



Reclaim your
Inner Throne

Aragorn & The Broken Blade

The healing of a lineage

This document is meant to elaborate on the symbolism of Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings and the Reclaim your Inner Throne symbolism that runs parallel to it, both viewed through a depth-psychological lens and Jungian psychology.

Setting the stage

In Tolkien's universe, and specifically the Lord of the Rings, evil stirs and Middle-Earth is in dire peril. The One Ring has been found again, which is the physical bond that binds Sauron to remain even after death.

The Ring has been forged by Sauron, before he made other lesser rings to give to the elves, dwarves and man: 'One Ring to Rule them all'. With it, he seeks to gain dominion over all of Middle-Earth, and with that uncompromising, archetypal power, he symbolizes the relentless power of evil and its external manifestations in the world. Since Sauron's spirit is infused with the Ring, he would endure, even after his physical form was lost.

Looking at it from a depth-psychological perspective, this signifies that even when external symptoms are extinguished, the root that lays in the Unconscious remains for as long as it is untouched and unintegrated.

Within, the archetypal forces will build up over time and eventually erupt. In our lives, this may manifest as addictions or other varying external symptoms like eczema or rage.

Here I give a short summary of what has happened with the Ring since Sauron was first destroyed, before he returned to power in the story of the Lord of the Rings. After I set the stage, I will focus specifically on Aragorn's story.

In the Second Age, which is thousands of years prior to the forming of the Fellowship of the Ring,

an alliance of elves and men vanquished Sauron. Isildur, son of Elendil, rushed forth upon seeing his father fall on the battlefield, and in a desperate attempt, picks up Narsil, the now broken blade of his father, and hacks at the hand of Sauron, thus cutting off the One Ring from his master's finger.

At the end of the battle, Isildur is brought to Mount Doom by elvenking Elrond to cast it in the fires from whence it came. But, as fate would have it, Isildur fell under the spell of the Ring walked away with the Ring still in his hands and refused to destroy it, despite Elrond's protest. And so, evil endured, as did the spirit of Sauron.

When ambushed by Orcs, Isildur, who was now King of Gondor, was desperate to flee from harm and attempted to get away unseen. The Ring, having the power to render its wearing invisible to human eyes, is transported to a netherworld of neither living nor dead, and is immediately visible to Sauron. Isildur slid on the Ring, but was betrayed by it as he tried to swim away under water. Pierced by arrows, he died there, and the Ring was lost.

Until, thousands of years later, an innocent Hobbit called Déagol dove it up from a pond where he and his friend Sméagol were fishing. From the deep waters of the Unconscious, the archetypal powers of the Ring stirred, and, after a peaceful period, evil would soon again find expression in the world.

Indeed, Sméagol killed Déagol while enthralled by the Ring, and, over the course of five hundred years, the Ring poisoned his mind and he would call it 'my Precious'. He would be known by others as Gollum.

But, after five hundred years, the Ring knew it was time and it decided to leave Gollum. However, something happened that the Ring did not expect. It was found by the most unlikely creature imaginable: A Hobbit. Bilbo Baggins of the Shire.

Now we return to the present time of the story and the moment where the main plot line starts for the Lord of the Rings and we find Gandalf inquire after if Frodo still has this magic Ring that he inherited from Bilbo. From a Jungian perspective, this is a very important part of the journey.

Gandalf is the messenger who brings tidings of evil to an as-of-yet unconscious state of being, making it immediately acutely obvious there is no going back, and Frodo cannot indeed return to his normal life of indulgence and leisure. He literally has to leave the Shire, which symbolizes that which is pure and untainted, as well as Unconscious.

Gandalf is aware that the forces of the enemy are moving and he deems it unsafe for the Ring to stay in the Shire so Gandalf sends Frodo on his way to Rivendell. Rivendell is the seat of master Elrond who was present when Isildur failed to destroy the ring, and, since Rivendell is under the protection of the Elves, Frodo believes the Ring would be safe there. Frodo takes up this quest with bravely and is joined later by Samwise Gamgee and the two other Hobbits who will turn out to contribute in unlikely, yet crucial ways to their quest.

