Reimagining the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien

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With a foreword by Thomas Honegger

This edition published by International Balkan University, 2022.

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Acknowledgments

I am forever indebted to Professor Thomas Honegger who unselfishly devoted his precious time and vast knowledge on Tolkien, to the making of this book.

I am grateful to all the amazing contributors who answered my call and shared with me (and the world) their unique perspective, adding to the majestic mosaic that is the window into Tolkien's world.

An enormous 'Thank you' to the talented Steve Airola who graciously custom-made and gifted his artwork of the Tree of Life for the cover pages.

The making of this book would not have been possible without the support of the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Seyhan Murtezan-Ibraimi and the International Balkan University.

As always, all my thoughts and all my deeds are inspired by and dedicated to my daughter.

Ana Kechan
Editor

To my Mina

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Foreword
by
Thomas Honegger

Dr. Kechan, after receiving the submissions to her 'call for papers' for this volume, must have felt a bit like Elrond:

> Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world. (*LotR* 242)

It may not be the "counsel for the peril of the world" that is at stake here, and it need not be Providence herself who had prompted the contributors to submit their texts, but the outcome looks ordered inasmuch as the selection gathered in this volume represents some of the major fields of Tolkien studies.

First in importance comes Language – here in form of Farrugia and Schreyer's discussion of the sound symbolism of Tolkien's constructed languages. Tolkien's Elvish languages have fascinated linguists, philologists, and conlangers alike ever since they received a first in-depth treatment in Jim Allan's classic *An Introduction to Elvish* (1978) and the journals of *Vinyar Tengwar* (1988-) and *Parma Eldalamberon* (1971-). The inclusion of dialogue in Sindarin in Peter Jackson's movies meant that a much larger audience got in contact with and became fascinated by the Elvish languages. This led not only to a renewed wave of publications on the Elvish languages per se, such as David Salo's *A Gateway to Sindarin* (2004) and Helmut Pesch's books on Elvish (2003, 2004, 2009), but also to more theoretical studies like Ross Smith's monograph *Inside Language: Linguistic and Aesthetic Theory in Tolkien* (2007, 2nd edition 2011), and Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins' commented edition of Tolkien's *A Secret Vice* (2016). The latter in particular reached out to a much wider readership than the pre-movie publications and introduced

Tolkien's artificial languages also to scholars who saw themselves primarily as linguists. Farrugia and Schreyer continue in this tradition and investigate the euphonious quality of Tolkien's Elvish languages, an aspect Tolkien himself commented on (e.g. in his *A Secret Vice*), and the two authors put it into the larger context of language theories past and present.

Language and languages not only constitute an important and fascinating element in the literary universe created by Tolkien but, as he argues in the 'Foreword' to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, they provided the very motivation for his world-building.[1] Out of language comes the world, or so we could rephrase Tolkien's statement. Luckily, we have with 'On Fairy-stories' another, longer text giving us a more substantial insight into Tolkien's ideas about world-building and related issues. The original lecture, which was delivered in 1939, was first published in print in 1947, yet seems to have had little impact whatsoever before it was republished in *Tree and Leaf* in 1964 and discovered as a possible authorial commentary on the principles behind Tolkien's *opus magnum*. Since then, it has gained greatly in importance so that some critics see it as a Tolkienian counterpart to Coleridge's ideas about Imagination in his *Biographia Literaria* (e.g. by Flieger and Anderson in Tolkien 2008: 20). Laura Iseut Lafrance St-Martin inscribes her discussion of Tolkien's essay into this scholarly framework and proposes a semiotic reading of 'On Fairy-stories' and its concomitant effect on world-building.

Tolkien's 'On Fairy-stories' also provides the theoretical framework for Richard Hasnip's interpretation of the tale 'Leaf by Niggle'. Hasnip provides a coherent argument for reading 'Leaf by Niggle' as an allegorical commentary on Tolkien's own work as an artist and practising Catholic and argues in favour of modifying Shippey's (2003) earlier assessment of Niggle and Parish as two aspects of Tolkien himself. Hasnip's biographical reading of the tale is able to continue and build on a small body of earlier studies, many of which have been published in *Tolkien's Shorter Works. Essays of the Jena Conference 2007* (edited by Margaret Hiley and Frank Weinreich 2008), and provides a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on 'Leaf by Niggle'.

Ana Kechan's own contribution revisits the question of 'Who is (or rather: are) the

1 Tolkien argues that his legendarium has been "primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues" (*LotR* xxii).

hero(es) in *The Lord of the Rings* and explores it with the help of the quaternity as an expression of the totality of the Self archetype in Jungian theory and the structuralist concepts proposed by Propp, Raglan, and Campbell, respectively. She combines these approaches with earlier work on the hero-figure in Tolkien and thus succeeds in giving the discussion new impulses.

The remaining two scholarly papers address the topics of eco-criticism and reader-response, respectively. Ever since some of the founders of Greenpeace compared their journey to Amchitka in 1971 to the Hobbits' journey to Mordor, *The Lord of the Rings* has attracted eco-critical readings as part of its adoption by the counter-cultures of the late 1960s. This has been best explored by Patrick Curry in his *Defending Middle-earth. Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* (1997) and in some of his essays published in *Deep Roots in a Time of Frost. Essays on Tolkien* (2014). Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan Evans, in their *Ents, Elves, and Eriador. The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2006) provide a more focused discussion of Tolkien's environmental ethics, which has been taken up and developed by various authors in the contributions to *Representations of Nature in Middle-earth*. (2015, edited by Martin Simonson). Sava Stamenković, in this volume, continues in this tradition yet enlarges the scope to include Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycle and to achieve a more general assessment of high fantasy's contribution to literary eco-criticism.

As someone who has dedicated more than three decades of his adult life to studying Tolkien's work, I often feel like Elrond since "my memory reaches back even to the Elder Days [of Tolkien criticism]" (*LotR* 243); and since I have seen many a fruitless paper repeating what has been published before, encountering an essay that provides an original and novel approach constitutes always a moment of eucatastrophic joy. Robert Falzon's paper has been responsible for such a rare experience. He explores how the application of Martin Buber's categories and concepts helps us to understand the often radically differing reactions to Tolkien's epic, and I hope at least some of you will share my excitement.

The last contribution by Mark Moore provides an excellent illustration of Falzon's point. Moore's ruminations and musings on Tolkien's works and its adaptations are the results of an encounter with Tolkien's texts in the 'thou-mode', to use Buber's term. They consciously forego the more detached academic 'it-mode' and allow the reader to partic-

ipate in the author's subjective encounter with Tolkien's art.

Whether you are a frequent visitor to Faërie or a 'stranger from distant lands' venturing for the first time into the perilous realms, I hope you will profit from your visit ('if you ever get over it', as Gandalf would add) and wish you much pleasure with reading the contributions to *Reimagining the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*.

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Reading Tolkien through Buber: a Faërian Encounter with *Thou*

by
Robert Falzon

"In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets." This quote is from C.S. Lewis's *Four Loves*. If we had gone down just a few lines further, he would have invoked J.R.R. Tolkien and his other best-friend, Charles Williams, to exemplify the point he was trying to make. For Lewis, Tolkien shed light on Williams and vice-versa.

This paper will talk about neither Lewis nor Charles Williams. It will, however, try to shed light on Tolkien by invoking Martin Buber's insights.[2] Martin Buber and J.R.R. Tolkien were not friends in the way that Lewis was talking about. They might not even have known of each other. Yet, there seems to exist a proximity, not only in time but also in thought, that establishes a relationship between the two authors despite themselves and it is this relationship which will act as an analogue for Lewis's version of friendship that sheds light on the parts.

The need for Buber's insight in the interpretation and criticism of Tolkien

It is a known fact that Tolkien himself was not enthusiastic of interpretation and criticism that went beyond the art of storytelling. It is not that everything was admissible for him but, broadly speaking, the criteria that he used had to do with how effective the artistic aspects were for the impression that the story left with the reader or listener. Certainly,

2 The main text by Buber that will be used is the essay "I and Thou." This was originally published in German in 1923 and the first translation in English appeared in 1937, the same year as the publication of *The Hobbit*. In 1970 a more accurate translation was produced. It is the text of this newer translation that will be used in this paper but for more clarity, unless I am using direct quotes, I will retain the use of "Thou" instead of "You," as had been in the older translation. The 1970 version uses "Thou" only in the title.

he was much less interested, if at all, in what the knowledge revealed about the author or the society in which a story arises.

He was highly interested in the philological aspect of the choice of words, but this in turn was in view of the effect that words would have on the receiver of the story. He seems to have believed that stories, in being made up of words and hence, connected to the history of the words contained, act through the teller of the present story and potentially affect the listener.[3] This is connected to his concept of the seamless web of story, wherein different stories, including our own–both biographical and fictional–are all interconnected (Tolkien 2006, 78. 100-101; cf. Shippey 2005, 32-34).[4] This means that one need not look beyond a story itself to find meaning. Each story, inasmuch as it is necessarily and inherently connected to life, no matter how fantastical, is to some degree allegorical because our own life is an allegory of "universal truth and everlasting life" (Tolkien 2006, 212). It is the "simple allegory", that is, the "particular and the topical" (ibid) that he was so vehemently against. Such particular and topical allegories mean that one needs to look elsewhere for meaning, whereas this would not be necessary if the art of storytelling is good enough. Moreover, the inherent meaning of a good story, for Tolkien, should arrive passively to the receiver through the enjoyment of the story rather than through a detailed and minute study of it.[5]

Despite this, it is not uncommon that authors attempt to apply more scientific, or even religious, criteria to Tolkien's works. I am of the opinion that these are valid but are not sufficient. There are a number of cases where authors analyse Tolkien's work and try

3 In discussing the importance of philology in understanding Tolkien, Tom Shippey discusses the author's 'comment on "The Name 'Nodens'" for the Society of Antiquaries in 1932.' (see Shippey 2005, 40-41). Here, Shippey writes how Tolkien made connections between names and history or historical events. In this discussion, at one point, he writes: "Shakespeare can naturally have known nothing about 'Nodens,' or about *Beowulf* […] *That did not mean that the old stories were not in some way working through him*, present even in his much-altered version. Like 'Akeman Street' and 'Wayland's Smithy,' Tolkien might have concluded, even *King Lear* could bear witness to a sort of English, or British, continuity" (Ibid. 41, emphasis mine.)

4 More emphatic than these references, is the dialogue between Sam and Frodo in "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol" in *The Lord of the Rings* where they discuss how they are part of a story which started millennia ago and is connected with that of Beren, and how one day, their own part will be written and told by the fireside. In placing this dialogue in his fiction, Tolkien is pointing to the continuity (which does not mean sameness) between fiction and the primary world. With his philological background, Tolkien held this belief strongly and it is observable in the way he writes about his fiction in his *Letters*.

5 "The analytic study of fairy-stories is as bad a preparation for the enjoying or the writing of them […] The study may indeed become depressing." (Tolkien 2014, 66).

to explain how his faith influenced his work.[6] However, these often risk presenting faith only as an object, a set of influential theological or catechetical concepts, or a fixed experience, as one facet of Tolkien's life that supersedes the others.[7] Raymond Edwards writes that "Tolkien's piety was of a traditional cast, and was (in later life, at any rate) heavily focussed on the Blessed Sacrament; but his theology is typically expansive and generous, hidebound neither by Thomist categorizing nor by Ultramontane triumphalism" (2020, 29).

Tolkien's faith was certainly very important to him and he himself applied its categories to his work.[8] So, it is legitimate to raise the issue of faith and religion when talking or writing academically about Tolkien's works. However, it is perhaps also important to approach the topic in a certain way, to which we will hint soon.

Concerning other approaches, it is also quite common that the names of Carl Gustav Jung and Joseph Campbell come up when myths or fairy tales are involved in academic scrutiny. Tolkien is not exempt from this type of analysis and of course, it is both justified and understandable.

These approaches are useful and undoubtedly interesting, but what of the experience of reading the stories by the common reader who does not go into such detailed study? It would be foolish to think that no impact is left on these readers. What is that impact? Honegger writes: "*The Lord of the Rings* especially seems to have 'spoken' to many of its readers via its archetypal images and motifs and elicited, as is to be expected from archetypal images, a strong emotional response… [it] constitutes a compensatory set of archetypal images that our age and culture requires for greater balance" (Honegger 2011).

Yet, in themselves, these "archetypal images," precisely in being images, point elsewhere, into a direction that is closer to the spiritual realm that is beyond the scrutinizing eye of psychoanalysis. Moreover, they seem to completely dismiss the author himself in an unapologetic triumph of the "death of the author" (cf. Barthes 1967). It is clear

6 For such analyses see, for example, Wood 2003 or Pearce 1998.

7 This author's approach to faith is that it is not simply one facet next to many others of a person's life, inasmuch as it is a relationship with the Divine, it is not uni- but bi-directional, and, even though it is a facet in a person's life, it is also a pervasive and transversal facet *without supplanting the others*.

8 Tolkien's letters are full of such examples. To cite one: in Letter 191 where he talks about Frodo's failure, he cites St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians and also the Lord's Prayer (Tolkien 2006, 251-252).

that Tolkien did not have such intentions when he was writing his fairy-stories, so these images, as interesting as they are, come up despite of him. If we are to give value to the stature that is Tolkien's as an author, these psychoanalytical and anthropological readings are not enough to discuss Tolkien's works. Jungian analysis adds an intriguing aspect to literary criticism but does not go as deep as Tolkien's own treatment of fairy-stories.

Looking, then, at the author's person and, hence, once again at his faith, it is evident that this dimension was foundational in his life. It is evidenced in numerous places. It was not foundational in a sectarian manner marking him as Catholic and separating him from the rest. Indeed, many of his closest friends, and even his wife, were not Catholic. Given the time, had he been sectarian, he would perhaps have stopped at Neo-Scholasticism. Instead, his works show a much more expansive approach, as Edwards, quoted above, writes. Martin Buber's claim about his own faith seems to fit Tolkien's like a glove:

> The theological element has indeed influenced a large part of my scholarship and reporting. It is the foundation of my thinking, but not as a derivative of anything traditional, as important as that also may be to me. It has, therefore, not been to "theology," but rather to the experience of faith that I owe the independence of my thought. (Buber 1967, 690)

In a letter to Robert Murray in 1953, Tolkien wrote: "[I] should chiefly be grateful for having been brought up (since I was eight) in a Faith that has nourished me and taught me all the little that I know; and that I owe to my mother, who clung to her conversion and died young, largely through the hardships of poverty resulting from it" (Tolkien 2006, 172).

The terms "brought up," "nourished me," "taught me" and the recalling of his mother's death associated to her conversion, suggest an approach to faith that is more than just an outer practice, and much less a moral code. Faith for Tolkien seems to have taken his mother's role and is not relegated to a religious object.[9] Faith had a parental role for Tolkien: the parenthood of the Divine. No wonder he often wrote about it to his own children

9 *Religion* here is understood in the anthropological-cultural sense of a defined and shared system of belief that includes ritual, sacred texts and a moral code. *Faith* is understood as a less defined experience that may include religion but is also more personal and intimate to a person's life. In the quoted letter, Tolkien may or may not have intended it to refer exclusively to Roman Catholic Religion, but for sure, his words reveal it to be more than an outer defined experience.

in their correspondence.[10] Faith may thus possibly be referred to as Tolkien's relationship with the Divine. Undoubtedly, this can be termed a psychoanalytic move but, more than that, it reflects how faith was essentially relational for Tolkien, as it was for Buber. This is the reason why his theology stemming from his faith was not crystallised. It is also the reason why it can be reasonably supposed that not only is it true that faith influenced his work, but that the other way round is also true. If this is the case, then Tolkien's work does not only affect us psychologically or culturally, but also spiritually. In turn, this is why Buber's *I-Thou* paradigm can be aptly used to shed light on Tolkien.

Buber (1970, 53-59) emphasised that there are two modes in which a person may approach the world: the *I-Thou* mode and the *I-It* mode. In the former, the person "does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation." In the latter, "I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something." In both modes, the *I* is particular to the mode. In *I-Thou*, the *I* does not *experience* the *Thou* but *relates* to it. In *I-It*, the person experiences the *It*, "it" being a defined person, an object, animate or otherwise. In *I-Thou*, subject-object cannot be spoken of, while in *I-It* subject and object take their form. For Buber, both modes are important and necessary, but while the *I-It* mode yields knowledge, use and skill, the *I-Thou* mode is the realm of meaning, relation and presence.

In the context of many conflictual stances as to what approach is best to interpret and understand Tolkien, this paper is not aiming at proposing yet another approach, but just at offering a point of view or perspective that could in turn aid the hermeneutics.[11] It is suggesting that even if we are to take the philological approach, or else choose a theological, or a psychoanalytical approach, we need to approach the works of Tolkien with the reverence due to encounters that take place in the *I-Thou* mode. The main reason is that this is how Tolkien himself envisioned Faërie:

> …the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country. I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its

10 One moving example is Letter 250, addressed to his second son, Michael, dated November 1, 1963 (Tolkien 2006, 336-341).

11 For a concise overview of the issue relating to the different approaches, see Thomas Honegger, "Tolkien through the Eyes of a Mediaevalist," in *Reconsidering Tolkien*, Cormarë Series 8 (Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2005) 45-66.

> qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole. […] Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic – but it is a magic of a peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician. […] That [magic] must in that story be taken seriously, neither laughed at nor explained away. (Tolkien 2014, 32-33)

It is Tolkien himself who puts us on track: in Faërie anything could happen because the traveller who ventures into the Realm comes across things and elements that present themselves in a different and new way than one would experience them in the Primary world. Faërie is therefore a place of encounter of the person with *Thou*.

> We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses – and wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us to make. […] And there is (especially for the humble) *Mooreeffoc*, or Chestertonian fantasy. *Mooreeffoc* is a fantastic word, but it could be seen written up in every town in this land. It is Coffee-room, viewed from the inside through a glass door, as it was seen by Dickens on a dark London day; and it was used by Chesterton to denote the queerness of things that have become trite, when they are seen suddenly from a new angle. (Tolkien 2014, 67-68)

It may take Tolkien's readers a while to grasp why he talks in several of his letters and essays of Faërie and elves as if they were part of the Primary world. The reason may be because, as he himself says in the penultimate quote, magic should not be explained away, and the moment the wrong – perhaps arrogant or pretentious – question is asked, the enchantment is lifted and we cannot relate anymore. Faërie and elves, then, cannot be treated as if they were something that belongs only in the imagination, if this is understood only as taking place in the grey-matter between one's ears.

Tolkien was aware that on the borders of Faërie he was treading on sacred and spiritual ground, even if he would not have used these terms so comfortably as we do. He did

not equate Faërie with religion, and yet it shares its sacredness and spirituality. In fact, he writes: "Fairy-stories as a whole have three faces: the Mystical, towards the supernatural; the Magical towards nature; and the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man. […] [the Magical] may (but not so easily) be made a vehicle of Mystery" (Tolkien 2014, 44). Language, on which any story ultimately depends, is itself imbued with spirituality. As an expert in languages, he had at least a working knowledge of Sanskrit (see Scull and Hammond 2017, vol.2, 625) and he would have known that the term *Devanagari* used to describe what is equivalent to the alphabet, meant something like "town of the gods."[12] Even though, as Tom Shippey says, philology (and hence, language in its broadest reaches) is the only proper key to approach Tolkien's works (Shippey 2005, 8-9), this is sacred ground that deserves the removal of our sandals (cf. Ex. 3:5) rather than the use of telescopes and calipers (Barfield 2010, 19) to scrutinise it. Faërie and its inhabitants need to be encountered as *Thou* before they are studied as *It*.

Tolkien's philosophy matching that of Buber

It is remarkable that even though, to my knowledge, there is no reliable evidence that Tolkien and Buber were aware of each other, and even though they came from completely different academic backgrounds and used different vocabulary, a number of concepts are strikingly similar. Perhaps it is a sign of the *Zeitgeist*.

For one thing, it is interesting to look at how Buber's view of art within his dialogical structure recalls Tolkien's own writing process. Buber says that forms appear to a person, who then turns them into a work of art (Buber 1970, 60-61). As such, the form is not "a figment of his soul," (ibid.) meaning that it transcends the person of the artist. "The form that confronts me I cannot experience nor describe; I can only actualize it" (ibid.). The form is a *Thou*, while the work of art that it is made to embody by the artist is an *It* that can be experienced and described. And yet, "the receptive beholder may be bodily *confronted* now and again." (ibid., emphasis mine). With regards to the form, Buber says, "tested for its objectivity, the form is not "there" at all; but what can equal its presence? And it is an actual relation: it acts on me as I act on it" (ibid.).

12 Closer to home, Tom Shippey explains the philological weight that the words "Gospel" and "Glamour" must have carried for Tolkien: other proof for the sacredness of words, stories and language. See Shippey 2005, 58-61.

When it comes to Tolkien's view of art and its processes, there are several examples that one may cite but I will present two instances. The first, and perhaps more famous, is his description of his conception of the hobbits. "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" -Tolkien described how this conception came all of a sudden and quite unexpectedly while he was correcting exam papers and how he then felt compelled to continue discovering what a hobbit is through his story-telling, that is, through his art. In a footnote to one of his letters, he wrote: "I once scribbled 'hobbit' on a blank page of some boring school exam paper in the early 1930's. It was some time before I discovered what it referred to!" (Tolkien 2006, 219). The second example is his encounter with Faramir and Aragorn as he was writing *The Lord of the Rings*. Again, these came unexpectedly: "A new character has come on the scene (I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but there he came walking into the woods of Ithilien): Faramir, the brother of Boromir…" (Tolkien 2006, 79); "I met a lot of things on the way that astonished me. Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree. Strider sitting in the corner was a shock, and I had not more idea who he was than had Frodo" (Tolkien 2006, 216).

Like Buber, Tolkien saw art as having a life of its own that comes into the world through the artist or, in his case, the story-teller. It is also clear how, similar to what Buber writes about art and the artist, Tolkien let the forms surprise him and encountered them to give them objectivity in his characters and storylines. Lastly, like Buber, who saw art as having a source in eternity, Tolkien saw the art of fantasy as being humanity's right in virtue of it being made in the image of a Maker, and hence, art as ultimately conducing to the original Maker (Tolkien 2014, 66), or the "Writer of the Story" (cf. Tolkien 2006, 253). We can argue, then, that even if he does not say so explicitly, Tolkien regarded art as the main spiritual conveyor in story-telling through the enchantment of words that is found ultimately in the link between myth and language (Barfield 2010 and Tolkien 2014). Such regard contrasts, to some degree, other approaches to stories, like for example, those of Jung and Campbell who adopt an empirical approach.[13] An empirical approach still has

13 Even though we need to understand the term 'empirical' in its historical and academic context, it seems to be how Jung described himself. In a letter dated June 29th, 1960, he wrote: "Buber and I start from an entirely different basis: I make no transcendental statements. I am essentially empirical, as I have stated more than once. I am dealing with psychic phenomena and not with metaphysical assertions" (Jung 2011, 570). The letter continues to explain the academic difference he saw between himself and Buber.

something to say about spirituality inasmuch as it deals with art objects (as *It*!), but the art itself, which is so central to Tolkien is somewhat at the margins of the approach and not that which enlightens the rest.

Another aspect to look at is the prominence that both Tolkien and Buber give to language and speech. In the case of Tolkien this, in fact, is not detached from the artistic aspect we have just referred to. Dimitra Fimi explains how Tolkien's invented languages, which sustain, and are sustained by, his stories, are in the middle of the spectrum of languages as communication and languages as art (Fimi 2018). Moreover, he himself states that "the invention of languages is the foundation. The 'stories' were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse" (Tolkien 2006, 219).

In the essay "I and Thou", language is not the main subject, but it evidently has a very important role. Buber refers to the two modes or *I-Thou* and *I-It* as *Grundworte*, translated as "basic words" and on these *words* his whole dialogical philosophy is founded. Buber also considers the three spheres of relation (thus the realm of *Thou* from where meaning emerges) in terms of language and speech: relations with nature remain at "the threshold of language"; relations with other human beings enter language; relations with spiritual beings create language since we do not hear a spirit but still "feel addressed" (Buber, 1970).

Thus, in both we see a prominence of language, and both give importance to myth.

> In the beginning is the relation. Consider the language of "primitive" peoples, meaning those who have remained poor in objects and whose life develops in a small sphere of acts that have a strong presence. The nuclei of this language, their sentence-words—*primal pre-grammatical forms that eventually split into the multiplicity of different kinds of words*—generally designate the wholeness of a relation. (Buber 1970, 69, emphasis mine)[14]

The concepts expressed here by Buber recall what was also expressed by Owen Barfield in *Poetic Diction*. This text is known to have significantly inspired Tolkien (See Flieger, 2002). Barfield wrote:

14 Both Buber and Barfield refer to "primitive people". While to us in the 21st century this may cause some discomfort, we need to understand that neither author used it disparagingly, and if one reads closely enough one is likely to see that the opposite is probably truer.

> In other words, you may imply, if you choose, with Dr. Blair, that the earliest words in use were 'the names of sensible, material objects' *and nothing more*–only, in that case, you must suppose the 'sensible objects' themselves to have been something more; you must suppose that they were not, as they appear to be at present, isolated, or detached, from thinking and feeling. Afterwards, in the development of language and thought, these single meanings split up into contrasted pairs the abstract and the concrete, particular and general, objective and subjective. And the poesy felt by us to reside in ancient language consists just in this, that, out of our later, analytic, 'subjective' consciousness, a consciousness which has been brought about along with, and partly because of, this splitting up of meaning, we are led back to experience the original unity.
>
> Thus, the sunstruck or 'meaningless' man, […] is in no sense whatever […] an analagon of primitive man. To make him that, we should have to conceive of him so far from being meaningless as literally resounding with all manner of meaning, and moreover, with meaning such that, if he could but communicate it to us, we should be listening to poetry. (Barfield 2010, 77-78).

This lengthy reference to Barfield is worth the space because it links Buber's insights with those of Tolkien especially in his poem "Mythopoeia," which he also refers to in his essay 'On Fairy-stories' to show how fairy-stories are linked to language and to truth in what may be termed here as "a spiritual light."

Buber, however, would continue saying that the precursors of *Thou* in a primitive person are the understanding of spiritual power in the world and a feeling of connection with it. When the person moves outside of relation with the world and what is outside of themselves is perceived as objects of human consciousness, the development of "I" begins. This also means that the first *I-It* word of separation is spoken, and awareness of their awareness takes place in the person. Once again, this echoes the notion of the two opposing forces that Barfield speaks of: separation and unity (Barfield 2010, 79-80). After single meanings have split up into a number of separated and isolated concepts,

in the evolution of consciousness there is the reassembly of these concepts where even previously forgotten connections and resemblances are brought together in metaphor. Metaphor, thus, contains a reality, once self-evident and which therefore was not experienced conceptually (it was a *Thou*!) but "which can *now* only be reached by an effort of the individual mind" (ibid. 80): in Buberian terms, the re-presenting of a reality in a way that it is allowed to move from an *It* back to a *Thou*.

