

WHERE THE SHADOWS LIE:
NATURE, MODERNITY AND THE AUDIENCE OF MIDDLE-EARTH

by

Michael J. Brisbois

B.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2003

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

February 2005

© Michael J. Brisbois, 2005



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 0-494-04640-6

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 0-494-04640-6

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Abstract

The following thesis examines the relevance of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in relation to its audience and the social conditions of its completion and reception. This relevance is best described as an imaginary process by which the reader vicariously experiences a millenarian religious movement that attempts to reject modernity. The argument is divided into four main sections, each building upon the preceding concepts. The first is a discussion of audience and fan culture which uses semiotics as the basis by which readers understand the novel. The second examines the way in which the semiotic nature of the imaginary world of Middle-earth codifies the meaning of the text. Third, the relationship between the reader, author and modernity is defined. Finally, in the fourth chapter, the millennial process is defined in detail and its relationship to the reader and the text.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
A Note on the Text	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Fantasy and Society	13
Fantasy and Genre	13
Fantasy and Fan Culture	22
The Semiotics of Fantasy	26
Open/Closed Texts	27
The Model Reader of <i>The Lord of The Rings</i>	29
Chapter Two: Imaginary Nature	36
Nature and the Reader	36
Onomastics in Middle-earth	40
A Moral Nature	43
The Typology of Nature in Middle-earth	48
Passive vs. Active Nature	48
Essential Nature	50
Ambient Nature	53
Independent Nature	57
Wrathful Nature	62
The Problem of a Fox	67
Chapter Three: Modernity and Social Crisis	69
The Upheaval of War	70
Tolkien and the War	74
Tolkien as Modernist	77
A Northern Modernist	82
Chapter Four: The Millennial Response	88
Modernism and Millennialism	90
The Process of Millennialism	92
The Basic Elements	93
Phase One	94
Phase Two	96
Phase Three	97
Millennialism and <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	98
A Weberian Coda	103
Conclusion	105
Works Cited	112

Acknowledgements

Anyone who commits themselves to writing a thesis will inevitably accrue many debts along the way. The people who guide you and teach you are best thanked in person; however, I owe a great deal to Jolene for her patience and to Christopher for his inspiration.

A Note on the Text

J. R. R. Tolkien did not publish prolifically during his life, but in death he has published a great many works, most edited by his son, Christopher Tolkien. In order to streamline the in-text citations, as well as to clarify references to Tolkien himself, a few basic guidelines must be laid out.

First, any reference to a member of the Tolkien family outside of J. R. R. Tolkien will include the full name. Only the author will be referred to as “Tolkien.”

Second, the titles of Tolkien’s major works that are cited repeatedly have been either shortened or reduced to acronyms. The following is a list of titles and their shorthand reference used in citation:

<i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	<i>LOTR</i>
<i>The Hobbit</i>	<i>Hobbit</i>
<i>The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien</i>	<i>Letters</i>
<i>The History of Middle-earth</i>	<i>History</i>
“Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics”	“Monsters”
“On Faerie Stories”	“Faerie”

Introduction

"He drew a deep breath. 'Well, I'm back,' he said." (*LotR* 1008)

With those words, Samwise Gamgee brings *The Lord of the Rings* to an end. It is a simple scene, abstractly and artistically described by author J. R. R. Tolkien: "...he went on, and there was yellow light and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was expected. And Rose drew him in, and set him in his chair, and put little Elanor upon his lap" (*LotR* 1008). This homely ending bookends the narrative with its quiet beginnings in The Green Dragon, a pub nestled in the Shire and patronized by gossiping farmers (*LotR* 21-24).

Between these two quaint, rural scenes, the reader has been witness to terrible monstrosity and beauty, temptation and redemption, sacrifice and acceptance. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth has been laid open to the minds of those who, like the author, hunger for imaginary exercise and escape. Since its publication in 1954-55, *The Lord of the Rings* has remained one of the most successful novels of twentieth century literature.

The original goal of this work was to examine the ecological ramifications of Tolkien's novel. To a great extent, this is still the core of the argument and ideas of nature and fantasy will be discussed at length. But, as is common and perhaps expected, many other topics became apparent through the process of research. Many questions arose, such as, "Why do readers respond to an ecological message in *The Lord of the Rings*?" And "Is this specific response part of a larger social reaction to the text?" Part of the complexity of Tolkien's work is that it is not allegorical in structure but is intended to be a complete secondary world. It creates a world dissociated with ours and any seemingly obvious connection the reader makes to the text is a reflection of the reader.

Tolkien called fantasy's ability to reflect concerns of its readers "applicability." This element is not limited only to fantasy, but is more of a by-product of literature's expression of the human experience (*Letters* 145). This applicability suggests that readers find deeper meaning in the text because it responds to their needs. If readers are responding to *The Lord of the Rings*, it must express something they desire. Because readers have garnered spiritual, ecological and imaginative inspiration from the novel, some mechanism must be at work to provide them with that inspiration.

If ecocriticism is to be viewed as a socially relevant theory, then that relevance must be demonstrated. Combining literary studies with anthropology allows one's understanding of the life of a novel to expand into areas not normally used by literary critics. Anthropology allows us to incorporate ideas related to the formation of fan groups through the shared communication of symbols and to tie these fans to the environmental movement, through groups like E.L.F (Earth Liberation Front), and Elf Lore, a non-profit society that maintains the Lothlorien Nature Sanctuary. However, in the body of this work, no obvious distinction is made between either discipline. Instead, this is an attempt to create a synthesis of theory in order to present a truly seamless interdisciplinary study.

But there is more to the following chapters than simply pointing out the images of nature in and the social groups inspired by *The Lord of the Rings*. There are broader questions that must be answered concerning the reader's relationship to modernity and the needs to which Tolkien responds. They are not new anxieties, but they are explicitly tied to the rise of industrialism in modern society. Social movements like medievalism do not begin or end with Tolkien, as the lives of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites, as well as post-Tolkien role-players and re-creationists demonstrate. The ecological

movement is tied to the medievalist movement through a shared concern and a shared figure of desire: the millennial ideal of a golden age.

Millennialism plays a critical role throughout our discussion. It is the underlying relevance of *The Lord of the Rings*, the reason why people find it inspiring. Millennialism is inherent in both the fantasy of J. R. R. Tolkien specifically and in ecocritical literature in general. The millennial reading is supported through the semiotic analysis of the characters and events of the novel. The symbolic and iconic structures of the literature create a bridge through which meaning can be accessed. Through the following study, Tolkien's work will be examined in order to demonstrate the importance of nature and millennialism in the text. However, before one begins to examine the text itself, it is helpful to understand the author, his work, and the scholarship that surrounds it.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is at once a very plain and a very romantic figure. Born in 1892 at Bloemfontein, Africa, he was a child with fragile health. He, his mother Mabel, and brother Hilary, returned to England in 1895. Tolkien's father died before leaving Africa to meet them and Tolkien's mother had to depend on her family for financial support. However, Mabel Tolkien's decision to adopt Catholicism isolated her from the majority of her family and resulted in the Tolkien's poverty. She taught her children what she could, finding that Ronald had an inclination for language. Due to their economic difficulty, Tolkien had to rely upon scholarships and the charity of the family priest in order to attend school. He proved an excellent student, if too taken with language and rugby. His mother died of complications from diabetes when Tolkien was twelve and he was raised in boarding houses under the guardianship of his priest, Father Francis Morgan (Carpenter 21-76).

Tolkien met his future wife, Edith, at one such house and struck up a secretive love affair with her. As college neared, Father Francis discovered the relationship and forbade it until Tolkien was 21. Tolkien would neither see nor correspond with Edith for three years. After winning his way into Oxford and successfully starting several student groups devoted to medieval literature, Tolkien proved to be a respectable scholar of philology, the comparative study of linguistic history. Upon turning 21, Tolkien sought out Edith and found her engaged to another man. He quickly wooed her away from her fiancé and married her in 1916. The initial honeymoon period was cut short by World War I. Tolkien had received some reprieve because of his ongoing education, but he eventually joined his regiment at the Somme. By the end of the war all save one of Tolkien's childhood friends were dead (Carpenter 50-121)

Following the war, Tolkien took to the academic life. He worked on the *Oxford English Dictionary* for a while, lectured at Leeds briefly, and then returned to Oxford, where he became chair of Anglo-Saxon and later Merton Professor of English Literature and Language. While he would revolutionize the study of *Beowulf*, the majority of his life was devoted to family and his faith. He would celebrate mass, have three children, meet his friends, "the Inklings," at a local pub, called The Eagle and Child, and teach (Carpenter). There was no scandal to his life: while a few romantic adventures and the terrors of the war are not to be minimized, Tolkien was not lecherous, wild, or uncouth. He is not a Byronic artist, but he does seem to wield a great deal of power over his critics.

Studying J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth is quite like wrestling with the dead. While Stephen Greenblatt may have desired to speak to the dead, many readers do not desire to speak with Tolkien when they read his novels, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the*

Rings or even *The Silmarillion*. They wish to speak to Middle-earth. The vast wealth of literature published pre- and posthumously has reached twenty-eight primary texts. This does not include the great wealth of single poems and academic writing published during his career. Instead, the majority of scholars focus on the most influential and successful of his works: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The supplementary literature of Middle-earth, some fourteen volumes more, are not nearly as well known or well read as his two novels. Perhaps it is the posthumous publication of these fourteen additional works that leads to the sense of grappling with the dead.

Tolkien seems to reach out and demand authorial control over his work. His collection of letters looms over the field, asserting his point-of-view on this element or that concept. The numbers of books written in the field that focus on Tolkien far outweigh those that focus on his writing. Tolkien's motives and practices have become the staple diet of the field, with *The Lord of the Rings* only serving as an example of his success or failure. He is an oddly charismatic fellow, perhaps because of his sincerity and simple life. In our ever-so-individual and hurried lives, we perceive his apparent quiet life as an ideal few achieve. His personal correspondence and personal collection of drafts has enabled Tolkien scholars to glean a great deal from his writing process and his ideas on Middle-earth and fantasy. In many ways, they are the greatest boon one could have—imagine if we had fourteen volumes of rough drafts, commentary and six decades of detailed correspondence between family, friends, and enthusiastic fans for the author of *Beowulf*, or Gilgamesh for that matter. How those fields would be different. Perhaps they would lose some of their mystique; perhaps they would become hemmed in by the authorial control exerted by those comments.

It is the task of a Tolkien scholar to wrestle with the control that Tolkien wields. Ideas and comments must be stretched and tested. Some can be bent; others manipulated and further others broken. Some critics have become so locked into understanding Middle-earth through Tolkien's commentary that they are unable to see it any other way. They forget that a great many of the fans of the novel have not read *The Silmarillion*, much less *Unfinished Tales* or the dense, perhaps too academic, twelve volumes of notes, drafts and unfinished pieces that comprise *The History of Middle-earth*. In the wake of the recent film adaptations, there will be many who have experienced Middle-earth without the novels. Their only experience will be through Jackson's version of *The Lord of the Rings*, which, while beautiful, falters when it comes to preserving the narrative flow and meaning of the novel.

One of the problems with Tolkien scholarship is the fact that it seems constantly torn between two conversations. On one level, many writers want to reach out to the general public and converse with the people who have made Tolkien a household name. On the other level, there are those academics who are content to speak only to other academics, becoming involved in obtuse debates on Elvish poetic structure and other fine points of analysis. Part of the reason for this division amongst Tolkien scholars is the fragile place of Tolkien's fiction in the academic sphere. As a fantasy author, he is often placed outside the English canon, and if accepted, then he is certainly put out on the periphery. Therefore, those academics who study his work become hypersensitive to the doom laid upon them by their peers and therefore, either reach out to the public, or insulate themselves in arcane practices like the study of the Elvish languages.

One of the goals of this work is to bring these threads together. I do not wish to simplify the field or Tolkien's work, but instead wish to harmonize some of its conflicts. Tolkien and his ideas are critical to our discussion here, but equally so are the people who have read and who are reading his works. My discussion is intended to be relevant to both the general public and my colleagues. The joining of academic and public perspectives on literature, or the influence of literature on the academic and public spheres, allows us to move beyond what has already been studied and into new areas of focus and study. I do not wish to see Tolkien's control ended, only to mitigate his influence to become a voice in a conversation instead of a dominant, ruling voice. Given Tolkien's analogy in "*Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics*," I think he would agree:

A man inherited a field in which was an accumulation of old stone, part of an older hall. Of the old stone some had already been used in building the house in which he actually lives, not far from the old house of his fathers. Of the rest he took some and built a tower. But his friends coming perceived at once (without troubling to climb the steps) that these stones had formerly belonged to a more ancient building. So they pushed the tower over, with no little labour, in order to look for hidden carvings and inscriptions, or to discover whence the man's distant forefathers had obtained their building material. Some suspected a deposit of coal under the soil and began to dig for it, and forgot about the stones. They said: 'This tower is most interesting.' But they also said (after pushing it over): 'What a muddle it is in!' And even the man's own descendents, who might have been expected to consider what he had been about, were heard to murmur: 'He is such an odd fellow! Imagine his using these old stones just to build a nonsensical

tower! Why did he not just restore the old house? He had no sense of proportion.'

But from the top of that tower the man had been able to look upon the sea.

("Monsters" 8-9)

In writing *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien applied his critical understanding of *Beowulf's* construction to his own imaginary world. Just as the Christian poet of *Beowulf* took oral stories of the Anglo-Saxons and created a medieval synthesis of them in his work, Tolkien synthesizes a great many medieval symbols and ideas into a modernist work. Many critics have argued against Tolkien for writing fantasy, not realism—"a nonsensical tower" instead of a historical fiction, "the old house" ("Monsters" 8-9). But in writing *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien created a literary masterpiece with a great deal of applicability. This has led readers to form a variety of interpretations of Middle-earth. Several important concepts exist in the field, and certain arguments can be grouped into schools of thought. The schools do not exist in an organized fashion, but the categories are useful for understanding the scholarship. The following basic concepts are presented in the hope that the reader will be able to interact with later arguments in greater detail.

The first school is the Christian school. This is a large and rather powerful area of Tolkien scholarship. Members of the school focus upon Tolkien's Catholicism and its affect upon his work. There is no arguing with the basic tenets of this school. Tolkien was very devout and viewed his mother's death as martyrdom for the faith (her sacrifice of family and wealth in order to practice her religion). He believed in what he called the "True Myth" of Christianity, as he called it (Pearce 45-60). The terminology of his lecture on fantasy is laced with terms like "sub-creation" and "Secondary World" because he believed that only God could create in the Primary World ("Faerie" 155-6). While

Tolkien's world is not explicitly Christian (a deliberate choice on his part) it is implicitly moral and founded upon Christian beliefs. For example, the gift of men is that they have souls and therefore can go on out of the world to be with the creator, while other peoples, like Elves, lack souls. One of the weaknesses of this school is that its members have a tendency to ignore other possible ways of interpreting the text. Their readings can often collapse into dogmatic statements, but they do articulate an important aspect of Tolkien's writing. There are a few authors who manage to break through and make comparative readings, such as Brian Birzer's excellent *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth*.

The second school is the Modernist/Historical. Its discussions are focused upon the effect of the First World War and the social upheaval that followed and Tolkien's use of real history in his narrative. Critics who subscribe to these ideas have produced a great deal of excellent work. Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth* eloquently demonstrates how philology plays a critical role in the development of Tolkien's imaginary world. Another scholar, John Garth, has only recently published his detailed study of Tolkien's experience in the Great War and its influence on his writing. The other important tenet of this school is the idea of "a mythology for England" (Chance). One of Tolkien's early goals was to create a complex cosmological expression of myth for England, mostly because he felt that the Arthurian legends and Shakespeare, which are both correctly held up as culturally important English legends, had failed to represent the England he believed in. Generally strong, this school can focus too much upon Tolkien's ideas and method of writing, sometimes obscuring his novels in biographical information.