Instead of Gandalf meeting the Hobbits in Bree, they are met by Aragorn,

son of Arathorn, is introduced to us as a mysterious Ranger, who roams the wilds and turns up to protect the Hobbits from Evil by moving them to another room as the Nazgûl seek to kill them and take the Ring.

That sets the stage for Aragorn's journey to unfold, and we will now focus more on Aragorn. However important the Hobbits, Gandalf's contribution and the forming of the Fellowship is, it is Aragorn's story that we use as an analogy for the Return of the King and the story of the Blade that was Broken.

But before I continue with Aragorn's story, I'd like to highlight that Gandalf the Grey battles the Balrog on the bridge of Khazad-dûm, and falls. However, he is meant to fall, and, as was apparent in the week 'Facing the Balrog' and 'the Abyss', this was meant to happen so that the transformational process could proceed and the required Death and Rebirth could take place.

This moment is crucial in the narrative of the Lord of the Rings, as it is the first turning of the tide for Middle-Earth, and Gandalf is reborn as Gandalf the White. Now, embodying the fully mature Magician and Wise Elder who guides the course of time through unseen ways.

"A wizard is never late, nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to." - Gandalf

Aragorn's Story

Aragorn turns out to be Isildur's heir, and heir to the throne of Gondor. We can see how his identification with Isildur, makes him doubt his own abilities and strength. Because he believes his forefathers were weak and corruptible, he undermines and doubts himself.

It is true though, that the line of Kings was broken after Isildur died and Gondor fell into ruin until its power was only a vain reflection of its former glory. Aragorn carries this wound in his heart and fear of this same weakness has made him choose exile over birthright. You can see how a complex has formed in his psyche, and he attempts to avoid confronting it directly through his life, until he is no longer able to, as you shall read later on.

Veering away from taking full responsibility and ownership, Aragorn decided to wander and forsake his throne. But it was not meant to be this way. He was meant to be King.

When Aragorn arrives in Rivendell, he is met by Arwen, with whom he has a long-standing love relationship. There, he is coaxed by the Feminine – his Anima, embodied by Arwen – to not dismay in the face of peril and she pledges herself to him. Aragorn and Arwen have a romantic history, but Aragorn has been unable to fully commit to this relationship.

Internally, he resists his Anima, and externally he resists Arwen. Although Aragorn has staved off their love in the past, she persists and promises herself to him regardless, fully knowing the implications. Since he is mortal and she is not, she is doomed to linger into eternity after his death, and both they and her father Elrond are acutely aware of this.

Arwen, being an immortal being, is part of the collective unconscious' wisdom and intuitive knowing, and, like the Anima, has the ability to connect Aragorn to his inner knowing and deeper wisdom.

Aragorn, still wounded by the Broken Blade and the identification with the men who came before him, has a dark and gloomy shadow cast upon him. Distrusting himself with his birthright, he sabotages himself with doubt about how he would follow in their footsteps, because 'the same blood runs in his veins. The same weakness'.

This is a narrative he keeps on telling himself, and it has become an essential part of his King-in-exile identity.

There is a scene that deserves special mention in the story of Aragorn, and that is scene of Boromir's death. Boromir, son of the Steward of Gondor, has his eyes on becoming ruler of Gondor one day, and despises that Aragorn would return to reclaim his birthright and openly scorns Aragorn for being 'Isildur's heir. This tension between these two 'sons of Gondor' continues, but it is Boromir who falls prey to the corruption of the Ring and falls in battle after he tried to take it from Frodo.

Boromir saw his mistake and valiantly attempted to defend the Hobbits from being taken by the Uruk-Hai that were set upon them by Saruman, who fell to Sauron's will, but is pierced by arrows. Although Aragorn prevents Boromir's tasteless execution, he is dying.

Now, in this moment, Aragorn meets his dying companion with compassion, and says "I do not know what strength is in my blood, but I swear to you, I will not let the White City fall, nor our people fail."