For Buber, the two modes of *I-Thou* and *I-It* occur in people synchronically and in the individual almost simultaneously; for Barfield, the forces of separation and unity occur diachronically in what he calls an evolution of consciousness of humanity; Tolkien as a person and an author seems to bring the two together, making it possible for us to participate in the transcendence of the stories and thus draw spiritual sustenance from engaging with his fiction. Tolkien, in fact, talks about (echoing, if unknowingly, Buber) recovery of vision, escape from prison walls of the familiar and the trite, and consolation in the glimpse of the joy that lies beyond the walls of the world (Tolkien 2014, 67-75). This happens in the individual. At the same time, he theorises how history adds different ingredients to the boiling cauldron of fairy-stories, thus pointing to a developmental approach to these stories (Tolkien 2014, 38-49). His own creations are made up of a patchwork of different material from his own life and from previous (mostly medieval) literature and development of language, now renewed and reworked (sub-created) into a new and separate (yet remaining within the seamless web of story) whole: what he saw as the new tree that grows out of a leaf-mould (Carpenter 2000, 131). In this, he is closer to Barfield through the sense of historical movement,[15] but Buber's notion of art becoming a work from form, which was mentioned previously with the quotes from Tolkien's own letters, helps us understand that this patchwork is not solely Tolkien's conscious, intellectual, and voluntary endeavour. In a letter written two years before his death, he writes about meeting a reader who mistakenly thought that Tolkien had been inspired by pictorial Art:

> Suddenly he said: 'Of course you don't suppose, do you, that you wrote all that book yourself?'
>
> Pure Gandalf! I was too well acquainted with G. to expose myself

15 In part 2 of "I and Thou," Buber also talks about how the two modes of approach to the world affect world history.

> rashly, or to ask what he meant. I think I said: 'No, I don't suppose so any longer.' I have never since been able to suppose so. An alarming conclusion for an old philologist to draw concerning his private amusement. But not one that should puff any one up who considers the imperfections of 'chosen instruments,' and indeed what sometimes seems their lamentable unfitness for the purpose. [...]
>
> Of course *The L.R.* does not belong to me. It has been brought forth and must now go its appointed way in the world, though naturally I take a deep interest in its fortunes, as a parent would of a child. (Tolkien 2006)

At this stage, the poem "Mythopoeia" becomes so clear in both meaning and intent:

> He sees no stars who does not see them first
> of living silver made that sudden burst
> to flame like flowers beneath the ancient song,
> whose very echo after-music long
> has since pursued. […]
> The heart of man is not compound of lies,
> but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
> and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,
> man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
> Disgraced he may be, yet is not dethroned,
> and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned,
> his world-dominion by creative act:
> not his to worship the great Artefact,
> man, sub-creator, *the refracted light*
> *through whom is splintered from a single White*
> *to many hues, and endlessly combined*
> *in living shapes that move from mind to mind.*
> Though all the crannies of the world we filled
> with elves and goblins, though we dared to build
> gods and their houses out of dark and light,

and sow the seed of dragons, 'twas our right
(used or misused). The right has not decayed.
We make still by the law in which we're made. […]
I will not walk with your progressive apes,
erect and sapient. Before them gapes
the dark abyss to which their progress tends […]
I bow not yet before the Iron Crown,
nor cast my own small golden sceptre down. […]
(Tolkien 2001, 87.89, emphasis mine echoing both Buber and Barfield)

These excerpts from the poem serve to show how Tolkien's creative genius, as well as his approach to fairy-stories in general, is grounded in his approach (through the lens of language) to reality as a relatable *Thou* that is not bound by the iron fetters of apparent cold fact. In the writing of stories, the *Thou* is inevitably turned into *It*, and yet Faërie allows reality to encounter the reader as *Thou* (cf. Buber 1970, 89-91). Furthermore, this *Thou* of reality permits Tolkien to acknowledge the Eternal *Thou* in whose image we are made and who can never be possessed or turned to *It*.[16] The moral life stems out of this acknowledgment.

A Faërian encounter with *Thou*

At this point, we could delve into some themes in Tolkien's fiction and see how they fit Buber's dialogical framework. The main aim of this paper is to offer a point-of-view rather than provide an interpretation, so this shall be done rather briefly, as further detail would be beyond our scope.

We have already mentioned how Tolkien first came up with the idea of the hobbits. For him it was an encounter with *Thou.* However, after the first encounter, he also developed the protagonists Bilbo, Frodo and Sam in such a way that they grew to face the events in Middle-earth as *Thou.* Shippey (2002, 2005) describes hobbits in general to be anachronistic to Middle-earth, for "they do not fit at all into Middle-earth, the world of

16 We need only recall what happened to the rebellious Númenoreans when they rejected Illúvatar and sailed to the West in an attempt to possess immortality by force. See Tolkien 1999, 309-338.

dwarves and elves, wizards and dragons, trolls and goblins, Beorn and Smaug and Gollum" (Shippey 2002, 11). He explains how the hobbits are in fact a vehicle for the modern reader to delve into Middle-earth. The hobbits need to shed their smug lifestyles in order for transformation to take place in them and deliverance of Middle-earth to succeed. It is also interesting how the vast majority of seasoned Tolkien enthusiasts recommend new Tolkien-readers to start with the two stories that involve hobbits rather than start with the texts of the First Age as would be chronologically correct. The passage to encounter *Thou* in Middle-earth is not obvious and might be daunting if we have not been accompanied by a hobbit who goes through the passage with us first.

Buber also gives us another instrument to use in reading Tolkien's treatment of the problem of evil by saying that "the basic word *I-It* does not come from evil—any more than matter comes from evil. *It* comes from evil—like matter that presumes to be that which has being. When man lets it have its way, the relentlessly growing *It*-world grows over him like weeds, his own *I* loses its actuality" (Buber 1970, 95-96). The *I-It* mode is only evil when it is exclusive: there can be no meaning and, thus, identity, when everyone is treated as an object. Power as such is not evil in Tolkien either: only when it is exercised to dominate does it become evil. About the person who is overcome by the *It*-world, Buber continues:

> To be sure, he views the beings around him as so many machines capable of different achievements that have to be calculated and used for the cause. But that is also how he views himself (only he can never cease experimenting to determine his own capacities, and yet never experiences their limits). He treats himself, too, as an It. (Buber 1970, 118)

In these quotes, it is easy to recall Saruman, Sauron and even Morgoth. The White Wizard becomes Saruman of Many Colours, Sauron loses the ability to appear fair and is referred to as a Lidless Eye, and Morgoth, once the greatest of the Valar, becomes bound to his physical form. The will to sheer power and domination is clear in all three; the "many machines" that Buber mentions recall the orcs who are always treated as mere pawns by all three; not to mention the linking of the Machine to the Magic of the Enemy by Tolkien (2006, 145). All the evil beings in Middle-earth may be seen to reduce all

Thous to *Its* by treating them as useful objects to their own will[17] and so they may give the idea that good and evil are either equal or that evil is a positive force rather than mere absence, as had been suggested by Boethius. However, in Tolkien's sub-creation, as in the Judeo-Christian belief (hence that of both Buber and Tolkien), there is the Eternal *Thou* that cannot be reduced to an *It* as the evil characters reduce even themselves in turn. In the Legendarium, it is Illúvatar who at Frodo's succumbing to the Ring steps in as the Writer of the Story (Tolkien 2006, 253).

These are just illustrations of how Tolkien approaches these themes but as such, they could remain text printed on paper. For Tolkien, the most important value is to engage with stories as stories in their entirety, that is, the stories themselves as *Thou*. It is in such type of engagement that lessons can be learnt and, more importantly, transformation may take place. With regards to the functions that are offered to a "peculiar degree or mode" in fairy-stories, that is, fantasy, recovery, escape and consolation (Tolkien 2014, 59), Tolkien will explain that the reader can only arrive to them passively. Imagination and Faërie have a life of their own and the person who journeys in them is not the sole dweller.[18]

> "The You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is my essential deed. The You encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship to it." (Buber 1970, 62)

17 We should not think that this is done only by evil beings. In writing about recovery, Tolkien says: "Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view. I do not say "seeing things as they are" and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say "seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them"—as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness. […] This triteness is really the penalty of "appropriation": the things that are trite, or (in a bad sense) familiar, are the things that we have appropriated, legally or mentally. We say we know them. They have become like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring ceased to look at them." (Tolkien 2014, 67).

18 This idea is rendered clear in Tolkien's last story: *Smith of Wootton Major*. In his note about the "genesis of the story," as he was describing how it had started with just a notion of a cake prepared for a children's party in what should have been an introduction to a book by George MacDonald in order to explain the essence of fairy-stories, Tolkien wrote: "There I stopped, realizing that the 'short story' had developed an independent life and should be completed as a thing in itself" (Tolkien 2005, 86). In the Afterword to *Smith*, Flieger writes that instead of explaining what Faërie is, Tolkien wrote *Smith* (Tolkien 2005, 72). Imagination has a life of its own, much like the *I-Thou* relationship, and story-telling was for Tolkien the best means to render the idea a real living encounter for others. Moreover, the person who lives this encounter through imagination, like Smith who has access to Faërie, becomes like a "missionary" to others. About the person who lives with *Thou* Buber writes: "Here the word has become life, and this life, whether it fulfilled the law or broke the law—both are required on occasion lest the spirit die on earth—is teaching. Thus, it stands before posterity in order to teach it, not what is and not what ought to be, but how one lives in the spirit, in the countenance of the You" (Buber 1970, 92).

It is worth remarking that Tolkien does not fully and immediately equate Faërie with imagination. Perhaps it is because imagination is often conceived to be a private realm whereas Faërie, in being presented as an objective reality, could be a shared reality. Yet, there are many convergences between Faërie and imagination if we consider imagination to include the use of language in a "Barfieldian way" such that it is not only communicative but also creative of meaning and so, a transpersonal reality. Towards the end of the essay about his last story *Smith of Wootton Major*, Tolkien writes:

> Faery might be said indeed to represent Imagination (without definition because taking in all the definitions of this word): esthetic: exploratory and receptive; and artistic: inventive, dynamic, (sub)creative. This compound of awareness of a limitless world outside our domestic parish; a love (in ruth and admiration) for the things in it; and a desire for wonder, marvels, both perceived and conceived – this 'Faery' is as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life: sunlight as distinguished from the soil, say, though it permeates and modifies even that. (Tolkien 2005, 144-145)

In Buber's terms, the sunlight, or Faërie/imagination, is the relationship with the *Thou*; the soil, or science/knowledge, is the experience of *It*.

Conclusion

One may object as to what Buber really adds to Tolkien. To Tolkien he adds nothing, but to us, he gives us further help approaching Tolkien's work. Buber is like a springboard for us so that Tolkien's emphasis on the artistic dimension and his engagement with Faërie may leap into transcendence.

Buber's *I-Thou* gives us a tool to consider Tolkien's faith in a non-traditional way as a "that-which-is-over-against,"[19] which is itself transformed by Faërie. Had Tolkien's faith been just crystallised concepts, it could be regarded as *It*, and in regarding it as such,

19 The word that Buber uses is *Gegenüber*, which in English means "opposite to" or "vis-à-vis" in French. Faith, in being the result of a relationship between the person and the Divine, presents itself as a *Gegenüber*, an "over against": a *Thou* rather than an objectified *It* in the conceptual realm.

there would have not been reason to turn to Buber in order to shed light on Tolkien's works. On the other hand, being relational, as shown above, for Tolkien, faith involved a whole view of and approach to the world that transcended himself and acquired a life or reality of its own, much like Buber's idea of the relationality between the *I* and the *Thou* (see Buber 1970, 89). In looking at his work, we, therefore, necessarily have to consider faith, but in order to be true to *Tolkien*'s faith and not reduce it to an *It*, we need to avoid hunting for religious concepts in his work (apart from those with which he presents us himself) and instead *relate* to it ourselves, thereby allowing it to be our own *Thou.* In so doing, we will be transformed ourselves as Tolkien was transformed, as the thousands of Tolkien's readers around the world are transformed. It is in this way that the emotions elicited by the archetypal images mentioned above in reference to Jungian analysis are not mere sentiment but real enchantment. Of course, both from a Buberian point of view as well as from a Tolkienian one, this needs to be qualified. It cannot be a dominating enterprise, and yet if we are discussing faith academically, we cannot but reduce it to *It.* The least we can do is discuss Tolkien's work after having related with it rather than just reflected upon it. It is a way of considering it while keeping the art within sight.[20] This is perhaps where much of Tolkien criticism misses the mark and ends up inadvertently cutting the ball in search of the bounce,[21] whether it be literary, psychoanalytical or theological criticism. The ball is cut when criticism is done by experts who have experienced an *It* rather than friends who after relating to a *Thou*, tell other friends of that relationship.[22] Considering Faërie as a place of encounter with one's *Thou*, it helps us understand why millions of readers around the world are affected by Tolkien's works while his bitterest critics are often literary academics or journalists. Only if the readers approach a *Thou* in Tolkien's own fairy-stories, can they get "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (Tolkien 2014, 75) that is evidently spiritual and not merely literary, theological or psychological.

20 In empirical approaches, art has its importance but more as a manifestation of the human psyche than as a place of encounter with the Other. As such, in these approaches art as art risks being sidelined.

21 The metaphor of cutting the ball in search of the bounce was given by a fellow Inkling Roger Lancelyn Green in reference to looking for meaning in *Smith of Wootton Major*. Verlyn Flieger discusses this briefly in her Afterword in Tolkien 2005, 80.

22 This phrase does not intend to criticise the experts, unless constructively. "Experts" and "experience" have the same etymological root. Buber insists that *Thou* cannot be experienced, but only related to. While both *I-It* and *I-Thou* are necessary in life, *It* gives knowledge while *Thou* gives meaning. Hence, fullness cannot be achieved only through *I-It*.

There are indeed overlaps in Tolkien's own methods and approaches with those of others. In particular reference to Tolkien and Jung, Honegger writes:

> The two were drawing water from the same enchanted well. This might very well be the reason why he [Tolkien] instinctively tried to keep a certain distance. Tolkien, if we are to believe his retrospective account of the (often nocturnal) writing process, was guided and inspired largely by his 'unconscious' – and images and concepts that originated in the 'collective unconscious'. (Honegger 2011)

It is the overall attitude and approach that varies, and that makes a whole difference to the possibilities that engaging with fairy-stories will bring up. Honegger (2011) is correct when he writes that "what is needed is more Tolkien scholars that apply Jung, rather than Jungians who apply psychoanalytical tools to Tolkien." Tolkien scholars are perhaps better equipped to know what to take from Jung, as from other scholars and other disciplines, for a more comprehensive view of Tolkien's works that respects the story of the author's life and also provide us with the right functions the works have to offer. The determining factor, however, will remain the attitude of approaching the works as *Thou*.

Tolkien, while he himself draws from Faërie and imprints his own faith, helps us draw spiritual sustenance, even a Divine epistemology, from fairy-stories, both his own and the world's. It is ultimately desire (which has to do with will) – being the driving force of life – that connects us spiritually between ourselves and the Divine because it makes us transcend ourselves; and fairy-stories, for Tolkien, serve to do just that - awaken desire: "Fairy-stories were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but desirability. If they awakened *desire*, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded" (Tolkien 2014, 55). As Buber writes, "In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every sphere according to its manner" (Buber 1970, 57).

For Tolkien, faith is formed partly but undeniably as the relationship, in the form of Desire, that happens in Faërie between himself and the (immanent and transcendent) Divine. Tolkien, therefore, does not simply give us works that can fit into theories drawn by others: both he and his works require a different attitude that different disciplines

need to adopt in order to approach his fiction. While religious influences can be traced, the journey of the hero can be drawn, archetypes can be observed, and while philology can be affirmed, there is much more to Tolkien's approach. Only if they walk through his work as Smith walked through Faërie, can all these have an effect on the academics in the same way as is observed in thousands of readers.

As in all friendships, there is reciprocity: Tolkien also sheds light on Buber. In his conclusion to a talk he gave on Buber and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, David Erlich posed some questions to his audience:

> In school, we teach the mastering of languages. We teach portions of language that correspond to portions of the world: from chemistry to history, from geography to economy. How can we, at the same time, respect and stimulate wonder with the existence of the world? Is it possible to do that in school? And how can we promote *I-You* relations in school? How must a classroom function in order to develop those relational skills?
>
> To sum up, how can we teach languages and, at the same time, running "against the boundaries of language," in the "threshold of speech," promote wonder with the World and wonder with the Other? (Erlich 2019)

Erlich does not provide the answers but leaves it to his audience to think of possible answers. Buber and Wittgenstein have provided him (and us) with very important questions. Tolkien's fiction with his notion of Faërie may provide us with one possible answer for the future generations.

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Lambenyáre, Language Ideologies and Worldview: The Sound Symbolism of Tolkien's Constructed Languages

by
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Introduction

To create a fictional world that will draw in readers authors engage in the process of world-building. There are many different ways to build a fictional world, from descriptions of landscapes, to realistic characters, but the inclusion of realistic speech and language patterns is also common. A full language created for a fictional work is known as a constructed language (Schreyer 2021). There are multiple kinds of constructed languages, also known as conlangs, and one way that these languages are categorized is through their intended purpose. An auxiliary language (auxlang) is one that is made to be of assistance to a group of speakers, such as the constructed language of Esperanto (Schreyer 2021), while an artistic language (artlang) is one that is meant to be art itself or used for an artistic purpose, usually literature, film, or television.

J.R.R. Tolkien is renowned for his artistic languages. As Weiner and Marshall write, "almost anyone who knows anything about J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-5) knows that Tolkien put invented languages into the mouths of his characters" (2011, 75). The art of world-building is typically associated with science fiction and fantasy works, although that understanding somewhat limits what effective world-building can do. If the goal is to create a fully realized experience of a place, a people, a physical setting, or a culture, this is something authors do regardless of genre. Their language choices build the experience of a text for the reader, to make it as real as possible for them, and there are multiple ways readers can be brought into the imagined world the author is building. Constructed languages are multifaceted tools to achieve this, as they allow an author to set a group of speakers apart from the world of the reader instantaneously. On top of that, the sounds and structure of the language can offer cues about its speakers to the reader.

Tolkien's constructed languages include the Elvish languages of Sindarin and Quenya, but also Black Speech and other languages. In this paper, we provide a lambenyáre, which is the Quenya word for "an account or history of languages", particularly focusing on the natural languages which parallel Sindarin - Welsh and Quenya - Finnish. We also discuss how Tolkien's language ideologies influenced his own language creation and suggest ways for current researchers and future conlangers to avoid similar linguistic traps.

Language ideologies and linguistic determinism

> "*That, I guess, is the language of the Rohirrim, for it is like to this land itself; rich and rolling in part, and else hard and stern as the mountains. But I cannot guess what it means, save that it is laden with the sadness of Mortal Men*" (Legolas, *The Two Towers*)

There are a multitude of factors that will affect the linguistic choices of a speaker: some that are based on an individual's way of speaking, and some which have had a centuries-long impact on the structure and sound of an entire language. These are known as language ideologies or the beliefs or opinions speakers hold about languages, often mediated through "cultural conceptions" (Woolard 1998, 10). For a constructed language, and specifically in the case of the languages Tolkien devised, his conception of all the places and cultures of Middle-earth are intricately tied to the languages he created. The idea that physical land and natural environment influence the language of a place is notable in Tolkien's perspective and construction process (Smith 2006, 70-71). Ross Smith aligns Tolkien's connection between place and language with the ideas of linguistic determinism. Sometimes called the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, linguistic determinism refers to the idea that "we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Sapir 1929b, 210). Therefore, not only can these conlangs become a way for the author to explore how linguistic determinism may have shaped his/her imagined speakers, they, on another level, provide readers with a perspective into the author's own embedded language ideologies.

Sound symbolism

Sound symbolism refers to the connection between a particular sound and its meaning. Phonemes are the smallest "units" of sound in a particular language, they are the individual sounds that letters or some combinations of letters represent (think of "ship," there are three phonemes: /sh-i-p/). Sound symbolism refers to the idea that a phoneme can directly express something, rather than its general linguistic designation as a "non-meaning bearing unit" (Nuckolls 1999, 228). Early voices in this field, like Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, strongly held that the sound of a word has no bearing on how it is used or what it means (otherwise known as "the referent"). Saussure understood the linguistic sign, the connection between the sound and the concept, to be entirely arbitrary. He went so far as to suggest that "no one disputes the fact that linguistic signs are arbitrary" (Saussure 2011, 67). Saussure describes the linguistic sign as uniting "a concept and a sound-image" (2011, 66). The sound-image is not just used here to refer to the audible sound, but also the "psychological imprint" of that sound (2011, 66).

At the time Tolkien was writing, the influence of Saussure's opinion that the sign is arbitrary was fundamental to the field of structural linguistics. There were, however, some dissenting opinions from other linguists. Otto Jesperson, a Danish linguist and conlanger, was a proponent of "phonosemanticism" or the idea that phonemes (sounds) carry meaning. He believed that sound symbolism influenced the way language formed, but also that it operated on an ongoing basis to make words more applicable or appropriate for the referent. In 1922, he challenged Saussure, asking if there was "really much more logic in the opposite extreme which denies any kind of sound symbolism (apart from the small class of evident echoisms and 'onomatopoeia') and sees in our words only a collection of accidental and irrational associations of sound and meaning?" (Jesperson 1922, 397). In his book *Inside Language: Linguistic and Aesthetic Theory in Tolkien,* Ross Smith (2006) compares Jespersen's perspective to Tolkien's, and Jason Fisher takes this even further in his review of this book, suggesting Tolkien would have been familiar with Jespersen's work (2008, see also Fimi 2009). He points out that Tolkien "refers explicitly to Jespersen's work three times in his essays for *The Year's Work in English Studies*" and that Tolkien has read Jespersen's book in the original Danish version (2008, 173). Fisher highlights multiple references that suggest Tolkien had a "considerable engagement"

with Jespersen's work. Tolkien's awareness of phonosemanticism affects how we can read his languages and particularly how we understand his sound selection. Jespersen felt that sounds could be symbolic in a sense even if this was not consistent across a language; a sound might mark some particular symbolic meaning in some instances in English, for example, but not in all cases that the sound appears. This is also true of signification across language. Jesperson wrote that it would be "absurd to maintain that all words at all times in all languages had a signification corresponding exactly to their sound, each having a definite meaning once and for all" (1922, 396). Neither are the authors of this paper aiming to suggest that all individual sounds in every utterance carry a conscious or unconscious meaning. Nonetheless, sound symbolism is important to address as there are words which we "feel instinctively to be adequate to express the ideas they stand for" (1922, 398) or indeed, those that are not. Constructed languages offer a unique avenue to explore the connections made between sound and sense, as the sounds are selected by one person with a specific vision in mind.

Sound symbolism has gained popularity as a concept in the 21st century, though the magnitude to which it operates in natural languages is difficult to establish. Most studies of sound-symbolism have focused on how it functions within an individual language, rather than looking at any potentially universal connections between a sound and its expressive meaning. In 1999, anthropological linguist Janis B. Nuckolls suggested that it was time to "build a bridge between the vigorously thriving conceptions of sound symbolism nurtured by anthropologists and the careful, parsimonious concessions made by linguists admitting to its existence" (1999, 228). That said, at the time that Tolkien was writing, sound symbolism could still be understood as a counter-tradition (Fimi 2009). Tolkien created his languages and wrote *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy while this conversation was ongoing. Though he was not a theoretical linguist, his writing from the time demonstrates at least a general awareness of the wider discussion of linguistic theory and the growing trend of sound symbolism, particularly in poetics (Smith 2006, 4). As well, Tolkien wrote about "linguistic aesthetics," a term he used to address the relationship between the sound of a word, its meaning, and the emotional response it can evoke (Smith 2006, 1).

Tolkien's linguistic aesthetics

In order to understand Tolkien's views on linguistic aesthetics, it is best to look to his own essays to examine his ideas about the connection between sounds and meaning. In 2016, Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins edited "*A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages*" which included all the drafts and relevant notes from Tolkien's essay 'A Secret Vice' which he first delivered in 1931. In the essay, Tolkien wrote that the direction of the development of language has been impacted by "the more individual and personal factor— pleasure in articulate sound, and in the symbolic use of it, independent of communication though constantly in fact entangled with it – must not be forgotten for a moment" (Tolkien 1983, 208). In their text, Fimi and Higgins include Tolkien's previously unpublished 'Essay on Phonetic Symbolism' wherein he defines phonetic symbolism to mean "the idea or belief or fact that certain combinations of sounds are more fitted to express certain notions than to express others: that certain groups of notions tend to be expressed (in all languages, or widely among languages) by ~~words~~ sound groups having certain phonetic elements" (2016, 180). This draft was found handwritten in pen, the stricken word is Tolkien's edit. Tolkien describes how this viewpoint has intrinsic complications, as these considerations would exist across a "common human taste or instinct" (181). He also raises the concern that "language is obviously now very old" and that many words have "wandered notionally" far from the original meanings. Even so, Tolkien asserts his belief in phonetic symbolism, stating that "it is principally seen as a disturbing factor in the parallel and synchronized development of meaning and form. It is an element not only in re-creation but in obsolescence and loss" (186). Many of the points raised in this essay align closely with his thoughts in 'A Secret Vice' where he speaks more personally to his experience creating languages and how he dealt with the "fitting of notion to oral symbol" (Tolkien 1983, 206). This process, unique to conlangers, makes very clear the significance of the specific word, the choice of the specific character and sound combinations that go into creating words in a new language. We can use constructed languages to identify the importance of sound-symbolism in this way. Klingon, for example, has sounds that were deliberately chosen to sound as unfamiliar and alien as possible (Okrand et al 2011), while for the film Avatar, Paul Frommer was tasked with choosing sounds for the Na'vi language that audiences around the world would find "pleasant" (Milani 2009).

Tolkien also writes that he is "personally more interested perhaps in word-form in itself, and in word-form in relation to meaning (so-called phonetic fitness) than in any other department" (Tolkien 1983, 211). For Tolkien, the sounds of his languages are directly associated with the pleasure that could be found in both the writing and the reading of them, and he suggests it is "the contemplation of the relation between sound and notion which is the main source of pleasure" (206). This understanding of phonetic fitness naturally leads us to question what it is exactly that causes this "linguistic pleasure". That is to say, what are the factors that influence the phonetic fitness of a word and its sound, and how can we apply these considerations to Tolkien's language creation process? In discussing the multiple directions of influence that operate on Tolkien's opinion of phonetic fitness, Carl Phelpstead reflects on his own linguistic preferences, presenting a pathway to understanding these influences. In *Tolkien and Wales*, Phelpstead describes his experience of learning languages in school; his own distaste for the "nasalized vowels of French" and appreciation of Danish glottal stops or the throaty Dutch initial consonants (2011, 21). He thoughtfully points out that while he can rationalize that these preferences come from his enjoyment of "phonological contrast" or plosive and fricative consonants, that ultimately this is not a productive examination. He feels that kind of explanation "only moves the phenomenon requiring explanation to another level" as we now must question why those phonological features might be appealing (2011, 22). Phelpstead convincingly argues that it is not simply a matter of personal taste, but that there are several cultural factors playing in to what we might find phonologically pleasing. He denies that an objective argument could be made that particular languages are inherently more pleasing or beautiful than others (2011, 22). He references Tolkien's lecture 'English and Welsh', which was the first of the Oxford's O'Donnell Lecture Series, delivered in October of 1955, one day after the release of *The Return of the King* (Hemmi 2010, 149). In the opening of that lecture, Tolkien describes himself as a "philologist in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic field," and one who "has always felt the attraction of the ancient history and pre-history of these islands, and most particularly the attraction of the Welsh language in itself" (Tolkien 1983, 162). He further outlines his love of the language, stating that "Welsh is of this soil, this island, the senior language of the men of Britain; and Welsh is beautiful" (189). While he does clarify that this is informed primarily by his own personal and subjective interpretation, he undoes this claim when he asserts that

there are common experiences of linguistic pleasure shared by all English speakers. He believes that most English speakers would find the phrase "cellar door" to be beautiful, "especially if dissociated from its sense (and from its spelling). More beautiful than, say, sky, and far more beautiful than beautiful" (190-191). Tolkien's grouping of shared linguistic preferences from "most English-speaking people" can tell us a lot about his own language biases. Ross Smith offers an important criticism here, questioning if Tolkien was imagining the pronunciation of the words in his own accent; in Received Pronunciation these sounds, particularly the "r," would be very different from other accents from around England, or in America or Australia (Smith 2006, 9). He also challenges Tolkien's instruction to dissociate the words from their sense, arguing that this is simply impossible for us to do as sound cannot be isolated from meaning. Just as Phelpstead had us consider sound choices with his own personal example, Tolkien's "cellar door" offers us more than an avenue to question the sounds particular to that phrase in a particular accent. Instead, we are given a chance to examine the broader cultural implications that inform his opinion of what is pleasing and what he assumes to be universal.

In *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, Dimitra Fimi encapsulates Tolkien's "notion of 'inherent linguistic predilections'" with the idea that "everyone is born with a hereditary taste for certain sounds and sound-patterns" based on their ancestral and historical links to certain languages (2009, 83, 92). Fimi highlights that Tolkien's writing on this topic reflected his views that our personal "recognition of beautiful sounds and words seem to come from the human soul, from the heart of our very existence" (ibid.). Fimi suggests that it is through this understanding that the creation of languages becomes an artform. This view highlights the importance of cultural awareness on the part of the conlanger, and the ability to critically reflect on one's own linguistic preferences when selecting the sounds of a new constructed language.

Lexicon and affect

In the process of world-building, the introduction of unfamiliar words and languages is an immediate flag for a reader of something separate from their own experience. By creating a culture that has their own language, they are "othered" immediately, and are made separate from their audience through incomprehensibility. Ria Cheyne of Liver-

pool Hope University suggests that a central function of a conlang is to express something about the beings who speak the language. She states that, "just as alien utterances can express or imply meaning on different levels, so can the related languages as a whole speak to the beings who speak it" (Cheyne 2008, 396). In conlangs, the link between the signifier and signified is now "motivated," meaning that it is consciously selected, unlike in "natural" languages. Cheyne argues that the more a created language "flouts the norms" of the language in which the rest of the text is written, the more exotic or foreign the author intends his audience to perceive them (392). Just as incomprehensible or unfamiliar aspects of the language can separate this culture from their audience, the use of cognates or recognizable sounds can more closely align an imagined group with their audience. Anyone engaging in language construction must now deal with the question of affect when selecting how similar or different sounding a word can be from a natural language. It is again evident here that the relationship between the sound-image and the concept is not at all arbitrary, but mindfully selected and used to accomplish a specific narrative goal. While authors across genres are obviously concerned with affect and language choice when writing, a conlanger has a particular investment in the system of sounds they choose to utilize as they have unlimited choice in the sounds they choose to include. The more languages a language creator is exposed to or familiar with, the wider their phonetic bank will be. It is only natural that the affective quality, the emotional weight, of these sounds should play a role in their selection. The role this plays in the new lexicon (the individual words that make up an entire language) is readily apparent. There are words in every language that can be used to cause an emotional reaction. An example from Tolkien's writing can be found in the lexicon of Qenya (not to be confused with Quenya; the former is the original name of the High-Eleven language that would become the Quenya of Middle-earth in the trilogy). In *The Book of Lost Tales*, Christopher Tolkien wrote that, "some early phonological description does exist for Qenya, but this became through later alterations and substitutions such a baffling muddle… that I have been unable to make use of it" (Tolkien 1983, 247). It was an impressive feat for the editors of *Parma Eldalambe*on to publish the Qenya lexicon in 1998, and in a review of this lexicon by Helge Fauskanger published in *Tyalië Tyelelliéva,* we can see many of the words included in the lexicon do not make much sense in the world of Middle-earth. Tolkien included place names for a number of real places like Warwickshire, Oxford,

Germany and Norway. Additionally, there are many words which reflect his own religious sentiments, including words that had not previously been published like "evandilyon" meaning gospel, and "evandl" for missionary. Other words, which had appeared elsewhere, were now given more Christian connotations, like "Atar" for father, was now noted to refer "usually to 1st Person of the Blessed Trinity" (1998, 33). As Fauskanger points out, Tolkien's politics also inform his choices when constructing Qenya, and a particularly telling word-group with the root Kalimb was quite clearly influenced by his service in World War I. At the time of writing the lexicon, Tolkien was serving with the British Army (Carpenter 1978, 78-84). Here are the entries for the word group:

kalimbo (o) a savage, uncivilized man, barbarian. - giant, monster, troll.

kalimban (n-) "Barbary", Germany.

kalimbardi the Germans.

kalimbarie barbarity.

Therefore, affect can be seen both in looking at the specific types of words a language has and does not have, to get a better understanding of the culture of the speakers, but also by looking at what words the conlanger themselves chose to translate from their own natural language(s).

Tolkien's "NatLang" sources and the languages of Middle-earth

While discussing the influence of existing natural languages on Tolkien's created ones, Carl Hostetter points out the difficulty with the idea that the Elvish languages are "based" on Finnish and Welsh (2013, 335). While the influence of these natural languages is important, it is subtler than one might first assume. Hostetter suggests that there are three key features of this influence: structural, phonological and lexical. This list, he suggests, "decreases in order both of abstractness and…of importance as influencing Tolkien's inventions" (2013, 335). Most might assume that the majority of the borrowing would come from the lexicon, and the "pairing of particular phonetic forms with particular meaning" (2013, 335) but Hostetter is keen to point out that while these similarities are present, this is the least "influenced" aspect of Tolkien's languages. That is to say that

while Sindarin may be "based on" Welsh, we will see much more influence from the structure and phonology of these languages, than we will in the actual lexicon (2013, 335). These distinctions are very important, as what we wish to examine is primarily the phonologies Tolkien invents, and how the sounds have an inherent significance, beyond their lexical meaning. In his speeches and essays, Tolkien focuses more on the structural and phonological characteristics of the languages that moved him, and consequently these are the elements of the highest importance for our examination.

Sindarin

Sindarin is called the "Grey Language" or "Grey-elven." Some notable moments from the trilogy where Sindarin appears would include Bilbo's song in Rivendell, as well as Gandalf's spell and the inscription on the Gates of Moria. In a 1955 letter to the Houghton Mifflin Co., Tolkien explained in a footnote the connection between Sindarin and existing natural languages: "The 'Sindarin', a Grey-elven language, is in fact constructed deliberately to resemble Welsh phonologically and to have a relation to High-elven similar to that existing between British …and Latin" (Tolkien et al 1981, 232).

Sindarin shares many phonetic features in common with Welsh, including its phonotactics. The phonotactics of a language are the "relation of sequence…in which phonemes or other phonological units" can appear (Matthews 2014, n.p). In English, an example of this is that a word can begin with at most three consonants, and only particular sets of consonants. A particular commonality between Sindarin and Welsh can be seen in their syllabic stress patterns. In Sindarin words that have two syllables, the stress will fall on the first (Fauskanger 1988). In a section describing the stress in Eldarin languages (the language family to which both Sindarin and Quenya belong) in the appendices of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien notes:

> The position of the 'accent' or stress is not marked, since in the Eldarin languages concerned its place is determined by the form of the word. In words with two syllables, it falls in practically all cases on the first syllable. In longer words it falls on the last syllable but one, where that contains a long vowel, a diphthong, or a vowel followed by

> two (or more) consonants. Where the last syllable but one contains (as often) a short vowel followed by only one (or no) consonant, the stress falls on the syllable before it, the third from the end. Words of the last form are favoured in the Eldarin languages, especially Quenya. (Appendix E)

In Welsh, the stress typically lands on the penultimate syllable in words that have two or more syllables, though the final syllable does receive a higher pitch (Hannahs 2013, 43). Below, we have charts illustrating the consonant and vowel sounds present in Welsh and Sindarin, respectively. These include the symbols for the sounds in the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Table 1: Welsh Vowel Chart

	Front		Central		Back	
	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long
Close	ɪ	iː	ɨ̥	ɨː	ʊ	uː
Mid	ɛ	eː	ə	(əː)	ɔ	oː
Open			a	aː		

Table 2: Sindarin Vowel Chart

	Front	Near-front	Near-back	Back
Close	i y			u
Near-close		ɪ	ʊ	
Open-mid	ɛ			ɔ
Open	a			

Table 3: Welsh Consonant IPA Chart

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Nasal	m		n			ŋ		
Plosive	p b		t d			k g		
Affricate								
Fricative	f v θ ð s ɬ ʃ						χ	h
Trill			r					
Approximant			l		j	w		

*This chart has been altered from Jones's (1984) to remove allophones and sounds only found in loanwords.

Table 4: Sindarin Consonant IPA Chart

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m		n		ŋ	
Plosive	p b		t d		k g	
Affricate						
Fricative	f v	θ ð	s ɬ		x	h
Trill			r			
Approximant			l	j	ʍ w	

It is clear that there is a significant overlap here in the consonants of these two languages, as well as some overlap in the vowels of the two languages. While Sindarin includes neither uvular nor postalveolar consonants, this is only at odds with two sounds regularly present in Welsh. While this similarity has been frequently noted by scholars, a comparison of the specific common sounds found in these languages helps provide a

more solid basis for this claim. It may be difficult to get an idea of what Sindarin actually sounds like from these sound inventories, but conlanger David Salo has provided an immensely helpful chart in his book *A Gateway to Sindarin* (2004).

Moving from the level of individual sounds to the structure of words, Sindarin is a fusional or "inflectional" language, meaning that a single morpheme can mark multiple pieces of grammatical information. For example, tense and number may be marked together in one morpheme. While Sindarin does not have gender markers, it does have two systems of grammatical number, just as Welsh does. Welsh has a system to mark differences between singular and plural, as well as between collective and singulative. Making a noun plural can be done by changing the suffix (as in the case of moch meaning "pigs" in basic form, where the suffix is added to form the singular mochyn "pig"). Plurals can also be marked through vowel mutation (for example in bachgen for "boy" and bechgyn for "boys"). This also happens in Sindarin, where some plural nouns are marked with a suffix, like –in (Drû becomes Drúin for "wild men") where others demonstrate a vowel change (Moredhel and Moredhil, meaning "Dark Elves") and other words use a combination of vowel mutation and suffix. Both Welsh and Sindarin mark not only singular vs. plural nouns, but collective and singulative as well. Just as Welsh does, Sindarin marks collective nouns with a suffix. One example of this is elenath meaning "all of the stars" where the suffix –ath is used to mark the collective. Another similarity is in word order. Welsh word order is VSO, meaning a typical sentence will have the verb followed by the subject and then the object. Only around ten percent of natural languages follow this sentence structure (Tomlin 2014, 22). A sample Welsh sentence, "Welodd Siôn ddim y defaid" meaning "Sion did not see the sheep" can be broken down as: Welodd (saw) Siôn ddim (negative) y (the) defaid (sheep), which illustrates the order of verb, subject and object (Borsley 2006, 29). Sindarin also follows the VSO word order, so a Sindarin sentence could look like "caro den i innas lín" which translates to "may one do your will," or "may your will be done" but would break down to: caro [may do] den [one] i innas lín [your will] (Salo 2004, 204). It should be clear then that not only are the sounds of these languages similar, but there is also an obvious overlap in their syntax and grammar.

Quenya

Earlier, we outlined the stages of development for the High-Elven tongue, first called Qenya and later Quenya. David Salo, the linguist and conlanger who worked on the Elvish languages for Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*, has written a comparison of Qenya and Quenya phonology. He outlines that the original Qenya and the newer Quenya "differ considerably in terms of vocabulary, underlying structure, and…in grammar" but that the "phonetic inventory is pretty much identical, and the distribution of sounds is very similar" (Elfling online forum, 2013). A scholarly discussion of the Qenya vocabulary was published in the 1998 *Parma Eldalamberon* edition that looked at the Qenyaqetsa or Qenya Lexicon documents Tolkien had sketched out beginning in 1915.

We are primarily concerned here with phonology, and so we will not spend much time differentiating these two evolutionary stages in the construction of High-Elven. As David Salo has pointed out, these languages are phonetically very similar, and we will focus from this point on Quenya, the version appearing in the majority of the canon. Just as Sindarin is widely connected with Welsh, Quenya is similarly influenced by Finnish. Tolkien's fascination with Finnish dates to 1907 when he first read a translation of *Kalevala*, the national epic of Finland, gathered from a collection of Finnish oral folklore and mythology. According to biographer Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien was so invested in this work that he found a Finnish grammar and learned the language well enough to read *Kalevala* in its original version (Tolkien et al 1981, 227). The stories had a powerful influence on Tolkien's writing, directly inspiring characters like Túrin who was based on the ill-fated Kullervo (211).

In an interview for the BBC, prominent Tolkien scholar Verlyn Flieger also suggested that the "most Finnish" aspect of Tolkien's works was the mood, for "there is a strain of deep tragedy and pessimism that runs through Tolkien's work, even *The Hobbit* and certainly *The Lord of the Rings*. *The Story of Kullervo* is without a doubt the darkest story he ever wrote. It is our first experience of that darkness" (Sander 2015).

The Finnish language itself had an affective quality for Tolkien, and he wrote in a letter to W.H. Auden that the discovery of the Finnish Grammar in Exeter College was like "discovering a complete wine-cellar filled with bottles of an amazing wine of a kind and

flavor never tasted before. It quite intoxicated me" (Tolkien et al 1981, 228). After this, he tells Auden that he "gave up the attempt to invent an 'unrecorded' Germanic language, and my 'own language' – or series of invented languages – became heavily Finnicized in phonetic pattern and structure" (ibid.). In another letter, this one to W. R. Matthews, Tolkien expands on the connection between Finnish and Quenya specifically, outlining the phonetic elements that are influenced by Finnish:

> The ingredients in Quenya are various, but worked out into a self-consistent character not precisely like any language that I know. Finnish, which I came across when I had first begun to construct a 'mythology' was a dominant influence, but that has been much reduced [now in late Quenya]. It survives in 47 some features: such as the absence of any consonant combinations initially, the absence of the voiced stops b, d, g (except in mb, nd, ng, ld, rd, which are favoured) and the fondness for the ending -inen, -ainen, -oinen, also in some points of grammar, such as the inflexional endings -sse (rest at or in), -nna (movement to, towards), and -llo (movement from); the personal possessives are also expressed by suffixes; there is no gender. (From a letter to W. R. Matthews, dated 13–15 June 1964, published in *Parma Eldalamberon*)

Quenya has five vowels and a distinction for length. The short vowels are: a, e, i, o, u and the long ones are marked by an acute accent, like: á, é, í, ó, ú (the only official Tolkien-published phonology is out of print, issue #19 of *Parma Eldalamberon* called "Quenya Phonology"). While Finnish has eight vowels that are not lengthened. The shared vowels are [i, e, u, and o]. Quenya has 19 consonants, while Finnish has 14 consonants; the shared consonants are [m, n, ŋ, p, t, d, k, s, h, l, r, and j]. There is less overlap between the phonologies of Quenya and Finnish than between Sindarin and Welsh, though these languages certainly share many elements, including some vowel and consonant sounds. Some of the sounds that appear in Quenya but not in Finnish could be the result of the other languages Tolkien considered in his construction of High-Eleven, like Latin. Structurally, Quenya resembles Finnish in its morphology as both Finnish and Quenya are agglutinating languages, whereas Latin is a synthetic, fusional one. The sentence

structure is also consistent between these languages, as both Quenya and Finnish follow the subject-verb-object order (SVO), though both are freer than in English where the same order exists.

Black Speech and Other Languages

The Black Speech, also called the Language of Mordor, was created by Sauron to be used by his slaves and those he ruled over. Hostetter writes that the orcs speak a "debased form" of the language, along with Common Speech. He also says that Tolkien (and in turn, Sauron) constructed the language with "harsh and guttural sounds" (Hostetter 2013, 343) including characteristic consonant clusters like sh, gh, and zg. Little work was done to develop this language, and the inscription on the One Ring, "Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatulûk, agh burzum-ishi krimpatul," is the only example of "pure" Black Speech that exists in Tolkien's works. The other instances of this language, like the curse of the Uruk from Mordor in *The Two Towers,* are considered debased, and as such have no one consistent translation. The curse is written (in a Romanized script) as "Uglúk u bagronk sha pushdug Saruman-glob búbhosh skai" and has been translated by Christopher Tolkien in *The Peoples of Middle-earth* to mean "Uglúk to the cesspool, sha! The dungfilth; the great Saruman-fool, skai!" but Hostetter's translation published in Vinyar Tengwar was "Uglúk to the dung-pit with stinking Saruman-filth, pig-guts, gah!"

Without a fully developed language, the lexicon for this language is largely based on the few examples of "debased" Black Speech in the novels. M. G. Meile (in Carr et al., 1997) describes Black Speech as an "evil Esperanto" in that it is a device created by a single individual (Sauron) from the "good" language Quenya, and suggests that it provides a view of how Tolkien imagines the move from good to evil. Sauron's language removes letters from the Quenya alphabet, like E and W, as "part of his ideological agenda" per Meile, since E carries significance to the elves and is featured in words like *Eldar* for High Elves and *elen* meaning star (220). Meile argues that "Sauron identified E and W with light and femininity…and eliminated them from his language." Sauron did not create his own language, but instead contorted an existing one, which Meile suggests demonstrates that not only is Black Speech then a parody of a language itself, but "a parody of language making" (221).

In regards to how Tolkien understands the motivations for evil-doing, Meile relates Black Speech to Orwell's "Newspeak" in its prescriptive positivistic attitude, and the removal of consciousness from Black Speech, and suggests that this is illustrative of Tolkien's views on positivism as a pessimistic worldview. Meile starts that in Tolkien's worldview, "pessimism is what drives sentient beings to do evil" (222) and so the lack of will, the absence of hope or individualism is what fundamentally makes Black Speech an inherently evil language. This examination of the language as an in-world constructed language also provides insight into Tolkien's design process; if the prescriptive positivistic attitudes are undesirable to a "good" language, then we see again that benevolent, valued cultures are given status through their lexicon.

Another language is Khuzdul, the language created by the Aulë, the Vala who also created the first Dwarves. Some consider this language to operate like a conlang even in the context of the narrative, as Aulë taught the Dwarves the language he had devised for them. Early in constructing his languages, Tolkien devised three language "branches" which were later revised. These original three branches to which all his conlangs were attributed included Oromëan, named for Oromë, who taught the first Elves to speak; Aulëan, to which Khuzdul belongs, and Melkian, named for Melkor, which included the languages of orcs and other evil beings, but is not related to "Black Speech" (Lhammas,[23] *The Lost Road and Other Writings*).

Particularly relevant to a discussion of linguistic bias, though, would be an examination of the languages of the Haradrim and the Easterlings. Unfortunately, we have little language material for these cultures, which in itself is telling. A closer look at what linguistic elements, and particularly phonological elements, Tolkien chose to include with these mysterious Eastern cultures of Middle-earth would be important for distinguishing the sounds he found less pleasing than those he would give to the elves, and perhaps harsher than those he gave to the men. Though there is little material available on these languages, in *The Two Towers* we are given a description of the Haradrim as "swarthy" and the physical landscape is said to have jungles populated with apes and elephantlike creatures called mûmakil. In *The Return of the King*, we are told that to Gondorians, the

23 Lhammas is the fifth chapter of the second section in The Lost Road and Other Writings, entitled "Part Two: Valinor and Middle-earth before The Lord of the Rings." It is a sociolinguistic account of the languages of Middle-earth, attributed to a Pengolod, and elf of Gondolin.

Haradrim sounded harsh and beast-like. There are several fan sites, particularly related to LOTR-themed role-playing games, which imagine these languages and create names for places and people. Mûmakil may be the only word that appears in print from a Haradrim language, but fans have taken up the enterprise of imagining both this place and the languages that fill it. The kind of "fanlang" based on Tolkien's works in these online communities that have formed around games like *The Lord of the Rings Strategy Battle Game* have explicitly tied Haradrim (or Haradaic on some sites) to African and Arabic languages, including the use of actual Arabic words as Haradrim ones. While this does not speak to any direct parallel Tolkien may have had in mind, it does suggest fairly directly that the connection of constructed languages to existing natural languages has had a significant impact on fans of Tolkien's novels and subsequent world-building efforts. In the imagination of fans, as in the imagination of Tolkien himself, names are particularly significant. As Treebeard the Ent puts it "real names tell you the story of the things they belong to" (*The Two Towers* 454).

Author Michael T. Saler believes that it was Tolkien's "cultural nationalism" which influenced his representation of language in essentialist terms, and that language was the "primary vehicle by which …an essential English nature might be conveyed" (2012, 178). In fact, when Dutch translators provided their own terms for the names of people and places in the translated version of the novels, Tolkien objected on the grounds that "the book is English, by an Englishman" and that those references were "integral and essential" (Saler 2012, 179). Finally, we address the question as to what lessons can be learned from this close examination of Tolkien's language ideologies and how might new language creators take these into account in their own language projects?

Concluding thoughts

Tolkien's languages represent a pivotal moment in the history of constructed languages, as his use of language was not only widely circulated but also very detailed. While Tolkien was by no means the first to use constructed languages for this purpose, he remains a staple among those who study world-building and constructed languages as his languages were so thoroughly planned and carefully developed over his lifetime. With television and film productions becoming more invested in creating realistic fictional

worlds, the demand for people to create languages for those worlds has increased. It is imperative that those who work on constructing new languages be aware of the cultural impact of their work. Examining the positive and negative impacts in the work of a prominent practitioner of constructing languages like J.R.R. Tolkien, we can ensure a more nuanced and thoughtful process of language construction that is mindful of the ways fictional cultures represent natural ones. To accomplish this, it is important to reflect not only on how constructed languages have been conceived, but also how they are understood by their audiences. All conlangs must convey cultural information about their speakers, and this can imitate existing linguistic and cultural patterns in the world. The sound symbolism of Tolkien's languages is related to the importance he places on the "phonetic fitness" of sounds. Such factors are important for conlangers to consider because they create a system wherein certain sounds have more value than others, and thus certain languages are also deemed phonologically better than others.

For instance, in her own work constructing languages, rather than focusing on sounds from a particular language and linguistic aesthetics, as Tolkien did, Schreyer has instead had the opportunity to draw on current linguistic research about the earliest human languages for her work constructing the language of Beama for the film *Alpha* (2018) (Schreyer and Adger 2021), as well as the canon of works related to Superman for the language of Kryptonian in *Man of Steel* (2013) (Schreyer 2020). Monica Heller (2017) has written about the opportunities that conlangs can provide to be windows into alternate worlds and newly imagined futures. For instance, Brianna Peacey's research with Trigedasleng speakers, who were fans of the television show *The 100*, but also fans of the language, used the language to explore conceptions of morality, gender and social hierarchies, that were different from their daily lives (Peacey 2020).

However, this opportunity for alternate perspectives will only be possible, if new conlangers avoid any ethnocentric biases they might have about languages and the people who speak them and instead focus on the world in which the languages will be spoken. As the pioneer of modern conlangs, Tolkien set the bar high for the level of detail and attention to authentic world-building in his languages and constructed cultures. That said, the impacts of where his languages echo ethnocentric biases can still be seen today. Using Tolkien's work as a model for its attention to linguistic detail in fiction, and for its

enduring impact on audiences and their perception of the culture through sounds, we have a solid base on which to examine these questions, and aim for the best practice of language creation.

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'Leaf by Niggle' – The Artist and the Art

by

Richard Hasnip

On one level, 'Leaf by Niggle' is a little story about a little man living a little life, at the end of which, all that remains is a little fragment, preserved for a little while, before it too, is gone. From an author who has created work remarkable for its expansive world building and scope – whether in the telling of the 'War of the Ring' or the larger legendarium of which *The Lord of the Rings* is merely a part, it would be easy to dismiss 'Leaf by Niggle' as a minor work.[24]

However, if stories of hobbits and rings have taught us anything, it is that small things can make a big difference and when it comes to understanding Tolkien's work, neglecting 'Leaf by Niggle' would be a big mistake, for the implications of this little story could hardly be larger. Within it, Tolkien considers issues theological, ethical and aesthetic and it is ironic, given that it is the story of a man better able to deal with little details (niggles) than the whole; the story synthesises ideas that run throughout Tolkien's writings.

As we will discover however, 'Leaf by Niggle' provides a complex image in which the smallness of the hero is neither negated nor rendered illusory by the ending, rather, this tale provides a double image of a minor artist nevertheless participating in significant art. Within this chapter then, we must keep sufficient perspective so that both the smallness of the small and the largeness of the large may remain in sight without either occluding or disappearing within the other.

The artist

First, let us state the obvious. One of the reasons that the visions that emerge from 'Leaf by Niggle' regarding the artist and the art are so interesting is that despite Tolkien's 'cordial dislike' of the genre (Tolkien 2001, xviii), the story is quite plainly an allegory.

24 This is precisely how 'Leaf by Niggle' is categorised in Wiley Blackwell's *A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien*.

Indeed, as Maria Artamonova has helpfully articulated, it is a kind of double allegory, a "Christian allegory" of "a man's journey from earthly life to Purgatory and thence to heaven" and a more personal allegory of "Tolkien's own life" and particularly his "perfectionist attitude to his own work" (Artamonova 2014, 196). One of the dangers of approaching the story in this way is that we will become like those critics of *Beowulf* that Tolkien accuses of using the tale as "a quarry of fact and fancy" rather than as a story in its own right (Tolkien 2006, 5). As I hope we will see, the story of Niggle is wonderful in itself and the complex knot of allegories, mysteriously interacting at its heart, are intrinsic to that sense of wonder. The double image of the small story, nested within (and yet not subsumed by) the archetypal pattern is a large part of the story's charm and meaning. It is not necessary to understand every allusion to enjoy the story but greater understanding leads to deeper enjoyment.

Tom Shippey has helpfully and succinctly articulated the details of the personal allegory:

…[Niggle's] journey = death. Niggle the painter further = Tolkien the writer…Niggle's 'leaf' = *The Hobbit,* his 'Tree' = *The Lord of the Rings,* the country that opens from it = Middle-earth, and the 'other pictures…tacked on the edges of his great picture' = the poems and other work which Tolkien kept on fitting into his greater one… (Shippey 2005, 49-50).

Consequently, although we might normally be cautious of ascribing to the author opinions expressed in his fiction, in Shippey's view, the allegorical mode, which (to be understood) necessitates us seeing Tolkien in Niggle (and vice versa), provides not only justification but an invitation to do so. As Shippey puts it, "…one can go on making these equations and one is supposed to…" (Ibid). Let us then follow Shippey's lead, using Tolkien's theoretical and creative writings and his personal correspondence to interact with 'Leaf by Niggle' and further tease out the meanings embedded within.

That the Christian allegory aspect of 'Leaf by Niggle' bears a markedly mediaeval flavour, (resembling several mediaeval stories in which characters undertake journeys representing death) is already a clue that the relationship between the greater and lesser allegories will be one of complex interrelation. The Christian allegory, the overarching pattern within which the personal plays out, is itself tonally marked by the professional

and personal interests of the subject (Tolkien) of the individual allegory.

The impact of the mediaeval allusion is, initially at least, largely humorous and the joke is at the expense of Tolkien/Niggle. For where the Mediaeval play *Everyman* opens in the heavenly realms with God sending for Death bidding him:

> Go thou to Everyman,
>
> And show him in my name
>
> A pilgrimage he must on him take
>
> Which he in no wise may escape (*Everyman* 1993, 201)

Niggle's story begins on earth and no sooner is the mediaeval allusion evoked by the opening line "there was once a little man called Niggle, who had a long journey to make" (93)[25] than the reader is plunged into a series of qualifications and thoroughly modern deprecations regarding little Niggle. Unlike Everyman, the 'summoning of Niggle' fulfils no direct mandate of God. Indeed, God does not appear directly in the story at all. Instead, in no time at all, readers find themselves immersed in a story involving potatoes, bicycles and bad colds. Indeed, when the time for the journey arrives and the mediaeval inflexions of the Christian allegory re-assert themselves, it comes as a bit of shock to the reader (and to Niggle).

However, the contrast with *Everyman* does not serve merely to comically undercut 'Leaf by Niggle' but to make the reader aware of the difference between the two works and particularly their central characters. Everyman, as the name suggests, stands in for everyone, and thus his cry of "O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind!" (*Everyman* 1993, 202) is chilling as we hear within it the common fate of all humanity and one day ourselves. Niggle, by contrast, is a specific person, his very name tells us that he stands for the particular, the little detail.

Niggle's particularity is further conveyed through his identification as "a painter". By this detail, we are to understand something more fundamental than Niggle's profession.

25 As we will be referring to 'Leaf by Niggle' constantly I will simply provide page numbers in-text, all references refer to the edition of *Tree and Leaf* listed in the bibliography.

Niggle *is* a painter, on an ontological level, he is an artist. We can see that Niggle's art is far more than a job, by the fact that it "bothers him" and gives him no rest (94). He feels it as a psychological imperative to finish his one picture, his "real picture" of the tree with many different, individuated leaves. It is as though Niggle's art, or at least this picture, comes from somewhere deep within (or far outside) himself, demanding his attention. Thus, it works upon him like a calling.

If we take the equation of Niggle with Tolkien seriously, this tells us something quite profound. For all the deprecation of Niggle's talents (we are told that Niggle was "not successful", that he could "paint leaves better than trees", that he was "very ordinary and rather silly", he was "sometimes just idle", and over and over that he was "little") Niggle is, nevertheless and for all his weaknesses, an artist. Tolkien was not, of course, professionally a writer of fantasy, but an academic. Yet, through the story, Tolkien asserts that he *is* a writer, he *is* an artist. True, perhaps only *The Hobbit* will be remembered and doubtlessly not for long, yet in 'Leaf by Niggle' we find Tolkien (albeit an allegorically disguised Tolkien) asserting his identity as an artist by calling.

Moreover, there are moments in Tolkien's writings and particularly his letters when the customary deprecation drops away and it becomes clear that Tolkien was aware that he might do something great. So, as early as 1916 we can read Tolkien, following news of the death of his friend, Rob Gilson, contemplating the "greatness" of being "…a great instrument in God's hands…an achiever of great things, a beginner at the very least of large things" (Tolkien, 1981, 9). And again, in a letter to C. S. Lewis we find references to "…something that I deeply desire to *make*, and which is the (largely frustrated) bent of my nature to make" (Tolkien 1981, 126-127). Like Niggle, Tolkien's sense of his own being, the 'bent of his nature' is that he is a 'maker'. Just as for Niggle who, briefly, despite its flaws, views his picture as "the only really beautiful picture in the world" (95) so too it is just possible that what Tolkien will make will be 'great' and even perhaps divinely ordained.

What frustrated Tolkien's desire to make were two factors nicely caught in another letter, this one to his son, Christopher:

> I did a certain amount of writing yesterday but was hindered by two things: the need to clear up the study (which had got into the chaos

> that always indicates literary or philological preoccupation) and attend to business; and trouble with the moon. (Tolkien 1981, 80)

We see two distinct types of obstacles to Tolkien's creative process here: one external to himself, the other internal. Let us take the internal problem first. Details mattered to Tolkien. The "trouble with the moon" refers to problems with the internal timeline of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's problems with making the risings and settings of his moon and the timeline of events within his created world correlate with one another entailed an afternoon's rewriting.

Getting details right is inevitably time consuming and can be frustrating. The fact that Tolkien chooses the name Niggle for his own part in this allegory relates to this penchant to obsess over details or niggles. Thus Niggle, we are told:

> …was the sort of painter who can paint leaves better than trees. He used to spend a long time on a single leaf…Yet he wanted to paint a whole tree, with all its leaves in the same style... (94)

Niggle is better at leaves than trees and yet he has this huge vision. These two desires: to complete something huge in scope and to perfect every detail contain between them a clear tension and the possibility of considerable psychic strain. Although many of the details that exercised Tolkien enhanced his work, in Shippey's view much of it did not and amounted to "work wasted" (Shippey 2005, 268). In 'Leaf by Niggle' Tolkien seems to express frustration at his own nature, his own incessant need for precision, accuracy and depth in the accomplishment of his enormous task.

An additional internal problem for Niggle (and perhaps for Tolkien) is that inspiration rarely coincides with opportunity. Every time Niggle feels that he really gets started, he is interrupted. Then, with cruel irony, when he is ill and unable to work he can see visions of "marvellous patterns of leaves and involved branches" but when he is again able to paint – the visions have gone (100). This is a point of some ambiguity in the story. At times, Niggle is interrupted when he really is concentrating. There is perhaps enough in the story and in Tolkien's letters though, to suggest that the potential greatness of the work can itself be paralysing. Some of Tolkien's delays ('the need to clear up the study') and Niggle's ('he was sometimes just idle') are self-generated. Perhaps fear that the picture

(or the story) inchoate in his mind will never be adequately realised worked as a brake on Niggle/Tolkien's creativity. Far safer, psychologically, to potter away at a detail, to re-write and never finish than run the risk that one's life's work is less than perfect.

However, Niggle is no hobbyist. He *is* a painter and painters ultimately need to show their work. So too, for Tolkien, he may be asserting himself in this story as an artist but in so doing he is ultimately accepting that his work is subject to the judgement of an audience, indeed he requires this audience, but fears the response. We have a matrix of tensions here: the need for finished detail pulls against the vastness of the vision, the need for an audience battles the fear of the judgement. Tolkien lays this paradox out in a letter to Stanley Unwin, his publisher:

> The thing is to finish the thing as devised and then let it be judged. But forgive me! It is written in my life-blood…It would be idle to pretend that I do not greatly desire publication, since a solitary art is no art; nor that I have not a pleasure in praise…yet the chief thing is to complete one's work…(Tolkien 1981, 122)

Niggle failed (at least in the ordinary world of human affairs) to finish his work. Tolkien at least partly succeeded. So much for the internal problems.

Both Niggle and Tolkien also faced external pressures. Indeed, Verlyn Flieger characterises the whole story as chiefly chronicling "the struggles of the artistic temperament with the demands of daily life…" (Flieger 2012, 72). Tolkien faced numerous such demands from his work as a professor: lecturing, tutoring and (in theory at least) writing academic papers. Additionally, he was a husband, a father, a friend, a member of a church, alongside all sorts of other things that called for his attention. Tolkien could not afford to give up his job and become a fulltime writer, bemoaning to his publisher "like Niggle I want a 'public pension', and am equally unlikely to get one!" (Tolkien 1981, 114).

Niggle's external pressures are largely embodied by his neighbour Parish.[26] Parish does not value Niggle's art and (from Niggle's perspective) his interruptions are a drain

26 Tom Shippey has argued that Parish should be read allegorically as representative of the practical aspect of Tolkien which must be integrated in purgatory (Shippey 2003, 43). Convincing though Shippey's argument is, in so far as this "practical aspect" invariably entails dealing with others I think it is helpful for the most part to think of Niggle as the primary Tolkien figure and Parish as representative of the demands of others.

upon Niggle's energy and health. Parish's request for Niggle's help in fetching the doctor just as Niggle is getting somewhere with his painting leads to Niggle's ill-health and contributes to his failure to finish. Niggle's self-reproach regarding interruptions from others is that he just needs to be tougher. He needs to learn to say 'no' to people. He needs to be less soft-hearted (94-95). However, Niggle does not sound very convinced of this, he never manages to do it and nothing else in the story supports the view that he should. In fact, far from berating him for helping, the Voices that judge Niggle in the workhouse focus on the fact that he only helped unwillingly, viewing these moments of charity as "interruptions" (106).

It is in the purgatorial workhouse that the personal joins once again with the mediaeval tones of the Christian allegory, this time with immediately sobering effect. Where initially Niggle's faults and foibles appear endearing, when he gets to purgatory it is clear that they are real problems. We first understand the absolute nature of the law to which Niggle is subject through the figure of the Inspector who unequivocally declares, "You should have helped your neighbour…That is the Law" (101). The Inspector is an unsympathetic character (in both senses of the word) and, at first, perhaps the reader is inclined to take issue with his claims. After all, Niggle *has* helped his neighbour and it cost him something to do it. However, the attentive reader will have noticed already that the narrator has intimated that Niggle's 'kind heart' is stirred more by a selfish interest in avoiding moral discomfort than a real concern for others (93). In the early portion of Niggle's time in the workhouse infirmary, his own thoughts (though still motivated by his desire to finish his painting) confirm the Inspector's judgement: "I wish I had called on Parish the first morning after the high winds began. I meant to" (103).

Thomas Honegger has deployed his understanding of Tolkien's mediaeval influences to identify the First and Second Voices as two of the 'Daughters of God', Justicia and Misericordia (Honegger 2005, 53).[27] Before the Voice of Justice, Niggle's actions and even this first movement towards repentance and sanctification, are exposed as proceeding from selfish motives. Even good actions are not enough to satisfy Justice; they must proceed from a pure heart. Niggle has been half-hearted and this amounts to a moral failure. Within the workhouse, he learns to give his full attention to each assignment. Tasks be-

27 Honegger points us to the Middle English play 'The Castle of Perseverance' (manuscript c. 1400) Scene XXII for an example of the debate between these characters, here called Rytwysnes and Mercy.

gin and end at the proper moments. There is no more niggling. Nowhere does he learn to be 'tougher-minded' or have a harder heart. On the contrary, it is only after enquiring after Parish and generously mentioning a (rather limited) good turn that his neighbour once did him, that Niggle is released (107-108). In accordance with orthodox theology, Justice is mollified when Niggle shows loving concern for his neighbour because, as Peter 4:8 puts it, "… charity shall cover the multitude of sins"[28].

Even in this archetypal moment of the soul standing before the eyes of Justice and Mercy, Niggle's individual identity as an artist is not forgotten. Indeed, as the voice of Mercy points out, one of the few points in Niggle's favour is that:

> He was a painter by nature…But he never thought that made him important. There is no note in the Records of his pretending, even to himself, that it excused his neglect of things ordered by the law. (106)

Here we see that the personal calling of the artist, however exacting, is nevertheless subject to the general demands of the ethical subject and Christian. Niggle is an artist but, so the story tells us, an artist is a human with the same ethical responsibility as everyone else. There is no trace of the Romantic 'artist as genius' trope. Niggle is neither mad, nor dangerous to know, and the extent to which he is bad could never be offset by any amount of artistic talent – his sins must be forgiven by Mercy and transmuted by love.

The redemptive conclusion to the story of Niggle and Parish demonstrates this transformation. By Niggle's Tree in what comes to be called Niggle's Parish, the two neighbours each learn something of what the other has always known. The artist Niggle learns to be practical and the prosaic Parish becomes aesthetically aware. More importantly, the two learn to love one another and work together. In this relationship, we can perhaps see a foreshadowing of Tolkien's later story of the Ents (who love "the great trees" and "drank from mountain streams") and the Entwives (who "desired order" and grew gardens) in *The Two Towers*, Treebeard wistfully declares:

> We believe that we may meet again in a time to come, and perhaps we shall find somewhere a land where we can live together and both be content. (Tolkien 1990, 93-95).

28 All Bible references refer to the King James Version.

Thus, what elsewhere is only a future hope, in 'Leaf by Niggle' comes to a marvellous realization, as the real calling of the little artist is miraculously fulfilled.

The art

If Tolkien depicts the Artist with a certain ambivalence, so too any evaluation of Niggle's art is dependent upon the perspective from which it is viewed.

Before his journey, Niggle longs for, but never gets any praise for his picture. After he has gone, his art is almost entirely dismissed. The Councillor Tompkins has two objections; Niggle's art is neither useful nor modern. By 'useful' Tompkins means commercially useful – you cannot make "posters" of Niggle's art.[29]

Tompkins expresses his belief in modernity like this:

> There is plenty of scope for bold young men not afraid of new ideas and methods. None for his old-fashioned stuff. Private day-dreaming. (116)

One can hear the voice of Tompkins in much of the criticism levelled at Tolkien's creations, which have been characterised as old fashioned, escapist, and nothing more than adolescent fantasy (Pearce 1998, 1-10). Joseph Pearce (Ibid) and Tom Shippey (Shippey 2005, 305-328) have comprehensively rebutted these critical attacks on Tolkien, however Niggle's art is also derided for its representations of nature and this requires a slightly different response.

Niggle's own defence of his work, "he thought they were pretty!" is mocked by Tompkins who sees nothing in the paintings drawn from nature but the "digestive and genital organs of plants" (117). However, in his essay 'On Fairy-stories', Tolkien gives a more robust response, admitting that it is possible to gain an understanding of the "patterns of nature" whilst nevertheless maintaining that "…each leaf…is a unique embodiment of the pattern…" (Tolkien 2001, 56-57). In other words, we need not deny the validity of a scientific understanding to maintain that a conceptual grasp of nature does not exhaust the meaning or efface the individual expressions of nature's patterns.

Tompkins' way of viewing the world is typical of an Enlightenment approach the "entire effort" of which, as Malcolm Guite points out, was:

29 Ironically, of course, Tolkien's art has proved highly lucrative.

> …to break everything down… – and then to believe that reality comprises the broken bits we've got left. But in the process, we have undone the beautiful, magical, imaginative, growing synthesis that originally made an organic whole. (Guite 2017, 496)

Tompkins is guilty of this and as a result has a deeply impoverished view of nature (and art). As Guite (paraphrasing Gandalf) puts it: "if we have only parts and no whole, we have departed from the path of wisdom" (ibid). This is no trivial detail, nor in the end, a matter purely of aesthetics. Tompkins' instrumentalist world-view allows him to declare that Niggle, just like his paintings, is of no use: "Worthless, in fact…I should have put *him* away long ago…Push him through the tunnel into the great Rubbish Heap…" (116). Fortunately, Tompkins has no such power. However, once again, 'Leaf by Niggle' contains in seed, what will grow into a major theme within Tolkien's work. In *The Lord of the Rings*, we encounter a character able to do great harm by putting Tompkins' philosophy into practice. As Saruman attempts to entice Gandalf with a policy of collaboration with Mordor, suggesting that together, they might even "direct its courses" (Tolkien 2001, 340) we see a man for whom Tompkins' notion of utility has become a guiding principle. In doing this, Saruman, has become something less than human, a being with "a mind of metal and wheels" (Tolkien 1993, 90). His instrumentalist approach to the world destroys trees who "had voices of their own" (ibid, 91) because they are more useful to him dead. This ultimately life-hating philosophy finds its logical end with trees felled and life extinguished for no reason at all (ibid).

By contrast, in his poem "Mythopoeia", Tolkien refuses to join with "…progressive apes…" emphatically declaring "before them gapes/the dark abyss to which their progress tends" (Tolkien 2001, 89). This is the path walked by those who, like Tompkins, "look at trees and label them just so" (Ibid, 85), classifying, analysing, anatomising and failing to see clearly at all. In fact, the poet explains - "trees are not 'trees', until so named and seen" (Ibid, 86). It is by participating in nature, by naming it (recalling the account in Genesis 2:19 in which Adam performs the sub-creative task of naming the creatures) that humans see clearly. It is by imaginative participation and the sub-creative art of the little human maker that the world becomes enchanted and meaningful.

Defying Tompkins' analytical dissections, Niggle's art is one of coherence and interconnection. All of the leaves may be different but they, nevertheless, belong to the tree. Niggle's other pictures find themselves drawn into the great work, perhaps not fully integrated but "tacked on" to the edges (94). The synthesising movement of Niggle's work is not complete, yet even in its unfinished state it has a certain power. Atkins saves a section of Niggle's picture, finding it strangely compelling. He is unable to articulate precisely why this fragment affects him as it does saying only "I can't get it out of my mind" (117) but perhaps the reader, by now knowing of Niggle's Parish, detects around the fragment the crackle of the numinous.

Tolkien acknowledges that at times it is the untold and the unfinished that can have the most power, writing to his son Christopher:

> …it is the untold stories that are most moving. I think you are moved by *Celebrimbor* because it conveys a sudden sense of endless *untold* stories: mountains seen far away…distant trees (like Niggle's) never to be approached…(unless in Paradise or N's Parish). (Tolkien 1981, 111)

Perhaps by making an unfinished gesture towards coherence and synthesis Niggle unwittingly creates more in the minds of the beholder than his skill would ever have allowed him to complete. Sometimes the implied has more power than the completed.

Elsewhere, Tolkien isolates a particular quality in stories drawn from prior lost stories, calling them "rooted" (Tolkien 2021, 109). The branch, belonging to the lost tree has this quality. Its 'rootedness' is a kind of ontological weight granted by the unseen remainder of the image. Viewed in this way, we can perhaps detect the operations of grace working even in the imperfections of Niggle's unfinished work on earth. After all, even the Voice of Justice never condemns Niggle for leaving his picture incomplete; perhaps the tree in final form was always literally beyond him.

Nevertheless, no matter how wonderful the reader might sense Niggle's picture to be, after the museum fire, no trace of it remains in the world. Niggle lived and died in obscurity and his work disappeared from view soon after (118). This, rather bleak outcome, might seem to be the natural conclusion to the story of an unknown artist. It was also the

fate that Tolkien expected for his own work as, Niggle-like, he worried about leaving "the whole thing [*The Lord of the Rings*] revised and in final form, for the world to throw into the waste-paper basket" (Tolkien 1981, 121).[30]

As Sørina Higgins reminds us: "The Tolkienian kind of happy ending whether of *Beowulf* or a fairy story…includes fading diminishment and loss" (Higgins 2017, 45). Tolkien's study of the Norse Myths, of the story of Arthur and his own creations of Elves and Númenor all speak to his understanding that even great works and golden ages pass as Fortune's wheel turns. Tolkien soberly reflects on this in relation to the *Gawain* poet, "a major poet of his day" whose name is now forgotten and whose work lives on only in a "fragment" (Tolkien 2021, 13-15). Thus, Tolkien has good historical precedent to conclude that all books ultimately end up as waste paper "…in this world anyway" (Tolkien 1981, 121).

For another writer those words "in this world anyway" would strike a forlorn note. For Tolkien they indicate hope for what he called 'eucatastrophe'- the unexpected happy ending of the Fairy Story that provides "a fleeting glimpse of Joy…beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (69). In life, it seems that this Joy is ever elusive. It is this sense of the almost-but-not-quite that Niggle feels when he contemplates his unfinished painting and sees something "wholly unsatisfactory, and yet very lovely" (95). For Niggle though, the quest does finally end. Upon release from the workhouse, Niggle takes a journey that ends with a remarkable discovery:

> Before him stood the Tree, his Tree finished. If you could say that of a Tree that was alive, its leaves opening, its branches growing and bending in the wind that Niggle had so often failed to catch. He gazed at the Tree, and slowly he lifted his arms and opened them wide.
>
> 'It's a gift!' he said. (110).

In this moment, 'Leaf by Niggle' makes the extraordinary theological suggestion that the work of imperfect little Niggle has made a lasting addition to the lower, gentle slopes

30 For the contemporary reader, the allegorical identification of Niggle with Tolkien might break down somewhat at this point. After all, Tolkien's work has resulted in the creation of perhaps the most successful Secondary World in fiction. Nevertheless, pleasing though this reception would doubtless have been, I suspect that Tolkien would still have insisted that in the end, on a long enough timeline, in this world, all human works, including his own, will fade.

of purgatory. It is a remarkable embodiment of the theory of eucatastrophe and clearly expresses a real hope for Tolkien, who in a letter to his son Michael declared:

> There is a place called 'heaven' where the good here unfinished is completed; and where the stories unwritten, and the hopes unfulfilled, are continued. We may laugh together yet…(Tolkien 1981, 55)

In one sense, Tolkien's theology in this story reflects Catholic orthodoxy. From the idea of purgatory where a work of sanctification (begun but very incomplete in life) can be continued, to an eventual ascent into the mountains, Tolkien has followed (with some distinct personal flourishes) a pattern found in Dante amongst others. Even the notion that God has somehow incorporated humanity's creations within the Divine narrative is not without Biblical warrant. The doctrine of the incarnation speaks to the Word becoming Flesh (John 1:14) and the participation of the Divine in human culture (Niebuhr 200,193). However, in this 'eucatastrophic turn' Tolkien does something truly audacious. In the workhouse we saw the personal allegorical story of little Niggle/Tolkien subject to the weight of Catholic doctrine. There Niggle's half-heartedness and distractedness in terms of work, charity and even leisure were purged from him. Having come through that, however, we see a reciprocating movement, as the Christian world of purgatory itself miraculously takes on the pattern of Niggle's picture. This is a moment of quite unmerited favour. Niggle calls it "a gift", the theologians would call it grace. The personal has shaped the archetype.[31]

Once again, in 'Leaf by Niggle' we find the embodiment of ideas located in Tolkien's theoretical writing. In 'On Fairy-stories' Tolkien identifies the joy given by the eucatastrophic 'turn' in fairy-tales as having "…the very taste of primary truth…It [the turn] looks forward…to the Great Eucatastrophe" (73). This 'Great Eucatastrophe' is the salvation of Man as revealed in the Gospels themselves. For Tolkien, this joyful 'turn', both in myth and history, validates the sub-creative work of the makers of tales (and pictures). The view of the artist and the art given by this is not that of the god-like genius. The littleness of the artist is not lost in the greatness of their participation. Nevertheless, they may find that, by 'gift' they "actually assist in the effoliation and multiple enrichment of creation" (73).

31 At least, this is how Niggle experiences it. The reader might sense that the vision of the tree was always a divine gift calling Niggle to this place. However, the naming of 'Niggle's Parish' nevertheless implies that the sub-creation of the neighbours' has been permitted to shape the spiritual geography of purgatory.

One of the compelling features of Tolkien's work (and perhaps one of the reasons why it often seems to have such coherence) is the degree to which Tolkien's life, his artistic creation and his theoretical writings are of a piece. Tolkien's belief in the ability of myths and stories to point to the 'true myth' of the Christian gospel was put to the test, proving instrumental in the conversion of C.S. Lewis from theism to Christianity (Wilson 1990, 126). Thus, by the time of the composition of 'Leaf by Niggle' (1938-39), Tolkien had seen first-hand how art could participate in salvation. 'Leaf by Niggle' may read like a fairy-tale but, consistent with Tolkien's view of such stories, it contains something that the author considers to be of the deepest truth.

Finally, perhaps the deepest and most mysterious 'truth' of Tolkien's legendarium is 'the gift of death'. As Guite (neatly rebutting those critical charges of escapism) puts it:

> Tolkien's mythos invites us to confront rather than evade the reality of death…for mortal men death itself is the gift of Ilúvatar that can be accepted graciously and made blessed. (Guite 2018, 496)

Tolkien articulates this concept most explicitly in *The Silmarillion* where we are told that Ilúvatar gives "a new gift" to humanity and thus "…willed that the hearts of men should seek beyond the world and find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life" (Tolkien 1977, 41).

Once again, the story of Niggle beautifully embodies this pattern. For while Ivan Ilyin claims that "Great art" is "service and joy" (Ilyin 2019, 52), Niggle has precious little joy from his art in life. Instead, it has been a kind of burden to him. Adding to that burden is the fact that nobody else cares for it. In a sense, (though only a very limited sense) Tompkins is right; Niggle's art is of no use. His life has been shaped by a vision beyond his reach but what would be a tragic tale of unfulfilled desire is here transformed. After the 'gift of death', the promise of Niggle's tree is fulfilled. Like Frodo, Niggle goes "to a purgatory and to a reward" and there gains "a truer understanding of his position in littleness and in greatness…" (Tolkien 2006, 328). There, at last, with the help of Parish, Niggle's art does real good, performing a service of helping others towards the mountains. There, at last, there is joy – and the mountains ring with laughter.

In a way, 'Leaf by Niggle' is indeed a minor work. It is only a short story with no nar-

rative linking it to the wider legendarium. Yet, like the World Tree of Norse myth, in the roots and branches of Niggle's tree we can find connections to all the other stories and to the author himself. The discovery of Niggle's Tree in purgatory is not only a moment of great beauty within the tale but it captures something so essential to Tolkien that it might be regarded as a key to understanding his whole body of work. By combining fidelity to a pre-existing pattern (here Catholic theology, elsewhere perhaps Anglo-Saxon myth) with close personal engagement, the pattern itself is refashioned and emerges as something close to a paradox: an original act of sub-creation, the "unique embodiment of a pattern" or, if you prefer, like a leaf by Niggle.

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The Quaternal Hero of The Lord of the Rings

by

Ana Kechan

As early as 2009, while working on my Doctorate in Comparative Literature dealing with Jungian hermeneutics, I was troubled by the concepts of the Hero archetype and the hero of a literary work – and not in just any literary work, but in *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien in particular. I was focusing my research on the archetypes of the Shadow and the contra-sexual Animus and Anima, but book titles such as *The Individuated Hobbit* by Timothy R. O'Neill, suggesting one of the hobbits *did* achieve individuation and would therefore qualify as the hero of the trilogy, were a thorn in my side. The question of who the real hero of the trilogy is seems to have been a thorn in many people's sides, as a simple search of this question would suggest, resulting in academic texts that name Aragorn, Frodo, Samwise or Gandalf as the one hero. Let us look at several of those claims.

George Clark believed that "Tolkien sought a true hero motivated by a heroic ideal consistent with his own religious and moral ideals, but he could not rid himself of his desire for the glorious heroes of old" (2000, 39). He looks at Bilbo as the first hero of Tolkien who "like a hero of old, sets out… for wealth and fame, his commitment to the adventure sealed by a contract as binding as a heroic oath confirmed with a drink of the bright mead" (42). However, when it comes to the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*, Clark says "the unexpected hero, much like the unpromising youth of folktales or a future saga hero lazing by the fire and called a fool until called to great actions by great needs, proves to be Samwise Gamgee" (45).

Randel Helms in *Tolkien's World* (1974) compares, as we shall later see, the hero journeys of Bilbo and Frodo, but as separate heroes – the former of *The Hobbit* and the latter of *The Lord of the Rings*. Paul Kocher in *Master of Middle-earth: The Achievement of J.R.R. Tolkien* (1973/2002) starts his chapter on Aragorn by lamenting his almost complete neglect in the eyes of the critics, as the hero of the trilogy. He then continues, for many pages, to recount each strength and weakness of Aragorn and how he overcomes them, building a solid case for him as the hero.

William Ready in *The Tolkien Relation* (1968) refers to Frodo as the hero multiple times, famously disregarding Aragorn as "too good to be human" (101), which is in fact one of the reasons Kocher goes through the analysis of Aragorn as thoroughly as he did in the aforementioned book, to show Aragorn's complex human nature.

What should be evident is that anyone trying to present a persuasive argument and build a case for one or another of the main characters as the hero of the trilogy can do so, and very effectively and meaningfully, yet any analysis of single hero characters leaves a large part of the story and the contribution of the other characters overlooked.

Several authors have looked beyond the single-character hero. Verlyn Flieger, in *Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of the Hero* (in 2004) wrote of Frodo and Aragorn as two complementary heroes because according to her "in *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien has written a medieval story and given it both kinds of hero, the extraordinary man to give the epic sweep of great events and the common man who has the immediate, poignant appeal of someone with whom the reader can identify" (124). In her opinion, Aragorn and Frodo combine very nicely as "an essentially epic hero and an essentially fairy-tale hero" (ibid.).

Thomas Honegger agrees that "most critics have noticed that Tolkien does not present us with a single, clearly identifiable hero in *The Lord of the Rings*" (2018, 158) and he proposes the term 'cooperative heroism'

> "denoting, on the one hand, the cooperation among different protagonists in order to achieve a common goal. On the other, the term also refers to the perceived interconnectedness of individual heroic actions within the larger framework of Providence." (ibid.)

He thus concludes that "Tolkien's multi-faceted presentation of heroism is a world where new heroes, as personified in Frodo or Sam and, to some extent, also Faramir, rub shoulders with heroes of an older tradition, such a Theoden and Eomer, but also Aragorn and Boromir" (173).

I included a short description of whom I believe to be the true hero of LotR in a text entitled "A Jungian View of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*", first published on March 30th, 2020 and then republished in 2022, while discussing Carl Gustav Jung's

notion of the quaternity. I believe that Jungian theory can provide a valid answer to this discussion.

In short, Jung believed that the quaternity is the archetypal image or fullest representation of the Self because it "symbolizes the possibility of becoming conscious" (in Skogemann, 1992:189) and becoming conscious is the greatest achievement one can accomplish. He wrote that

> "quaternity…always represents a consciously reflected and differentiated *totality*. Quite apart from its almost universal incidence it also appears spontaneously in dreams as an expression of the *total personality*." (1977, 203, *my italics*)

There are several instances of fours in Tolkien's trilogy, yet the one of crucial importance of the quest for the hero of LotR is the quaternity of Man, elaborated on by Edward C. Whitmont.

In his book *The Symbolic Quest* (1979), Whitmont makes a parallel between Toni Wolff's differentiation of the archetypal expression of the feminine with his own view of the archetypal expression of the masculine, delineating the Father, Son, Hero and Wise Man as the four elements. To anyone familiar with LotR characters, it should be relatively clear how these elements correlate with the characters, with Frodo being the Son, Aragorn being the Hero (but only as one quarter of the quaternity of Man), and Gandalf being the Wise Man. The only slightly problematic figure is the Father figure, simply because Bilbo does not at first glance fit the description of the Father who, according to Whitmont

> "is the archetypal leader, the voice of collective authority, the Lord, King or Tyrant, but also Protector, the figure concerned with hierarchical social order, whose word is Law. He directs and protects, but knows only children or subjects, not individuals." (1979, 181-182)

Furthermore, the father archetype

> "maintains order, manifests fertility and blessing and represents feeling calm, centered and a sense of inner authority." (Bogart, 2009:112)

The second description comes very close to a description of the essence of hobbits, whereas we also see some of the traits of the first description in Bilbo, in the way he is revered by the community and it the way he gathers everyone for the celebration of his birthday, almost like the Lord of the Shire. He is, without a doubt, a father figure to Frodo, the Son, whom he adopts after his parents' death and, most interestingly, they both share the same birthday. He is set apart from the other hobbits as well, firstly because of his bad temper and lack of patience, second, by his unnaturally long life, but also by the wisdom that came from his experiences taking place in *The Hobbit* – experiences no other hobbit has ever had because of their complacency. Thus, Bilbo *is* set apart from the other, common hobbits, which leads us to the other uncommon hobbit, Frodo, who in the trilogy takes on the maleness in the form of the Son. Whitmont's description is very fitted to Frodo for

> "The Son goes his own way, seeks individual relationships and his own individuality, his own inner treasure, in ever new settings…. […]…He is the eternal Friend (1979, 182)

The friendship of the four hobbits, and Frodo and Sam's in particular, has widely been written about. However, the Son is also embodied in the *puer aeternus* and are there any more perfect eternal boys than the hobbits? This is also one of the reasons why Frodo does *not* achieve individuation and remains a puer, for achieving individuation would mean that he reaches not just psychological but also physical maturity and wholeness as individuation is reserved for the second half of a person's life, according to Jung and Whitmont.

The third form of expression of the masculine is the Wise Man or mana figure and Gandalf is precisely like other actualizations of this archetype, for he is "the scholar, teacher, sage, seer and philosopher" (ibid.).

Finally, the Hero is presented in the character of Aragorn. Aragorn is a complex character in this context, although at first glance in the books, he is far from such a description. His evolution is what is fascinating – so, why cannot Aragorn be the hero of LotR, in the same way that Frodo cannot? If we look at Aragorn's development without the other expressions of masculinity, namely Frodo, Gandalf, and Bilbo, it is obvious that he could not have reached individuation, as he did, in the name of Man. The same is true for Frodo

– if we only look at his plotline, he could not have destroyed the One Ring without the others. Furthermore, let us not forget that the destruction of the Ring ushered the new age, Age of Man, and the four characters we have mentioned all together, as an expression of Man, constitute the real hero of the trilogy, solving the conflicting and incomplete statements of hero-hood by various authors.

Let us not stop there with a statement of Man being the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*. Let us support this by looking at the three schemata of heroes we have available: Vladimir Propp's and Lord Raglan's Formalist morphologies, and Joseph Campbell's psychological points which he termed the monomyth.

Stephen Potts, in his article 'The Many Faces of the Hero in The Lord of the Rings' (1991), looks at the same hero morphologies mentioned above, for each character (with Samwise Gamgee as the fourth, not Bilbo) concluding that each of them is a separate hero and that "Tolkien's many heroes reflect in their various ways the archetypes and archetypal patterns more methodically delineated by the writers of monographs" (1991, 10).

He did sense the connection when he writes that "Aragorn and Gandalf serve their functions as heroes in tandem – indeed, almost archetypally as the projections of a single psyche" (6).

A look at each of these four characters as archetypal images or representations of Man shows Man is the true hero, fulfilling every single point of the three schemata.

Propp's morphology	Raglan's morphology	Campbell's monomyth
1. A member of family departs from home (to travel, war, collect berries, or die)	1. The hero's mother is a royal virgin.	1. Hero receives a call to adventure
2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero (don't look in this closet, don't talk to strangers, don't defile my shrine)	2. His father is king and	2. Hero refuses the call
3. The interdiction is violated	3. Often a near relative of the mother	3. Hero receives supernatural aid (a guide, a talisman, a power)

4. The villain reconnoiters (seeks out hero or addresses him)	4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and	4. Hero crosses the first threshold, often with brother-battle
5. Villain receives information about his victim	5. He is also reputed to be the son o f a god.	5. The belly of the whale, or underworld
6. Villain attempts to deceive victim to take possession of him or belongings	6. At his birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or maternal grandfather, to kill him, but,	6. The road of trials (a series of tests, accompanied by helpers; at nadir, undergoes major ordeal, receives reward)
7. Victim submits to deception and thus unwittingly helps enemy	7. He is spirited away, and	7. Meets goddess, or is tempted by woman; sacred marriage
8. Villain causes harm or injury to member of family or [VIIIa. Member of family lacks or desires something]	8. Reared by foster parents in a far country.	8. Atonement with father, or recognition by divine father
9. Misfortune is made known; hero receives request; is dispatched	9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but	9. Apotheosis of hero
10. Seeker agrees to/ decides counteraction	10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.	10. Hero receives ultimate boon, sometimes by stealing bride
11. Hero leaves home	11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon or wild beast	11. Begins return, after refusing it
12. Hero is tested, attacked, etc., leading to magical agent or helper	12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and	12. Magic flight
13. Hero reacts to future donor/helper	13. Becomes king.	13. Rescue from without
14. Hero acquires magical agent	14. For a time he rules uneventfully, and	14. Crosses return threshold
15. Hero delivered to object of search	15. Prescribes laws, but	15. Becomes master of two worlds (material and spiritual)

16. Hero and villain join in direct combat	16. Later he loses favor with the gods and/or his subjects,	16. Enjoys the freedom to live
17. Hero is branded (wounded, marked, or receives token)	17. Is driven from the throne and city, after which	
18. Villain is defeated	18. He meets with a mysterious death	
19. Initial misfortune is ended	19. Often on top of a hill.	
20. Hero returns	20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.	
21. Hero is pursued	21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless,	
22. Hero is rescued from pursuit	22. He has one or more holy sepulchers.	
23. Hero arrives unrecognized		
24. False hero presents claims		
25. A difficult task is proposed to the hero		
26. The task is resolved		
27. The hero is recognized		
28. False hero or villain is exposed		
29. Hero receives new appearance (new looks, castle, clothes)		
30. Villain is punished		
31. Hero is married, ascends throne		

Several things should be noted here. First, I have used the same condensed versions as Potts, simply because they were very succinctly organized. Second, I have organized them in a table to provide a clearer overview but not to suggest that there is a correlation

between the numbers of the points, i.e. for example, number 3 in Propp's morphology does not correlate to number 3 in Raglan's or Campbell's list.

With just a glance at the three lists of points, one should be able to notice immediately that the hero takes on the four shapes of the quaternity of Man as described previously – there is mention of him being the Son, the Father, the Wise Man and the Hero.

Ruth Noel outlines Aragorn's character against Raglan's points and the fact that he "perfectly fulfills the first fifteen functions, from his royal and even semi-divine birth, the attempt on his infant life, and his foster upbringing, to his victory over a figure of evil, his marriage and assumption of the throne, and his peaceful rule" (in Potts 1991, 5).

Furthermore, when it comes to Propp's and Campbell's functions, Aragorn jumps in at Propp's point nine continuing to points eleven, twelve and thirteen, finishing with points twenty-nine and thirty-one. On Campbell's list, he joins at point three, continuing to points four, five, six and seven. He is the only one out of the quaternity to achieve *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage – point seven with Campbell - thereby elevating the quaternity a level higher and closer to achieving individuation for Man.

Gandalf starts off as "a Proppian magical helper…as of his resurrection, however, he appears heroic on his own" (6). He descends into the underworld, he battles a beast, he enters the world of the dead, performs a magic flight, there is the successful return and the apotheosis – hitting points four, five, six and nine of Campbell's functions, to become a master of two worlds at point fifteen. On Propp's list, he reaches points twelve to seventeen, finishing at point twenty nine early on in the books, with his ascension as Gandalf the White.

Frodo, the Son, very interestingly shares points from both Propp and Campbell and not randomly, but he starts from Propp's number one, with the departure of a family member, continuing all the way to number fourteen, then to seventeen, and then he jumps in at number five of Campbell's list but fails to reach the final points and achieve peace of mind and find happiness in the freedom he fought for.

In the trilogy, Bilbo has already finished his individual hero journey and we find him at the end of both Raglan's and Campbell's lists. In Reglan's he may be placed at point twenty where his child (Frodo) does not succeed him and his body is not buried, for both

of them sail to the Undying Lands. The same is true for Campbells's – he magically disappears from the party at the beginning of the trilogy – point twelve on Campbell's list, and goes to live in a different world (he spends several years in Rivendell) where he enjoys the freedom to live, hitting the final point, point sixteen. In *The Hobbit*, he does go through points eleven to twenty on Propp's list and he matches most points on Campbell's.

Bilbo and Frodo's hero journeys are remarkably similar, as Randel Helms noted in the aforementioned book. He compares their journeys by using the points of the hero morphologies by Propp and Reglan, although he does not directly state them in the text. He, does, however, provide an overview of how they each go through the same points.

One thing of great importance is the fact that the hero is not a static element, like the flat, static character of fairy tales that does very little and changes even less. The hero is a developing archetypal image or, in the words of Joseph L. Henderson,

> "…It is essential to recognize that in each of the stages in this cycle there are special forms of the hero story that apply to the particular point reached by the individual in the development of his ego-consciousness, and to the specific problem confronting him at that moment. That is to say, the image of the hero evolves in a manner that reflects each stage of the evolution of the human personality." (in 1964, 112)

The final sentence makes perfect sense in the context of the four different aspects of Man we have been describing. It is only through the individual contributions of each aspect of Man that the Age of Man can begin and the psyche of the collective, humankind, can reach the highest degree of psychological equilibrium.

This brings us to another quaternity related to our quest for the hero of LotR and that is the quaternity of the Ages: the First Age is the age of Elves and the unconscious, whereas the consciousness of Man is primitive and dominated by the unconscious. In the Second Age, with the fall of Morgoth, Man is mature and his consciousness is expanding, but during this expansion, it loses touch with the past and its archetypal foundation, leading to the complete alienation of the conscious and the unconscious in the Third Age, during which the spiritual desolation leads to neurosis. The great battle for

Middle-earth that decides the fate of the world ends with the beginning of the Fourth Age, in which a balance must be achieved between the conscious and the unconscious, otherwise the unconscious will swallow the world. This is the story we find in the trilogy and this is achieved by the victory of Man who, as an expression of the quaternity we have discussed, has managed to achieve totality or, in Jung's terms, individuality.

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A Semiotic Reading of 'On Fairy-stories': The Plurality of Secondary Worlds and the Construction of Primary World-views

by
Laura Iseut Lafrance St-Martin

Introduction

'On Fairy-stories' is a lecture Tolkien gave on March 8, 1939. It followed the publication of *The Hobbit* (1937), when Tolkien had just begun working on *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), following the request of its publisher for a sequel. At this early stage of writing his novel, Tolkien reflects on several themes, such as the existence of "children's literature" and its link with fairy tales. This conference therefore marks an important moment of reflection and changes of perspectives, concerning both his creative and theoretical works.[32] For example, Tolkien had not yet questioned the idea spread and supported by Andrew Lang that children are the "natural" audience of fairy tales (Flieger and Anderson 2008, 12). 'On Fairy-stories'was first published in 1947, in a collective work titled *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Lewis 1947).

'On Fairy-stories' is a much-cited text: it holds a central place in Tolkien studies and in fantasy studies (Fimi and Honegger 2019; Flieger 2002; 2001)[33]. In most cases, the text is analyzed as to shed light on Tolkien's aesthetic choices in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* and, more rarely, *The Silmarilion* (Flieger and Anderson 2008; Northrup 2004; Beal 2017; Bush 2012, etc.). According to this approach, the essay would present Tolkien's views on what a "good" fairy tale is. Several of the most influential essays in Tolkien studies are

32 This reflection led, among other things, to the rejection of many of the aesthetic choices made during the writing of *The Hobbit*: "Direct address to a fictional "you" presumed to be smarter than the characters in the story, labored jokes about dragons in a pinch and trolls with only one head, asides that no serious author would address to an adult reader – Tolkien came to regret them all." (Flieger 2012, 57)

33 The importance of 'On Fairy-stories' is relatively new. In fact, Honegger notes that "For a long time, the lecture itself had virtually no impact" (2022, 28), and it is only after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* that it started to be read (often to understand Tolkien's fictional writing).

in this vein. For example, in her important work *Splintered Light* (1983), Verlyn Flieger shows the importance of Owen Barfield's thinking on Tolkien when he wrote *The Silmarilion* using his essay as a source. Patrick Curry, in *Defending Middle-Earth* (1997), uses the three sides of Tolkien's fairy tales[34] as a structure for his influential book as he sees these as the three main spheres of his thought. Tolkien's influence on the construction of the specialized terminology of fantasy studies also extends to the concept of Secondary World, which he proposed to replace "fictional words". According to Dimitria Fimi and Thomas Honegger (2019, i), the concept of Secondary World, which derived directly from 'On Fairy-stories', is now a standard expression in literary and fantasy studies. Similarly, Honegger notes that "[…] Tolkien's essay has indirectly become the theoretical cornerstone for the secondary-world tradition within fantasy (vs. the Todorovian framework)" (2022, 29).

This chapter aims to offer a new interpretation of this important text. Drawing on the work of C.S. Peirce and William James, we argue that 'On Fairy-stories' presents Tolkien's philosophical and semiotic thoughts (i.e., a theoretical way of understanding the process of interpretation). We will begin with a brief presentation of his critics' arguments. After, we will show how the Tolkienian concepts of Enchantment and Recovery set up a semiotic theory that accounts for the influence of the Secondary Worlds on worldviews. Finally, we aim to show that Tolkien sees Secondary Worlds as a part of reality and, therefore, we must pay attention to them to understand human experiences.

'On Fairy-stories'

In 'On Fairy-stories', Tolkien develops his three research questions: "What are fairy-stories? What is their origin? What is the use of them?" (1947, 27). He proposes an (unconventional) definition of fairy tale as stories about the realm of Faërie in the first section. In the second section, he challenges the philological and anthropological scholars' insistence on the tales' origin. He then argues that what matters is the effect they have on present-day readers, not their past and inaccessible meaning. The next three sections deal with the effects and functions of fairy tales, which have a significant transformative

34 In 'On Fairy-stories', Tolkien says that "[…] fairy-stories as a whole have three faces: the Mystical towards the Supernatural; the Magical towards Nature; and the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man. The essential face of Faerie is the middle one, the Magical. But the degree in which the others appear (if at all) is variable, and may be decided by the individual story-teller." (Tolkien 1947, para. 34)

capacity. Thus, although he never really deviates from the subject matter announced in the introduction, Tolkien offers more than just a theory of fairy tales in 'On Fairy-stories'. The further his essay progresses, the more he bases his thoughts about the influence of stories on a specific understanding of the processes of meaning.

Critics and 'On Fairy-stories': a brief overview

During his demonstration, Tolkien develops a theory of fairy tales and Secondary Worlds which goes far beyond his initial objectives. The result is a dense text in which many ideas are stated or implied without necessarily being explained. This density allows the essay to be used in a variety of ways, but at the same time makes it the subject of much criticism. Indeed, *On Fairy-Stories* is a much discussed text in scholarly circle; for example, the proceedings of the *Deutschen Tolkien Gesellschaft*'s 2015 seminar in *Hither Shore* (Fornet-Ponse, Honegger, and Eilmann 2016) present various scholarly discussions surrounding Tolkien's essay.

In particular, Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien's official biographer, criticized the essay for lacking direction: "He made a good many points in the lecture, perhaps too many for an entirely cogent argument" (1977, 228). According to him, 'On Fairy-stories' is a collection of good ideas rather than a text with a clearly argued progression.

Another important criticism of the essay comes from Tom Shippey, one of the most eminent scholars in Tolkien studies, who accuses it of lacking a philological core[35]:

> However, this is Tolkien's least successful if most discussed piece of argumentative prose. The main reason for its comparative failure, almost certainly, is its lack of a philological core or kernel; Tolkien was talking to, later writing for, an unspecialised audience, and there is some sign that he tried to 'talk down' to them. (1982, 66)

Flieger and Anderson respond to this criticism by saying that the essay is too scattered, giving the impression that it lacks "core": "While 'On Fairy-stories' is packed with

35 Shippey defines the discipline as follows: "In my opinion (it is one not shared, for instance, by the definitions of the Oxford English Dictionary), the essence of philology is, first, the study of historical forms of a language or languages, including dialectal or non-standard forms, and also of related languages. […] However, philology is not and should not be confined to language study. The texts in which these old forms of the language survive are often literary works of great power and distinctiveness. […] In philology, *literary and linguistic study are indissoluble*. They ought to be the same thing." (2000, 8)

information and erudition, it casts so wide a net as to appear at first glance lacking a core, philological or otherwise" (2008, 10). In a similar way, Honegger notes that "the argument of the lecture is somewhat meandering, which is due to Tolkien's endeavor to keep up the pretense of talking, at least intermittently, about Lang's fairy-stories" (Honegger 2022, 28). Nonetheless, Honegger notes that Tolkien was working on critical concepts specific to his approach even if the essay's argument is often difficult to follow.

Thus, several important Tolkien specialists agree that 'On Fairy-stories' is a text whose argument is difficult to follow. Indeed, reading the epilogue (whose purpose borders theology), there seems to be an important shift in his objective. The way Tolkien goes from "what are fairy-stories?" (1947, para. 3) to "all tales may come true" (1947, para. 106) may seem inconsistent. The text's density, its style (sometimes humorous or literary) and the frequency of innuendo may partly explain why the essay fascinates and polarizes Tolkien specialists so much. Nevertheless, in this chapter, we will show this progression is justified by the fact that it is not only a literary theory of fairy tales, but also a semiotic conception of the importance of Secondary Worlds.

A semiotic proposition

At the essay's beginning, Tolkien's subject matter and research goals for 'On Fairy-stories' seem clear and explicit. Despite this, he quickly diverges from purely literary and philological perspectives to enter philosophical considerations that influenced the rest of his argument.

For example, Tolkien discusses the origin of language and narratives (here, fairy tales), which he directly links: "To ask what is the origin of stories (however qualified) is to ask what is the origin of language and of the mind" (1947, para. 22). Although this remark is related to Tolkien's second research question ("What is their origin?"), the subject begins to slide more towards philosophical considerations. Stories are described as the "natural" consequences of human languages. This comment is a first step towards Tolkien's thoughts on the nature of narratives and their function of shaping the Primary World or "real" world.

Further on, Tolkien discusses worldviews—which he calls personal philosophies. When judging the veracity of stories (mainly those from the Middle Ages), the critic

or researcher is very often inclined to refer only to his primary beliefs. Tolkien uses the term *philosophy* as a conception of reality, or worldview: "The critic's philosophy does not allow [the tale] to be possible in 'real life,' so that he would actually disbelieve [it]" (Tolkien 1947, para. 35). The use of the verb *to allow* (what do we allow "real life" to be?), as well as the absence of references to rational faculties or science, lead to question the nature and construction processes of one's personal philosophy. It appears that, for Tolkien, the world is not "given," but rather constructed: the worldview (i.e., the coherent whole of beliefs, habits and understanding of the "workings" of the world) has a deep effect on the perception of reality.

These remarks make us wonder if the essay 'On Fairy-stories' would not be more semiotic than what it appears at first glance. It sure seems to be mostly centred around the history of fairy-stories, but it quickly becomes much more than that. Rather than philological, could the "missing core" of the text, as Shippey, Flieger and Anderson put it, be semiotic? In this context, our study starting point is as follows: 'On Fairy-stories' is a text whose roots are in semiotics. As part of this chapter, we therefore propose to discuss semiotic elements of Tolkien's theory as presented in 'On Fairy-stories' and to reveal how the essay can help rethink the role of Secondary Worlds in the construction of worldviews.

A Tolkienian theory of Secondary Worlds and of primary worldviews

'On Fairy-stories' is a dense and sometime obscure essay. As shown before, many scholars have studied it with various approaches and objectives. While we do not pretend to explain the whole essay in such a short chapter, we propose instead to focus on a particular theme: the influence of Secondary Worlds on worldviews. Therefore, many concepts and sections in 'On Fairy-stories' will be left out of our argument. To support our semiotic interpretation, we will discuss Tolkien's ideas as well as those of the American pragmatist philosophers C.S. Peirce and William James[36].

36 Pragmatism is a philosophical and semiotic approach born in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. The term "pragmatism" was first used by the philosopher, logician and mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce in *The Fixation of Belief* (1877) and was later developed in *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (1878). According to Peirce, pragmatism's starting point is the definition of "belief" according to the Scottish philosopher and psychologist Alexander Bain: "that upon which a man is prepared to act. From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary; so that I am disposed to think of him as the grandfather of pragmatism" (1907). Drawing from this simple definition, Peirce and James developed a concrete and practical definition of the processes of meaning. Although Peirce was the father of pragmatism, it was James who popularized him and defended him publicly during a series of lectures in 1898. These lectures will later form the book *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907).

What makes a world secondary: the semiotic nature of sub-created worlds

Tolkien's first use of the term "primary" appears in the section on children (already halfway through the essay): "It seems fairly clear that Lang was using belief in its ordinary sense: belief that a thing exists or can happen in the real (primary) world" (1947, para. 49). In this sentence, Tolkien constructs an association between reality and primacy, with the aim of subsequently substituting the "primary" adjective for that of "real".

Tolkien proposes different terms to replace the classic opposition between reality and fiction: Primary World and Secondary Worlds. The implicit theological model of the essay constructs a separation between the (unique) Creation by the Christian God[37] and (multiple) sub-creations by human beings. Humans are limited in the materials they possess for their creations: these are mainly signs (sounds, words, pixels, etc.). In short, Secondary Worlds are marked by a semiotic nature[38].

This conception of the Secondary Worlds realness is manifested in comments that support, in a humorous way, the existence of fairies, elves and other inhabitants of the Faërie[39]. For example, specific expressions such as "whatever the folk of Faerie may think of [the scholar's] impertinence" (1947, para. 3) and "[y]ou are deluded—whether that is the intention of the elves (always or at any time) is another question" (1947, para. 74) mark this position. This type of commentary periodically comes up in the essay and stands out from the classical academic style.

The difference between Primary and Secondary Worlds is not summed up in a simple distinction between material and non-material, since Secondary Worlds have the materiality specific to signs: for example, recognizable shapes printed on a blank page or

37 The association Tolkien makes between the Primary World and Divine creation is obvious: for Tolkien, and according to his Catholic faith, the Primary World is necessarily linked to his God.

38 According to the semiopragmatic approach, all human experiences are necessarily semiotic, since percepts must be interpreted and shaped with the help of signs to become meaningful. The next chapters will dialogue with this idea to show the distinction between primary and 2012, although both are semiotic in nature.

39 Dimitra Fimi, in *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History: From Fairies to Hobbit* (2008), notes that Tolkien probably believed in *some existence* of fairies and that this belief has evolved over time. From an association with the spirits of nature that are part of his Catholic faith, to a "historical" belief, and finally to a modally different existence from humans, this *potential* belief could explain why, in *On Fairy-Stories*, he treats fairies and elves as beings with opinions about what he supports in his essay. However, in the elaboration of the Tolkienian theory of the Secondary Worlds, this question is not of crucial importance since Tolkien's beliefs are necessarily inaccessible to us and our project aims to build a semiotic theory from his essay, not to find an original meaning.

illuminated pixels organized in such a way as to produce recognizable shapes on a digital interface. These are signs, with their specific materiality. This insistence on the semiotic nature of the Secondary Worlds is not intended to diminish their realness or their importance. On the contrary, their participation in real experiences rests precisely on their semiotic nature. The main consequence of this model is that both types of Worlds are part of the "realness" of human experiences.

Primary and Secondary Worlds: both real parts of human experience

The thought of the psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910) makes it possible to account for the human experience. By insisting on the pure experience, that is, raw data organized in comprehensible forms, he proposes a theory of the first perception of fictional phenomena. To show the reality of the Secondary Worlds, we therefore rely on James' experiential theory.

James develops a philosophical system that he calls "radical empiricism" in which the concept of experience occupies a central place (1912). James' starting point, in the elaboration of his radical empiricism, is to do justice to everything that can be the object of experience (1912). In this system, anything that is a part of an experience is real. Nonetheless, not every part of reality has the same status: some are more present or very difficult to ignore, some other are difficult to see or to access. As a location of an artistic experience, Secondary Worlds hold a certain degree of reality.

To build a theoretical approach which allows reality to be conceived in this way, James proposes the concept of "pure experience," defined as "the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories" (1912, 50). The pure experience is therefore prior to thought, to any semiotic relationship. It must then be organized with the help of truths and habits to become meaningful to the individual.

Regarding this point, it is interesting to look at the French etymology of the term "world", which is translated as "*monde*". It comes from the Latin *mundus* which means "that which is arranged" and, in a similar way, from the Greek *kosmos* meaning "that which is put in order." The English etymology of "world" is similarly interesting: from

Old English *woruld*, coming from a Germanic compound meaning "age of human" or "human experience", this term is centered on the human relation to reality. Modern languages (including French and English) use this term in a more neutral sense, to evoke all the perceptible elements of reality. Nevertheless, those etymologies testify the necessary manipulations needed to produce a world: it must be arranged, put in order or manipulated by a human. This etymological sense describes a movement like the process of transforming pure experience into experience in James' philosophy. Indeed, although an important part of this process is done unconsciously, our world awareness is still already shaped with the help of our habits, beliefs, and truths.

From a perceptual point of view, the inscription of the Secondary Worlds in the human experience is beyond doubt. Indeed, the signs used to access the Secondary Worlds are necessarily a part of reality. At the level of simple perception and pure experience, there is still no difference between a sign of the Primary World or of the Secondary World. The difference only occurs at the time of formatting the experience.

Following Peirce's theory of signs, the association of a sign with an object is constructed by the act of interpretation: the meaning is thus never given in advance, it must be actively constructed. Thus, as a judgment of value, the association of a set of signs with "fiction" come after its existence and its perception. Although this is apparent in the case of religious narratives[40], Tolkien's theory of Secondary Worlds holds that the set of narratives can have a different truth value for different individuals. Indeed, based on James' philosophy of experience, we propose that there are several ways to categorize secondary experiences. Like Tolkien (who does not use the concept of fiction), we propose that the classical opposition between "reality" and "fiction" maintains a false dichotomy that does not allow us to understand the importance of Secondary Worlds.

The use of "fiction" to describe a semiotic experience contributes to excluding it from reality, and thus not giving it the attention needed to understand its importance within the individuals' and the communities' experiences. Our reading of 'On Fairy-stories' aims to show that Secondary Worlds contribute to the construction of the worldview. It is necessary to understand them to render the complexity of the human experience.

40 For example, religious narratives have a very different value of truth (and reality) in different individuals: for some, they have a value of absolute reality, while for others they are narratives with little or no reality. Thus, the stories cannot simply be described as "fictional" or "real", outside their context of interpretation.

Enchantment: art and semiotic state

Enchantment is a polysemic concept for Tolkien. He presents the relation between the concepts of Enchantment, Secondary Worlds and human experience as follows:

> Art is the human process that produces by the way (it is not its only or ultimate object) Secondary Belief. Art of the same sort, if more skilled and effortless, the elves can also use, or so the reports seem to show; but the more potent and specially elvish craft I will, for lack of a less debatable word, call Enchantment. Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose. (1947, para. 75)

It is both a type of art that aims to produce a Secondary World and a state, which can affect the production pole as well as the reception pole (within a Secondary World, creators/authors and readers/spectators/players can become "enchanted"). As part of this chapter, we will focus on the state of Enchantment.

The Secondary World presents itself as a space of potential experiences in which the *explorer*[41], i.e., the reader, creates new interpretative habits and beliefs, which are related to their understanding of how this world works. Enchantment is here understood as a semiotic state that results from the presence in a Secondary World. The term "state" is defined in its usual sense, meaning "way of being," and is added to the adjective "semiotic" to mean a "way of making sense from signs." In this regard, Enchantment is a way of producing meaning.

Being enchanted and the creation of secondary beliefs

The Secondary World aims to create Secondary Beliefs through experiences: "Art is the human process that produces […] Secondary Belief" (Tolkien 1947, para. 75). Inside this World, when the explorer is in a state of Enchantment, events are interpreted

41 We are using the term 'explorer' following Tolkien. Indeed, in *On Fairy-Stories,* Tolkien uses the term to designate the reader (or anyone in the reception pole).

according to Secondary Beliefs[42]. According to the typology present in 'On Fairy-stories', Secondary Beliefs can be defined as Beliefs formed within a Secondary World.

Thus, the notion of Belief is central to understanding how Tolkien's Secondary Worlds work. For William James, notions of truth and belief are also essential to pragmatism and its radical empiricism. He proposes a definition of truth that is non-essentialist, that is, being true is not an intrinsic feature of certain ideas or thoughts. For him, "our thoughts become true" when they successfully mediate our experience (1907, 32): "Truth in our ideas means their power to 'work'" (1907, 28)[43]. It is an idea that has, by repetitions and habits, taken on a very strong value of trust: the individual knows that they can count on it to shape the world and its events.

This idea fits well with Peirce's semiotics. For him, the relationship between a sign and its object is always built by an interpretative process: it is always actual and in action. Several elements come into play to determine the meaning of a sign, but in the final analysis, it is the interpretive habits that "determine" the meaning and value of the signs. In his own vocabulary, Tolkien proposes that the acquisition of Secondary Beliefs is at the heart of the Secondary World experience: it is one of the explorer's main objectives.

As a place of real experiences, the Secondary World needs to be shaped using truths, beliefs, and habits (similarly to the Primary World). Over time, the explorer develops knowledge and a better understanding of how this world works. The farther away the Secondary World is from the Primary World (Wolf 2012), the more it will be necessary to develop Secondary Truths (or Beliefs): the truths from the Primary World cannot be used to shape it.

In semiotic terms, the Enchantment state is, therefore, defined as an interpretation

42 Tolkien does not propose the concept of Enchantment to replace the notion of "(consented) suspension of disbelief" because they are two separate processes. The notion of "(consented) suspension of disbelief" is frequently used to explain the functioning of various art forms (Ferri 2007; Brown 2012; Citton 2017, etc.), but is also used in other fields such as education or politics (Böcking 2008; Duffy and Zawieska 2012; Muckler 2017, etc.). It comes from Coleridge who made the suspension of disbelief (concerning the supernatural) a prerequisite for literary experience (1817). For Tolkien, this suspension is necessary only if the semiotic state of Enchantment cannot be attained or maintained. In this case, a "compromise" is actualized between the Secondary World and the Primary World.

43 Contrary to what some critics have argued, this is not pure relativism or opportunism: not all ideas are necessarily true and not all truths have the same value. Indeed, for James, truths have a necessary social character. Most of our truths come from our family and cultural upbringing: they are therefore "bequeathed" by previous generations. Truths thus have a subjective aspect, but they are fundamentally intersubjective, which gives them a certain objectivity.

in which the meaning of the signs is defined by interpretative habits formed within the Secondary World. It is, therefore, an interpretative cycle that aims to be autonomous, to make as little reference as possible to the Primary World.

As Tolkien argues in 'On Fairy-stories', Enchantment is both difficult to attain and to sustain over time. The slightest disturbance in the primary context of the individual (a direct solicitation of another individual or a sudden noise) can take the interpretation out of its secondary cycle and make it return to the primary one. In the same way, an event within the Secondary World that cannot be interpreted according to the individual's secondary habits can break the Enchantment. Thus, the semiotic state of enchantment requires both a context conducive to experience and a semiotic balance between novelty and internal coherence in the Secondary World.

The semiotic autonomy of Enchantment can in part explain why Tolkien "cordially disliked allegory." Indeed, the interpretative mode requires continually going back and forth between the Primary World and the Secondary World to create equivalences between the elements of each. It is an interpretive mode with very little flexibility. Nevertheless, Tolkien does not reject the links between the two types of Worlds. He proposes another model, that of applicability, which makes it possible to focus on the transfer of meaning between Worlds. Close to the anachronistic reading put forward by Citton (2017), applicability seeks a dynamic correspondence, possibly changing with each reading depending on the context. However, the concept seeks to explain the interpretation of the Secondary World and cannot explain the reciprocal interinfluence between the two.

In 'On Fairy-stories', we find a concept that links the Secondary Worlds effect and the experiences lived within them to the vision of the world. Very close to Enchantment, the concept of Recovery makes it possible to understand the effect of a complete secondary experience on the vision of the Primary World.

Distance and semiotic negotiation: recovery of a "clear view"

When the explorer is in a State of Enchantment, they experience an interpretive process outside of these primary habits. In other words, they are "out of themselves," from a

semiotic perspective. It is a strong experience that can change the individual relationship to their way of being in the world. In this section, we discuss Tolkien's concept of Recovery as a result of the State of Enchantment.

In his definition of Recovery, Tolkien does not use terms directly associated with semiotics (signs, meanings, representation, etc.). Nevertheless, it directly involves a semiotic reflection. He proposes the following definition:

> Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a regaining—regaining of a clear view. I do not say 'seeing things as they are' and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'—as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness. (1947, para. 83)

For Tolkien, Recovery is closely linked to worldviews and Enchantment. As seen in the previous sections, the state of Enchantment presupposes, by definition, the creation of a semiotic distance between the interpreter and his Primary World: Enchantment is characterized by the interpretation of a sign using a secondary interpreter, that is, without appealing to the interpretative habits resulting from primary experiences. It also includes a complete semiotic cycle in the Secondary World (to the detriment of the Primary World), if only for a short time.

When they leave the Secondary World, the explorers are once again in contact with their immediate physical environment. The concept of Recovery aims to account for the feeling of "new look" or of "being out of sync" that often accompanies this return to the Primary World. The interpreter has a context allowing them to regain awareness of their relationship with the immediate environment.

Like "washing the windows," the individual can then become aware of all the interpretative habits that "obstruct" his relationship to the Primary World. This has the effect of realizing that the "things [are] apart from ourselves," meaning that it is our interpretative habits that make them familiar. With the Recovery of a clear view, we can realize our own agency regarding our habits, our values, and our beliefs. This realization, being the first step

towards a semiotic renegotiation of interpretative habits, offers a clean slate to build anew.

In short, Recovery is an effect of the strangeness characteristic of Secondary Worlds. Strangeness has the effect of de-familiarizing individuals, that is, distancing individuals from their primary interpretative habits. This defamiliarization in turn makes it possible to realize the importance of habits in semiotic processes. Therefore, Recovery marks one of the potential effects of Secondary Worlds on Primary worldview: it can have a lasting effect on individuals and their behaviors.

Some concluding thoughts: the reality of Secondary Worlds

The state of Enchantment produces an opening to semiotic transformation which means that it is possible for some Secondary Worlds to influence our view of the Primary World. Some worlds offer semiotic tools that make it possible to act in the world or to preserve ourself in the face of the difficulties experienced within the Primary World.

Enchantment and secondary experiences offer the returning explorer the opportunity to renegotiate their relationship with the Primary World. In some cases, secondary experiences can play an important role in the construction of individuals' identities. Furthermore, secondary experiences can become reference points to understand the world, in a way similar to religious stories. Some Secondary Worlds and interpretive habits may come to overlap with the interpreter's worldview, meaning that truths coming from them are used to shape the pure experience. Within the framework of Tolkien's theory of Secondary Worlds, this type of interpretation is called the re-enchantment of the Primary World.

This original position paper highlights several key points of Tolkien's Secondary Worlds theory, including the importance of "imaginary" narratives in constructing worldviews and their effects on the Primary World. Tolkien concludes his essay with the sentence: "All tales may come true" (1947, para. 106), which marks the transformative power of narratives and their potential values of truth. Far from being only a theological and mystical commentary, this sentence marks the culmination of an implicit reflection on the relationship of stories and Secondary Worlds to truth, understood as signs allowing the shaping of the Primary World (James 1907).

Semiotics aims to understand the roles (good or bad) of signs in everyday life. It is also useful to understand the agency we have regarding the organization of the world. If we consider the many crises the contemporary world is facing (environmental, pandemic, economic, etc.), we are tempted to consider our hegemonic worldview as a problem. In this context, Secondary Worlds and the experiences we live in them, can be a useful tool to reimagine how, as a society, we organize what we deem important or not. Tolkien's theory can be a useful tool since he understands that stories are not simply "false" or "virtual", that is to say, outside of reality. The Secondary Worlds are real as they are potential spaces of experience and of stories. The secondary experiences we live help us shape truths: they influence us and, by doing so, they change the world. Therefore, we argue that Tolkien's semiotic theory can help us to, as Carry (1997) said, re-enchant the Primary World.

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Nature and High Fantasy: The Works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin as Eco Narratives

by
Sava Stamenković

High fantasy is often seen as escapism, even when we talk about nature – entering a fictional world with rich nature can be interpreted as an escape from the real world in which nature became something else or, worse, it may no longer be present. As American literary theorist Frederick Jameson says, the Other was once nature, but now the Other is yet to be defined. In "the moment of a radical eclipse of Nature itself [when] Heidegger's 'field path' is irrevocably destroyed by late capital, by the green revolution, by neocolonialism and the megalopolis, which runs its superhighways over the older fields and vacant lots" (2012, 77), we don't know what Nature is to us and thus "the other of our society is in that sense no longer Nature at all, as it was in precapitalist societies, but something else which we must now identify." (ibid.)

High fantasy by its very settings belongs to the ecocritical domain. The fictional worlds of high fantasy imply a pre-industrial society similar to the European society of the early Middle Ages, which includes a more preserved nature and a very low level of pollution. The world of high fantasy thus offers what has been stolen from us in reality – nature. When we say nature, we have in mind both wild, not cultivated, and cultivated nature, greenery, everything that is opposed to barrenness, destroyed nature, artificial constructions.

As Ursula Le Guin herself says in an essay, "fantasy's green country is one that most enter with ease and pleasure, and it seems to be perfectly familiar to most children even if they've never been out of the city streets" (2007, 86). And indeed, when it comes to high fantasy and nature, the first thing that comes to mind are Tolkien's long descriptions of the forests, wild rivers, elves that are almost one with nature. However, another association

can also be the desolation of Mordor, Saruman's destruction of trees etc. These are often interpreted (and some of Tolkien's essays support this) as a metaphor for an industrial society that threatens to destroy nature completely. High fantasy, therefore, offers us not only a kind of a pastoral idyll, a lost paradise, but also hints of its fall; it includes the fear of the destruction of nature, that anxiety that probably torments every person of the 21st century, who lives on a "planet in ecological debt"[44].

In ecocriticism, a text that does not use nature as a simple framework for action or a mirror of the psychological state of the characters is called an *eco-narrative* or *nature writing*. It is, therefore, as it is often defined, a text that pays due attention to nature. In his book *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell gives four criteria by which a work can be recognized as an ecological text:

> 1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
>
> 2. The human interest is not considered to be the only legitimate interest.
>
> 3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation.
>
> 4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text. (Buell 1996, 7-8)

Works of high fantasy generally meet all four criteria, due to their genre characteristics. The pre-industrial societies that offer us these works imply a more preserved nature, but also greater attachment to it and less control over it. A person without machines and other aids will certainly have greater respect for nature and its laws. He can, like the person of the real, modern world, try to establish some control over it, but these attempts are weaker and the results are usually less devastating. Some authors will present it

44 Scientists have calculated in 1971 that more natural resources have been consumed than the Earth can renew in a year. Earth Overshoot Day (EOD) is the calculated illustrative calendar date on which humanity's resource consumption for the year exceeds Earth's capacity to regenerate those resources that year. In 2021, Earth Overshoot Day fell on 29 July, meaning that we are using the resources of 1.7 Earths. (EOD 2021)

explicitly (e.g. Ursula Le Guin), whereas others will regard it as only an incidental motif, but the fact remains that in the fictional supernatural worlds of high fantasy, nature has an important role closely related to human history. Lisa Tuttle reminds us that this is also the case in speculative fiction in general:

> Landscape, in both SF and fantasy, is more than just background: it plays a role equivalent to that of a major character. The setting may determine the plot, or have been determined by it – either way, it is firmly bound up with the SF or fantasy story. (2005, 35)

High fantasy offers the reader imaginary worlds, which include other species, besides the human. Most often, we encounter elves and dwarves, which many authors include in their imaginary worlds, no doubt under the strong influence of Tolkien, the alpha and omega of this subgenre. In addition to such creatures that are close to humans (in speech, reason, etc.), these imaginary worlds are often inhabited by fantastic animals, ranging widely from huge, dangerous and cunning dragons to small otaks in the novels of Ursula Le Guin.

> To include an animal as a protagonist equal with the human is – in modern terms – to write a fantasy. To include anything on equal footing with the human, as equal in importance, is to abandon realism. (Le Guin 2007, 87)

All these equal beings have their own interests and intentions, and they are often in conflict with humans, but also completely legitimate – this is how Buell's second condition is met.

Andrew Rayment in the study *Fantasy, Politics, Postmodernity* divides the fictional fantasy world into Pragmatikos and Allos (2014, 16), classifying in Allos everything that would be impossible in the real world. It seems that the ecological consciousness of high fantasy lies in that part. Fantastic creatures are always more closely related to nature, and in some works, e.g. in Le Guin's *Earthsea*, they are its defenders. Dragons of the Earthsea[45] are those who want nothing but freedom and nature, i.e. freedom in nature. Thanks to them, the ancient harm done to nature by men is undone. The wound that wizards (people that use magic, but are still people) inflicted on nature by creating Dry

45 The fictional world in this cycle and the cycle itself bear the same name.

Earth is healed through destroying this artificial realm. It all begins with a rebellion of dragons and ends with the joint destruction of a foreign body of Earthsea, a man-made and unnatural creation.

At the beginning of most high fantasy novels and stories, the world in which the action takes place is in crisis. The plot itself is actually a solution to that crisis. It should be noted that the flourishing of the forces of evil in the Secondary Worlds of this subgenre is always connected with nature. It is also a threat of ecological catastrophe. In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* Sauron awakens and the world is threatened by darkness. The spaces inhabited by Sauron and his allies are the spaces where nature dies. Saruman's servants cutting and pulling trees down is one of the most striking scenes in this aspect. Similar scenes are to be encountered in other high fantasy novels. In *A Song of Ice and Fire* by G. R. R. Martin, the threat of eternal winter is coming from the north. In the first novel of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, the White Queen has shackled the world in snow and ice…

Resolving the crisis also means taking ethical responsibility for nature. In this respect, Buell's third condition has been met. The grief that is felt in these works, the grief for the golden age is also a grief for the lost nature and for the unity with it. Nature, therefore, is changing, as is people's attitude towards it. Nature is not the same all the time. It is changing – admittedly, slowly, but it is still changing. It is up to the people to adapt to it. Awareness of the change of nature is the fourth and last condition that these works satisfy, and we can say with certainty that the works that belong to high fantasy genre are eco-narratives.

High fantasy is among the bestselling and most widely read contemporary works of literature. The question one might ask is what kind of society produces such works and what do these works say about us? Perhaps that lost nature is one of the reasons why so many readers reach for epic fantasy. If some see it as an escape from reality, perhaps it can also be seen as an escape into a better past, to a time when nature was stronger and people were closer to it. Maybe it is what Heidi Hutner calls eco-grief (see Hutner 2014) – it is a sadness, but also a clear reflection of the desire to return to nature and the natural world.

Observing the beings in the so-called classics of high fantasy, the impression is that

the beings are "ordered" by their closeness to nature, ie. there is a (not always explicitly stated) hierarchy among species determined by the degree of closeness to nature. In Tolkien's saga of Middle-earth, the elves are obviously on top. Their appearance, origin, habitat, language – everything is connected to nature. They live not by, but with the river, the forest, and they have the ability to partially control them. We remember one of the first attacks of the Nazgûl (the former kings of the people, who, taken by the rings of power, became something unnatural) and how Frodo was saved by the elven lord of Rivendell, Elrond:

> 'Who made the flood?' asked Frodo.
>
> 'Elrond commanded it, 'answered Gandalf. 'The river of this valley is under his power, and it will rise in anger when he has a great need to bar the Ford. As soon as the captain of the Ringwraiths rode into the water the flood was released ... For a moment I was afraid that we had let loose too fierce a wrath, and the flood would get out of hand and wash you all away. There is great vigor in the waters that come down from the snows of the Misty Mountains.' (Tolkien 2009, 224)

It is important to note that there is a fear that the river will take away everything; it is alive and, despite Elrond's commands, it has its own consciousness, thus behaving differently. This control of natural elements is also important for the end of the trilogy – Aragorn, when crowned king of all people, marries Elrond's daughter Arwen, which can also represent a symbolical marriage to nature. Timothy O'Neill in his study *The Individuated Hobbit* claims that this wedding signifies the achievement of the individuation of the West:

> Aragorn weds Arwen Undómiel, the daughter of Elrond, thus physically and spiritually reuniting the two kindreds, the sundered lines of Elros and Elrond; and though she sacrifices immortality and her link with the Blessed Realm, he introjects her power for the strengthening of the realm and power of Man. His reign begins on May Day, the day of rebirth; and his marriage is at Midsummer's Day — the Self emerges at the midpoint of the year. The sacred marriage is enacted, the *hieros gamos*. (O'Neill 1979, 143)

But even this Jungian reading of Arwen and Aragorn's wedding also concerns nature. O'Neill writes about the Fourth Age as "the golden age in which the psyche of Man is in equilibrium" (152), through "the sacred marriage as a union of opposites" (144), but what Man must overcome is the Third Age in which "the unity with magic and nature is sold for material gain" (152). So, Man is finding the Self by turning back to nature. Without the reconciliation of man and nature, there is no hope for a bright future.

Elves in some way change nature, but that change certainly is not the same as the changes men make, and, in our opinion, the hierarchy of the species comes from that. Beneath the elves are the hobbits that are close to nature in the sense that they are mostly farmers. Carolyn Sigler talks about three approaches to nature (1994, 148). The first is the model of domination, an anthropocentric view, domination over nature; the second is the model of care, which is still anthropocentric and puts people in the position of those who nurture and maintain nature; and the third is the biocentric model, which rejects anthropocentrism and emphasizes the connection between all, living and non-living things in nature. The hobbits clearly belong to the second model, and the elves to the third. Humans and dwarves (digging deep mines, which can be interpreted as a form of nature damage) belong to the first model. Dwarves, unlike humans and elves, were not created by Eru Ilúvatar, the supreme deity of Tolkien's universe, but by one of the Valar. Outside all divisions are species that are materialized by nature, such as Ents, the ancient walking trees.

Aimed at promoting some ideas and writing contemporary novels (which are characterized, among other things, by their conciseness), Ursula Le Guin did not create many species for her *Earthsea*. She practically reduced them to only two conscious, highly intelligent species: humans and dragons. And while the first trilogy (*A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan*, *The Farthest Shore*, written between 1968 and 1972) tells about the never-ending conflict between the two species, the second (starting with *Tehanu* in 1990) brings "the real truth". Le Guin decided to redefine Earthsea – the reader learns that dragons and humans were one species until Verdun, a great division, when one group opted for wealth and power and transformed into humans, and the other group chose wilderness and freedom and dragons were created (Le Guin 2001b, 107). Dragons are, therefore, those beings who have chosen nature.

Dragons are not interested in treasure, but in flight and freedom. They speak the oldest language, the language of creation. While mages, sorcerers and wizards have to learn it, this language comes naturally to dragons – they are born with the knowledge of it. "The dragon and the dragon's speech are the same thing" (Le Guin 2001a, 375). The oldest creature in the world is Kalesin, a dragon, which according to one theory can also be Segoy, the creator of the world, the one who separated the land from the sea. Dragons are physically more powerful than humans, but, contrary to European ones, and in accordance with Far Eastern myths, they are above them in terms of wisdom. There is no solution to problems without them, although due to their wild nature, they often cause problems themselves. Thus, like nature, they have two sides and are in fact "above good and evil" (Le Guin 2001b, 129), i.e. above human understanding of morality. The fact that they are placed hierarchically above people is seen even in the custom of Cargo and Oskil – people there give the first-born child in the family the name Dragon.

It is interesting that Le Guin also puts other beings, not just dragons, above people. People are moving away from nature, trying to control it and often endangering it with risky experiments. Nature was somehow forgotten after the rise of civilization, so in the "civilized" Archipelago (but not in the "wild" islands like Kargads, Osskil and Paln) places of worship of the old forces, i.e. Nameless Ones, that existed before the rising of the land from the sea (Segoy is probably one of those old powers) became places for disposing garbage.

However, by detaching himself from nature in this way, man also endangered himself. The old mages artificially created the Dry Land (a kind of underworld, the land of the dead) to provide eternal life (jealous of dragons who have it in some sense), but they actually expelled the people from the cycle of reincarnation, death and rebirth. Until the Dry Land is destroyed, they are trapped in darkness. But, interestingly – animals are not. One of the questions that Ged asks in a letter to his adopted daughter Tehanu, which resolves all doubts about the true structure of the world, is: "Who goes to the Dry Land when they die?" (Le Guin 2001b, 122). The answer is that those who were in the Dry Land did not see a single animal there, nor did they see a plant growing there – therefore, animals are not subjected to the magical curse, and in that sense they are more powerful than people. This also shows that the Dry Earth is unnatural, artificially created. The

mage Ged teacheing young prince Arren in *The Farthest Shore* that people must learn "to do what the leaf and the whale and the wind do of their own nature" (Le Guin 1993, 361) is a powerful message about the need for people to be like nature, not the other way around.

Lawrence Buell claims that the "apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (Buell 1996, 285). He claims that writing about the apocalypse is the easiest way to make people think about the crisis we are currently living in, i.e. about the crucial time when it is decided whether nature will survive or not. Therefore, Buell believes that the key is not to devise survival strategies, but to make people aware that the crisis exists and that it is huge. High fantasy, which also uses the metaphor of apocalypse, can play a significant role in that process.

The crisis of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings* represents the ascension of Sauron, the evil Maia. Within his realm (Mordor), nature seems to have died. There is no greenery, no life. The wizard Saruman, who joins him, begins to destroy the thousand-year-old forests. Everyone is afraid that the world will sink into darkness and death, i.e. that nature will die. This fear was interpreted by many as the fear the author himself, Tolkien, had – the fear of industrialization.

Probably the most interesting hero in Tolkien's work, Tom Bombadil, the only one on whom the ring has no influence, was initially conceived as a spirit of the vanishing Oxford and Berkshire countryside. Of course, that was just an initial idea – Tom is much more. Researchers have interpreted this enigmatic figure as Tolkien himself, as God, as a Vala, etc.[46] However, the most interesting theory for us is certainly that Bombadil is the spirit of nature, and that his power decreases as the forests around him decrease.