The third and final school is that of the Fantasist school. This is actually the smallest school in terms of academic publications. Very few authors write about fantasy

as a genre, and if they do, Tolkien is either ignored (as in the case of Todorov or, to a lesser extent, Manlove) or too dominant, obscuring readings of other authors (such as Shippey's conclusion in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*). This school, if working academically, is often concerned with the study of the Elvish tongues Sindarin and Quenya. However, the majority of this school is non-academic, consisting of fans, authors, Internet communities, medieval re-creationist and role-playing enthusiasts. The lack of academic presence in the most publicly active school of Tolkien discussion is likely due to the segregation of art into high and low and the academic concern for collegial acceptance and recognition.

The growing prevalence of cultural studies is slowly correcting this imbalance, and part of the intention of our discussion is to shed light upon the fans of *The Lord of the Rings* in particular and of fantasy in general. Furthermore, thematic criticism must consider "historical, anthropological and aesthetic lines of analysis" in order to adequately explore its position (Siebers 20). In this case, non-academic groups are very important to "an anthropology of Fantastic literature," as it would be necessarily concerned with the readers who follow a genre (Seibers 42).

One of the important questions a critic can try to answer is "Why is a writer or novel relevant?" This is a question many have asked of Tolkien and then attempted to answer. Each school has offered up its ideas, from the religious reading of Joseph Pearce, to the social reading of Patrick Curry. Many authors have pointed out that readers often glean an ecological concern or awareness from the novel. The function of nature in Middle-earth is to be a gateway, not only to understanding the environmental meaning of the text but also to understanding the general significance of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Through the analysis of its function, we can recognize the text as a profoundly millennial work. Millennialism refers to a socio-religious movement brought on by social crisis, often related to the growth of technology, which focuses upon the coming of a prophesized golden age accompanied by a renewal of the world. This renewal is often a paradoxical mixture of progressive moral development and a regressive return to past ways of life. Clearly the idealistic view of the medieval period that becomes a movement in Victorian England is based upon this sort of social reaction to industrialism (Girouard). Likewise, the success of Tolkien's imaginary medieval world is due to the way his readers react to the pressures of modernity.

The following chapters explore this relationship in detail. The first, "Fantasy and Society," begins our discussion by defining fantasy as a genre, the process by which readers form communities and social groups based upon fantasy, and the way semiotic signs convey their meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*. Secondly, "Imaginary Nature" will explore the way fantasy creates verisimilitude through a movement from the real to the imaginary. This incorporates the natural world of Middle-earth, which involves a more medieval notion of nature than many modern readers grasp. Third, "Modernity and Social Crisis" will examine the effects of modernity upon Tolkien and his generation. A discussion of Tolkien's position on and in the modernist school of literature as well as the relationships between him and his literary forebears will demonstrate the historical connections between the literary tradition of medievalism and fantasy. Chapter Four, "The Millennial Response," will conclude the work by demonstrating the way millennialism functions in western society as a response to modernity and the explicit semiotic connections between millennial theory and *The Lord of the Rings*. In this final

analysis, a combination of anthropological theory and study will help answer the question: "Why is Tolkien relevant?"

Chapter One: Fantasy and Society

'I cannot read the fiery letters,' said Frodo in a quavering voice.

'No,' said Gandalf, 'but I can. The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode, but the language is that of Mordor, which I will not utter here. But this in the Common Tongue is what is said, close enough:

One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them. (LotR 49)

It is with this event that *The Lord of the Rings* moves beyond a rural story about quaint little Hobbits living out their lives. A much larger world begins to dominate the narrative as Gandalf reveals his suspicions about the Ring, and once they are confirmed, a much darker story begins to take shape. This is not a child's story, though in haste and ignorance it has been mistaken for one. This is an adult's story and the success of *The Lord of the Rings* would usher in a flood of Fantastic stories.

Fantasy and Genre

The process of defining the fantasy genre is paradoxically difficult. In some ways, it is as easy as saying anything with magic, monsters and/or imaginary worlds is fantasy. But that includes a great deal of literature, from Homer, to Mallory, to Shakespeare and many others. Each of these writers includes a great many magic and supernatural elements in their work that could lead to their inclusion into the genre, but fantasy is a much more modern development and, despite supernatural elements in earlier literature, it is misleading to classify them as fantasy.

Another stumbling block to defining fantasy lies in the connections between magic and religion and magic and science. The issue becomes more complex if we examine work of a religious nature, such as *Paradise Lost*, which might be fantasy or

religious depending on the critic's view of Christianity and the events of the poem. Magic realism contains its own cultural and artistic concerns in judging its place as fantasy. We should also consider other historical genres, such as Gothic or the Fairy Tale, which are obviously connected to the development of fantasy but seem to resist the modern definition of fantasy due to their historical particulars. Furthermore, we must consider the possibility that fantasy is merely a subgenre of the Fantastic, a much larger concept that includes science fiction, horror, gothic, fairy tale, and magic realism.

Another level of the problem of defining fantasy stems from the general lack of academic publication on the topic. Tzvetan Todorov's 1970 work, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* is an important work due to its generation of debate about the genre that continued until the earlier 1980s. Todorov was working with French literature and thematic studies and while his study works well for its chosen environment, English fantasy proved to be a very different genre. Since then, a very limited number of works have been published attempting to explain the function of English fantasy. In 1976, Eric Rabkin defined the fantastic as "a diametric reversal of the ground rules within a narrative world" (42). This implies the world must deliberately alter the standard physical laws of the natural world, which is rarely done in some fantasy.¹

Tobin Sieber's 1984 study, *The Romantic Fantastic*, demonstrates the need for superstition and imagination in our society. He argues that modern fantasy arises during the Romantic period. In their rejection of the rationalism of the enlightenment, the Romantics focused upon the imagination (Siebers 25-6). Of course, *Frankenstein*, one of the earliest science fiction stories, is a Romantic period piece. Sieber's connection of

¹ The majority of Guy Gavriel Kay's work is acutely mundane, and the magical only a matter of perspective or mystery, but his novels are considered to be among the best fantasy ever written.

fantasy and Romanticism is interesting, as our discussion of environmentalism in *The Lord of the Rings* owes a debt of gratitude to critics like Johnathan Bate and Karl Kroeber, who focused upon the environmentalism of Romanticism. In fact, Kroeber, who published *Ecological Literary Criticism* in 1994, had previously published a work on the fantastic, *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction*. It is not mere coincidence that critical discussion focuses upon the Romantic and the Fantastic. Both are responding to the strain of modernity in similar ways: focusing upon the effect modernity has upon our lives and the imaginative powers of the human mind.

Sieber's study is also important because he incorporates anthropology into his discussion. The social function of magic, the authority it provides, and the cultural roles of mythology are all important considerations in the study of fantasy (38-40). When one begins to argue about the role of imagination in a reader's life, or a culture's, the research demands that anthropological ideas be included.

In the years following, the literary genre underwent a massive amount of growth, both in terms of publications and intellectual development on the part of the authors and the audience, while the critical discussion slowed. Although there are still scholars producing excellent work, they are few and the studies were largely limited to specific texts or literary theories. Any attempt to thoroughly define the genre as it currently stands is beyond the scope of this work. In the interest of space and clarity, it is best to focus on the task and material at hand: J. R. R. Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*. This will allow us to examine fantasy through the most relevant and necessary details.

As a starting point, we will accept a basic definition of "Science fiction and fantasy" found in his M. H. Abram's *Glossary of Literary Terms*:

These terms encompass novels and short stories that represent an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience...The two terms are not sharply discriminated, but by and large, science fiction is applied to those narratives in which—unlike in pure fantasy—an explicit attempt is made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known and imagined scientific principles, or to a projected advance in technology, or to a drastic change in the organization of society. (279)

This definition provides a good, representative overview of the genre(s). The ideal framework would be to use the term Fantastic literature as the title of the genre and relegate fantasy and science fiction to the position of sub-genres. Clearly, *The Lord of the Rings* is not science fiction. No technology is used to explain the fire that Gandalf conjures during the battle with the worgs at the base of the mountain Caradhras:

Stooping like a cloud, he lifted a burning branch and strode to meet the wolves. They gave back before him. High in the air he tossed the blazing brand. It flared with a sudden white radiance like lightning and his voice rolled like thunder.

‘*Naur an edraith amen! Naur dan I ngaurhoth!*’ he cried.

There was a roar and a crackle, and the tree above him burst into a leaf and bloom of blinding flame. (*LotR* 291)

In Middle-earth, magic is an internal power and is reserved for beings that are not human, such as Gandalf, Saruman, The Witch-King, Sauron and the elves. Tolkien’s Christian outlook was based upon a belief that trying to explain the workings of myth and religion in analytic terms was to miss the point of its power and workings (Pearce 57-8).

The representation of magic as an internal power, naturally occurring in creatures of a different order of being, has connotations with Max Weber's idea of primary charisma. In Weber's concept of magic, charisma is the quality of personality that magicians use to exert their power, and primary charisma "cannot be acquired by any means"; in order for charisma to be effective it must be a "natural endowment" (Weber 2-3). Of course, Weber is examining the way magical and religious leaders create their social roles, but the idea of charisma clearly relates to Gandalf and his fellow wizards: their power, whether it is Gandalf's magic or the Witch King's terror, it is a natural part of their being and sets them apart from society. Given Tolkien's devout belief in myth, he clearly made the decision to define Middle-earth's magical processes along religious lines.

Tolkien had a very detailed and complex understanding of fantasy. Though reluctant to systematize his beloved genre, he did deliver a long lecture on the nature of fantasy, titled "On Faerie Stories" in 1939 (Carpenter 191). It is a key piece of Tolkien's academic work and is neatly positioned after the publication of *The Hobbit* and the beginnings of his work on *The Lord of the Rings*. It shows his development from a children's author to an author of adult fantasy. The lecture is very idiosyncratic, as Tolkien uses the concept of "elves" and "faeries" as a stand-in for some unknowable mystery, which is perhaps faith or the suspension of disbelief (though Tolkien directly discusses the former in his epilogue and the latter in the lecture).

In a manner befitting a philologist, Tolkien begins to discuss the terms used by his contemporaries, particularly "fancy," which he points out is "a reduced and depreciatory form of the older word 'fantasy.'" At the time of the lecture, fancy held a higher

paradigmatic position than fantasy in the English language. Fantasy meant idle daydreaming, while fancy was “the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency of reality” (“Faerie” 138). What Tolkien does in his lecture is deconstruct the paradigmatic difference between fantasy and fancy and reposition the older word, fantasy, above fancy. This suits the historical focus of Tolkien’s linguistic training. Philologists focused on tracing and comparing the history of words, in order to understand language and culture. For Tolkien, it was clear that fantasy had always included fancy, and that the current use of fancy was a misunderstanding. Fantasy is therefore given the primary position in Tolkien’s terminology, and as the current lexicon stands today, he was successful in renaming the genre, or at the very least, recognizing growing changes in the semiotics of fantasy.

Tolkien also eliminates several elements that he believes cannot be part of a Fantastic work. These include dream stories (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*), beast-fables (*Wind in the Willows*) and traveler’s tales (*Gulliver’s Travels*) (“Faerie” 115-118). None of these elements fit into a definition of the Fantastic because they each contain a mechanism for explaining away the magical elements of a story. By explaining away the story, we destroy the Primary Belief that Tolkien later argues is critical to fantasy (“Faerie” 141).

Primary Belief, the ability to believe that fantasy is as real as the phenomenological world, is important as it allows Tolkien’s four critical elements of fantasy to emerge. These elements are “Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, [and] Consolation” (“Faerie” 138). The first of these, Fantasy, is the ability of the text to create Primary Belief in the supernatural elements of the story. It is “an equivalent of Imagination [that

provides] notions of 'unreality'...freedom from the domination of observed 'fact'" ("Faerie" 139). It should be noted that Tolkien describes two levels of belief, Primary and Secondary. Secondary Belief is similar to the willful suspension of disbelief that Coleridge described in the nineteenth century, whereas Primary Belief is experienced only when the Fantasy is so overwhelming that "you give to it Primary Belief, however marvelous the events" ("Faerie" 142).

Recovery is the second element. In Tolkien's terms, Recovery is defined as "re-gaining a clear view" ("Faerie" 146). By examining the imaginary and the impossible we come to view mundane reality in a renewed light. Tolkien uses the example of staring at a single color, in this case green and, having stopped, being "startled anew...by blue and yellow and red" ("Faerie" 146). One should realize as well that this Recovery is tied to the third element of Escape because if the Escape is incomplete then the Recovery will fail. The Escape is not the "Flight of the Deserter," which is how Tolkien argues realists perceive this term. He suggests that Escape is perfectly normal, at its most base form in daydreaming, and much more complex and rigorous in fantasy ("Faerie" 148). Through Escape one leaves the troubles of the real world behind and experiences a relaxation that allows the Recovery described above.

The final element, Consolation, is the happy ending, or "*Eucatastrophe*" ("Faerie" 153). The happy ending does not deny the possibility of a catastrophic ending, but ultimately offers us "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" ("Faerie" 153). Tolkien elaborates:

It is the mark of a good fairy-story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give

the child or man that hears it, when the 'turn' comes, a catch of the breath a beat or lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality. ("Faerie" 152-3)

This "peculiar quality" is the reader's psychic recovery described by the three other elements of fantasy. This final element might be more convincing if Tolkien had simply left off after ascribing a happy ending. The reader may now be wondering how Tolkien's definition is a better than Todorov's if Eucatastrophe depends upon a specific response in the reader. The answer is that Tolkien's definition fits the discourse surrounding the Fantastic better and suggests his statements on Consolation should be read as a guide to gauging the worth of any literature, not merely fantasy. It is important to understand that the Eucatastrophe occurs when the story looks bleakest, so it is a literary device and not a response in the reader.

Tolkien understood that fantasy could represent much, much more than imaginary ideals. He saw a deep, powerful connection between fantasy and reality:

...it is after all possible for a rational man, after reflection...to arrive at a condemnation, implicit at least in the mere silence of 'escapist' literature, of progressive things like factories or the machine-guns and bombs that appear to be their most natural and inevitable, dare we say 'inexorable,' products.

'The rawness and ugliness of modern European life'—that real life whose contact we should welcome—'is the sign of a biological inferiority, of an insufficient or false reaction to environment.' The maddest castle that ever came out of a giant's bag in a wild Gaelic story is not only much less ugly than a robot-

factory, it is also (to use a very modern phrase) 'in a very real sense' a great deal more real. ("Faerie" 150)

Tolkien describes escapism as a responsibility of the modern person, and his use of military imagery in the phrase "the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter" is not without meaning ("Faerie" 148). Tolkien uses the analogy of a soldier captured by the enemy in order to galvanize his argument and it relates heavily to the pressures of World War I and II (recall the lecture was given in 1939). In his line of reason, the modern world captures our minds, places them under immense strain and inflicts psychic damage on them ("Faerie" 145-49).

Tolkien understood that, through the active use of the imagination, individuals could relieve some of their psychic strain. This is what he meant by "recovery, escape and consolation" ("Faerie" 145). This is different from the passive escapism of reading a realistic short story, or watching a television program that requires little thought or imaginative exercise. Furthermore, Tolkien insists that fantasy is not an irrational act, like dreaming, but a rational art ("Faerie" 139). The escapism of Tolkien is evocative and based upon the idea that the more complex the fantasy, the better it will be ("Faerie" 144).

It is the dynamic of escape that is important. It allows us to recognize that the reader experiences an intellectual and psychic engagement with fantasy. The relationship Tolkien draws between the positive effects of fantasy and the pressures of modern life is, in retrospect, also a connection between the popularity of fantasy in general and *The Lord of the Rings* in specific. It is as if Tolkien had an audience waiting for him, a need in the fabric of society that only fantasy could fulfill.

Fantasy and Fan Culture

The reading groups and fan clubs that sprung up throughout the English-speaking world (and after translation, worldwide) to discuss *The Lord of the Rings* clearly respond to something in the literature. But the reality is more complex than a single reader's catharsis. These large communities of fans, not only of Tolkien specifically, but also fantasy in general, are united by a common identity. The formulation of this identity is a complex area of study. At first, it appears that Joseph Campbell's concept of the monomyth, or Durkheim's idea of collective representations may play a role here (Campbell 3-46; Durkheim 83). The principle flaw in suggesting that a universal structuralist myth or consciousness is expressed by fantasy is the simple fact that not everyone "gets" or enjoys it. Those who do, however, develop the tightly knit social groups that make up the fan culture of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Non-participants often view the social groups formed by fantasy with amusement, as the film *Trekkies* demonstrates (Nygard). The film offers viewers a glimpse into the world of *Star Trek* fans. *Trekkies* focuses upon individuals who take their appreciation for *Star Trek* to an extreme: decorating their dental offices in *Star Trek* fashion, wearing their uniforms to work and to jury trials, or even making use of surgical modifications to resemble alien species. Amidst the humor and strangeness of the documentary's representation of fandom, one must admit that there are a great many fans who relate to *Star Trek* in a much less fabulous way and so are not given time in the documentary. In fact, *Trekkies* is not so much a study of fandom as it is a comedy, or "mockumentary."

But both *Star Trek* and *The Lord of the Rings* have profound and complex fan groups. There are obvious similarities between the two groups, such as a love of invented

languages. Fans of Roddenberry's "wagon train to the stars" eagerly learn Klingon, while fans of Middle-earth exalt Tolkien's two forms of Elvish.² In fact, there is a scholarly journal, *Vinyar Tengwar*, fully peer-reviewed and accredited by the Modern Languages Association and published by the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship, which is entirely devoted to the study of *Queyena* and *Sindarin*, Tolkien's invented languages (Hostetter 2002).

Both social groups revel in a strange nitpicking of details, such as the nature of warp-coils or why Sam says "'O Elbereth Glithoniel'" in one chapter, where elsewhere the form used is 'A Elbereth Glithoniel'?" (Tolkien 277). They band together on the Internet and at conventions dedicated to all things popular and Fantastic. They all hold a similar vision, a shared community that is based upon something that is not realistic in most ways. Unlike the fans of Joyce's *Ulysses*, who can take a tour based on Bloom's day in Dublin, the fans of fantasy cannot visit the worlds they love ("A Tour of the Downtown Dublin of *Ulysses*"). They can visit soundstages and, thanks to the New Zealand tourism board, follow a map to the places where Jackson filmed his trilogy, but these are only the material elements of the production: the real is not the imaginary (Tourism New Zealand). It is much more fundamental that what these fans gather to share is their love of an imaginary universe.

They share this fantasy for a few essential reasons, and through examining the process by which they develop their social groups we can further understand their needs. A general theory of communication put forth by Ernest G. Bormann, "symbolic convergence theory" is best suited to discuss the formation of fan culture. In basic form,

² There is a major difference in the origin of these imaginary languages. Tolkien created his privately, for his own interest. Klingon was created after the original Star Trek series had moved into the realm of film. Arguably, its support has more to do with the large fan-base and marketing focus that existed prior to its inception (Schoen).

this theory proposes that the basis for communication and group consciousness is “shared fantasies [which] provide group members with comprehensible forms for explaining their past and thinking about their future” (Bormann 128). The details of *The Lord of the Rings* are so important to fans because they represent a shared language used to identify those within the group and those without. Symbolic convergence is based upon a three-part structure that explains the development of special, group-specific communication.

The first part of Bormann’s development model is the “discovery and arrangement of recurring communicative forms and patterns that indicate the evolution and presence of a shared consciousness” and the second is the “description of the dynamic tendencies within communications systems” that explains the existence of the group consciousness (129). In the case of Tolkien’s fans, the development of shared consciousness is apparent in a number of ways. First, reading groups wrote to Tolkien to ask questions. Nearly half of the correspondence found in *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* is written to his fans. In fact, the above question concerning the invocation of Elbereth’s name comes from a letter written to Tolkien in 1958, by the leader of a group of “fellow-enthusiasts” who met regularly to discuss *The Lord of the Rings* (Letters 277). Another profound example of the emergence of the Tolkien subculture as an expression of ideology and community is the foundation of official societies in the sixties and seventies and, more recently, the development of Internet groups like *theonering.net*, who have published a book based on their forum discussions (Hebdige 5-19).³

The existence of the fan culture of *The Lord of the Rings* is apparent in the costumes worn to theatres, as well as groups dedicated to recreating Middle-earth. Even

³ While the fantasy fans of Tolkien are not as overtly subversive or as “spectacular” a subculture as the punks which Hebdige discusses, we will see throughout the body of our argument that ideology, semiotics and subversion play a role in our understanding of subculture (Hebdige 18).

non-Fantastic medieval re-creationists could be said to be participating in a comparable activity, either explicitly, in the case of Dagorhir Battle Games, whose slogan is “You’ve seen *Lord of the Rings*. We live it,” or implicitly, in the case of the Society for Creative Anachronism (www.dagorhir.com; www.sca.org). We can easily identify the first two stages of the theory, the inception and development of fan culture, but the third part of our theoretical structure is more detailed.

The third part of the theory is to ask “why?” Why do people turn to Middle-earth? Why do they find so much meaning in a story about hobbits, elves and orcs? Shared group fantasies, like those of the fans of *The Lord of the Rings* or *Star Trek*, are a “creative and imaginative shared interpretation...that fulfills a group psychological or rhetorical need” (Bormann 130). Just as communication experts can demonstrate the ways in which certain topics of conversation elicit more exuberant discussion, literary critics can examine why certain texts create such an excited response in their readers (Bormann 130-1). People respond to fantasy literature because it provides them with something; it fulfills a need on behalf of the reader.

Tolkien’s success lies in his writing’s ability to respond to the reader’s need for escape. Not desire, not want, but actual need to achieve complete psychic escape from the crushing weight of modernity. We need only to look at the title of Tolkien’s masterpiece to find the reason people find it so fulfilling: it is the defeat of *The Lord of the Rings* and all he stands for. Sauron is an abstract element in the novel, never actually seen or encountered. This is an intrinsic part of what Sauron really is: the modern condition. In his unseen form, he represents technology and pollution as connected to the hegemony, tyranny and the lust for power that seem to consume our ever quickening society. While

the latter evils are not purely modern, Tolkien clearly considers them to be so (Jackson 155). For Tolkien, and others like him who served in World War I and lost many friends, the world seemed to have derailed. The old Victorian notions of progress suddenly became questionable, and the fate of modern society seemed difficult to map out. He wrestled with the same crisis of European civilization as his contemporaries.

The way that fantasy achieves this complex expression of modern anxiety without being allegorical is through the exchange of semiotic signs. We have already noted that Tolkien attempted to deny an allegorical structure to *The Lord of the Rings*, but he did allow for “applicability:”

I dislike Allegory—the conscious and intentional allegory—yet any attempt to explain the purport of myth or fairytale must use allegorical language. (And, of course, the more ‘life’ a story has the more readily will it be susceptible to allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made the more nearly will it be acceptable just as a story.) (*Letters* 145)

The “life” of *The Lord of the Rings* is what allows the reader to perceive a meaning in it where there is not necessarily one. This meaning invariably responds to the needs and desires of the reader. At first, this may seem like a circular argument, but if we examine the process of perceiving meaning in fantasy texts, we can further define the reader’s or fan’s relationship with the novel.

The Semiotics of Fantasy

The perception of meaning in Tolkien’s novel requires a basis for analysis and in order to develop our reading of *The Lord of the Rings*, we will examine the way semiotics can interpret a Fantastic work. A good shorthand definition of semiotics is “the

systematic study of signs, as these function in all areas of human experience” (Abrams 279-80). This means there is a large body of signs working as representations of meaning in order to construct our cultural understanding of our perceived environment. They convey specific information to the receiver in a variety of ways—auditory (oral language), olfactory (scent), visual (written language), tactile (brail), and even through taste (palate). They can be as natural as body language and as ornate as weddings and architecture.

These signs allow us to make sense of the world and transmit our knowledge through shared communication and education. It is important to note that there is no real connection between the signifier (the sign) and what it signifies (the meaning). The letter “T,” for example, is a vertical line | placed under a horizontal line —. These lines have no concrete link to the sound “tee” or “tu,” but the sign does represent these sounds because English language speakers are taught to understand that the Phoenician symbol “T” means “T” in our language.

Semiotic signs define the way we interpret Middle-earth and the events that take place there. They construct the signs that make the verisimilitude of Middle-earth reasonable. As readers, the way we draw meaning from a novel is based on how we understand the semiotics of the text. Signs are the keys to unlocking the “applicability” of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Open/Closed Texts

Tolkien’s term, “applicability,” is similar to Umberto Eco’s idea of an open text, along with its opposite, the closed text. These terms are attempts at describing the kind of reader the text attempts to create. A model reader is an individual who will be able to

access the layers of reference in a given utterance, event, or story arc. An author writes to an audience and in doing so designs his work to relate to his model reader. When viewed cynically, the idea of the model reader underlies the formulaic process of writing romance novels, but can also be understood as the driving force for innovations in writing as authors try to express their ideas to other people.

The open text is designed to interact with the reader, drawing from a wide variety of sources in a complex web of allusion, allegory and relationship. In a paradoxical way, this text is less accessible than its binary companion, the closed text. The open text relies heavily on allusion and reference. This means that the model reader must be capable of understanding the levels of meaning packed into the writing. One can liken this critical capacity to the different ways viewers interact with television shows. Most long running television shows or series of novels develop a long imaginary history that a viewer/reader will interact with in one of two ways: one, the viewer/reader will understand the reference and interact with the history of the characters, or two, the viewer/reader will not understand the reference and either be confused or miss the point entirely (Eco 9-10). Therefore, while an open text is easier to draw meaning from, it requires a more complex model reader to understand it.

Furthermore, an open text can be interpreted coherently in multiple ways. No one reading is necessarily the absolute truth of the text, but they can all be valid and supported by the work. A closed text is the binary reversal of the open text. It is designed to carry one meaning and a relatively immediate one at that. It is accessible to a wider audience because it leaves little room for misunderstanding or interaction (Eco 8-9). The typical pop song is a fine example of a closed text. It is designed to project a single

feeling (loss, love, most often sexuality) to the listener (and now, viewer of the requisite video). The closed text offers little analysis (except placing it in cultural context), cannot support multiple interpretations and requires a less developed model reader. It is more accessible to a wider audience, but has a more limited range of responses available to that audience.

While a closed text's meaning is dependent on a universally accessible point, an open text is coherent on multiple levels to multiple readers, creating an enjoyment that is less dependent on a reader's frame of mind. An open text rewards readers by offering the possibility for multiple discourses helps to create the group-specific language of fan groups, as they are best equipped to be model readers and receive a feeling of exclusivity and superiority in relationship to their beloved material.

The Model Reader of The Lord of the Rings

The Lord of the Rings is clearly an open text. One can look at the story and see many levels of meaning: the similarities to the World Wars, a desire to contact lost imaginations and cultures, the idea of creating mythology and language, anti-authoritarianism, or environmental concern. It strives to create a model reader, first through the structure of the text, and secondly, through the subject matter.

The structure of *The Lord of the Rings* is one of a pseudo-historical record. Tolkien creates a framework in which he is the narrator of the frame story of "the Frodo and the One Ring" from the *Red Book of Westmarch* (LotR 1). This device is drawn from real medieval studies where many texts are classified by color. These include the *Mabinogion*'s source texts, the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest* (Jones xvii). The various appendices and indexes of *The Lord of the Rings* are presented

in an academic format. Indeed, the book begins with a forward in which Tolkien discusses the meaning of his work and the “applicability” of it in a scholarly fashion. This is followed by a prologue that analyzes the nature of hobbits, the history of the Shire and of Middle-earth. Even the publisher seems to have joined in on the model, including a four page “Note on the Text,” ensuring the text seems scholarly. This structure not only fits Tolkien’s training and academic style, it is also designed to place the reader in a specific state of mind that will accept the Fantastic elements of the story because they are conveyed with academic sincerity and authority.

The second element of the model reader is the subject matter of Tolkien’s novel. One might argue that the subject matter is more important than the pseudo-historical construction of the text. After all, Tolkien is sold in the Fantasy, not the History section of a bookstore. This position is incorrect: the scholarly structure works to present the subject matter, not vice versa. It generates interest in the reader and attracts those interested in serious medieval material. *The Lord of the Rings* dominates its genre, even though works of comparable critical reception, such as Mervyn Peake’s *Gormenghast* series, were released around the same time (1946-59). The imaginary world of Middle-earth is a complex and multi-layered one. The subject matter of *The Lord of the Rings* appeals to readers from many walks of life. The non-religious reader might take comfort in its lack of Western religion, as the youth of the 1960s did (Walmsley). But a religious reader might also take comfort in the statement by Tolkien that this work is “a fundamentally religious and Catholic work” (*Letters* 172). A pacifist reader might take heart in Frodo’s struggle to destroy the weapon of the Enemy, while a militaristic reader

will thrill at the desperate battles of Helm's Deep, Minas Tirith, the Pelennor Fields and the Black Gate.

Even though Tolkien pointed out, seemingly to the point of exasperation, that "As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical," *The Lord of the Rings* carries a great deal of meaning for its fans (*LotR* xiv). In constructing an ideal reader that is intellectually and imaginatively engaged with the medieval past, Tolkien has written a work that speaks to its audience and invites them to engage with Middle-earth, to become lost in it for a brief time, and then, as we leave, to look back upon the world and marvel at it.

The model reader for *The Lord of the Rings* would desire the mystery of medieval life, no matter how much that mystery is the result of idealism. The re-creationist hobbies mentioned above indicate that people interested in the Middle Ages also find Tolkien's work interesting. If we take the Heir of Gondor, Aragorn, as an example, we can examine how the semiotics of medievalism is at work in the text. As a king, Aragorn is certainly not constructed in a historically accurate manner. He assumes his role as an absolute monarch, not a feudal chieftain. Aragorn is tied through signification to the image of the medieval, perhaps even pre-Christian, king. He is more palatable to a modern audience because he wrestles with his destiny as king, expressing his sorrow and shock when Elrond reveals his lineage's failure in the face of temptation (Isildur's use of the Ring) (*LotR* 1034-35). He is a benevolent monarch, more concerned with the wellbeing of his people than his own success. He is still tied to the ideal of a medieval king as protector and warrior. Much like the returning Richard the Lionheart of the Robin Hood legend, Aragorn is valiant and noble. He is fearless and inspiring in combat, willingly facing foes

such as Nazgûl, Trolls, and Orcs. He is semiotically constructed to be a modern idealization of the noble king.

His sword, Andúril, is a kingly weapon and a prime example of the process of semiotic construction. Swords, such as Arthur's Excalibur, have always been symbols of leadership (DeVries 20-21). Many bronze and iron age burial sites are the final resting places of a king's swords and there is evidence that swords were used as sacrifices, usually to the rivers where they have been found (Bradley 99-101, 132-3). Anthropologist Christian Keller notes that while "a sword is obviously made for killing people...it carries a symbolic message, which could be killer, soldier, free man, aristocrat or the like" (92).

In the novel, Aragon's sword begins its history as Narsil and bears a distasteful past. Narsil was the sword wielded by Elendil at the Battle of the Last Alliance, during the final days of the Second Age. When Elendil was struck down by Sauron, his son Isildur rushed to his aid. In the battle, Narsil is shattered, but Isildur manages to cut off the finger bearing the One Ring. Following these events, the sword remained shattered, as a reminder of Isildur's inability to destroy the One Ring (*LotR* 51).

After the Council of Elrond, Narsil is reforged by elven weaponsmiths, creating Andúril, the sword Aragorn will carry throughout the remainder of the novel. In Bree, Aragorn reveals the broken sword:

He stood up and seemed to grow taller. In his eyes gleamed a light, keen and commanding. Throwing back his cloak, he laid his hand on the hilt of a sword that had hung concealed by his side... 'I am Aragorn son of Arathorn'... He drew out his sword, and they saw the blade was broken a foot below the hilt. 'Not much use

is it, Sam?’ said Strider. ‘But the time is near when it shall be forged anew. (*LotR* 168)

This event is repeated, with greater effect on the Plains of Rohan, when Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas meet Éomer and his Riders:

Aragorn threw back his cloak. The elven-sheath glittered as he grasped it, and the bright blade of Andúril shone like a sudden flame as he swept it out. ‘Elendil!’ he cried. ‘I am Aragorn son of Arathorn, and am called Elessar, the Elfstone, Dúnadan, the heir of Isildur Elendil’s son of Gondor. Here is the Sword that was Broken and is forged again!’ ...He seemed to have grown in stature while Éomer had shrunk; and in his living face they caught a brief vision of the power and majesty of the kings of stone. For a moment it seemed to the eyes of Legolas that a white flame flickered on the brows of Aragorn like a shining crown. (*LotR* 423)⁴

Andúril is a semiotic icon of Aragorn’s role as king. It also becomes a symbol of his intent to claim the throne when it is reforged.

Aragorn’s use of Narsil in Bree and Andúril in Rohan indicates that the reader should understand the sword as being representative of Aragorn. This is why Aragorn wields a sword and not some other weapon. The model reader of *The Lord of the Rings* would understand that any other weapon would conflict with Aragorn’s role as king. A ranged weapon, such as a bow, is too removed from one’s opponents and often signifies lawlessness (as it is in the Robin Hood legend). Despite Legolas’ mastery of the weapon, it would not suit the role of a king, in part because of its lower class connections. Class

⁴ The New Line Cinema film version deviates wildly from the novel in these instances. Neither event occurs and Narsil is not re-forged and carried by Aragorn as an emblem of his coming kingship until the final half of last movie (*Return of the King*). It is likely this change was made to heighten the dramatic tension within Aragorn. It is worth noting that this alteration does not occur in the 1977 animated version of *The Lord of the Rings*.

relationships also eliminate reach weapons, such as spears and halberds, because these were the weapons of the peasant infantry, not noble kings. In Aragorn's ascendance in Gondor, he fights as a chevalier, the proper medieval place for a king and knight (*LotR* 866-74). While rods and scepters are symbolically linked to kings, Aragorn could not have satisfactorily wielded a mass weapon such as a mace, as the mace is tied to the clergy in medieval warfare—a papal bull outlawed the drawing of blood by priests, so the mace became the clergy's weapon of choice (which, of course, results in a great deal of blood and hemorrhaging, but less directly than a sword) (DeVries 7-44).

Aragorn must wield a sword because he must be king. The cultural conventions built up around weapons and their wielders as well as the cultures that produce them (consider the katana and Japan) are aspects of a deeply entrenched semiotic relationship that cannot be ignored. Tolkien understood the importance of a king wielding a sword⁵ he comments on them in his criticism on *Beowulf* ("Monster") and they figure prominently in *The Lord of the Rings*. The change from Narsil to Andúril is symbolic of the change in Aragorn, his acceptance of responsibility. It also signifies the beginning of the change in Middle-earth, the renewal of the environment.

Middle-earth is a construct of our understanding of both the real world and the imaginary world. Fans and readers use this linkage to generate both their individual and social reactions to the text. The need for the reader to become a model reader is part of the impetus to create reading groups that occurred after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. These groups have expanded to become large international communities and, with the advent of the Internet, have become even more connected and involved with the text,

⁵ There are obvious connections to Arthuria, as well as Norse Sagas, which place special emphasis upon unique swords being tied to kingship.

to the point of producing their own scholarship on Tolkien: *The One Ring.net* has published two books, *The People's Guide to J. R. R. Tolkien* and *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader*.

The semiotics of *The Lord of the Rings* is not confined to the cultures of Middle-earth, but help to construct the natural world of Middle-earth as well. This is part of why readers have perceived a strong ecological message in the text. It is necessary to understand nature in Middle-earth in order to perceive the renewing, millennial function of the narrative.

CHAPTER TWO: IMAGINARY NATURE

‘One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present; like sun shimmering on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake. I don’t know, but it felt as if something that grew in the ground—asleep, you might say, or just feeling itself as something between root-tip and leaf-tip, between deep earth and sky had suddenly waked up, and was considering you with the same slow care that it had given its own inside affairs for endless years.’ (*LotR* 452)

This is how Pippin would try to describe his first impression of Treebeard’s eyes, long after the War of the Ring ended. To many readers, Tolkien’s novel creates a sense of an “enormous well” working beneath the text. This effect is related to two elements of the novel: Tolkien’s use of medieval myth and legend and the natural world of Middle-earth. Many scholars have examined the medieval sources of Tolkien’s work and this aspect of the novel has been thoroughly discussed since the publication of the novel. However, the natural world of Middle-earth has not. Nature in *The Lord of the Rings* serves as the basic element of the imaginary world the reader perceives. The representation of nature in *The Lord of the Rings* is at once comforting in its familiarity and Fantastic in its denizens.

Nature and the Reader

In order to begin an analysis of Middle-earth’s natural world, we will draw a deliberate and arbitrary distinction between nature and the constructs of culture. This is a very difficult distinction to make in Middle-earth. One cannot simply refer to the cultural

constructs of Men,⁶ because of the presence of dwarves, elves, ents and orcs, nor merely bipedal species, since the Great Eagles of Misty Mountain possess culture. The complex relationship between Elves and forests or Dwarves and mountains makes defining nature even more complex. Sam knowingly comments in Lothlórien: “they [the elves] seem to belong here, more even than Hobbits do in the Shire. Whether they’ve made the land, or the land’s made them, it’s hard to say, if you take my meaning” (*LotR* 351). The subtle magic that infuses the elves is intertwined with the land they live in, suggesting they do not make clear distinctions between culture and nature. In order to come to terms with nature in Middle-earth, it must be understood as not only as a place and a space, but also as an artificial creation of imagination and not a direct mimesis of our real or constructed nature (Keller 88, Soja 118-137). As readers explore the world of Middle-earth through the journey of the four hobbits, they move steadily from the real to the imaginary, a transition critical to the function of fantasy and imaginary nature.

The fundamental (and obvious) problem with the nature of Middle-earth is that it is not real. Furthermore, we are only able to draw examples from a limited range of material. In humanity’s normal relationship with nature, we at least are able to rely on a level of tactile response and phenomenological study. We can sense and interact with nature. We can perceive cause and effect. In our standard relationship with nature, we can understand that it is apart from culture in one of five ways:

- 1) The complexity of human-social material, 2) the fact that meaning enters into human conduct in the way in which it is absent in nature...3) the feedback character of social processes, 4) the fact that in culture, unlike nature, acquired

⁶ The term Men is used because of its use in Tolkien’s writing and is not intended to exclude women.

characteristics are transmitted, and 5) the Joker card of free will and, if it obtains, inherent unpredictability. (Gellner 14-5)

Through this relationship with real nature, we develop a sense of what is human and what is not. However, Middle-earth is not a world in the same way as ours. It is a fabrication of the mind and can only be accessed through the use of imagination. The maps drawn for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are similar to maps of Europe, but the landscapes and details are not entirely consistent with the actual continent. Middle-earth is a small section of what is presumably an entire world, similar to ours in size. This is certainly suggested by Tolkien's cryptic references to the South and the East, home of the Haradrim, Southrons, and the Wainriders (*LotR* 645, 633, 1024).

Middle-earth is enough like our world that it is easily understood. There is a sun and a moon; gravity appears to work in the same manner; if one is cut, one bleeds; and a cedar tree looks like a cedar tree. Tolkien himself said in an interview: "If you really want to know what Middle-earth is based on, it's my wonder and delight in the Earth as it is, particularly the natural earth" (Fonstad ix). One student of C. S. Lewis recalled that Tolkien had a very thorough and impressive knowledge of natural history and gardening lore (Sayer). The author's love of nature informs the complex descriptions of Middle-earth. The representation of nature creates a complex relationship between the reader and the imaginary world. While we can perceive nature as being distinct in the real world because of our ability to draw distinction from it, Middle-earth is a more complex world. What occurs is a development of understanding in the reader. In order to maintain verisimilitude, the illusion of reality that allows for Tolkien's Primary Belief, Middle-earth is based upon a realist depiction of nature. This realist base allows for the reader's

transition from the real to the imaginary. By way of demonstrating the essential familiarity of nature, let us examine two descriptions of landscape. First:

In the Weald, autumn approached, breaking up the green monotony of summer, touching the parks with the gray bloom of mist, the beech trees with russet, the oak trees with gold. Upon the heights, battalions of black pines witnessed the change, themselves unchangeable. Either country was spanned by a cloudless sky...(Forester 148)

And secondly:

...in the fine weather he forgot his troubles for a while. The Shire had seldom seen so fair a summer, or so rich an autumn: the trees were laden with apples, honey was dripping in the combs and the corn was tall and full. (*LotR* 66)

Both passages deal with the changing of summer to autumn. The first quote is from E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*. Removed from its context, there is little to distinguish it from the second quotation, from of *The Lord of the Rings*. There is a level of artistic difference and it is certainly intentional that a hobbit would focus upon crops of food, as hobbits are more concerned with feasting and living off the land than the sophisticated Europeans of Forster's work, but if we replaced "Weald" with "Shire" or vice versa, there would be no way for the reader to judge if one description is realist or fantasist. There is an important difference though. Tolkien's nature serves only an aesthetic purpose in his novel. For Tolkien's novel, nature has a considerable practical value. It is what the Shire's pastoral culture is based on. The farms and pastures of Middle-earth are described with a keen eye to how they are used in the support of culture.

Onomastics in Middle-earth

Tolkien was a clever scholar who understood the mechanics of onomastics. He constructed the cultural name landscape in such a way that it creates a cohesive terminology and reference point for the reader. This cohesion may be attributed to the extensive amount of work and revision put into its creation. Middle-earth is the result of decades of work. Tolkien began work on the first tale of Middle-earth, *The Silmarillion*, in 1917—thirty-seven years before the publication of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Tolkien's use of onomastics is integral to the reader's interpretation of the text. Earlier Fantastic worlds, like Lewis Carroll's Wonderland or Frank L. Baum's Oz, were steps towards the complexity of Middle-earth, but their landscapes and maps are too disconnected, too symbolic to be comparable to modern maps and geography (Algeo 81-2). Middle-earth contains some 400 place-names in non-English languages, usually Sindarin. These names sound distant, unfamiliar, but are applied to geographic features that we immediately can recognize: "rivers, springs, waterfalls, mountains, caverns, lakes, seas, forests, plains, fields, areas, kingdoms, cities, towers, fortresses, and other geographical features, both natural and constructed" (Algeo 82). As we are interested in the natural features of Middle-earth, a brief example is in order.

The word "amon" is equivalent to the English term "mount," used as a short form of "mountain" to title the related geographic features. The three most prominent "amon" names in *The Lord of the Rings* are "Amon Sul," "Amon Hen," and "Amon Amarth" (Algeo 84). Amon Sul is the fallen fortress known as Weathertop where the Witch-King of Angmar stabs Frodo. Amon Hen is one of the twin hills that frame the falls of Rauros and is topped by an ancient ruined chair that allows the viewer (in the

story Frodo) to see for leagues all around. Lastly, Amon Amarth is known as “Mount Doom,” the place of the One Ring’s forging. Just as place names in our world link the natural environment to culture and history, Tolkien uses onomastics to make his world more cohesive. It creates a landscape that is more easily understood and helps to combat the “daunting” sense of alienation that can be caused by “an unfamiliar landscape” (Basso 71).

The connection between nature and culture seen in *The Lord of the Rings* is part of its success and why readers perceive an ecological meaning in it. This correlation between the ecologically damaged Middle-earth and our own real world is echoed in the recent film version. Throughout the trilogy, the heroes’ movement through landscape is created with a keen attention to detail and the films repeatedly stress the environmental themes of the novel. The journey from the pastoral Shire through the increasingly desolate Middle-earth to the wasteland of Mordor is rendered in clear, obvious representation. In addition to the emptiness of the landscape, director Peter Jackson uses Saruman’s involvement in the story as a cautionary tale for the viewer (as it is for the reader of the novel). Jackson portrays Saruman’s corruption by the Shadow and his development of industry and militarism in such an intertwined manner that the message becomes clear. The Isengard scenes are filled with great war-forges, Uruk-hai birthing pits and great fiery furnaces fed by trees ripped down by orcs and thrown down into great fissures in the earth surrounding of the Tower of Orthanc. This emphasis is deliberate, as the cast and writer/director commentaries on the extended DVD versions stress. Over the violent images and degradation of Isengard, two of the actors, Billy Boyd (Pippin) and Dominic Monaghan (Merry) relate their opinion:

Boyd: “I love this, because, as Dom and I have spoken about this a lot, one of the main themes we love about *The Two Towers* is the environmental themes that Tolkien was writing about. The destruction of trees for industry and, even worse, for weapons... [What] Tolkien was saying was so wrong in the 1940s, and we’re still doing it now. I think that shot, where you see the tree being ripped down and thrown down into Isengard, sums it up.”

Monaghan: “Yeah, this is what you sacrifice for war...the natural world. (“Cast Commentary” *The Two Towers Special Edition DVD*)

This portrayal echoes Treebeard’s comments in the novel:

‘I used to talk to [Saruman]. There was a time when he was always walking about my woods...his face, as I remember it...became like windows in a stone wall: windows with shutters inside. I think that I now understand what he is up to. He is plotting to become a Power. He has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far that they serve him for the moment. Now it is clear he is a black traitor...He and his folk are making havoc now...felling trees—good trees. Some of the trees they just cut down and leave to rot—orc-mischief that; but most are hewn up and carried off to feed the fires of Orthanc. There is always smoke rising from Isengard these days.’ (*LotR* 462)

The theme of environmental concern prevalent in Tolkien’s work and life (a subject we will explore in further chapters) is not only echoed in the films, but in the real world as well.

Members of Elf Lore, a nature commune located in Indiana, USA, freely use Tolkien’s vision of Elven harmony with nature and have even named their nature

sanctuary “Lothlorien” (sic). Their approach to environmentalism is very spiritual, a fact that will be explored in later chapters. However, once we accept the fact that the reader can perceive the natural world of Middle-earth in a coherent and believable manner and make the shift from the real to the imaginary, we can move towards the last step to understanding the foundation of my reading: The intrinsic morality of Middle-earth.

A Moral Nature

At this point in the argument, nature referents in Middle-earth are both “real” and Fantastic. The above discussion has sought to define the way realism helps to define the imaginary world of Middle-earth; below we will examine the topology of its nature. First however, the bridge between real nature and the imaginary world must be defined in more detail. Randel Helms argues in his 1974 work *Tolkien's World*:

we will misjudge *The Lord of the Rings* unless we grant that the aesthetic principles governing a fantasy world are different from both the laws of our own realm of common-sense reality and from those governing “realistic” literature.

(76)

Helms is correct in his observation. Middle-earth is based on the verisimilitude of realism, but it is still a construct of the author's and the reader's imaginations. Therefore, it is possible to perceive laws of natural order that do not necessarily apply to the real world. The creator of the imaginary world can construct the underlying characteristics of the world with deliberate authority. Fantastic landscapes are not necessarily mimetic but can be powerfully symbolic.⁷ In the case of Middle-earth, these laws are of a moral nature and based upon traditional Catholic Christian religion and values.

⁷ While not part of our primary discussion, the reader may wish to explore the Taoist nature of Ursula K. le Guin's *Earthsea*, the animist shamanism of J. Gregory Keyes' *Chosen of the Changeling*, or Stephen R.

All of Tolkien's work, academic or artistic, is informed by his faith. In a letter to his friend and priest, Robert Murray, Tolkien states:

The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically any references to anything like 'religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. *For the religious element is absorbed in the story and the symbolism.* (Letters 172; emphasis mine)

The last sentence in this passage is critical to understanding nature in Middle-earth. The aesthetic laws Helms spoke of are infused with Catholic belief, and so is the natural world of *The Lord of the Rings*. This aspect of Tolkien's representation allows the reader and critic to draw meaning out of the natural world of Middle-earth and contributes to the sense of that "enormous well" lying beneath the novel's narrative. The symbolism inherent in nature is a key to understanding the transmission of divine providence and the millennial effect of the narrative.

Helms defines five internal laws for Middle-earth:

1. "The cosmos is providentially controlled." That is, the hand of God can be perceived in the events of the story. Helms cites Gandalf's words as an example of this law: "I can put it no plainer than saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case, you also were meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought" (*LotR* 54-55; Helms 79-80). By extension, the entirety of Middle-earth's nature is an expression of divine and providential will.

Donaldson's *The Land* as other metaphoric landscapes. Of course, some fantasy landscapes are purely mundane. Readers may wish to compare the above authors worlds with the Four Lands of Terry Brooks and the setting of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series. These landscapes are much less, if at all, symbolic.

2. “Intention structures results.” That is, Middle-earth’s moral structure works according to a kind of “‘truth table’...a good action with good intent will have a good result; an evil action with an evil intent will also ultimately have a good result” (Helms 79). Gollum’s final act, to attack Frodo in an attempt to seize the Ring—an attack that results in the Ring’s destruction (*LotR* 925)—is a prime example of this law. Likewise, Saruman’s evil intentions turn against him and awaken the Huorns, which aid the heroes in the siege of Middle-earth.

3. “Moral and magical law have the force of physical law” (Helms 79). This is the basic structure of moral nature. When creating an imaginary world, one has to deal with the implications of a change in the natural world. The One Ring’s power of invisibility is an excellent example of this: one has to consider the implications of a magical power and how it will alter the cultures at hand and the morality associated with such power (Helms 80-81). Tolkien’s version of magic is limited enough that it does not entail sweeping changes to the culture and therefore is not a major factor, but there are clear distinctions between the magic of the good and the sorcery of the evil. The simple fact that there is a terminological difference is a semiotic divider between good and evil.

4. “Will and states of mind, both evil and good, can have objective reality and physical energy” (Helms 79). That is, the exertion of will can have real effect, such as Saruman’s magical voice (*LotR* 564-5), or the Nazgûl’s terrifying presence:

At length even the stout-hearted would fling themselves to the ground as the hidden menace passed over them, or they would stand, letting their weapons fall from nerveless hands while into their minds a blackness came, and they thought no more of war; but only of crawling, and of death. (*LotR* 805)

On the side of good, Sam's willpower takes on physical energy as he rushes to aid Frodo at Cirith Ungol, defeating Shelob and terrifying the Orcs guarding the citadel.

5. "All experience results in the realization of proverbial truth" (Helms 79):

...In other words, the archetypal patterns of events that are realized in fantasy as conventions of romantic literature (heroes fighting monsters) are the way things have always happened from the perspective of Middle-earth's inhabitants, and their proverbs often describe those events. Théoden, for example, moralizes that 'oft evil will shall evil mar' (Helms 81).

Of course, evil turning upon itself is a major element of the novel later on (e.g., in Gollum's destruction of the ring).

These laws are necessary for understanding the way morality informs the events of Tolkien's epic tale and for the imaginary world it takes place in. They define the way in which the underlying cosmology of Christianity affects the events and offers us a gateway into a greater understanding of *The Lord of the Rings*. The entirety of nature can be understood as a system of symbolic representation of religious expression.

As millennialism is a religious expression, the fundamental structure of Middle-earth can be shown to be millennial. Furthermore, the nature of Middle-earth is based upon medieval theology. While the medieval understanding of nature varied based upon region and stage in social development, the notion of nature as the result of providential design and control was an essential tenet. Nature was an expression of God's laws and was therefore inherently moral. To act against nature was therefore amoral or immoral. Sin was often defined as operating against the natural order. This understanding produced

many of the less enlightened medieval positions against women and homosexuals, but it does influence the framework of Middle-earth (White).

Another important medieval debate concerning nature was whether people held dominion over nature or were to be stewards of the land instead. Tolkien advocates stewardship over dominion in *The Lord of the Rings*. The treeherd ents, the elves, and the hobbits all live in a relationship of stewardship with nature; however, this relationship is not one of blissful harmony. Elves and ents seem to co-exist with nature and are not viewed as the ideal in Tolkien's work. Humans often cannot understand these entities and express fear of them. It takes a sincere effort for humans to understand these beings (as Aragorn indicates). The hobbits likewise must engage in conflict with the wild forces of the Old Forest.

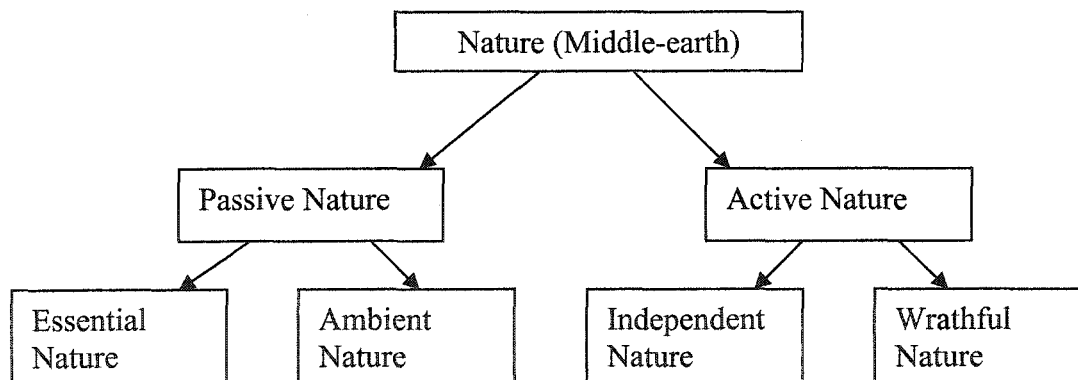
While stewardship implies husbandry, nature that is not contained by civilization is viewed as dangerous by the characters and is a source of risk. Old Man Willow nearly kills the hobbits (*LotR* 115-6). The "ill-will" of the mountain Caradhras defeats the Fellowship of the Ring as they attempt to cross the Misty Mountains (*LotR* 285-6). The safe spaces of Middle-earth, the sanctuaries of the Shire, Rivendell and Lothlórien, are those where the hands of farmers and gardeners have cared for nature. In advocating stewardship over dominion, Tolkien's villains are the other side of the coin. Saruman and Sauron are not caretakers; they are destroyers. They wish to smash nature and the world into submission. This is an offense to the moral fabric of Middle-earth, for to desire the domination of nature implies the desire to dominate the will of God. When one includes *The Silmarillion* in the discussion, Sauron's desires are to explicitly dominate the will of Eru (God) through the rulership of Middle-earth and the defeat of the Valar (angels). This

is what Treebeard means when he comments that Saruman “is plotting to become a Power” (*LotR* 462).

The Typology of Nature in Middle-earth

We can now see that Tolkien’s imaginary nature is a complex and manifold creation. It is not simply a backdrop to a story of cultural conflict, but a significant series of semiotic signs, symbols, and indexes. Nature is both familiar and alien to the reader, at once realistic and Fantastic. Nature is also intrinsically tied to the will of Ilúvatar, the Elven name for Tolkien’s creator figure (i.e. God). Furthermore, the nature of Middle-earth is classifiable into a binary opposition: Passive/Active. However, this binary soon splinters into sub-categories of relation. Therefore, we should consider the following model as a guide to the nature of Middle-earth:

Figure 1: Categories of Nature in Middle-earth



Passive versus Active

At best, these terms are contestable. The first basic definition required is the binary opposition of Passive versus Active nature. Passive is meant to indicate the kinds of nature that are the least involved in the direct action of *The Lord of the Rings*. We must remember to develop our understanding of the world based upon what has been written,

and resist too much inference into the workings of Middle-earth that are not manifestly available in Tolkien's writing. "Passive" is not meant to indicate inert or stagnant. Instead, Passive nature includes the realist basis of nature in Middle-earth as well as moral symbolism. It is neither an agent in the novel nor does it affect the events of the War of the Ring, but it does have a voice and a role in the creation of fantasy. It is true that ecology and the environment cannot be considered inactive, but within the framework of Tolkien's story it is a less manifest force than what would be considered Active nature.

The other side of the binary opposition, Active nature, is a more Fantastic form of nature. It includes the great eagles that fly high among the mountains, as well as those elements of nature that directly affect the story: Caradhras, the Balrog, the Ents, and so forth. Active nature has a level of intelligence, if not outright sentience, in its processes. Unlike its binary partner, active nature does influence the narrative and is an active agent in Middle-earth. Occasionally, certain elements of Tolkien's fantasy world might appear to break out of these categories, but, as we will see, they can all be firmly established to return to the categories.

The binary pairing subdivides into four categories: Essential, Ambient, Independent and Wrathful nature. Each subsection is more Fantastic than the one preceding, steadily moving away from realism and becoming more and more involved in the actual narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is dangerous to place these categories in a hierarchy, because doing so would imply a system of importance. Instead, each category plays a critical role in the way the reader understands Middle-earth.

With our binary equation established as a starting point, let us examine the Passive nature of Middle-earth. Passive nature breaks down into two main categories: Essential and Ambient nature. These two categories are tied to our initial discussion of the reader and nature. Essential nature is the result of the realist element of Tolkien's constructed world and Ambient nature is the result of the expression of morality and divine influence.

Essential Nature

What is the Essential nature of Middle-earth? For this information we will turn to Karen Wynn Fonstad's authorized *Atlas of Middle-earth* for detailed information. The history of Middle-earth is divided into three "ages." Each age corresponds with major cultural events and/or geographic changes. The First Age is made up of material found in *The Silmarillion*. It contains the Elven creation story and details the earliest periods of Middle-earth's history. It also details the fall of Melkor/Morgoth, a Lucifer/Satan figure, and his plans to subjugate the creation of Ilúvitar. One critical bone of contention that remains is whether the world of the Middle-earth is consistently flat or round. Fonstad points out that when the human kingdom of Númenor fell and "Valinor was removed from Arda [Middle-earth]; then 'the world was made round' ..." (ix). She is quoting from *The Silmarillion* and eventually concludes that Middle-earth was flat until the Second Age, when it became round and recognizable. The worlds of the First and Second Age change drastically, so much that a reader familiar with a map of the Third Age will have difficulty recognizing any landmarks from the earlier ages. Most of Beleriand, the main area of *The Silmarillion*, is submerged by the cataclysmic transformations wrought by the Fall of Númenor.

As we are focusing upon the Third Age of Middle-earth, we will not waste time performing too detailed an analysis of the Essential nature of Beleriand. The Third Age is the backdrop to *The Lord of the Rings*, and it is a fallen age: Númenor has fallen and Valinor, the Paradise of Middle-earth, has been removed from the world. The great forests are destroyed, as Treebeard laments in *The Two Towers*: “Those were the broad days! Time was when I could walk and sing all day and hear no more than the echo of my own voice in the hollow hills. The woods were like the woods of Lothlórien, only thicker, stronger, younger” (*LotR* 457-8).

In terms of geographic themes, forests are important to *The Lord of the Rings*. They are primarily broadleaf or broadleaf/coniferous forests, scattered throughout Middle-earth. There are few coniferous forests, which might seem unusual to a Canadian reader, but they are found in the regions that best make sense for them: higher regions like Rivendell, or southern Mirkwood (Fonstad 184). Generally speaking, the Middle-earth of the novel is rather empty of active society, although it is littered with the ruins of prior civilizations, such as Weathertop (*LotR* 178-79). A few areas of Middle-earth have been made barren either by direct sorcery (the Dead Marshes), or by the corrosive pollution of Mordor, such as the barren Eryn Muil or the arid zone surrounding the Black Gate, both of which have been damaged by the vile storms of Sauron’s lands (Fonstad 179, 182).

The films are to be commended for their gorgeous cinematic representations of Middle-earth. Locations such as the Shire or the Misty Mountains are shown in grand scale. The clever computer alterations create a world that is more real than real for the viewer. For example, while putting together the film section set in the Shire, it was

decided that the sets did not look “natural” enough; so special color tinting was done to make the area look more “real” (“Digital Grading”). This technique of modifying the natural world to make it more real seems paradoxical. New Zealand has touted the fact that Peter Jackson filmed the movies there, using it as a tourist draw, but even the splendor of that Pacific island chain was not was not “real” enough for Middle-earth. This demonstrates the earlier point about the way the reader interacts with the semiotic signs of the real and the Fantastic. These two elements in juxtaposition create the verisimilitude of Middle-earth. If the setting were too Fantastic, too unnatural, it would not have been believable. Therefore, elements of the setting must begin in the mode of realism, and build to the hyperreal in order to progress through to the Fantastic.

An excellent example of the hyperreal is the Oliphaunt, or Mûmakil. These terrible beasts of war appear in Book Six, as Sam and Frodo are captured by Faramir’s men:

Amidst it Sam heard a shrill bellowing or trumpeting. And then a great thudding and bumping, like huge rams dinning of the ground...Sam saw a vast shape crash out of the trees and come careering down the slope. Big as a house, much bigger than a house, it looked to him, a grey-clad moving hill. Fear and wonder, maybe, enlarged him in the hobbit’s eyes, but the Mûmak of Harad was indeed a beast of vast bulk, and the likes of him does not walk now in Middle-earth; his kin that live still in later days are but memories of his girth and majesty...passing only a few yards away, rocking the ground beneath their feet: his great legs like trees, enormous sail-like ears spread out, long snout upraised like a huge serpent...his

small eyes raging. His upturned hornlike tusks were bound with bands of gold and dripping with blood. (*LotR* 646-47)

Here we have a description of the Haradrim's greatest weapon—gigantic elephants. The Mûmak is a vast hyperbolic version of what we easily recognize in the real world.

Tolkien has carefully constructed the way Essential nature exists. In fact, it is perfectly plausible that the semiotic construction of nature in Middle-earth allows us to perceive meaning in the way nature functions, even if there is no direct effect to events of the representation of a world.

Ambient Nature

If we recall the laws of Middle-earth laid down by Helms, ambient nature becomes easy to describe. It is the first and third laws that are of most interest here. The first, that the world is providentially controlled, suggests there is always an influence or meaning behind events. The third, that moral law has real force, implies that the expression of morality can be found in nature. Therefore, we can unpackage symbols in order to connect directly with the author's intention and the greater meaning of the text for the reader.

For example, while hunting the Uruk-hai that have captured Merry and Pippin, Legolas witnesses the rising of a red sun: "'Awake! Awake!' he cried. 'It is a red dawn. Strange things await us by the eaves of the forest. Good or evil, I do not know; but we are called. Awake!'" (*LotR* 418). Legolas has not spoken to the sun, only seen the red color. From this circumstance, he draws the knowledge that something is imminent and it is near the woods they saw the day before. The natural world is warning the Three Hunters about the battle that occurred while they rested—Éomer and his Rohirrim slaughtering

the Uruk-hai at the foot of Fangorn forest. In the film version of *The Two Towers*, this event is more directly evident: Legolas merely looks over his shoulder, sees the sunrise and comments that the red dawn means blood has been shed in the night. This is easier for viewers to grasp because it more directly relates the event to the old sailor's rhyme "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky at morn, sailors be warned." What is important is that Legolas is not interacting with folk superstition; instead the rising of a red sun literally means what Legolas says: there are strange things (clues) waiting for them at the foot of the forest, and blood has been spilt.

This example demonstrates the function of Ambient nature. From the perspective of the narrative, it is a way for the author to create feeling and mood, but it is also a very real element of Middle-earth. It functions in a completely semiotic manner—that is, through the construction of a signifier and signified. Therefore, the signifier in the above is the red sunrise, and the signified is the night's events. Ultimately, the reader engages with *The Lord of the Rings* through a network of semiotic signs that constitute the imaginary world and construct a model reader for the text.