In one of the most beautiful scenes of the trilogy, Boromir gasps on his dying breath, that "I would have followed you to the end. My brother. My captain. My king." Boromir, at his end, swears his allegiance to Aragorn, deferring to him as his King – the first major external sign that something is shifting in Aragorn, and Boromir dies with honor restored.

In the meantime, Elrond has openly disapproved of the love between Arwen and Aragorn, seeking to undermine them at every turn, arguing that she is immortal and he is not – and even if they win this war, Aragorn will still die someday, leaving her alone without her people. Elrond urges Arwen to join him and the rest of the remaining elves to sail to the Undying Lands, to live a life of eternal grace.

The elves represent the Unconscious, eternal knowing, which knows no humane reasoning or sentimentality as such, and Elrond presses his case to Aragorn. With the rise of Consciousness, embodied by the individuation process of Aragorn and inside each and every one of us, it is symbolic that the elves, representing the Unconscious, will have to fade away into the Undying Lands when Man becomes conscious.

Aragorn, still carrying the Shadow of his forebears on his heart, accepts the words of Elrond, and states that she indeed needs to follow him and her people into the Undying Lands. Here, Aragorn decides to take this as another opportunity to avoid taking up his birthright and letting Arwen go out of his life.

However noble his words may seem may seem, it can be seen as weakness and fear, where he is simply avoiding the fact that fact that he needs to take a full stand towards Arwen (his Anima and future Queen) and the throne of Gondor, if he is to claim them both.

When Arwen, persuaded by Elrond, glumly rides along in a procession of elves towards the Grey Havens to leave this world, she has a beautiful vision of new life, seeing Aragorn and what looks like their son. Instantly, she knows that she will forever regret this moment, and returns, giving Aragorn another chance of integrating his Anima more fully, and thereby also providing new hope for this world, symbolized by her Child, but more pragmatically by imbuing Aragorn with new strength and courage to steward Middle-Earth towards victory.

However, Arwen has chosen mortal life, and, as the power of the Ring is growing, Arwen is fading. Elrond is deeply concerned and, after having followed Arwen home, and is now fully committed to helping the battle for Middle-Earth and saving his daughter from an early grave.

What this shows in a beautiful way is that Arwen has now chosen to take a stand for herself, rejecting the imposing rules of her Tyrant father. Surprisingly, after this confrontation, Elrond becomes wholesome and supportive towards her and Aragorn, and can now be seen as the Wise Elder he truly is. Paradoxically, Arwen disconnects from Elrond, and has found herself a Father.

Elrond seems to have turned around his animosity towards Aragorn and sees wisdom in helping Aragorn to his birthright as the way to new life. Elrond knows that if he fails, Arwen will die and so will the rest of the people of Middle-Earth. Metaphorically, Aragorn is now starting to integrate his Anima figure (Arwen), and by embracing her, he unlocked the Wise Elder (Elrond) inside of himself as well, and is open to his counsel.

Arwen, as the voice of intuition and eternal wisdom of the Unconscious, convinces her father Elrond to reforge the shards of Narsil, Elendil's sword that Sauron shattered. It is the Feminine, the Anima, who whispers wisdom to the Masculine, a deep inner knowing that inspires man to greatness. Indeed, Elrond has the shards of Narsil reforged and now calls it Andúril, Flame of the West.

With Andúril, Flame of the West, Elrond travels in secret to meet Aragorn, who is at the encampment of the Rohirrim horselords, who, after cleaning up Rohan and Isengard, are seeking to aid Gondor in a decisive battle at Minas Tirith. When they meet, Elrond confronts Aragorn, now not in distrust, but with support, and urges him to meet his fate and no longer be the Ranger – but to pick up his birthright.

Aragorn still carries doubts in his heart, and he fears there are not enough men to defeat the forces of Sauron. But Elrond, in his wisdom, says: "There are those who dwell in the mountain", trusting that Aragorn is able to step into his power and reclaim his throne if he wields Andúril, the reforged sword.