An ecological catastrophe in *Earthsea* was best shown in the novel *The Farthest Shore*. Because of the hole that the wizard Cob made in the Dry Land so that he could walk between the worlds, the whole Earthsea is starting to move towards death. The joys of life disappear, magic is forgotten, life itself is slowly fading, so the old and wise dragon Orm Embar feels as if "there is a hole in the world and the sea is running out of it, the light is running out, we will be left in the dry land" (Le Guin 2002, 119). This image of a land

46 We wrote more about Tom Bombadil in: Stamenković 2020.

without plants, without water gives the novel elements of an apocalypse. Images of the Dry Land through which Ged and Aren chase Cob show the same thing – a dry, lifeless desert, into which the entire Earthsea will be transformed if no one puts a stop to Kob, who experiments with magic without thinking about the consequences.

Some critics saw the magic here as a metaphor for technology – our experimentation with technology can lead to the death of nature. Nicholls and Clut believe that magic in the world of Earthsea follows such strict rules and is so strictly defined (the law of action and reaction, the law of conservation of energy, etc.) that this cycle should be classified as science fiction, not science fantasy (Nicholls, Clute 1999, 405). Feng Cai Shu from Shanghai University compares Le Guin's concept of magic to science:

> "The reader recognizes that a mage's devotion to finding out a true name in order to control it is similar to a modern scientist's persistent research on a certain subject. It is no mistake that the education of wizards is made deliberately comparable to the modern corpus of knowledge." (2003, 149)

Just as science can be abused, so too can magic. The nuclear bomb was created as a product of science, and with developed magic, for example, the Dry Land was built. Magic has also led to a change in the geography of the Earthsea. Legend says that Morred's Enemy (an evil magician whose name has been erased) was furious because the most beautiful and wise woman in the world, Elfarran (also a sorceress), rejected him and married Morred, so he sank the island Soleá and with it Elfaran (Le Guin 2001a, 387). The sinking of this fictitious island is associated with the sinking of Atlantis, especially since Soleá is described as a magical island, and agriculturally richer than any other in Earthsea. Plato in *Timaeus and Critias* describes Atlantis as an island that had two harvests a year.

Certainly, the biggest change caused by the abuse of technology, that is, magic, was the construction of the Dry Land. Divided into dragons and humans, dragons were given a small number of islands where they could lay eggs (this is the sole reason they needed them for they spend most of their time in the air), and humans took the rest of the Earth. According to the agreement, people were supposed to forget the ancient language and dedicate themselves to what they aspired to – material acquisition. However, the wizards

invented the alphabet and thus preserved a part of the ancient language, and wanting to achieve eternal life like dragons, they took a part of the dragon islands and transformed them into a land where the souls of the Archipelagons will go after death.

Raising the wall and creating a space for the souls of the dead can be interpreted as an ecocide[47]. One space is devastated by human greed and stupidity and made uninhabitable. The Earth reacts to this unnatural division by stopping the sea and rivers at that place, and all the flora and fauna on the other side of the wall are dying. Instead of heaven, hell was made, an apocalypse.

Dry Land makes it difficult for dragons to reproduce, but also to go "to the West after the West", i.e. going "to another wind", a kind of space where time does not exist and where all the dragons take off at one moment[48]. Only with the destruction of the artificial creation that is Dry Land do people return to the normal cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Through this demolition, the whole world is united – different cultures (Archipelago, Kargs, Palns), different magic (female, male, paln, gontic, "classical", i.e. archipelagian), different sexes/genders (women and men[49]) and different species (humans and dragons).

The demolition of the Wall[50] and the re-liberation of one area to bring life back to it, i.e. to make the river flow again makes a clear contrast between stone and water as symbols of death and life. Aiki Hiroshi notices that this opposition is present even earlier – the stone is part of the Wall, but also the Labyrinth of Atuan where Ged was once captured, and "more broadly it is the opposition of land and sea" (2007, 27). It seems that this can also stand for the opposition of natural vs. artificial, i.e. what is given, what is already there is opposed to what is made. In a broader sense, it is the famous (Taoist)

47 Ecocide is a term coined from two words – ancient Greek noun *oikos*, which means house and the Latin verb *cedere*, meaning to chase away, to banish. This terms implies action resulting in a devastating change in the natural environment of an area, in terms of a huge deterioration of living conditions – the extinction of plants and animals. The term is a neologism, it appeared in the seventies and quickly became popular among eco activists, primarily because of its seriousness, i.e., associative connections with the term genocide. Activists are working to treat ecocide as genocide, i.e. to include it into international criminal law as a crime against peace.

48 A parallel can be drawn here with Tolkien's elves, who at some point must go to Valinor, the Blessed Realms, which is also in the West. Both Tolkien and Le Guin provide the species closest to nature immortality and liberation from the primary world (Pragmaticos) and its problems.

49 Or women, men and wizards – wizards can be categorized as queer.

50 It is interesting that the land of the living and the land of the dead are divided by a wall. The wall was erected to protect the soul, but in fact it captures it. Walls can be also found in other popular high fantasy novels. For example, in George Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* the Wall is a strong eco-symbol.

opposition that is the main idea of the whole cycle – the opposition between action and existence, between reaction and acceptance.

Eco-critics often point to the forest as the most important "mirror" of culture. Robert Pogue Harrison, author of the study *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (1992), believes that human culture began to develop within the forest, but in a cleared, bare part, without trees, thus setting the boundary between nature and civilization which cannot be annulled. There is no human culture without borders for the border was introduced into it as a basis. However, although it rationally seeks a cleared space, our psyche also seeks a forest. Thus, the forest appears not only as a biologically, but also as a psychologically important area (Harrison 2012).

The forest is very important in high fantasy. In the past of Middle-earth there were Yavanna's trees, Telperion and Laurelin. The two trees that this Vala created, gold and silver, brought light to Valinor, and when Melkor destroyed them, the Sun and the Moon were created from their remains. Then there is, in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the Old Forest – a living forest, with trees that watch, move, capture. There is also the Old Man Willow, a huge, grumpy willow tree that only Tom Bombadil and his wife Goldberry can calm down.

Forests are also important to elves, as they were their home. The most famous one is of course Lothlórien, also known as Lórien. This forest was cultivated, mainly by Galadriel and her ring of power. It seems that Tolkien was more inclined to the idea of nurturing nature, slightly changing it, shaping it, then letting it be what it is. Le Guin, on the other hand, is more inclined towards letting the wild nature remain wild.

Stewardship is a key concept in Tolkien's view on nature and, in the words of Dickerson and Evans:

> "We use the term stewardship strictly to mean the benevolent, selfless custodial care of the environment rather than as a "cover term" justifying the exploitation of our natural resources for commercial, corporate, or personal gain. In our sense, a steward is not one who owns property or is the lord over a domain but one who is responsible for the care of something placed in his or her custody." (Dickerson, Evans 2006, XX)

They see Gandalf as one of the stewards, and Faramir, Frodo and Aragorn as his disciples in this sense, writing about the agricultural society of Hobbits, the horticulture of Elves and Entviwes, and about the conservation of wilderness, which they call feraculture and which is entrusted to Ents. We can make parallels to Le Guin's Earhsea here. Her magi are a sort of stewards, but again, the best of them are always for letting the wild be truly wild, not cultivated.

There have been a lot of papers about nature in Tolkien's work, and Verlyn Flieger wrote about the important roles trees have for this author, but also stating that "he has espoused two irreconcilable attitudes with regard to nature wild and nature tamed – by which I mean nature cultivated according to human standards" (2000, 154). Both "versions" of nature are present and celebrated in Le Guin's cycle. There is wild nature untouched by men's hands and there is cultivated nature in the village; there are pines older than humans and there are fruit trees that humans nurture and they nurture them back. Dragons are the highest beings in this Secondary World, as Tolkien would put it, they are wild nature, but, at the end, the main heroes, Ged and Tenar, choose a simple and peaceful life at the outskirts of one village, where there's wild nature (forest), but also cultivated one (their farm).

There are, it seems, differences between Tolkien and Le Guin in aspects of using nature and earth. There is agriculture amongst men tribes (of course, dragons have no need for that), there is talk about crops etc, but the farm of the main heroes, Ged and Tenar is more about orchards (they greet guests with plums), not crops. It is more about mending what is already there and not making something new.

Let us go back to the topic of forests. Both authors are, according to critics, "arboreal" writers. Of course, one cannot forget the long descriptions of the forest in Tolkien's saga. It is as though he thought that the power of nature and all its beauty was best seen in forests. Le Guin thought of herself "as the most 'arboreal' of the science fiction and fantasy writers." Indeed, the forest appears as a motif or theme in many of her works. The first thing that comes to mind, of course, is the 1972 science fiction novel *The World is Called a Forest* about the indigenous people who live in the forest and fight for their world against civilized occupiers[51]. In the 1971 story *Vaster than Empires and More Slow*, researchers

51 This novel, which was interpreted as an allegory for the Vietnam War, according to some critics, is actually the basis for James Cameron's blockbuster *Avatar*.

from Terra land on planet 4470, which is completely covered by forest, without any other form of life. It turns out that the whole forest is one organism (similar to the planet Solaris from the novel of the same name by Stanislav Lem), scared of human newcomers.

In *Earthsea* one of the first places that came out of the sea when Segoy made Éa is the Immanent Grove on the Roke, the Island of the Wise. There is also a school for wizards, which is less important, considering the reevaluation of that school in the second trilogy. More importantly, it is a forest where the trees are alive and, to the one who knows how to listen, they whisper exactly what he needs to know. To the mage Azver, the Master Patterner, trees revealed the arrival of the young Irian, the dragon woman who will change Roke forever, as well as the prophecy about the woman from Gont on the throne of Roke, which is probably Tehanu. It is in the Immanent Grove that Irian essentially destroys the ghost of Torion (who, like Cob, threatens the natural order of things by not accepting his own death), although it is possible to claim that the Immanent Grove itself, i.e. the trees, destroyed Torion, because "everything there is as it really is".

The forest is also a place where wise ones retreat. The Master Patterner, who is the first protector of Balance, lives in the Immanent Grove. Ged's teacher, the wise Ogion, wanders the forests of Gont. The first lesson that Ged, one of the greatest wizards of all time on Earth, receives is about nature and it takes place in nature. We should also mention Dulse, Ogion's teacher. He prevented a great earthquake that would destroy Gont by an act of ultimate self-sacrifice, but also of the highest growth as a being – he, in fact, merged with the mountain, became its support, the part that holds it during the earthquake. These wizards, with their attachment to nature, are reminiscent of druids, Celtic priests, whose guiding idea was "the love of land, sea and sky – the love of the Earth our home" (Cunliffe 2010, 128)[52]. Ged is also attracted to the forest. In *The Farthest Shore*, when he predicts that he will lose his powers, he fantasizes about long walks through the Gontian forest. It is obvious that the forest in Ursula Le Guin's cycle is a symbol of nature, her most beautiful emanation.

From an eco-critical perspective and from the standpoint of environmental ethics, we can claim that of all of the high fantasy writers, Ursula Le Guin went the furthest. Namely,

52 There are other similarities, e.g. within the scope of the druid's work. They, just like the wizards and magicians of Earthsea, were advisers to the ruling class and also worked as doctors.

the entire fictional world she created was reshaped at one point, both ideologically and physically. This was carried out consciously and under the influence of feminism (which is often emphasized), but just as much under the influence of eco-activism. In the second trilogy of the cycle, one great lie and artificial creation was annulled, and nature and the normal circulation of life were restored. If we look at this from the perspective of culturology, the Western, Judeo-Christian, linearly organized world was transformed into an Eastern, Taoist, circular world, a world of balance.

> "Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle is an anti-anthropocentric heroic saga, the outstanding for bringing oriental philosophy and contemporary environmental ethics into western literary tradition. The Earthsea Cycle shall be treasured as a pioneering achievement of an ecological myth on an epic scale, and a successful discovery of an alternative narrative mode to the romantic heroic myth, which we desperately need in this era of environmental crisis." (Shu 2003, 143)

Catherine Buse of the University of Cambridge connects Le Guin's Earthsea cycle to the book *Quiet Spring* by Rachel Carson[53], which is considered the most important book of the American environmental movement. Buse even believes that it may have directly influenced the creation of Earthsea, given Ursula Le Guin's involvement in American eco-movements (Buse 2013, 265). Buse sees the special closeness of these works in the third novel in the cycle, *The Farthest Shore*, a novel that appeared in 1972, the same year when the US Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of DDT pesticides after an investigation launched because of Rachel Carson's book.

The release of captured nature in *The Other Wind*, the last novel of the cycle, is accompanied by the release of women. Witches whose magic is despised are now

53 Rachel Carson (1907-1964) is an American biologist best known for her book *Quiet spring* (Silent Spring) from 1962. She studied English language and biology, and after her studies she was engaged in radio where she wrote screenplays for shows aimed at bringing biology closer to the general public. Although credited with founding a strong environmental movement in the United States and around the world, the Silent Spring is still causing controversy today. It is a combination of literature and science. In addition to the chapter on pesticide research, the work also contains a story about a city in the future that has turned into dystopia, and the cause is precisely the use of pesticides. It was this compound that gave an effect and influenced the general public, so DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane), until then known and often used insecticide, was banned in 1972. Silent Spring has won many awards, was praised as one of the best science books in the world, and was republished in 1994, with a foreword by the US Vice President and presidential candidate, Al Gore. On the other hand, there are numerous challenges to the scientific side of the book. Many biologists have pointed out that research has not clearly shown the impact of DDT on human health, and that Rachel Carson's work has killed millions of people, given that the ban has spread to almost the whole world, leaving third world countries without major weapons in the fight against malaria and typhus.

beginning to be revered because their magic is tied to the old powers, i.e. to nature. This links Ursula Le Guin's ideas primarily to ecofeminism. Tom Kinsey notes that "the nature of the Earthsea is feminized" (Kinsey 2007, 17), connecting this to the influence of Celtic mythology on the work of Le Guin. We would, however, rather argue that this is the influence of the ecofeminist movement. In addition to advocating for women's rights, Le Guin often spoke of endangered nature and often mentioned ecofeminism.

It should also be pointed out that the very name of the cycle and the fictional world is deeply ecological. Earthsea is a fusion of two natural elements, a celebration of balance and nature. Then, all the holidays that people of Earthsea celebrate have to do something with events in nature. For example, the summer solstice is celebrated[54] and during it, the Long Dance is played all over Earthsea. The songs that are sung are also a display of culture that is strongly related to nature. There are also the names of the inhabitants of Earthsea, which are most often names for plants and animals – the main character in *Earthsea*, Ged, is also called Hawk, and there are Rose, Ivy, Moss etc.

We have already mentioned the importance of animals. Let us add that they also have a big role in the plot itself – a small *otak* brings Ged back from the dead, and a kitten prevents the souls of the dead from dragging the wizard Alder into the Dry Land. And, of course, Ursula Le Guin's treatment of dragons is original and unique. They are animals, but not negative, as seen by the Western, European culture, but positive and noble, with knowledge and morals above people. They are not, therefore, like Tolkien's Smaug, who is collecting treasure – in the *Earthsea Cycle* the people are the ones doing that.

Moreover, the main idea of *Earthsea*, that of balance, is deeply ecological. Shu sees three types of metaphorical expression of Equilibrium in the cycle: 1. the myth of Imminent Grove, 2. the legend of the ancient dragon and 3. the poetic depiction of natural scenes, emphasizing the third because "Earthsea is presented as an idyllic, pastoral world in which human civilization is still in harmony with the natural world" (Shu 2003, 153). Although Shu writes from memory, making factual mistakes[55], he correctly concludes

54 Our translators chose to translate midsummer as Ivandan instead of a long day. This connects the work with Christianity, which is one of the things Le Guin tried to avoid.

55 He states that the rebellion of the dead from the Dry Land is encouraged by the mage Torion by making a hole in the Dry Land, and that Irian reports it to the king, who goes with the dragons to destroy the Dry Land and defeat Torion, i.e. he mixes, merges three different novels into one.

that this cycle, from an ecological perspective, can be defined as an antiheroic, not heroic (168, 169). While the classic western hero of high fantasy is "mostly" turned toward human goals, the hero, i.e. the heroine of Earthsea has a broader picture and seeks the common good.

It is also important that in the second trilogy Le Guin shifted her focus to everyday life and to emphasizing the need for peace. Shu connects it with the history of literature, i.e. with the basic pair of tragedy-comedy. The epic is basically a tragedy, about the heroism and warfare of a character who usually dies in the end, while the comedy insists on peace and everyday life, and ridicules heroic acts and war[56]. Le Guin actually turns her epic, quite unexpectedly and uniquely, into comedy (Shu 2003, 170). There are elements of comedy in Tolkien's saga, of course, but not at this level, in this sense. By mixing these two basic genres, Le Guin caused a shift in the high fantasy genre.

At the same time, it is also how she brought her cycle closer to the modern world. The author herself said that her works can always be read as allegories and that in some way our world is always contained in them. In that sense, the reshaping of Earthsea is perhaps a call to change our world, especially when it comes to the position of women and the position of nature, about which Ursula Le Guin was particularly concerned in the last phase of her work.

Both Tolkien and Le Guin created their fictional worlds within the genre of high fiction, but also gave their realistic views of nature. They both see it as endangered, something that needs to be protected. Although they don't share the same point of view when it comes to the solution, since Tolkien is closer to the model of nurtured, shaped nature, and Le Guin to the model of wild and free(d) nature, both have created eco-narratives, literary works that offer us rich and fantastic fictional worlds that help us see our real world with new eyes and understand that its basis and the most valuable thing in it definitely is nature.

56 This is, of course, extremely simplified and generalized. The *Odyssey* is, for example, an epic poem and does not fit into that scheme – we will categorize it as a comedy rather than a tragedy.

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There and There Again – A Family Tale
by
Mark Moore

The tenth Palantir

In a world as vast and complex as Arda, one must speculate on certain points and thoughts of J.R.R. Tolkien, and we can do this quite simply because the Professor left us the Master Palantir: a way to see the whole of Arda in our own time. We can read the Ainulindalë and the Music of the Ainur, or we can read *The Hobbit* or any of the lays that have been written for our benefit. While the hobbits were on their way to Rivendell and were on Weathertop, Aragorn was singing, and Frodo asked him what he was singing. Aragorn answered - the lay of Lúthien. Most authors would have left it at that and that would have been fine, but Tolkien wrote the lay of Lúthien (about an Elf maid and a mortal Beren) taking his art to the level of masterly.

Each body of work corroborated the other and in so doing Tolkien, without the use of computers, built a mesh of intrigues and mystery, all supported by fact and historical information, with more than enough room for anecdotal contribution and speculation. The extraordinary depth of backstory and history alone should excite any fantasy reader; there is in fact more backstory than actual story.

Sir Christopher Lee said many things about J.R.R. Tolkien, but this one continues to stand out for me:

> "What Professor Tolkien achieved is unique in the literature of my lifetime. Indeed, in my opinion, he had reached the peak of literary invention of all time. Nothing like it has ever existed, and probably never will." (foreword to *The Lord of the Rings: Weapons and Warfare* by Chris Smith)

This essay is a collection of original thoughts and, though I may be influenced by other works, these thoughts are mostly mine and my personal understanding of what the Professor did. It is largely anecdotal and may change in time, as I continue to journey there, and there again, but there are many aspects that run solid and true, things that we can transpose from Tolkien's world into ours, seamlessly and wholly transparently.

We all acknowledge that Tolkien was a genuinely gifted linguist, with influences from numerous sources such as Nordic, Slavic, Celtic and Germanic myth, legend, and languages. We know that Beowulf was a firm favourite of the Professor and Númenor, for example, could well have been influenced by the tale of Atlantis. What is so ingenious about what the Professor did was to bring myth and legend from so many cultures and times and work them into his narrative over the eons of Arda. Tolkien then took this multifaceted backstory to reach its zenith in the superficially arbitrary little tale of a hobbit going on an adventure.

He went beyond literary genius while keeping true to his faith and allowed his strong personal beliefs to be reflected but not implied. Tolkien was very prudent in crafting a world completely removed from ours and anything in it. Though there are faith systems in the works of Tolkien, more implied than discussed, none of our contemporary faith systems are in the works of Tolkien and despite the hope and joy that his faith system looks for, his works portray horror and tragedy and sadness to the very limit of our capacity to cope, while still constantly weaving the thread of hope.

There is so much sadness and futility in the works of Tolkien, especially the earlier ages, but the hope and thread of light continues, never wholly hidden: *those that needed to know, knew.*

So, back to the 10th Palantir. As one should know, the Palantiri were seeing stones, made by Fëanor himself and were a gift from the Noldor to the Dunedain (Numenoreans). The whole purpose of the Palantiri was for people who "possess great strength of will and of mind" to direct the stone's gaze to its full capability (*The Silmarillion*). Other people who try to use the stone, such as Pippin for argument's sake, would simply fall prey to others that use or have used the Palantiri and only see the propaganda or unreliable images of lies and deception. What an incredible device or concept showing us easily how power in the hands of the weak-minded is dangerous and can do surprisingly little good, if at all.

Now, if we can accept the metaphor of mine that the complete works of Tolkien are the 10th Palantir, let us go on a journey looking at some key characters and events, working out how relevant and pertinent the works of Tolkien could be in our lives as well. We may yet discover a thing or two.

The word "power" is bandied around so easily in today's Gandalf vs Dumbledore or Legolas vs Hawkeye vs Robin Hood world, we are so eager to compare things that are just not comparable. There is a reason for that and most times, it falls to agenda or controlling narrative. But, in these new worlds, the meticulously crafted world of Tolkien reigns supreme. The reason for this is amazingly simple. The depth of character, the genealogy of each character, the wealth of resources available to these characters and of course the years of experience under strong and wise counsel from other characters that have also been crafted by Tolkien over the years.

Let us briefly look at the Legolas vs Hawkeye vs Robin Hood "challenge". One was real and the other fantasy. Not at all. Legolas has been an elf and archer for thousands of years, Hawkeye not even closely equivocal. Legolas has generations of DNA and teaching handed down to him, Robin Hood, again, not so much. For Robin Hood and Hawkeye, bow was their weapon and they used it well, but for Legolas, it was part of his life, part of who he is as all the Sindar were. The Sindar were a subgroup of the Teleri, but never crossed the ocean.

Peculiarly enough, this made the Sindar more "dangerous" than the higher elves that did cross the ocean and came back, though they were nowhere near as powerful or skilled. The reason for this is that they were quicker to anger and action. However, Legolas was not even one of the Great Elvin archers - this is evident when Galadriel's gift to him was a better bow (with which he shot down a Flying Nazgûl) and Beleg Strongbow, a Sindarin Elf, was far more competent, and yet still none were as competent as the Noldor Archers. So, it is clear and evident that the real archer in this example was Legolas.

Which brings us to Galadriel. What an Elf. What a Being. What a Woman.

Let us look at some questions on Galadriel. Finwë, the first and high king of the Noldor had two sons with Indis, Fingolfin and Finarfin. Finwe then had a third son Fëanor. Finarfin and Eärwen (daughter of Olwe - the High King of the Teleri) are the parents of Galadriel. This makes her third generation Elf and that is immense.

She spent much of her time learning from the Valar, the beings that did the work in creation of Arda. She spent time with each of them as they were all responsible for various parts of the creation - for example, Ulmo was the Lord of all water or "Sea King", Aulë the smith and Lord of all things underground, and Yavanna, the Lord of all things that grow. She was the second oldest Ñoldor alive in Middle-earth at the time of the War of The Ring. Círdan was the eldest and he was tremendously wise.

So, let's take Galadriel's immense age, her teachers and experiences and add to them the ring Nenya, the "preserver", whose guardian she was. Nenya seemed to slow down time in the realm it was wielded, and so we add this stretching of time to the already wise, sage and powerful Galadriel, who was over 8700 years old, but did live under the light of the trees Laurelin and Telperion. In truth she existed before time itself started and then already was considered wise and beautiful.

So what is this power we talk of? It was certainly not the kind of magic and spells that the modern world would expect, with staffs and the likes. Remember that the ring was like an enhancement to her knowledge but not knowledge itself. Galadriel with the ring has more latent power than without the ring. With the ring she would be Galadriel squared, so to say. So what power is it we talk of?

It is essential to understand that there are always two worlds in Tolkien's works on Middle-earth. To us we could call it the physical or corporeal world and the spiritual world, and Elves lived in both, simultaneously. We can deduce this from numerous texts in the books: why the Nazgûl rode their horses into the river for example (they did this because they saw Glorfindel in all his glory behind them and the Witch King of Angmar certainly remembered Glorfindel from thousands of years before). Another example is how, when Frodo put the ring on, he could see the Nazgûl. This was because the ring allowed him to "travel" from the one world to the other or to see into the other from his. Now, in the corporeal world, we can hide ourselves under a coat and not show our power and we can be still and quiet and mask our strength, but not so in the world of shadow. Light shines brightly in the world of shadow and Galadriel's "spiritual self" would have been a furnace.

Let us go one step further. If she was so powerful, why did she not go and fight? Well, that was not her power. Her power was understanding, wisdom, magical engineering if

I may call it that, and this was revealed when the books say she went to Dol Guldur and broke it down and laid the pits bare. As I see it, these places of evil were held together with the will and magic of Sauron. All Galadriel had to do was to "dismantle the magic", remove the magic from the place and then let the time that has been kept at bay for all the years come back and claim it with urgency. I think that the collapse of the Black Gate and Barad-dûr was superbly done in the movies and certainly supports the notion of the will being removed from the very stone and earth as well.

But to me, the single biggest lesson we must learn from Galadriel is that she had almost boundless power, wisdom, intelligence, beauty and more, yet she served. She served with humility, she served with loyalty and love, but was also a formidable enemy to have. She never lorded herself over those she ruled and she honoured Celeborn, her husband, who in his own rights was a tremendously important and significant Elf.

She had everything and still stayed humble in her relationship with all she touched, be it land or people. Why is this important to me? I have already said how the Professor gave us a mechanism to traverse our future, a future that will undoubtedly have its orcs and Gollums, not to mention the Sarumans and Saurons in our lives. But, it will also have Galadriels and Sams and Gandalfs. We will no doubt all have to face our own Mordor and Dark Lord and work out a way to navigate with the least peril.

We cannot look to the world today for council or guidance as to how to navigate challenges, as the leaders and heroes of today just are not up to the task. Everything and everyone, almost without exception, has an agenda and only if things fit in with their agenda, will they contribute to the narrative of your life. This is not the case with Tolkien's Tenth Palantir. Palantiri are seeing stones that see in both directions, although this is without a doubt NOT the reason that Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings*. We need examples such as Galadriel in our lives. If we look at the world we currently live in, we will find a remarkable amount of orc and goblin and troll in our lives. How many Elves do we find and more importantly, how many Galadriels do we find?

We are a modelling species, we model and mimic what we are exposed to, so what and where is the harm to be exposed to the likes of Galadriel, Glorfindel and their contemporaries? But, there is more. We cannot all be high elves; that task is simply too tough and perhaps requires too much effort. It certainly takes effort to become learned and educat-

ed and I certainly do not mean institutional education. We may not have that capacity, then what? I tell you what, let us read on and see what an ordinary, simple, and plain old gardener can do.

Samwise Gamgee

If you cannot be a Samwise Gamgee, find one, model and mimic and learn how to become a Samwise Gamgee.

There are many heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*, but Sam is for sure the only 'Superhero', in our modern vernacular.

There is so much debate on who Sam is and why he is as he is. There is speculation on the love that Sam had for Frodo and why. There have even been some banal attempts to romanticise the most sincere and honest relationship that we have been privileged to witness.

Let's go back to the time that Tolkien started formalising his works and then wrote his works. It was a different time from what we know today or are likely to ever experience again. He lost his dearest friends during WWI and this psychological and emotional impact never left him, his loss was so profound.

Tolkien would later describe how he struggled during WWII while he was writing about Frodo and Sam's travels. At this time, he was also earmarked to be a code breaker in the foreign office, in case of an emergency.

But it was WWI and the loss of humanity over and above the loss of his friends that forged such a strong thread of despair in his life leading him to show us a bit more of the mind of Théoden at Helms Deep. Théoden starts to wonder if he should have gone to war and says:

> "had I known that the strength of Isengard was grown so great, maybe I should not so rashly have ridden forth to meet it, for all the arts of Gandalf. His counsel seems not now so good as it did under the morning sun." (The Two Towers)

In the movies by Peter Jackson, they summed up the mood and the feeling of what I think Tolkien may well have felt about WWI, when Théoden said: "so much death. What can men do against such reckless hate?"

The wars and the resultant loss had a visceral effect on Tolkien. It is only natural that we would see this in his writing and the characters that were yet to be created. Who knows when these characters came to the fore, but we do know that *The Lord of the Rings* was the conduit that Tolkien used to express his joys and lament his loss and perhaps challenge the idea of the human condition?

Sam was the epitome of humility and strength, trustworthiness, and self-sacrifice, the greatest of men and the greatest of leaders. Tolkien, a devout Christian, allowed his beliefs to influence his writing. One of the most profound verses in the Bible tells how Jesus came to serve, not be served. I think that these fundamental personal factors resulted in the creation of Sam.

Sam faced unimaginable sadness. He watched Mr. Frodo get stabbed on Weathertop. He then saw Mr. Frodo struggling with the Ring and the weight of the Ring and was unable to help with the task set to Frodo to carry that weight. He watched and observed how Gollum insinuated his way into Frodo's life (for good reason), and saw Gollum, while Frodo tried to see Smeagol. He was led to believe that Frodo was killed by Shelob. He had to leave Frodo so that the mission could continue. The mere fact that Sam chose then to carry the weight is a testimony for his love for Frodo. Staying there or going back to the Shire would not have honoured Frodo at all. His torment is relentless; he has to follow the orcs that took Frodo, fight Shelob and then go into the keep of Cirith Ungul.

A single hobbit goes into an orc stronghold, just for the love of his Master. This must have been one of, if not THE bravest thing done in the entire works of Tolkien. It is important to understand that the word "Master" is not as we would define it today. Master is not the same as boss. Sam did not come from the same "high blood line" that the Bagginses did, and he was not bothered by that because he loved Frodo and he knew that Frodo loved him. I have tried to show the growth of the relationship during the journey, though Frodo was still Mr. Frodo to Sam, and he called him as such, they were now peers, they were now both ring bearers, they were now on equal standing, as this will become evident in a couple of sentences.

When Frodo was struggling immensely to climb Mount Doom, Sam was still upbeat and delivers one of the "Sammest" statements of love and commitment (in the movie Sam says, "I can not carry it, but I can carry you").

> "However, the glimpse of Sauron's power causes Frodo to panic. His hand grasps for the Ring around his neck, and he cries for Sam's help. Sam kneels beside Frodo and gently holds his master's palms together in his lap. Afraid Sauron has spotted them, Sam takes Frodo upon his shoulders once more and continues up the mountain. With much difficulty, they finally reach the top."

It was at this point that Gollum returned and hit Sam on the head with a rock, and while Sam is gathering himself, he hears Gollum and Frodo fighting until Frodo commands Gollum to be gone. Here is the next simply amazing growth lesson in the life of the journey. At this point Sam is the one that has mercy on Gollum who had fallen to his knees. Mercy stayed the hand of Bilbo. Mercy stayed the hand of Frodo and mercy stayed the hand of Sam, who now was fully Mr. Frodo's peer. What would have happened if Gollum was slain by Sam at this point?

My favourite line of Sam, without doubt, is "of course you are, and I am coming with you" in response to Frodo saying that he was going to Mordor alone.

The lessons we can and should learn from the life of Sam are numerous and sincere. In the world of today, people will say that Sam was taken advantage of by Frodo, people will say that the relationship was skewed, others have said that Sam was just his gardener because Sam's father, the Gaffer, was Bilbo's gardener. But, these are, once more, today's minds trying to instill today's zeitgeist on a world that many have not bothered to try and understand.

There was nothing that Sam did that he himself did not choose to do. The qualities of Sam and his commitment to Frodo and their relationship is something that should be the aim of all relationships. To be a friend who is fanatical about people, to love them so fervently and utterly is something to behold. It is something that we can learn, something we can do, if we choose to. I would rather surround myself by one Sam than a thousand that claim to love me, but with caveats. Yes, the type of person living the love

and commitment Sam had, could and would completely surround the person of said commitment.

Was this relationship reciprocal from Frodo? Absolutely. But, many do not or choose not to see it. We need to see a relationship with someone as a journey towards making that person more whole than they are. People in a healthy relationship should be more whole than they are in isolation. What would the point be for Frodo to duplicate Sam or for Sam to duplicate Frodo? When people are in a relationship, it should not be two identical people, it should be two whole individuals; that is what Frodo is for Sam and Sam is for Frodo.

This clearly means that in a relationship, a healthy one, we complement each other, we add value to each other's lives and, if needs be, do a bit of pruning as well, yet always to help the one we love to be the best version of themselves as they can be.

Tom Bombadil

Another amazing character in Tokien's work is Tom Bombadil - I am not going to go into where he came from or what his purpose in Arda was, other than his own.

If we were to ask Tom what his purpose was in life, his answer would be instant and unchanging. His purpose was to love and serve Goldberry, his lady. But again, the current climate would look at the word serve and balk, not fully understanding the core of their relationship. If one had to ask Goldberry what her purpose was, she would respond with "to accept the love of Tom and bring sunshine into his life."

The relationship was as such that they were both better with each other than without, and here is a little side note: Tom had absolute power. The ring had no effect on Tom at all. He could sing songs and chase Barrow-wights away, he could talk to trees that they would listen. But, none of that was important to him, the only thing that was able to keep his attention was Goldberry. His love for her was total.

Glorfindel

Glorfindel is arguably the greatest Elf in history, and although not of noble birth, he certainly did have some strong contemporaries, such as Ecthelion, Rog, Beleg to name a few. For reasons unknown, when Glorfindel fell fighting a Balrog at the fall of Gondolin, he was sent back to Middle-earth and lived in Imladris. This speaks to two things that will come to pass. The first is setting the precedent to send Gandalf the Grey back as Gandalf the White and the second is that there are powers well beyond our comprehension that still influence Arda for the furtherance of Arda.

It was Glorfindel and a couple of other Noldor elves that Elrond sent out to look for Frodo and the party (in the movie, Arwen was used) as the Nazgûl had no power over him.

Think about this for a short while, four Nazgûl fled from Glorfindel at the bridge, leaving it open for Frodo and his party to cross, and then later, all nine of them together were dismayed, as Asfaloth crossed the water with Frodo at the Ford of Bruinen. During his confrontation with the Nazgûl at the Bridge of Mitheithel, Glorfindel reveals himself as a mighty Elf-lord terrible in his wrath; Frodo saw him as a shining figure.

Millennia earlier, Glorfindel led an army to the north made up of elves from Rivendell, Lothlórien and The Grey Havens to defeat the Witch-king of Angmar, who fled from him. It was then that Glorfindel prophesied that it would not be by the hand of man, that the Witch-king would be slain. And yet, at the Council of Elrond, Gandalf still said that not even an Elf-lord like Glorfindel could take this ring to Mount Doom. And yet, with all that history, power and pedigree, what did he do in the third age? He served Elrond and the people of Rivendell.

Círdan

Here is another tremendously powerful and capable Ñoldorin Elf who was 2000 years older than Galadriel.

He carried the ring Narya, the Ring of Fire, and being as wise and far seeing as he was, he gave Gandalf the ring when the Istari arrived at Grey Havens.

Let's just look at that for a moment. He gave Gandalf the Grey the ring not Saruman the White (the head of the order) as one would expect. He gave it to the second in the order and did it in secret. Saruman was not aware of this at all. Galadriel also never fully trusted Saruman showing the wisdom of the Ñoldor in that they could even discern a race of beings higher up on the hierarchy, than them.

All the many years of Círdan's existence, he was just known as the Shipwright, not Lord Círdan or any such thing. Despite all his power and wisdom, Círdan served and continued to serve. His relationship with his people and the people that came through the Grey Havens was sincere, loyal and trustworthy. Right to the very end, Círdan was there.

So what?

When someone goes to such lengths to introduce the genealogy of a horse, or the history of a blade or sword, or the numerous languages, races, family trees and more, it makes sense to see what other nuggets may be in the works.

I have been on so very many journeys through the world of Arda and it strikes me that I meet new friends both inside the world of Arda and out each time. I have been to Middle-earth more times than I can remember, through reading the books, watching the movies, playing the games, or just simply talking to people who love the works of Tolkien. No passport is required, just the desire to go. Some ask, "Why do you keep going back?" If the reasons just stated are not enough, then let me elaborate.

Some may call it escape, some may call it research, some may call it fantasy. I simply call it essential. I read what I have read many times before and laugh or am sad every single time. Such is the capacity of the works of Tolkien to engage and fascinate. There is little to nothing that I cannot find in the works. Intrigues, mysteries, hate, love, despair, hope, war, peace, revenge, horror, elation, victory, purpose and much more.

The anticipation of reading the text is beyond comparison. For example, while they were in the Mines of Moria and the battle at Balin's Tomb took place, the book says that an orc chieftain of unusual size pushed Boromir aside, ducked under Aragorn's sword and then stabbed Frodo with a spear. The book then goes on to say "then Andúril clove

his head asunder" (*The Return of the King*).

Let us just have a look at that single bit of text and what questions and imagery it raises. Firstly, why did the orc chieftain avoid both Boromir and Aragorn to go at Frodo? I am sure that the orc did not know itself. We just need to think back a couple of pages and see that the first person that the Watcher of the Deep went for was also Frodo. Chance perhaps? I think not. Both these evil creatures, though not servants of Sauron the watcher, were compelled by the presence of the Ring to go for the Ring bearer. This talks to the role that Frodo played and how very few would have been able to carry the weight of the Ring as he did. Then secondly, Andúril clove his head asunder, as if this had nothing to do with Aragorn, Andúril took offence and corrected the little 'injustice'. I read that line over and over and over again. This is just one single sentence of a myriad.

I read it repeatedly to hear the wisdom of Treebeard or how the relationship of the cousins, Merry and Pippin, and the Ents worked out, bearing in mind that not too much later, Pippin was walking around being best friends with a 10-year-old boy, Bergil, in Minas Tirith. The notion of befriending a being that even the elves call Ancient, to befriending a 10-year-old child from Gondor is quite miraculous.

I then move on to the meeting of Ghân-buri-Ghân and Théoden, (sadly, not in the film) and how "backwards" or "rustic" the Drúedain may have seemed to the Rider of Rohan or those from Gondor for that matter. Yet, these "simple folk" counted and knew exactly how many horses were riding with Théoden. I find this incredible, but plausible. Not like the films today when 10 identical cars ride out and one has the stash and the hero always knows what car it is in. No, that was simply not how Tolkien worked. It was always plausible, or he did one of two things; he either wrote more backend story to make it plausible or he took it out.

I notice the conversation of Pippin and Gandalf in Minas Tirith[57].

> Pippin: I didn't think it would end this way.
>
> Gandalf: End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.

57 I am quoting from the movie here and though it is out of place in the movie, the point is still the profound. The original was alluding to the dream Frodo had in the house of Bombadil.

> Pippin: What? Gandalf? See what?
>
> Gandalf: White shores, and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise.
>
> Pippin: Well, that isn't so bad.
>
> Gandalf: No. No, it isn't." (*The Return of the King*)

What a collection of words to explain the hope that those of faith have.

We can go back and read the Riddles in the Dark. Who did not stop reading and try work out the riddles?

Look at Huan, the hound of the Valar. What an exceptional character. Permitted to speak only three times and all three were to Lúthien and Beren. Here was a wolfhound that was so formidable that it defeated Sauron no matter what form Sauron took and then let him go at the instruction of Lúthien.

A chapter that I sometimes do not re-read is the fall of Gondolin. It saddens me at how much damage can be done, from within, through deceit and lies and jealousy. Such unfathomable heroism and such debilitating trauma in a single chapter. How something so noble can be brought to ruin by a single person that is hell-bent on revenge.

Who cannot be brought to utter silence in thought after reading the "Ainulindalë" or the music of the Ainur as it is known? What Tolkien did here is conceivable as to parallel God's creation of Earth. Unlikely to be true, but certainly plausible.

How can we look at the hobbits, Frodo included, who went on a most perilous journey that took the lives of greater men, such as Boromir and Gandalf the Grey, and not be inspired? Hobbits did not go on adventures. If we look at *The Hobbit*, just climbing trees and going on boats or riding a horse was considered to be Faërie. Perhaps they went so easily because they did not know the peril. They were innocents and innocence at the same time.

What Tolkien did was take what is happening in the real world, and still is, and transpose it to the world of Arda. All we need to do is read and understand or watch the films as if they were a documentary and you will see what I mean.

In life, if we need to know what to do in certain situations, we need only recall what happened in Arda. How the fall of Gondolin, so proud, so majestic, so beautiful, so formidable was caused by jealousy, hubris, scorn and self-importance. How Maeglin first treated Tuor and then Tuor's response caused Maeglin to start plotting revenge. It was also caused out of strife, as Aredhel, the daughter of Fingolfin, left Gondolin and circumstances led her to wander through Beleriand where she met Eöl in Nan Elmoth. She stayed with him, eventually giving birth to Maeglin. This was not a "happy" union. But, the most important thing to observe out of the entirety of the fall of Gondolin was this: it fell because of the love that King Turgon had for his sister. He broke the single, most important rule of a hidden kingdom. Once you have seen it, you will not be allowed out.

This is an abundantly clear warning against the damage that pride and scorn can bring. It also gives insight into what love actually means. In this case, Turgon loved his sister fiercely but turned to folly and strayed from wisdom. If we love someone, do we let them do whatever they want to no matter what the cost? A complex question as the lines will be drawn in many different places by many different people, depending on our point of departure. At what stage in the life of a child do we let them do whatever they want? At what stage in the life of an aged and frail parent do we not become the parent and assist with or make decisions? The thread or agenda that I am pushing here is, to me, simple and unambiguous. There are times in life where we must assume responsibility for others and it may be tough, it may be unpopular and it will vary, but we should always have the courage to do so.

Courage brings us back to Samwise the Brave, Samwise the Courageous. He, too, slipped up. If you recall I spoke on how Frodo tried to see Smeagol but Sam only saw Gollum? Gollum was a complex creature but not complicated at all. Smeagol did not want to harm "Master" but he had no issue killing Sam, and it was Sam's constant vigilance and ultimately Sam's scorn that led Gollum to finally conquer Smeagol and lead Frodo and Sam to Shelob. There is no doubt that Gollum would have caused mischief eventually, and that too is a lesson; he was addicted to the Ring, he was a slave to it, but Gollum was not inherently evil. Yes, Smeagol was not the nicest of creatures before the Ring, but he certainly was not a servant of Sauron. It was also not just chance that the "nicer" Deagol, who found the Ring, was murdered by the more likely to commit evil Smeagol.

Let us now jump forwards to the time of the Return of the King. Aragorn had to go through the Paths of the Dead. By this time, there was no conceivable way that Gimli and Legolas would not follow him. Aragorn laid no oath on them to come with him, but they would not have it any other way. By this time, there was a group of Rangers from the North with Aragorn as well as the Sons of Elrond. Halbarad was the leader of the group of Dúnedain that came to the aid of Aragorn and said at the door to the Paths of the Dead, "I foresee my death on the other side of this door". He later went on to lead the Grey Company to Aragorn's aid during the War of the Ring and carried Aragorn's standard onto Pelennor Fields where he was killed. This is yet another nugget that Tolkien drops for us. He did not go into detail on Halbarad, but certainly went into more than would have seemed necessary, because in truth, he played a minute role in the books, and the history far outweighs the part that Halbarad played.

The party that went through the Paths of the Dead went on a journey so tough and hard and determined, that only the Númenoreans of the human race, could do it. Along with them went three elves and a dwarf. The horses were terrified before going into the Door of Dread, as it was called, or the Dark Door, but they were needed, and they too followed Aragorn due to their love of their riders and masters. Even the horses loved this man Aragorn. The ride to the Stone of Erech, a black stone with a diameter of around three metres, that Isildur himself placed half submerged, once more shows the extent of the backstory, for Tolkien even gave the history of a stone at a meeting place.

How was all this possible? How did these people get to the stone with the terror of the Ghost Army behind them? At one stage the army started to overtake Aragorn and he instructed them back, and they listened.

The party, the horses, the Grey company, as they were called, could only achieve what they did because of their love of Aragorn and their relationship with each other, their horses, and their Chieftain. Aragorn was not the King of Gondor yet, just the Captain of the Rangers.

It must be evident and clear that a common thread through the works of Tolkien are the core emotions of love, hate, good and evil. What must also be clear and evident is this: the love and commitment is to the person, not the position. Certainly, respect for the position, but love for the person. Peers, not thralls, contemporary not feudal. But, if one

looks a little bit deeper still, one will surely notice that this is only the case on the side of good. The exact opposite took place on the side of evil or, at least, ambivalence.

Come with me as we look at a couple of relationships worthy of review but in no particular order.

Gandalf and Shadowfax – Gandalf walked for days to finally catch up with Shadowfax and forge their relationship. One did not ride Shadowfax; Shadowfax carried you and if so, he would make sure you never fell off.

Legolas and Gimli – the strongest relationship between elf and dwarf in the history of Middle-earth. This relationship was quite quickly forged. The reason for this is in plain and open sight: Aragorn, Galadriel, Gandalf and others. They loved and it was clear and evident. It was visible and tangible. In that environment, the natural harvest would be a strong relationship.

Even Boromir, who outright denied Aragorn and his linage, said at his death:

> "Farewell, Aragorn! Go to Minas Tirith and save my people! I have failed."
>
> "No!" said Aragorn, taking his hand and kissing his brow. "You have conquered. Few have gained such a victory. Be at peace! Minas Tirith shall not fall!" (*The Two Towers*)

Boromir smiled. But said no more.

Beleg Strongbow and Túrin Turambar - Beleg once more was an Elf of high standing and one of the great captains of the Sindar. Beleg was captain of the marchwardens and therefore was usually on duty on Doriath's northern borders. Beleg carried a black bow named Belthronding, to which his Epessë (surname) referred, and an arrow called Dailir. Túrin was the only son of Húrin Thalion and Morwen Eledhwen. He had a younger sister Urwen whom everyone called Lalaith, but she died in childhood of a plague, the first grievous event in Túrin's life caused by Morgoth's curse.

After Húrin was captured in the Nírnaeth Arnoediad ("the Battle of Unnumbered Tears"), Túrin remained with his mother Morwen, who hid him from the Easterlings that Morgoth had sent to Hithlum, fearing they would kill Túrin or enslave him. This love was so great, that when Túrin left Doriath in a rage, Beleg sought permission to leave his task of Captain of the marchwardens to go and look for Túrin. This led to him being willingly captured and tortured so he could deliver the message from Melian and Thingol. Once more due to deceit and hate, the enemy was alerted to Túrin and Beleg's stronghold at the hill of Amon Rûdh. Once more Beleg was overpowered and tied and left for dead but managed to get free and followed the host that captured Túrin, not knowing what to do as a single elf, but he was not prepared to let Túrin be taken alive to Morgoth. He met Gwindor, an elf that was captured by Morgoth and tormented for years and together they worked a plan to free Túrin, but in a tragic twist of fate, Túrin, whom had been tormented by the host, decided to fight to the death, thinking that Beleg was one of the tormentors and slew Beleg.

Once more, we see that a higher being, despite the warning from Melian, forsook everything, including their life, for a mortal. The warning of Melian was that the sword Anglachel, that was forged by Eöl the Dark Elf from a meteorite had malice and a purpose. The blade was black but also glowed and was so hard that it could easily slice through iron. It was said that it was imbued with Eöl's malice and was apparently sentient. This was the weapon of choice for Beleg on his journey to find Túrin and it was the mischief of the sword that got Túrin to fight and kill Beleg. Túrin went on to kill Glaurung with this sword and then it took his life as well. We can see the notion of relationship and once more we can see the torment and sadness that Tolkien carried with him on the death of his best friends from his youth, and to what end? The next world war broke out 21 years later or was it just one large global conflict in two parts?

There are so very many examples of strong relationships that end in joy or sadness on the side of the light, but none can be found on the side of the dark. At very best, the dark could mimic or emulate the light for a while, as Sauron did, when he deceived the smiths of Eregion to forge the Rings of Power. But, his façade was brief, and he was not able to seem fair in the eyes of men or elf again.

There is so much to say on this alone, but I will just say this. Sauron came and called himself Annatar (the Lord of Gifts) and claimed to be sent by the Valar. Under his guidance and skill, the seven and the nine rings of power were made. Celebrimbor, however, made the three rings of the elves in secret and that is how Sauron had no power over them. Around four hundred years later, Sauron secretly forged the One Ring and as soon as he put it on, Celebrimbor and the other ring bearers became aware of him and his plans. Sauron then waged war on Eregion and sacked it. Here once more we can see that it is not always the hand that carries the sword that is the one to watch. Always a feint from the enemy before the fight. Quite often, no fight is required.

We have seen once more that the threads on the side of light are love and self-sacrifice and on the side of shadow are hate, deception and terror. All we need to do is have a look at this and think: "How different is this to the world we live in today, how much deception takes place, how many pat us on the back with the one hand, while they drive the blade in with the other?" This comes from all sectors in life.

There is the adage that it takes a village to raise a child. The world has changed so very much that these communities are rarely available today. This leaves us alone to bring up our children or we can find a community, albeit a fantasy, written in a different time.

All we want as parents is to have a strong relationship with our children, one that is constantly evident in the side of light in Tolkien's work. We can easily see how the two different types of relationships work and the effects thereof - a healthy relationship or a toxic one, one of open trust and love or one of deception and abuse. In my opinion, it is a pretty good idea to learn these lessons from outside of one's family.

Many years of observation and working with young people in family environments and in isolation brings me to my final point and reason that I go on this journey into Middle-earth as often as I do:

Every single time I go in there, I take a person or people with me. I take them so that in that world we can find some common ground, some ground where we can communicate and build and ultimately continue to do the same when we get back.

Parents, watch or read with your children, so many connections and joint neural pathways will be created, that will afford joy but more importantly allow for space to nav-

igate sorrow and hardship as will happen in the life of a family. At any given time in the life of a family, tragedy or elation happens. The elation is easy to deal with, the tragedy is far harder. At many times in the life of a family relationships get strained and broken and communication is difficult, but how could two people who love each other, who 'see' the charge of the Rohirrim at Minas Tirith not be stirred to a moment of peace and truce?

How can any father and son still be at odds after the Battle of Helm's Deep? Even if it is just for a couple of moments. Those moments could become periods and certainly be used as a conduit for any member of the family to try and cross what they believe to be an uncrossable schism. A daughter could say to her father, I feel like Arwen being sent away by Elrond, Dad. Or a son to a father, am I Boromir or Faramir, because I know what I feel? Mom, I need the houses of healing, to be healed, body and soul.

There is little or nothing that the world of today can throw at us that we cannot see in the works of Tolkien including the results of those actions. We can still choose to do as we see fit at that time, but if a family has a "safe haven" there is more opportunity for that choice to be one of light.

I have been to Middle-earth with numerous people and, without exception, none who came on the journey have bemoaned the loss of time on the journey. Some I am still traveling with. I may be in different places with different people at the same time, but we are always traveling and always on an adventure. This and many more, is the reason why, to me J.R.R. Tolkien has no peer and should be lauded in every realm for his contribution both to literature, but also to life.

Here is a note that one of the people that came into Middle-earth with me had to say:

I was almost forced to read the book. My brother had read it and he could talk at length about the characters and how great this epic journey was. I bought the book back in the 70's and finally gathered my strength to dedicate a big piece of my life to it. From the very first lines on the page, I was immediately drawn into it and a whole new world opened for me. I could see the landscapes; I could see their faces and I could feel every step they had to take on the journey that is now legend.

I felt the exhaustion they felt and often had to stop reading for I too was too tired to carry on reading. I had no idea where it was going but I knew that I had to follow them all the way

to the end, and I did this with a great sense of achievement.

When I heard they were going to make the movies I immediately felt a whole lot of pressure. I wondered if they would do justice to the books, would I by some tragic twist of fate not be alive to see them and especially that they were making three – one each year.

When they released the first movie, I decided that to pay true tribute to Tolkien I would drive from Cape Town where I lived, to Bloemfontein where Tolkien spent the first years of his life. Anyway, it is a 2000km drive and off I headed with my two young daughters on our own adventure. We booked into a hotel in Bloemfontein and made sure we were at the very first show in the town of his birth to watch the first of the trilogy.

We walked in proudly and booked our tickets and were a bit confused that there was no FANFARE. We asked why not and sadly they had no idea he lived in Bloemfontein. Tragic loss for them. We bought our popcorn, took our seats and were blown away by the movie. My daughters Rikki and Carla loved it. Rikki who is now 37 is still a massive fan.

We left the theatre, took a quick drive through the city to see where he had lived. It is now a furniture store or worse and we hit the highway back to Cape Town chatting about it all the way.

To this day I still watch these movies and have committed to reading the book again. I still have the original that I read 40 years ago. For me this journey lifts me out of any low I am feeling and gives me hope. I even managed to persuade my wife Alison to watch the movies. She does not do fantasy and I told her it is not about fantasy it is about personal struggle. We now watch together and in three places we get a bit misty eyed.

I am just grateful that I lived in an era when this could take place.

In closing, I will say this: there are many options for us to escape into - games, fandoms, drugs, and yes, some other literature that too is very good. Yet, that all seems quaint to me as none is anywhere near as balanced or nuanced as the works of Tolkien.

None of them are as thorough and very few of them hold to the standards of an era of days of light and shadow. The climate today is so hostile and seems to be both whimsical and capricious, not ever giving a firm foothold or platform to have a look at the deeper and more cogent purposes of life. Change is good and this is also evident in *The Lord of*

the Rings, however some things must hold true and stand firm.

Parents, friends, families, immerse yourselves into this world of Arda and you will see the Tenth Palantir where we can look back at our world and see what is going on here, in the full knowledge that the Palantir can be twisted and distorted by people to suit their own agenda.

Then, where we need to, we fight, where we need to, we let be, but at all times, we love.

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација

Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

821.111

REIMAGINING the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien / edited by Ana Kechan With a foreword by Thomas Honegger. - Skopje : International Balkan University, 2022. - 148 стр. ; 30 см

Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија кон главите

ISBN 978-608-4868-27-9

а) Книжевност -- Англиска -- Толкин, Џон Роналд Руел

COBISS.MK-ID 59088133