This relationship allows us to perceive the hidden meanings behind the natural images and events of the novel. For example, the Mallorn tree, a magical sort of beech tree with larger leaves, is indicative of Catholicism. Left alone, beech trees often create natural cathedrals, "with the boles forming smooth gray pillars above a carpet of grass." The name "malinornelion" used by Treebeard to name Lórien is translated into "gold beech tree" (Fonstad 184). By extension, Lothlórien becomes a cathedral, a holy sanctuary. The symbolism of the trees forming cathedrals implies a religious element. In fact, Tolkien himself compared Galadriel to the Virgin Mary (*Letters* 172). He did not

reject the assertion that Gimli's love for Galadriel is "clearly related to Catholic devotion to Mary," and not based on attraction and reproductive urge (*Letters* 288). This reading leads one to believe that in Lórien, we see elements of a prelapsarian world. W. H. Auden caught a glimmer of this symbolism in his review of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, describing elves as "creatures of an unfallen world" ("A World Imaginary, but Real" 59). His assertion seems very plausible if we consider the following description of Lothlórien:

It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at one clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of the eyes...In winter here no heart could mourn for summer or for spring. No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lórien there was no stain. (*LotR* 341)

This is certainly a glimpse of the holy, as expressed through the natural perfection of Lórien.

In the above-quoted passage, there is reference to winter. The story of the One Ring moves through the seasons of Middle-earth. In his review of a possible movie script, Tolkien complained that the writer had missed the point of seasons in Middle-earth:

They are pictorial, and should be, and easily could be, made the main means by which the artists indicate time-passage [the film was to be animated]. The main action begins in autumn and passes through winter to a brilliant spring: this is basic to the purport and tone of the tale. (*Letters* 272)

What is of importance here is the seasonal shift. The movement from autumn (the last days of the world) to winter (the season of death) and through to spring (renewal, rebirth) is a conscious decision of the author. It is meant to demonstrate the renewal of Middle-earth. This natural change symbolizes the spiritual victory over Sauron and the forces of Mordor.

We can see an example of this Ambient expression of nature in the demise of the Witch-King's Hell-Hawk:

Suddenly the great beast beat its hideous wings, and the wind of them was foul...Still she did not blench: Maiden of the Rohirrim, child of kings, slender but as a steel-blade, fair yet terrible. A swift stroke she dealt, skilled and deadly. The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn head fell like stone. Backward she sprang as the huge shape crashed to ruin, vast wings outspread, crumpled to the earth; and with its fall the shadow passed away. A light fell about her, and her hair shone in the sunrise. (*LotR* 824)

Accepting the deliberate use of natural symbolism in the narrative, we can see the transition from foul to fair take place. In the presence of the Hell-Hawk, the environment is fouled and is described as such. When Éowyn strikes down the beast, the air is cleansed, the darkness is lifted and the image we are left with is a resplendent one. It is a short-lived moment of transition, as Éowyn and Merry must still face the Chief of the Nazgûl, but it is a subtle reward for this Maiden of the Rohirrim, as if the divine spirit of Middle-earth was reaching out to praise her.

Essential and Ambient nature are intrinsic to understanding how Tolkien's creation of an imaginary world succeeds. The complex pseudo-realism of Essential nature

creates a foundation that readers can understand and respond to. The Ambient nature is infused with symbolism, a subtle magic that permeates the events of *The Lord of the Rings*. It aspires to move the Essential nature to a more imaginary realm, where the entire world of Middle-earth is infused with divine meaning. It makes Passive nature more complex than simply replicating our world as a foundation. Instead Passive nature has a voice, a role that can be determined by understanding the symbols at work.

Active nature has an even more direct voice. It have an impact on the story in one of two ways: either Independent of or Wrathful towards the denizens of Middle-earth. It is more obviously imaginary but is also more directly involved with the War of the Ring. In basic terms, Independent nature is nature that lives apart from culture, but is nonetheless intelligent, while Wrathful nature is very aggressive and takes an often-violent role in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Independent Nature

As one watches the recent New Line Cinema film adaptations, we can see the ecological message of *The Lord of the Rings* displayed in detail. But the process of adaptation has left various elements of Tolkien's narrative aside. As we consider Independent nature, it is important to remember that these elements generally have limited effect upon or meaning in the narrative. They exist to create a more complex work, but are used with limitations. The best examples of Independent nature are Tom Bombadil and the Great Eagles of the Misty Mountains.

Tom Bombadil appears in the first book of the novel and is only briefly mentioned in passing during The Council of Elrond and later (again, in passing) by Gandalf in the denouement chapters of *The Return of the King*. From what little we can

see of Tom and his wife, Goldberry, they exist in a sort of steward-like or perhaps harmonious relationship (in the musical sense of harmony, were Tom Bombadil is Essential nature, but an octave higher). He is not stealthy like elves, which instead seem more gentle with their natural surroundings:

There appeared above the reeds an old battered hat with a tall crown and a long blue feather stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big People, though he made noise enough for one, stumping along with great yellow boots on his thick legs, and charging through grass and rushes like a cow going down to drink. He had a blue coat and a long brown beard; his eyes were blue and bright, and his face was as red as an apple, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter. (*LotR* 117)

Here we meet Tom Bombadil in all his garish glory. He is by far the most joyful character of the novel, full of mirth and song. The reader might consider Tom to be an aspect of society rather than nature, and the fact that his home is well tended and made of stone would seem to support this (*LotR* 119-21). But Bombadil is much more complex than he seems.

Tolkien was repeatedly asked about Tom Bombadil, for he appears to be a sort of Green Man, a pagan representation of nature to readers. Tolkien responded to one such letter by describing Bombadil as “an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science” (*Letters* 192). Tom is an intentional enigma, a paradox that Tolkien inserted to make readers think (*Letters* 174). However, early in the novel’s development, Tolkien described Bombadil as the “spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire

countryside” (*Letters* 26). From this statement, we can make a connection between Tom Bombadil and the natural world of Middle-earth. He is cultural, as his home, marriage and love of music suggests, but he is not part of society: he is a personification of Passive nature’s relationship with culture. Just as Ambient nature moves Essential nature to a more Fantastic realm, Bombadil moves the Ambient further along to become Active nature.

Tom’s connection with Essential nature is represented in the fact that he does not attempt to reform Old Man Willow he merely admonishes him (suggesting that there is nothing wrong with Old Man Willow’s feelings, only the way he acts) (*LotR* 118). Bombadil can be seen as an aspect of Independent nature because he seems unaffected by the One Ring. Gandalf warns that “the ring has no power over him...if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away” (*LotR* 259). Tom is immune to the draw of the Ring because he is disassociated from culture and any need for social power he is nature, Active and Fantastic, but still just the image of the earth in motion. He has no real desire to affect the War of the Ring because he simply cannot comprehend the mechanics of culture. This is why Tom Bombadil remains a part of the novel. Even after countless revisions, Tolkien kept the mention of him because:

I suppose he has some importance as a ‘comment’...he represents something that I feel important...I would not, however, have left him in if he did not have some kind of function...The story is cast in terms of a good side, and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship...[but if you take] your delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself...It is a natural pacifist view...Ultimately, only the victory of the West will allow Bombadil to continue,

or even survive. Nothing would be left for him in the world of Sauron. (*Letters* 179)

The world of Sauron, as we have seen in the mention of its corrosive effects, is one of death and environmental degradation. If Sauron's rule came about, Tom's role as a personification of nature would die alongside the trees, grasses and waterways of Middle-earth. He is an aspect of nature that functions with sentience but is ultimately powerless to affect the War of the Ring.

The other most apparent form of Independent nature is not so unwilling to be involved—The Great Eagles of Misty Mountain. Although they appear only three times in the novel, their effect is felt throughout. Their first appearance in *The Lord of the Rings* involves the rescue of Gandalf atop Saruman's tower, Orthanc. Gandalf says that the Great Eagles were already going far and wide, noticing the gathering of Sauron's armies, and it was only by chance that Gwaihir the Windlord flew by to bear Gandalf away (*LotR* 255).⁸ This activity suggests the Eagles have a defined social order including organized military intelligence missions. Gwaihir says he "was sent to bear tidings not burdens," and informs Gandalf of recent political events involving Rohan and Isengard (*LotR* 255).

The next meeting of Gandalf and Gwaihir follows the wizard's return from death atop the mountain Celebdil, when the Eagle heeds a command from Galadriel to fetch the wizard. Gwaihir once again displays intelligence, commenting that "The Sun shines through you," referring to Gandalf's immortal angelic form (*LotR* 491, "The Istari"). The

⁸ This event is very different in the film. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Gandalf speaks to a butterfly, who then leads Gwaihir to Orthanc. The butterfly motif is repeated in the films, always heralding the Windlord. This creates an almost providential sense to the butterfly and the eagles, making them more divine agents. Ultimately, the differences in the events do not cause the Eagles to move out of Independent nature, but does add a fitting level of Ambient nature to their actions (especially the butterfly motif).

Eagles carry a bit of Ambient nature with them, as they seem to arrive in dire times, often connected with the Istari, who are divine servants themselves.

The last scene involving the Eagles is the longest and it is certainly the most Fantastic, as the Great Eagles descend *en masse* upon the armies of Mordor, challenging the Nazgûl for air supremacy. Again Gwaihir bears Gandalf aloft, this time to find Sam and Frodo in the fallen realm of Sauron (*LotR* 927-9). Each time Gandalf is borne by Gwaihir, it is a mission of mercy, further connecting the Eagles with Christian morals. These Fantastic Eagles, vast and strong, are an aspect of nature that functions alongside the world of Men and Elves. They fight in the war, and act as messengers, but are so rarely used that they seem to be a minor point in the plot, or a *Deus ex Machina* used to involve the divine will of God in the narrative.

The rarity of the Great Eagles is intentional on the part of the author. To use them too often reduces their exoticism and, as Tolkien complained about Zimmerman's animated film script: "The Eagles are a dangerous 'machine.' I have used them sparingly, and that is the absolute limit of their credibility or usefulness" (*Letters* 271). Tolkien took special offence to the use of the Great Eagles as a ferrying service for the Fellowship, likening it to using helicopters to go to the top of Everest in a movie about climbing it (*Letters* 273-4). The Eagles play a minimal role in the narrative because of how the reader has to interact with a Fantastic world. If Giant Eagles are commonly used as transport, then the entire culture must reflect this (recall Helms' third law) which would be rather radical from Tolkien's point-of-view of what Middle-earth should be (that is, tied to the heroic past) (*Letters* 274).

Independent nature plays a small role in *The Lord of the Rings*, but it does play a part. Because it is not aggressive in action, it is a less direct element than the next category, Wrathful nature. However, it is another step for the reader; it is another level of fantasy building upon the realism of the landscape.

Wrathful Nature

Wrathful nature is the pinnacle of the movement from a realistic nature to a Fantastic nature. Here Active nature becomes directly involved in the events of the novel. It threatens heroes and villains alike, reaffirming that nature is an active force in Middle-earth. It plays an active role in *The Lord of the Rings*, although that role can take many shapes. Among the most obvious forms Wrathful nature takes in the narrative are Old Man Willow, Caradhras, the Balrog, the Ents and the Huorns.

Old Man Willow is the first aggressive foe the hobbits face in *the Fellowship of the Ring* (the Nazgûl are hinted at, but not yet revealed) (Fleiger 148-9). In fact, the whole of the Old Forest might be considered the first real hurdle the young travelers must contend with. The winding paths mislead them, and Old Man Willow draws them close and lulls them to sleep with his siren-like effect (*LotR* 113-14). He then attempts to devour Merry and Pippin and it is only the intervention of Tom Bombadil that saves the hobbits.

There is no doubt that Old Man Willow is malevolent, and perhaps actually evil. Tom tells the hobbits that in the Willow's youth "his heart was rotten, but his strength was green; and he was cunning" (*LotR* 128). But the Great Willow did not turn to eating travelers without some cause. The Old Forest is old and scarred. It holds "a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers

and usurpers” (127). In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, Tolkien says, “The Old Forest was hostile to two legged creatures because of the memory of many injuries” (*Letters* 419).

Old Man Willow is not evil in the same way as Sauron. He is not corrupted with a desire for power. He is instead wrathful. He is filled with anger at the environmental destruction he has witnessed. He is one element of the environmental concern expressed in the novel. One can see a cause and effect relationship between environmental damage and Wrathful nature. Tolkien is not anti-culture, or even anti-technology (after all, everyone in the narrative, even Tom Bombadil, lives in a house of some kind and the cities of Gondor are not portrayed as evil), but he is anti-destruction. In the same letter to the *Telegraph*, he declares that nothing is as horrible as “the destruction, torture and murder of trees perpetrated by private individuals and minor official bodies. The savage sound of the electric saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing” (*Letters* 420).

Wrathful nature is a cautionary symbol in Middle-earth. It endangers the good as well as the bad, because it is not a culture on its own rather a manifestation of the natural world. Caradhras, the great peak of the Misty Mountains is such a force. He is repeatedly personified by the Fellowship: Gimli laments, “Caradhras has not forgiven us,” for the mining of the mountains. Later the dwarf comments, “It is the ill will of Caradhras. He does not love Elves and Dwarves, and that [snow]drift was laid to cut off our escape” (*LotR* 284-5). The mountain seems to be alive with anger, and while not deliberately aiding Sauron he resents the presence of the Fellowship, forcing them from the Redhorn Gate.

The Balrog is another example of Wrathful nature. While the Balrog is a demon and tied to the mythology of *The Silmarillion*, it can be taken out of a strict Christian reading through the use of Helms' laws. If we assert the providential control of the first law, the Balrog can be seen as a force through which the divine morality of Middle-earth is brought to bear. From this position, we can argue that the dwarves of Moria were punished for their greed and its consequent environmental damage. At its height, Moria was a splendid realm, in balance with the mountains, a place where dwarves mined their precious ores—gold, iron and *mithril* (*LotR* 415-17). But the dwarves were too greedy and dug too deep, awakening the Balrog. While they did not intend to cause its awakening, the demon destroyed their proud realm (*LotR* 301-21). The entire area surrounding Moria is polluted. The river Sirannon, once beautiful, is now “gloomy” and “unwholesome” and inhabited by the terrible Watcher in the Water (*LotR* 293).

The Balrog is presented in protean terms, composed of a strange absence of nature, along with shadow and the most destructive of the four classical elements, fire. It is “Something as dark as cloud [filled with flame and wielding a] blade like a stabbing tongue of fire” (*LotR* 429, 432-33). It rises above Gandalf who is described as “a wizened tree before the onset of a storm” (*LotR* 433). Unlike its representation in the film, it is silent, issuing no sound (a deliberate characterization by Tolkien) (*Letters* 274). This characterization creates a very ominous figure, full of power and force. The absence of natural form is a key hint to the Balrog's demonic nature—as an instrument of Morgoth, or Satan, it is removed from nature like the Ringwraiths or Sauron. It is more a disembodied spirit than a towering monster. However, the Balrog is still a tool of the divine will of Middle-earth, because even the most evil servant still draw their power

from the will of God.⁹ When we combine this description with the idea of a wrathful, divine nature expressing displeasure with environmental damage, we can see how the Balrog is a tool of punishment for those who tread Moria's disastrous hallways.

Just as the dwarves' punishment lingers on to threaten the Fellowship, Wrathful nature punishes the villains as well. The Ents and Huorns are the two races who punish Saruman for his transgressions against nature. Ents are not trees *per se*, but they are quite tree-like:

At least fourteen foot high, very sturdy, with a tall head and hardly any neck. Whether it was clad in stuff like green and grey bark, or whether that was its hide, was difficult to say. At any rate the arms...were not wrinkled, but covered in a smooth brown skin. The large feet had seven toes each. The lower part of the face was covered with a sweeping grey beard, bushy, almost twiggy at the roots, thin and mossy at the ends. (*LotR* 452)

These "tree-herds" are caretakers of forests, and they act to smash Isengard after a (relatively) brief Entmoot (*LotR* 473). In the novel, the Ents are very aware of the destruction of sections of Fangorn Forest and act accordingly, first assaulting the fortress of Orthanc, and then unleashing the dammed River Isen, which rushes out, flooding Saruman's diabolical engines and furnaces (*LotR* 554-55). Like in Moria, nature acts to strike down those who would abuse it. In the film, the Ents seem less concerned, and the decision of the Entmoot is reversed. However, the clever Pippin tricks Treebeard into going to Isengard, where he sees the damage done by Saruman's Orcs. It is then that Treebeard summons the other Ents and brings about Saruman's downfall. The

⁹ The Balrog's role of being a servant of the divine while appearing infernal is similar to Satan's role in *Paradise Lost*. He is evil, but is only allowed to exist because it serves the desires or needs of God.

filmmakers likely changed this sequence of events so as to make the assault of the Ents seem angrier, better representing the Wrathful aspect of nature of the Ents.

The Huorns are the trees of Fangorn Forest that are fully conscious. They are like Old Man Willow in the fact that they are full of anger—the axes of Orcs have killed many of their kind—but more magical because they can move. They enact their wrath by appearing at the close of the Battle of Helm’s Deep:

The land had changed. Where before the green dale had lain, its grassy slopes lapping the ever-mounting hills, there now a forest loomed. Great trees, bare and silent, stood, rank on rank, with tangled bough and hoary head; their twisted roots were buried in the long green grass. Darkness was under them. (*LotR* 529)¹⁰

The Huorns act to trap the Orcs of Saruman between themselves and Gandalf’s charge. The Orcs that flee into the woods are never seen again: “Wailing they passed under the waiting shadow of the trees; and from that shadow none ever came again (*LotR* 529). Later, Legolas feels “a great wrath” while passing through the forest (*LotR* 533).

Nature becomes a prominent force in the War of the Ring. It acts to both hinder the West and the East alike. Ultimately, the divine providence of Middle-earth’s nature means the hindrances to the West work out for the best (The Old Forest toughens the hobbits, and the Balrog is a tool through which Gandalf is elevated in power). The wrath

¹⁰ Tolkien commented on this event in a letter to W. H. Auden in 1955: “Their part in the story is due, I think, to my bitter disappointment and disgust from schooldays with the shabby use made in Shakespeare of the coming of ‘Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill’: I longed to devise a setting in which the trees might really march to war” (*Letters* 212). Tolkien is referring to the events of act 4, scene 1, in which the prophecy of the third apparition, “a child crowned, with tree in his hand” that “Macbeth shall never vanquished be until/ Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill/ Shall come against him. (4.1.92-94). There are perhaps further interesting parallels between Saruman, who craves power and intends to be a usurper, and Macbeth himself, but this is mere speculation (with Tolkien’s dislike of Shakespeare further confusing matters).

that is brought to bear on the forces of the East is much less kind, matching the moral force of Middle-earth.

The Problem of a Fox

There is one final significant problem remaining: the thinking fox. This singular event of an animal's thoughts being related by the narrator is an obvious anomaly to this reading. It cannot be Wrathful nature, because it enacts no violence. It is not Ambient, for it is a direct utterance: "'Hobbits!' he thought. 'Well what next? I have heard of strange doings in this land, but I have seldom heard of a hobbit sleeping out of doors under a tree. Three of them! There's something mighty queer behind this'" (*LotR* 71). In my schema of nature, there are two remaining categories—Essential and Independent. I would hesitate to place Tolkien's articulate fox under Independent nature, because it makes the fox much more Fantastic and important than it is.

Therefore, let us place the "thinking" fox under Essential nature. Why? Because the fox is not so much an active force as it is representative of human relations with nature. We attempt to anthropomorphize animals constantly. There is a desire in our psyche to believe that animals think as we do, that when we pass a moose, or look at our family pets, they have the same sort of considerations that we do. In this way, the thinking fox is more of a passageway for the imagination. It is an aspect of our relationship with real nature that is used to prepare us for the more magical nature we will witness in only a few chapters (Old Man Willow and Tom Bombadil).

Nature in Middle-earth is a complex web of semiotic symbols that allows the reader to participate in the story. At the most basic level it is clever construction of real and imaginary nature that allows the reader to make the leap from the ordinary to the

Fantastic. In a more complex reading we can perceive how an author can intentionally create a plausible nature that follows Fantastic rules (Helms' five laws of Middle-earth). From these basic laws, we can further categorize the imaginary world into Passive and Active elements, which further divide into the subsections discussed above. If one uses these categories to understand the imaginary world, and then define it, we can begin to undertake the next logical step, which is to justify a larger reading of the ecological concern found in the author, the text and the social reception of *The Lord of the Rings*. This step permits us to perceive a greater meaning in fantasy literature, beyond a mere melodrama of good versus evil.

Chapter Three: Modernity and Social Crisis

‘And the very last end of the War, I hope,’ Said Merry.

‘I hope so,’ said Frodo and sighed. ‘The very last stroke. But to think that it should fall here, at the very door of Bag End! Among all my hopes and fears at least I never expected that.’

‘I shan’t call it the end, till we’ve cleared up the mess,’ said Sam gloomily.

‘And that’ll take a lot of time and work. (*LotR* 997)

The killing that Frodo is describing as the last stroke of *The Lord of the Rings* is Wormtongue’s murder of Saruman. In a moral sense, this event shows one of the flaws of evil: it will inevitably turn on itself.¹¹ In other ways, the meaning is more nuanced. The final blow lands far from the battlefields we toured earlier in the novel, and there have been many: Weathertop, Amon Hen, The Misty Mountains, Moria, Rohan, Fangorn, Helm’s Deep, Isengard, Eryn Muil, The Dead Marshes, Ithilien, the Pelennor Fields, Osgiliath, Minas Tirith, and Mordor. Throughout the novel, we have seen war as something that happens far away from the hobbit’s (and the reader’s) home. As the battles grew in size, so too did the distance from the Shire. The beginnings of the novel are homey, quiet and rural, and while the four hobbits venture further and further out into a wider world, there is a sense of safety for the Shire.

This sense is only disturbed once, relatively early in the novel, by Galadriel’s Mirror. Frodo acknowledges a desire for home, lamenting that “It seems a terribly long time that I’ve been away,” and Sam deliberately scrys upon the Shire through the waters (*LotR* 353). At first Sam sees visions of what will happen to him in Mordor, but the

¹¹ This is a long-standing tradition in the contemporary Fantastic, as both the wildly popular *Star Wars* and *Dragonlance* narrative hinge on this structure. It is of interest that these works can also be considered millenarian.

images soon shift to the felling of trees in the Shire, and the scene only becomes more grim:

But now Sam noticed that the Old Mill had vanished, and a large red-bricked building was being put up where it had stood. Lots of folk were busily at work. There was a tall red chimney nearby. Black smoke seemed to cloud the surface of the Mirror. (*LotR* 353).

Sam does not react well to this scene. He calls it “devilry” and insists that he must return home (*LotR* 353). The obvious religious connotations of his diction should not be underestimated. It is one of the few such references that Tolkien allowed into the work. Given the nearly two decades of revision after revision, this moral stance on the fate of the Shire is important. What the moral nature of Middle-earth implies, Sam’s words directly explain: In Middle-earth, environmental abuse is amoral and connected with Christian dualism. Sam does not return home until the Ring-quest is complete, but when he does, he finds his worst fears confirmed—the Shire has become an industrial landscape. This is the meaning of Sam’s warnings after the death of Saruman, and it is important that they are the last words of “The Scouring of the Shire.” In the landscape of Middle-earth, industrialism is linked with evil, but it is an evil that must be dealt with through hard work, not violence.

The Upheaval of War

One of the common statements about *The Lord of the Rings* is that it is about World War II. Tolkien had to deal with this reading more than once, often enough that his “Foreword to the Second Edition” actively debunks it (*LOTR* xv-xviii). He says in letters to fans and critics that the work was not a “war-product” and that the Shire after the War

of the Ring does not represent post-Blitz Britain (*Letters* 216, 235). Of course, Tolkien is being absolutely honest. Some of the pathos of the book may stem from the stress of bombing and rationing, but Tolkien's experience of the Second World War would have been like Sam's Gaffer's, who was worried about the fate of his son. No, it is not the Second World War that Tolkien is concerned with: It is World War I.

The hobbits' experience of an industrialized homeland was shared by thousands of soldiers who returned to England following World War I. One particularly telling cartoon titled "Mr. William Smith 1914/1919" was published in a 1928 issue of *Punch Magazine*. The first panel shows a man leaving an idyllic countryside dominated by the village tower and fields on a foot-wide path with the caption "1914. Mr. William Smith answers the call to preserve his native soil inviolate." This scene is contrasted with the second panel in which Mr. Smith halts in shock on a two lane paved road overlooking a mass of industrial factories; large exhaust towers now overwhelm the simple village tower and the once clear sky is now filled with harsh pollution. The caption reads "1919. Mr. William Smith comes back again to see how well he has done it" (Matless 24).

Frodo's entire journey through Middle-earth could be seen as a battle with the forces of industrialization, as represented by the One Ring. Certainly the perpetually smoky, ash filled skies of Mordor are reminiscent of the pollution caused by coal mining. In his seminal work, *The Making of the English Landscape*, W. G. Hoskins describes the effect of industry on the English landscape:

Nor was the industrial landscape represented solely in the great towns, for between them stretched miles of torn and poisoned countryside—the mountains of waste from mining and other industries; the sheets of sullen water, known as

‘flashes’, which had their origin in subsidence of the surface as a result of the mining below...In the Lancashire township of Ince there are today¹² twenty-three pit shafts covering 199 acres, one large industrial slag-heap covering six acres, nearly 250 acres of land under water or marsh due to mining...another 150 acres liable to flooding, and thirty-six disused pit-shafts...the later industrialists, the heirs of the steam age, were completely and grotesquely insensitive. (Hoskins 187)

This description is reminiscent of Mordor, a land of belching volcanoes and blackened skies, devoid of flower and tree, presenting only “tangle[s] of thorny bushes” and “bitter and oily” water. One picture is startling in its similarity, cited by Hoskins as “the view of the Black Country in 1866. The full horror of life in a Victorian industrial area is obvious here” (Hoskins 188). The picture is black and terrible, showing a fractured, barren landscape, completely devoid of trees, but full of smokestacks spewing forth black smoke that blocks out the sun.

Tolkien felt very strongly about industrialism, and would frequently lament the loss of arable soil to roadways (Carpenter 170). His biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, describes Tolkien’s reaction to “man’s (sic) destruction of the landscape” as one of “profound anger:”

Later in life, when his strongest held opinions began to become obsessions, he would see a new road that had been driven across the corner of a field and cry, ‘there goes the last of England’s arable!’ By this time in his life, he would maintain that there was not one unspoilt wood or hillside left in the land, and if

¹² Hoskin’s was first published in 1955, one year after *The Lord of the Rings*.

there was, he would refuse to visit it for fear of finding it contaminated by litter.

(Carpenter 169-170)

Tolkien adored the idyllic landscape of his childhood in Sarehole and found the loss of the Shire-like England he loved tragic. The journey to Mordor and the destruction of the “Land of Shadow” can be seen as a battle to restore the English landscape, the industrialization of the Shire representing the final threat to hobbits (*LotR* 895).

In representing the corruption of the Shire, Tolkien was echoing the English sentiment that industry had corrupted England. There is a complex nationalistic relationship between England and Englishness. In the same year as the publication of the “Mr. Smith” cartoon, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England issued a postcard entitled “Save the Countryside: Saint George for Rural England.” It features the noble St. George, patron saint of England, charging out from a rural scene to defend a woman and her children from a wicked dragon. The dragon charges forth from a landscape of garages and littered bottles. Its visible wing is inscribed with “Cigarettes, Petrol, Tyres, Cycles, Soap, Pills, Tea” like a great advertisement. Of course, St. George is spearing the dragon with his lance (Matless 27).

In this postcard, we can see the conflation of English mythology with a fear of industrialism, capitalism and progress. This reaction against social progress can be seen as a direct relation to the social crisis wrought by World War I. The Great War wrecked a terrible cost on Europe, and although the soil of Britain was not often disturbed in the course of the war, it suffered losses. The numbers are well known, and as they age, they risk becoming more abstract: 772,785 British service personnel killed, with another 1,676,037 men wounded (Thorpe 50). While the sober hindsight of history may permit us

to note that this is only half of France's losses, and that the rate of killing in the trenches did not equal the loss of men to emigration in the years preceding the war, we risk losing sight of the nature of warfare if we do so (Taylor 120). It is one thing to see your son off to Canada or the United States, where you will receive brief messages that never arrive often enough; it is entirely another thing to receive a letter telling you your child is dead.

The death rolls left entire villages depopulated of young and middle-aged men. In the wake of this loss of manpower, many of these villages collapsed and ceased to exist, not unlike the empty ruins of Middle-earth. In addition to this emptiness, England suffered socially and economically. Between 1913 and 1919, prices on goods had tripled and by 1932, one quarter of England's male population was on state welfare (Goff, et al). The post-war years were more uncertain than those preceding the war. Works like Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* sought to explain the failure of progress and the violence of the war as the inevitable fate of all civilizations. Britain faced electoral reforms, a major growth in the labour movement, and the women's suffrage movement (Pope 29-39). The old moral traditions of chaperoned courtships and aristocratic rank would never recover in the wake of the war (Pope 28).

Tolkien and the War

It is both tragic and fortuitous that we do not need to remain with the abstract and can focus on the particulars of Tolkien himself. Now that there has been an exhaustive biography of Tolkien's war years published, *Tolkien and the Great War*, even more information on the author's experience of the War is known to us. His life demonstrates a great deal of the emotional power of the war and the effect it had upon young

Englishmen. It is even more important to understand Tolkien's war experience because it allows us to recognize his place among other Modernists.

Tolkien and his friends, Christopher Wiseman (whom he had known since 1905), Vincent Trought, and Robert Quilter Gilson, formed the Tea Club and Barrovian Society (TCBS) during Tolkien's brief run as Librarian at King Edward's Public School. Together, they would debate all manner of literature, criticism, religion and philosophy. They were bound by a mutual enthusiasm, and as a club they ruled over the library at King Edward's and the tea-room at Barrow's Stores (Garth 18-25).

If this reminiscence reminds the reader of Tolkien's much more famous club, The Inklings, one should note that this is a different sort of club. The TCBS was not a venue for the aged, worn, experienced scholars of Oxford. It was a wild, innocent, heady group of young men, "read[ing] from the Norse Sagas...expound[ing] on historiography...enthus[ing] about the art critic John Ruskin, and...deliver[ing]... 'the last word' on the Romantics" (Garth 5). These were four childhood friends, rugby players and debaters all. Even after Tolkien moved on to Exeter College, Oxford, his friends retained control of the library and stayed in close contact. On breaks, the TCBS would meet and celebrate their newest literary loves and grand ideas.

Christopher Wiseman was clearly Tolkien's best friend. As the Inklings parallels the TCBS, C. S. Lewis parallels Wiseman. While Tolkien and Lewis were bound by academia, Wiseman and Tolkien were bound by the scrum. They would exchange vicious, blood-minded comments about nearly everything, but with such enthusiasm and honesty that friendship, not enmity, was the result. They lived a block apart, and so great was their bond that they called themselves the Great Twin Brethren (Garth 4-5).

The young Ronald is not the aged, tweed clad professor of the post-success photographs. Tolkien is always shown on book covers late in life, dressed head-to-toe in an academic suit, never all that fashionable and always in a scene of nature (usually leaning against a tree). The young John Ronald, as he was called, was a rugby player who compensated for a slight build with terrible ferocity. His ear for language was developing and he was discovering Northern European literature for the first time. He performed school debates in Latin, Greek, and in a particularly notable feat, Gothic (Garth 16).

Like a foreshadowing of things to come, the TCBS was also linked by the Officer Training Corps (OTC) at King Edward's. Started in 1907, the OTC was intended to "boost Britain's readiness for war" (Garth 23). With militarism a part of his education, and a large part of male social activity, Tolkien continued on with a regiment while attending Oxford. His friends belonged to other corps, but all of them had some tie to the armed forces. So when the war broke out, the TCBS went to war as well.

Some men like Tolkien who were excelling at school were given some reprieve from immediate service, but Tolkien, as mentioned earlier, was eventually called up. The Somme would change his life. There he saw the mass slaughter of his regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers. The war left an indelible imprint on Tolkien's mind and was the basis for his belief that the strength of a country lay in its commoners, not its nobles. Samwise Gamgee is the exact personification of this ideal; Tolkien manifestly based the character on the infantry soldiers he met in the trenches: "My 'Sam Gamgee' is indeed a reflection of the English soldier of the privates and batmen I knew...and recognized as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter 114). The experience of the war left a powerful imprint

on Tolkien, and would influence his writing, just as it influenced every author of his generation.