'Those who dwell under the mountain' are an army of oathbreakers who failed to live up to their promise to come to the aid of Gondor, thousands of years ago, were cursed by Isildur, and are now living an undying life. Only the King of Gondor may command them and release them from their oaths. The

'ghosts of the past' continue to linger in the Underworld and haunt Aragorn, who is still carrying the taint of his bloodline in his heart. It is because of his fear of who he is that Aragorn fears this place and initially resists going there. But he knows he must. But how is he to do that?

Elrond then brandishes Andúril, Flame of the West, and Aragorn starts to feel strength again and whispers: "Sauron will not have forgotten the sword of Elendil. The blade that was broken shall return to Minas Tirith."

In this moment, Aragorn starts to assume his birthright as he realizes that only by fully embodying his Kingship, will he be able to fulfill his destiny and assume his rightful throne.

Let me pause at this moment. You have just found the shards of the Blade that was Broken, the family heirloom of your lineage, representing your masculine power. In order to reforge and claim your birthright, you must first face your 'ghosts of the past' by honoring your male lineage, get clean with your parents and set yourself free from limiting narratives, which you will have the chance to do in the coming weeks.

And, leading the way, this is similar to what Aragorn is about to do. Together with the elf Legolas (intuition) and the dwarf Gimli (instinct), Aragorn ventures into the mountain, and they enter the Dimholt, where the dead reside. This is a place that reaches deep into the collective unconscious and carries the wounds of the past, symbolized by the ghosts that still linger there.

In the next dialogue, I exemplify the process by which Aragorn overcomes his fears and finally asserts his Kingship. Having arrived, they are confronted by the King of the Dead, who threatens that "The dead do not suffer the living to pass". Aragorn replies with "You will suffer me", to which the Dead King answers scornfully: "None but the King of Gondor may command me!".

Aragorn is now being put to the test and he must persevere in this moment if he wants to prove he truly is the heir of Gondor and embrace the fact.

After a scuffle and some confusion on behalf of the Dead, Aragorn blocks the blade of the King of the Dead who, in unfeigned surprise utters: "But the line was broken!". Aragorn, in this moment, overcomes his inhibitions and fears, and finally embraces that he truly is the true King of Gondor and states that "it has been remade!".

He asserts himself now fully, as the true heir to the throne of Gondor, by proclaiming it out loud to the dead by saying: "I'm Isildur's heir! Fight for me, and I will hold your oaths fulfilled!"

Now we will skip forward faster. Aragorn fully becomes the King, the heir to the throne of Gondor in that decisive moment, and, with the allegiance of an army long dead, he delivers Gondor and the Rohirrim from Rohan from their doom.

In summary, to conclude the story of the Lord of the Rings succinctly, Aragorn leads the remaining

armies to the Black Gates in Mordor to divert Sauron's attention from the Hobbits Sam and Frodo, who have almost reached Mount Doom in the meantime and are within reach of destroying the One Ring once and for all. Evil and the archetypal power that flows through us in the form of complexes, can only be dissolved when faced head on, and with the Ring of Power, it is no different.

Finally, in the end, the Ring is destroyed. Aragorn ascends the throne and is crowned King of Gondor by Gandalf the Magician. After his coronation, he is reunited with Arwen, received the blessings of Elrond, and a wholesome Sacred Marriage takes place in this moment, signifying, together with his coronation, the mythological, psychological wholeness that transcends opposites, embodied by Aragorn now-crowned King. But, in the end, it is Aragorn who bows with humility to the Hobbits, who represent innocence, and shows them their eternal respect for their invaluable contribution to the War of the Ring.

And with that, I conclude my re-telling of the story of Aragorn's individuation process and the symbolism of the Blade that was Broken, in which I attempted to clarify the patterns that play, as well as which themes are recurring from it within Reclaim your Inner Throne.

"Now come the days of the King. May they be blessed." – Gandalf the White

Ruben

End note: The information and inspiration for the depth-psychological analysis of the Lord of the Rings is taken from Jungian Psychology and specifically inspired by Karin Hamaker-Zondag's book called 'Psychische groei en individuatiesymboliek in Tolkiens In de Ban van de Ring', which is about a Jungian perspective on psychological growth in regards to Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings.