple life with Llonio. Taran finishes his quest by learning three crafts—smithing, weaving, and pottery—in the Free Commots and fighting Dorath twice, once again at Commot Isav and finally at the Mirror of Llunet. There, he reaches his goal of self-knowledge. Then, he can return home.

<center>❧❦</center>

However, Campbell's construction of the Hero's Journey does not just concern plot; throughout, he connects the archetypes he folds into his monomyth to both the psychoanalyses of various authors like Jung and Freud and to comments on narrative theory (the ways that psychological impulses push a story and its Journey forward). In fact, Campbell explicitly brings up individuation as he is discussing the return of the hero: the loss of the personal individuation that had been achieved is a driving fear for the hero in his Return to the known world (188). It is these psychic impulses that I hope to uncover next, using Jung's methods; Campbell's monomyth structure, while implying answers to psychological questions, does not make them central to the scholarly approach, so a solely psychic reading is worthwhile to supplement it. It is also worth noting that a Jungian reading of the Chronicles of Prydain already exists—Nancy-Lou Patteron's "*Homo Monstrosus:* Lloyd Alexander's Gurgi and Other Shadow Figures." However, I am going to make amendments to her argument

and focus more heavily on the process of individuation, because that is what drives the Hero's Journey for Taran.

Individuation, von Franz writes, is "the conscious coming-to-terms with one's own inner center (psychic nucleus) or Self" (166). Put broadly, Jung's theory is: in the process of psychic development, after being catalyzed by a natural "wounding of the personality," a person—or, for us, character—must learn to assimilate conscious and unconscious and move from the ego and the Persona (the outward projection of the ego) to the Self (von Franz 166; "Conscious, Unconscious" 288-289; Jung, "Concerning Rebirth" 123). After accepting the call, there are three major components of the process of individuation—assimilating the Shadow, the Anima (or Animus) and, finally, coming to terms with the Self (Jung, "Archetypes" 20-32). These three are major archetypes from the pantheon that Jung describes, where the Shadow is the dark and negative characteristics of a person, and is often spoken of as the most important archetype to resolve, as a monster that menaces the hero (Akam and Wan Yahya 346). But the conflict with the Shadow is not the only difficult step of the process of individuation. The Anima (for men; Animus for women) is what Jung called the "master-piece," rather than the "apprentice-piece" of the Shadow ("Archetypes" 29). The Anima is a "spontaneous production of the unconscious" that functions as the feminine part of the male psyche; it is represented as a female (in contrast to the homosexual male Shadow) (Jung, "Syzygy" 12; Patterson 27). Finally, the archetype of the Self is the product of individuation, the combination of the conscious and the unconscious, the amalgam of the merger of ego, Shadow, and Anima into a psychic whole, an individual (Jung, "Self" 22-24).

But I will truncate the primer on Jungian psychology here; after all, there have been reams of paper devoted to these topics. In contrast, our interest lies in their application to our text and character—in seeing how Taran, as he progresses forward on his Hero's Journey, moves along the individuation process. The first step, as outlined above, is that Taran must have a catalyst to begin his psychic development. Von Franz writes, "there are many children who earnestly seek for some meaning in life that could help them to deal with the chaos both within and outside themselves"; the call arises from a wounding of the ego (Von Franz 166). Other psychoanalysts have posited that children without parents have deep struggles with feeling of being unwanted; Taran, as a foundling, is subject to this psychic chaos, which both hampers his development and can make him feel powerless (Brinnich 185). Taran himself identifies his quest as concerning his ancestry: "What is my parentage? I cannot rest until I know. Am I lowly born or nobly?" (Alexander 6). Dallben and Taran ascribe his desire to know to his accompanying desire for Eilonwy's hand in marriage, but von Franz points out that the ego often projects, distracting from

the real crisis by focusing attention on an external construct—in this case, Eilonwy and marriage (166). Von Franz also writes that, really, "One is seeking something that is impossible to find or about which nothing is known" (167). Dallben freely accedes to his lack of knowledge about Taran's parentage, and Eilonwy has by this point made clear that she will wait for Taran, pointing us towards ancestry—and the chaos implied by not knowing much about it—as the root issue that engenders his process of individuation (Alexander 6; Fierce 81-82). We can also appreciate that Taran's Persona—his outward self of the Assistant Pig-Keeper—has become tiresome for him; Coll's promise to teach him "the high secrets of planting turnips" or cabbages is not as fulfilling as his new quest will be, a long-running motif in the larger Chronicles of Prydain (Alexander 3).

After responding to his call, Taran must confront his Shadow. Intriguingly, the conflict with the Shadow takes place over the vast majority of the novel. The Shadow, the "thoughts and traits rejected by the conscious mind which are then repressed in the unconscious mind," Jung notes, is often the villain the hero needs to defeat (Akam and Wan Yahya 346; Jung, "Psychology of the Child" 167). Hunting for the Shadow, we can clearly see the villain in *Taran Wanderer*: Dorath. The outlaw is egotistic, violent, and callous when Taran first meets him; Dorath describes himself as "king wherever he rides" (Alexander 118). He is, in many ways, Taran's darkest impulses and inclinations, melded together into one character. Taran, through the Prydain books, has valorized martial prowess, bucked authority, and has not yet come to learn true humility—he has always complained about his job as Assistant Pig-Keeper. His head is still "full of dreams about battles and heroes" and beautiful princesses, rather than the assurance that comes from self-knowledge (Colbath 943). Thus, Dorath represents many of the dark aspects of Taran's personality, and the novel does not terminate until he has made his three appearances and has been defeated (Jung, "Shadow" 7). In fact, Dorath overpowers Taran the first time they meet; the Hero has not acknowledged his dark impulses and remains at the mercy of his Shadow.

However, the Shadow is more than just a villain; it is also a "moral problem that challenges the whole personality" ("Shadow" 7). Therefore, in addition to Dorath, I submit that Craddoc is another manifestation of Taran's Shadow. Craddoc, as we have seen, forces Taran into a crisis of choice: does he let his presumptive father die in order to escape the barren Hill Cantrevs, or does he jump into the abyss to save a man whom he has come to resent? Jung makes clear that the Shadow has emotional qualities, and that it represents those qualities to which the subject wishes to avoid coming to terms ("Shadow" 7; "Conscious, Unconscious" 284-285). Taran is drawn into a deep emotional struggle as he ponders his choices; after all, if Craddoc were to die, Taran could

escape to a comfortable life, taking King Smoit up on his offer of adoption and pursuing Eilonwy. However, the choice that Taran makes is to face his fears and emotions, to live up to his new father and to act heroically to try to save his life, sacrificing the value his ego placed in the battle horn in the process. As Jung writes:

> The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty […]. ("Archetypes" 21)

And, by successfully facing his Shadow for the first time, Taran is able to pass through the door and begin to accept his heritage. But, even though Taran begin his identity as a man, the truth that Craddoc is not truly his father forces Taran deeper into uncertainty about his parentage—he takes on the moniker of "Taran Wanderer," indicating that he has successfully brought up his Shadow, even if he has not had the chance to fully integrate it into his identity. Asking the question is the victory ("Archetypes" 20). Jung notes that this is a small solution, a step towards resolving the ongoing process of assimilating the Shadow ("Conscious, Unconscious" 288).

The first steps towards assimilation of the Shadow that Taran takes with Craddoc are then continued when Taran comes into contact with Dorath again. At their second meeting, Taran has begun to appreciate his own dark impulses: he takes charge of the village defense as a leader and he recognizes his aloneness in the world (Alexander 202-24). However, even as the villagers withstand the onslaught, Dorath escapes—the Shadow is still at large because Taran has still not quite assimilated it. He still is under the sway of his rage and his martial impulses, illustrated most vividly by his desire to ride down Dorath, only to be stayed by a villager (Alexander 206-207). After the battle, Annlaw helps Taran to finally come to grips with some of these personality traits—in response to Taran's rhetorical questions about his identity, the potter points out that he could become a sellsword like Dorath. Taran, finally realizing the possibility of that life—of embracing his anger and violence—responds, "When I was a child I dreamed of adventure, glory, of honor in feats of arms. I think now that these things are shadows" (Alexander 209). It seems that Taran has finally recognized that he could, indeed, become like Dorath—but rejects that path due to the knowledge he has gained from his time in the Free Commots.

Taran's final engagement with Dorath is the crucial one. At this point, Taran has looked into the Mirror of Llunet and realized that the secret of his

parentage is unimportant; instead, he is a man, able to face the world as himself rather than his Persona:

> I saw myself […]. In the time I watched, I saw strength—and frailty. Pride and vanity, courage and fear. Of wisdom, a little. Of folly, much. Of intentions, many good ones; but many more left undone. In this, alas, I saw myself a man like any other. […] Now I know who I am: myself and none other. I am Taran. (Alexander 216)

By looking in the Mirror, Taran has finally come to grips with his failings and with his parentage, allowing him to finally accept his identity, confront his Shadow and defeat it. However, as Dorath's safe retreat again emphasizes, the battle with the Shadow for assimilation is never truly finished, and must be played out over and over again in the course of a life (Alexander 215).

Astute readers will note at this point that I have made thoroughly different contentions about the characterization of Taran's Shadow than Nancy-Lou Patterson. She argues that Gurgi is Taran's Shadow, not Dorath or Craddoc. Explaining her position, she writes:

> Gurgi embodies, then, Taran's self-emasculating fear, his hunger (for self-knowledge and identity)—of which his being a pig-keeper is perhaps an echo, for the prodigal son, far from his birthplace, and starving, became a swineherd and ate husks with his pigs—and his doglike dependency […]. When Taran reaches maturity, Gurgi (and the other magical—that is to say, unconscious—companions) withdraws. (Patterson 28)

I agree with Patterson partially. Gurgi indeed seems like a Shadow figure, but not for Taran, and certainly not in *Taran Wanderer.* Over the course of the Prydain Chronicles, Gurgi goes from Trickster to friend, but never really engages in conflict with Taran; by *Taran Wanderer,* he is very firmly the sidekick, more like Sam Gamgee than Grendel or Gollum (Patterson 24-25). As we went through our Campbellian journey, we saw Taran develop, with the individuation process as the underlying psychic drama. But Taran never engages with Gurgi's dark impulses in this book, so he cannot be the Shadow for Taran in this text.

However, Gurgi can certainly serve as a Shadow; in fact, I contend that he is the Shadow of the collective unconscious ("Archetypes" 3-4). Patterson shows us the way: Gurgi is terribly afraid of desertion, of being alone in the world; he is intensely hungry (which is "more than physical"); and he is associated with castration (Patterson 25-26). In the world of Prydain in Taran's epoch, there is much to be afraid of: Arawn Death-Lord, the former evil queen Achren, the coming war that will ensue in *The High King.* Fear is endemic to the experience in Prydain—even the powerful Dallben is clearly worried about the

future at the beginning of *Taran Wanderer* (Alexander 3-5). Furthermore, Arawn has stolen away the tools that made life in Prydain easier in order to despoil the land and its people, leading to characters repeating, over and over, the hunger for the knowledge and tools that could help them improve their lives. Aeddan bemoans the lost tools and secrets, as do Hevydd, Annlaw, and Llassar, reflecting a larger social desire to reclaim their lost heritage (Alexander 27, 176-177, 192-193, 204). This metaphorical hunger can be connected to the castration that Arawn enacted by stealing the secrets away from Prydain's people, again echoed by the craftsmen. In this way, Gurgi reflects the insecurities and worries and the darkness of society at large—of the collective unconscious that permeates Prydain (Jung, "Psychology of the Trickster" 269-270).

But *Taran Wanderer* ends just as the hero has overcome his Shadow, rather than when he has achieved full individuation. Jung stresses that individuation is circumambulatory rather than being linear; when we examine the text, we see that Taran has not assimilated an Anima representation, and thus cannot be fully individuated (*Memories* 196). The Anima representation, being female, poses the problem: there are no female characters that are particularly significant; Orddu, Orwen, and Orgoch fall into a different archetype, Eilonwy is just an afterthought for most of the story, and the other women only have a couple of lines apiece ("Syzygy" 12-13). There is no feminine counterpoint to Taran's Persona, no additional archetype to assimilate—at least, not in *Taran Wanderer.* This novel's status as the penultimate component of the series implies that the individuation process will be continued in *The High King,* much like the way that the Hero's Journey rests, unfinished, until the next book. However, that is a different paper.

<center>⛤⛤</center>

Now that we have examined the novel through both the lenses of the Hero's Journey and Jungian individuation, what can we draw from the two analyses, and how do they connect? Clearly, *Taran Wanderer* has mythic dimensions—both through its invocation of the *Mabinogion* and through its own iteration of the monomyth; similarly, Taran's struggle with the Shadow illustrates how he develops psychologically, from an immature psyche to one that has begun to assimilate the other archetypes. But leaving our discussion at that—two discourses that both each yield separate insights into the text—without synthesizing them seems like a waste; critical intertextuality is an important part of the metadiscourse in literary studies (Morgan 1-2). So, here I will consider how the mythic and developmental constituents of the text combine to offer a thematic answer to the question that Taran struggles with, as do we all as we grow up.

First, Fimi offers an insight into the ways that the structural components of *Taran Wanderer* force us to combine myth, text and psychology. She writes:

> The insignificance of Taran in the *Mabinogion* may have made him an ideal candidate for Alexander's central hero: Taran is a young teenager who goes through an education from farm-boy to heroic leader throughout the series, and the obscurity of his parentage becomes an important part of his identity. […] Taran, therefore, has an authentic Welsh name but is otherwise a suitable *tabula rasa* for Alexander to create what critics have characterized as a thoroughly "American" fantasy hero. (Fimi 129)

By giving his protagonist a name from myth which lacks a significant back-story, Alexander forces us to consider identity (and, by extension, development). I have endeavored to do this in terms of the text through my Jungian analysis, and the larger point is that critics must attend to the implication that the name—a structural component of the book—both has significance and suggests critical direction. The Taran in the myth is unmoored from a real personal history; Alexander's adoption of the name for his protagonist seems to suggest a re-imagining that includes a search for a real identity.

Taran's shouted question as he decides to save Craddoc—"What man am I?"—is, I think, the crucial moment of the book; it crystallizes his own struggle, the struggle of many heroes before him in the literary pantheon, as well as us, the readers. The two lenses we have used have both similarities and differences but both focus on this moment; I will summarize these analyses before returning to the thematic question. First, the Call to Adventure is remarkably similar in both Campbellian and Jungian frameworks—Taran must determine his parentage and learn more about himself. However, the next few phases of the Hero's Journey do not have direct correlates in our Jungian interpretation of individuation—the Shadow does not appear clearly until Taran is confronted with Dorath in the first part of the Road of Trials. However, there are Jungian ideas still embedded in the Departure: Orddu, Orwen, and Orgoch can be seen as the Wise Old Man and Morda, described as barely human and bent on "senseless orgies of destruction" and "self-imposed sufferings" could be a particularly evil Trickster figure ("Archetypes" 37; "Psychology of the Trickster" 256, 260; Alexander 89-94). But, in terms of the process of individuation, not much happens in this part of the Journey. Additionally, some of the richness of the mythopoeic reconstruction of the monomyth in *Taran Wanderer* gets lost when the Initiation is reduced down to the conflict with the Shadow—the value of the gifted battle horn, the experience with Llonio and the

three craftsmen in the Free Commots seem to take a backseat to just a few salient characters and episodes: experiences with Dorath and Craddoc, primarily.

Earlier in this paper, I briefly stated that the Hero's Journey construction, which is sometimes accused of being reductive, skips some of the richness of literature in favor of focusing on structure (Northup 8). Jungian individuation narrows the possibilities of what is structurally important in the novel even further than the monomyth—instead of Campbell's numerous stages, only the major archetypes involved in individuation, and where they appear, matter. Interestingly, these two distinct analytical methods do cross, marking a few places where we can focus our exegetical energy—the intertextual moments that could reveal important ideas. The two most prominent episodes where the two methods intersect—where the conflict with the Shadow takes on particular prominence in a stage of the Hero's Journey— bring out the novel's guiding theme. First, in the moment of apotheosis, Taran asks the question: "Who am I?" Then, as he looks into the Mirror of Llunet, he finds the answer, which he later relates to Annlaw—that he is a man, a person with both flaws and qualities. The universal themes of myth, combined with the developmental focus on Jungian psychoanalysis, point us to the sequence— asking the question of identity and finding the answer—that is so valuable to us as readers, for we all come to this realization, though sometimes we need help finding it for ourselves (Lawson 137-138).

<p style="text-align:center">❧❧❧</p>

Having examined *Taran Wanderer* through the lenses of the Hero's Journey and individuation, what conclusions can we draw regarding our animating question? How do the two complement each other to keep psychoanalysis vital? First, we now have a clearer idea of how the Shadow can manifest itself in different ways—as Dorath and as Craddoc as Taran's personal Shadow, as well as Gurgi for the Shadow of the collective unconscious—and how the steps to its assimilation drive the plot. Secondly, and more importantly, we see how the Hero's Journey and the individuation process are not completely synonymous: even though the Hero's Journey seems to be focusing on the Return for the following book, *The High King,* the Shadow will keep reappearing. A larger point raised by this phenomenon is theoretical: series of novels can often give rise to nested Journeys. After all, Taran's growth and development can also be viewed through the lens of the whole series, or as begun in *Taran Wanderer* and continued in *The High King.* This is of particular interest to us because of its implications for applying Jungian theory: when does individuation start, and when does it end? The answer, it seems, is that the Jungian development process is much like the Hero's Journey and can be nested, with periods of stasis and restarts; it is not impossible to imagine that Taran's initial call in *The Book of Three*

was his psychic need to prove his status as a man (more than an Assistant Pig-Keeper, his Persona), and that his struggle with the Shadow and the other archetypes began much sooner, with the path in *Taran Wanderer* that I have picked out as merely a subsection of that process, beginning from a place of developmental inactivity after the end of *The Castle of Llyr*.

Another theoretical point worth considering is that structurally-oriented exegesis can offer a great deal to the reader, especially when different structures are layered across each other to find particularly salient themes. For us, the value of doing this was to foreground the question of identity and its resolution that we all face—thus connecting our project to what Norman Holland would consider valuable psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis that helps readers and critics to become more self-reflexive, to know ourselves better. Through this project, we have also demonstrated with our case study text how children's literature, myth, psychological development, and maturing all find meaning in each other, increasing our critical possibilities for inter-discourse scholarship. Refocusing on our text, we can re-word this conclusion: *Taran Wanderer*, as a work of mythopoeic fiction, seems to be at the center of a nexus of different approaches and goals: it is a work of world-building and fantasy, with all of the archetypal implications that entails, but it is also a Hero's Journey, fitting both with the common characteristics of the fantastic novel and the Campbellian application of Jungian thought.

So, perhaps, the best conclusion to draw is that the Hero, his Journey and psychic motivations are all deeply intertwined and easily accessible in fantasy literature—and, as literature for young people, these novels grow with their readers. In this way, by leaning on the monomyth and the coming-of-age saga, the value of psychoanalysis—or criticism, generally—is to lay bare for adults the joy of these novels, which may have been tarnished and lost over the years. We can talk about Shadows and Apotheoses all we want, but the real value of these studies is more fundamental than those abstractions. We all struggle with questions of identity at some point; books like this can help us to learn more about ourselves and to confront the world more authentically. But nowhere is the sense of wonder about growing up as clear as it is with children and their literature. I will close with a few words from Tolkien, as he puts this idea eloquently:

> Children are meant to grow up, and not to become Peter Pans. Not to lose innocence and wonder, but to proceed on the appointed journey: that journey upon which it is certainly not better to travel hopefully than to arrive, though we must travel hopefully if we are to arrive. […] [T]here is no true end to any fairy-tale. (Tolkien 44-45, 68)

The process is the purpose, and all of these academic tools are just to tease out a little bit better for our adult selves the wonder that the pages, the adventures, and the characters contain; to remind ourselves that the journey, while not over, can still be magical.

WORKS CITED

Akam, John Helvy, and Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya. "Overcoming The Shadow and Achieving Individuation through a Hero's Journey in Tunku Halim's 'A Sister's Tale.'" *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities,* vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 345-358.

Alexander, Lloyd. *Taran Wanderer.* Henry Holt, 1967.

Bascom, William. "Four Functions of Folklore." *The Journal of American Folklore,* vol. 67, no. 266, 1954, pp. 333-349.

Berry, Dave. "The Treatment of Mythology in Children's Fantasy." *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature,* vol. 9, no. 3, 2005, 17 July 2019, https://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/29/34.

Bisenieks, Dainis. "Children, Magic, and Choices." *Mythlore,* vol. 6, no. 1 (#19), 1979, pp. 13-16.

Brinnich, Paul. "Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Adoption and Ambivalence." *Psychoanalytic Psychology,* vol. 12, no. 2, 1985, pp. 181-199.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* 3rd ed., New World Library, 2008.

Carr, Marion. "Classic Hero in a New Mythology." *The Horn Book Magazine,* October 1971, pp. 508-513.

Colbath, Mary Lou. "Worlds as They Should Be: Middle-earth, Narnia and Prydain." *Elementary English,* vol. 48, no. 8, 1971, pp. 937-945.

Fierce, Rodney M.D. "Isn't It Romantic? Sacrificing Agency for Romance in *The Chronicles of Prydain.*" *Mythlore,* vol. 33, no. 2 (#126), 2015, pp. 75-93.

Fimi, Dimitra. *Celtic Myth in Contemporary Children's Fantasy: Idealization, Identity, Ideology.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Frye, Northrop. "Review: Forming Fours." *The Hudson Review,* vol. 6, no. 4, 1954, pp. 611-619.

Goldstein, Lisa. "Becoming a Teacher as a Hero's Journey: Using Metaphor in Preservice Teacher Education." *Teacher Education Quarterly,* vol. 32, no. 1, 2005, pp. 7-24.

Holland, Norman. "The Mind and the Book: A Long Look at Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism." *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies,* vol. 2, no. 1, 2000, pp. 13-23.

House, Ellen. "Book Forum: The Chronicles of Prydain." *Journal of the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry,* vol. 50, no. 9, 2011, pp. 952-955.

Hughes, Felicity. "Children's Literature: Theory and Practice." *ELH,* vol. 45, no. 3, 1978, pp. 542-561.

Hughes, Ted. "Myth and education." *Children's Literature in Education,* vol. 1, no. 1, 1970, pp. 55-70.

Jung, Carl. "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Vol. 9, Part 1)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1969, pp. 3-39.

—. "Concerning Rebirth." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Vol. 9, Part 1)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1969, pp. 113-150.

—. "Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Vol. 9, Part 1)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1969, pp. 275-289.

—. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections.* Edited by Aniela Jaffé and translated by Richard Winston and Clara Winston, Vintage, 1989.

—. "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Vol. 9, Part 1)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1969, pp. 255-274.

—. "The Psychology of the Child Archetype." *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Vol. 9, Part 1)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1969, pp. 151-181.

—. "The Self." *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self (Vol. 9, Part 2)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1970, pp. 23-35.

—. "The Shadow." *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self (Vol. 9, Part 2)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1970, pp. 8-10.

—. "The Syzygy: Anima and Animus." *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self (Vol. 9, Part 2)*. 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton, 1970, pp. 11-22.

Kuznets, Lori. "'High Fantasy' in America: A Study of Lloyd Alexander, Ursula Le Guin, and Susan Cooper." *The Lion and the Unicorn,* vol. 9, 1985, pp. 19-35.

Lawson, Gerard. "The Hero's Journey as a Developmental Metaphor in Counseling." *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development,* vol. 44, no. 2, 2005, pp. 134-144.

McGuire, Sandra. "Growing Up and Growing Older: Books for Young Readers." *Childhood Education,* vol. 79, no. 3, 2003, pp. 145-151.

Morgan, Thaïs. "Is There an Intertest in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality." *The American Journal of Semiotics,* vol. 3, no. 4, 1985, pp. 1-40.

Nikolajeva, Maria. "Children's Literature Coming of Age? By Way of Introduction." *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic,* edited by Maria Nikolajeva, Routledge, 1996, pp. 3-11.

Northup, Lesley. "Myth-Placed Priorities: Religion and the Study of Myth." *Religious Studies Review,* vol. 32, no. 1, 2006, pp. 5-10.

Patterson, Nancy-Lou. "*Homo Monstrosus*: Lloyd Alexander's Gurgi and Other Shadow Figures of Fantastic Literature." *Mythlore,* vol. 3, no. 3 (#11), 1976, pp. 24-28.

Robertson, Derek, and Christopher Lawrence. "Heroes and Mentors: A Consideration of Relational-Cultural Theory and '*The Hero's Journey*.'" *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health,* vol. 10, 2015, pp. 264-277.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy-stories." *The Tolkien Reader,* Ballantine, 1966.

Tunnell, Michael, and James Jacobs. "Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain:* Twenty Years Later." *School Library Journal,* vol. 34, no. 8, 1988, 27-31.

—. "Fantasy at Its Best: Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain." *Children's Literature in Education,* vol. 21, no. 4, 1990, pp 229-236.

Von Franz, Marie-Louise. "The process of individuation." *Man and His Symbols,* edited by Carl Jung, Doubleday, 1964, pp. 158-229.

Winick, Stephen. "Review: *One Earth, One People: The Mythopoeic Fantasy Series of Ursula K. Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle, and Orson Scott Card.*" *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies,* vol. 27, no. 1, 2013, pp. 137-139.

Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal.* 2nd ed., Routledge, 1998.

LIAM BUTCHART is pursuing a joint MD and MA in Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University (Renaissance School of Medicine), where his advisor is Stephen G. Post, PhD. He has previously published on Freud and Faulkner. His research interests include psychoanalysis, literary theory, and the intersection of literature and medicine.