The TCBS did not survive the war. Later members lingered longer than the core four, but Trought and Gilson died in the war. Tolkien and Wiseman, the Great Twin Brethren, had survived, but the fabric of their relationship was to be as wounded as the fields of France. It was not a terrible separation, more a tear that could not be repaired. Tolkien always spoke well of his friend and named his third son after him. But Wiseman and Tolkien found they had little sympathy for each other and drifted apart. Their fiery arguments did not pass as easily, but remained restless in long interludes between letters (Garth 281). The friendships of the TCBS and the terrible sundering of fellowship by the war could not survive the psychic fallout of the modern age. Instead, we are left with the sad image of two dear friends unable to communicate with each other.

Indeed, Tolkien had a great problem communicating his war experience through conversation or obvious discussion. As John Garth wisely points out, he did not write 'A Subaltern on the Somme,' but 'Tour and the Exiles of Gondolin' while hospitalized with trench fever (Garth 287). His imagination did not run in the same vein as other writers. It ran in a strange world of elves and wizards, but even so, it ran in a vein parallel to the imaginative concerns of his generation.

Tolkien as Modernist

Modernity is a rather vast topic and must be defined narrowly for the purpose of our discussion. The term can be used broadly to indicate something that is modern in taste or appearance, but for our purposes it will be used to represent the rapid process of technological and social change that occurred after the industrial revolution and primarily

in the Twentieth Century (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This is not stretching the term at all, because something modern in taste is implicitly tied to the developments in technology and processing available through industrialization. While progress is still an aspect and ideal of our society, many artists express a severe crisis or concern over modernity in their work. Tolkien is not unlike Robert Graves or Siegfried Sassoon in the fact that he experienced the war first hand (unlike several “high modernists” such as Eliot or Joyce). The indelible imprint of the war is on Tolkien and his artistic expression.

Modernism is a term slightly less broad than modernity, but still open to interpretation. Some critics have noted that modernism may begin as early as the 1890s, but most agree that the literary movement known as High Modernism begins in the post-World War I period. It is marked by experimental forms of writing, fractured narrative and avant-garde attempts to recreate art. It is often concerned with history and the nature of society, often wildly breaking from traditional norms (Abrams 167).

The High Modernism movement is a rather exclusive club, although recent critics like Rita Felski and Maria Dibattista have done excellent work in expanding the realms of modernism. One of Tolkien’s most important literary critics, Tom Shippey, has discussed the possibility of Tolkien being seen as a Modernist. Unfortunately, Shippey affords the definition of Modernism the position of authority, not the artist’s work. Therefore, he finds that Tolkien does not fit the proscribed idea and excludes him from Modernism. In this case, Shippey is incorrect. Tolkien does fit the definition of modernism in nearly every respect except one, the unity of his narrative (Shippey, *Author* 312-18).

Like other Modernist writers, Tolkien was affected by the war and his novels do represent a very experimental form of writing. While fantasy novels had been published

before, Tolkien attempted a feat of world-building unlike any other. The development of language, history and culture found in the stories of Middle-earth is much greater than that depicted in any previously published fantasy novel. Like Eliot and Pound, Tolkien was enamored with medievalism. But whereas Eliot and Pound were influenced by Rossetti's translation of Dante and other Southern medieval poets, Tolkien was influenced by William Morris and his translation of Northern medieval works. *The Lord of the Rings* is a result of Tolkien's love of northern medieval writing. In many letters he makes reference to a northern spirit, an identity formed of that medieval expression. In writing *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien was expressing the essential concepts of modernism—an experimental artistic expression (perhaps more experimental than many others as it does not try to alter realism, but transforms it into something completely imaginary) based upon a reconstruction of history.

The difference lies in the kind of narrative used. Tolkien's narrative is unified; although there is experimental construction of the narrative in *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* (the absolute division of the two plot strands), it is neither fractured nor disjointed. It does not present a series of questions and force the reader to find the answers. Instead, *The Lord of the Rings* presents the exact opposite: it provides a possible answer and forces the reader to try to understand the question being asked. In the social fallout of World War I, Tolkien sought to create something whole, something meaningful and something mythical.

Tolkien was very nationalistic, and while nationalism has acquired negative connotations, and it was not a term used by Tolkien to represent himself, it is nonetheless a suitable term for his feelings. From a very early age, Tolkien believed that God had

given him some duty to perform, some task that would define his life (*Letters* 9). To Tolkien, this task was to create a mythology for England. While legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood had been important to the Victorian period, Tolkien felt that “the Arthurian world...powerful as it is, is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not English, and it does not replace what I felt to be missing” (*Letters* 144). In his reference to Arthur not being connected to Englishness, Tolkien is expressing his concern over language: the majority of medieval Arthurian tales were written in French, and so are not purely English.¹³

Later in life, in a letter to publisher Milton Waldman, Tolkien is humble, but still insistent upon his dreams:

Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendor from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country. It should possess the tone and quality that I desired; somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our ‘air’ (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East)...(*Letters* 144)

Tolkien’s ideas of what made England England were influenced by the landscape of his beloved country. When he speaks of “the clime and soil of...Britain,” one is reminded of

¹³ Of course, the earliest sources for Arthur are from Britain in the romances of *The Mabinogion*. However the published stories that develop the Welsh legends into medieval romances were largely continental until the nineteenth Century. There is of course another reading of Tolkien’s phrase: Arthurian legends are rooted in Wales and are therefore less English. But for Tolkien, the distinction between England and France was even more severe, linguistically, as most things were to him—a story written in a foreign tongue could not convey the real flavor of the place.

the quiet, pastoral Shire. The home of the hobbits is a positive environment, which Tolkien said was based upon “some acquaintance with English toponymical history” (*Letters* 250).

The twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* traces the development of Middle-earth and displays the various attempts Tolkien made in creating his mythology (*History* 1984-1996). He struggled through revision after revision, trying to complete the mythic world and effect he longed for. Through the *History*, we can see the painful and humorous roads that were left untaken by the author, but we can also see him wrestle with his source material and attempt to find his voice. The voice he did find expresses a world that is manifestly Fantastic and internally very modern. Its words resonate with the modern reader because of the underlying concerns. It wrestles with hegemony, alienation, technology and the role of the individual. It offers a process by which the reader can participate in a world that undergoes a millenarian revival. This is why Tolkien’s novel is so immensely satisfying for its readers. It was called both triumph and trash in the 1950s, but in the ‘60s and ‘70s, *The Lord of the Rings* became an important text to the youth movement, adopted by counterculture protesters and environmentalists. The cathartic mechanism of the novel lies in its use of the past.

This is why the connection between William Morris and J. R. R. Tolkien is critical. Tolkien’s use of medievalism is part of a tradition connected to concerns of Modernity. Morris’ utopian notions of craftsmanship and medievalism are examples of the Victorian struggle with industrialism. Tolkien had read Morris, particularly the fantasy novel *The Well at World’s End*, which influenced his writing. Other examples of the Victorian fascination with the medieval past include the Pre-Raphaelites’ celebration

of the medieval and the Victorian use of the Arthurian legends to build national character (Girourd). Medievalism is an attempt by the English to deal with the pressures of modernity by accessing the most formative period in their history. It allows them to mitigate the rapid changes in social power brought about by industrialization. This is the same process that led the Italians to focus on the grandeur of Rome, or Germany the Holy Roman Empire in the post World War One period.

Wagner's medievalist glorification of Norse/Germanic mythology, and his use of ring images often leads to a parallel being drawn between him and Tolkien (particularity through the *Volsunga Saga* and *The Niebelungenlied*) (Maté). Tolkien himself derided the comparison by stating "Both rings were round and there the resemblance ceases" (*Letters* 306). However, Tom Shippey disagrees with Tolkien's curt response in his analysis:

This is not entirely true. The motifs of the riddle-contest, the cleansing fire, the broken weapon preserved for an heir, all occur in both works, as of course does the theme of 'the lord of the Ring as the slave of the Ring', *des Ringes Herr als des Ringes Knecht*. But what upset Tolkien was the fact that Wagner was working, at second-hand, from material which he knew first hand. (343-44)

It is not without aesthetic decisiveness that Tolkien became a professor of Old English and became an advocate of *Beowulf* and other medieval literature. He had little interest in literature written after 1400 and afforded little time to the study of contemporary authors (Carpenter 99).

A Northern Modernist

Tolkien's use of the past is key to his artistic expression, particularly in the character of Aragorn. A key element to understanding Aragorn's millennial rise to

kingship is the process through which the medieval image of Sigurd is transfigured into a more moral and modern figure. In short summary, the *Volsunga Saga* tells the story of the dragon-slayer, Sigurd. It begins with a genealogy tracing back to Asgard and progresses through the death of Sigurd's father, a king, to Sigurd's life with his adoptive father, Regin. In time, Sigurd, receives a special sword forged to represent his kingship, slays the dragon Fafnir, and becomes a proper king. In the course of his adventures, he marries the beautiful and willful Gudrun and aids his friend Gunnar in seducing the Valkyrie Brynhild by assuming Gunnar's form, riding through a wall of fire, and spending three days and nights with her. This seduction ultimately leads to his downfall as he is betrayed by his allies over the deceit and is murdered in bed.

A brief comparison of the *Volsunga Saga* and the *Nibelungenlied* is warranted, as it contains the seeds of the historical development that Tolkien's narrative represents. The Sigurd of the *Volsunga* is quite similar to the courtly hero Siegfried of the *Neibelungenlied*, but there are distinct differences in the two works. The Romance is far less magical than the Saga. There is no dragon, no shape-shifting (although a cloak of invisibility is a key element of the romance). The *Nibelungenlied* is also less bloody. In both stories, the betrayal and murder of the hero is an act of cowardice, but Siegfried's death is poetic, for he is speared in the back while crouched at a stream, with narrative emphasis placed on the flowers stained by his blood (131-2).

In contrast, Sigurd is killed in bed, with his wife Gudrun next to him. He is cut so viciously that the killer's blade drives into the bed. Sigurd awakens and though fatally wounded and unable to rise, grasps a sword and hurls it at his fleeing murderer. The sword hits with such force that it splits his target in two. Amidst the commotion, Gudrun

awakens covered in blood, appropriately screaming and lamenting proud Sigurd's murder (Byock 90).

The difference between Sigurd and Siegfried shows how the basic outline of a story can remain similar, while the actual events may be changed to suit the audience's sensibilities. Sigurd is a Norse hero. Some of his actions are unconscionable to a Christian reader. Siegfried is the medieval, Christian knight. His violent impulses are supposedly tempered by courtly romance and etiquette. His tale is similar to Sigurd's but different in tone and morality.

The difference in tone and morality between the pre-Christian source and the reformation of the text is exactly what takes place within Tolkien's use of pre-Christian myth. If we recall the summary of the *Saga* above, there are obvious similarities: the *Saga* tells the story of the downfall of a king, whose son is raised by a trusted friend. In time, this son receives a sword that marks him as a king, undertakes great challenges and risks, and becomes a proper king. In many of these details, Aragorn and Sigurd are nearly identical. Both are orphaned sons of kings. Both are raised by a foster father-figure: Sigurd by Regin, Aragorn by Elrond. Both embark on a period of travel and receive proper education in courtly and intellectual matters. More interestingly, both characters have a shattered sword in their past. In Sigurd's case, his father Sigmund shatters his sword against a foe's spear, while Aragorn's ancestral blade Narsil is shattered by Sauron. Similarly, each receives a sword forged at the hands or by command of their adopted father. These swords are both named, Gram and Andúril respectively, lending them the air of instrumental magic. Both Sigurd and Aragorn are presented as characters in tune with nature: Sigurd can speak to birds and Aragorn is a Ranger (an exclusive

group of wilderness guides and warriors). While Aragorn does not exactly slay a dragon as Sigurd does, he does vanquish many foes and achieves a singular victory over the ghosts in the Paths of the Dead, who may be considered to be similar in nature to dragons, due to their connection with the fall of Empires and the inevitability of death (Bates).

In a more complex manner, both characters are selflessly willing to help others and both immediately take responsibility for their actions, but many of the inner psychological aspects of the characters differ. Sigurd never pauses in his pursuit of adventure. He shows little caution and never doubts the correctness of his action nor does he show any regret over wrongdoing: "He did not lack courage and never knew fear" (73). His actions, while often thrilling, are aggressively violent, with Sigurd actively waging wars of conquest. Many sections of the Saga are focused on the seductive conquest of women, mostly under false pretenses.

Aragorn is not like Sigurd in these respects. Tolkien's hero does doubt himself, and does question his actions. He does not glory in war, nor fight a war of conquest. His war is a war of rearguard action, desperately buying time for the passive quest of Frodo to succeed. In order to be recognized as king, Aragorn must be recognized through an act of healing, not killing. Aragorn is also a monogamous hero, remaining true to Arwen despite the advances of Éowyn. What this means is that Aragorn is patterned after Sigurd in outward appearance and experience, but is morally and psychologically different.

There are also key narrative differences. The events of Sigurd's past are less clear, less singular. There is a randomness to Sigurd's father's death, but in *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron, the one who sunders Elendil's sword, is so important he becomes the

titular character. Sigurd's sword is made fresh and new, not like the remaking of the past we read in Tolkien. This distinction indicates a change in the way history is viewed. For the Norse, history is more abstract, less permanent, but for the Christian Tolkien, all history must be teleological and therefore requires a singularity to major mythic events.

Sigurd is like a shell, hollowed-out by Tolkien and refashioned into his ideal king—a Christian king. Aragorn appears, semiotically, as a pre-Christian northern European hero, but internally he is a much more modern, self-aware and moralizing Christian hero. This is a large part of the appeal of fantasy: it creates a continuum in which the images of the past seem to hold our values, reassuring the reader that their moral position is correct and has always been so. The characters of the *Volsunga Saga* are at times very alien to us. But the characters of *The Lord of the Rings* are not. It is a fundamentally modern work that echoes the horrors of modernity. Real world organizations, like Elf Lore, have taken Tolkien's terminology and applied it to their Lothlorien (sic) Nature Sanctuary, where they hold elf scout camps and attempt to develop a relationship with nature based upon harmony. Elf Lore pressed a civil action suit against E.L.F., the Earth Liberation Front, over the use of the term "elf." The Earth Liberation Front is drastically different from Elf Lore, acting as an eco-terrorist group; they have blown up vehicles and facilities in several countries, primarily Britain and the United States. Elf Lore, and to a lesser extent, E.L.F. have found a question of ecological responsibility in *The Lord of the Rings* (Birzer 127).

Of course, Elf Lore is much more peaceful, much more like Sam in its devotion to hard work and cleaning natural spaces. The E.L.F. is an aberrant organization, whose self-acknowledged violent actions always damage property and place lives at risk

(www.earthliberationfront.com). While the lawyer representing Elf Lore handed over the subpoena to representatives of E.L.F. at a town meeting in Bloomington, Indiana, one member of Elf Lore shouted “You are not Elves of any kind, but Orcs!” (Birzer 127). In this use of terms, we can see how Tolkien’s Fantastic tale has, at least for a few, become an important way of viewing the world. The success of his mythology is so profound it has entered into the lexicon of modern life and environmental activists.

The Lord of the Rings asks questions of modernity, criticizing its apparent lack of values or spiritualism. It asks questions of its intentions and its possible endpoints. The growing isolation of the individual and the growing power of hegemony are expressed through Sauron and the emptiness of Middle-earth. Part of the reason the Shire is so appealing is because of the sense of community found in those sections of the novel. Questions of power and the nature of governance are brought out through depictions of the One Ring and Aragorn. Of course, some of the answers are Christian. Pity, mercy, and Christian charity are dominant themes in the book, both through Gollum’s and Aragorn’s stories. Many of the novel’s events are very conservative and based on Tolkien’s monarchism. But throughout the narrative, a response to Modernity is found. This response is millennialist, invoking the renewal of the past and the coming of a golden age.

Chapter Four: The Millennial Response

But Aragorn smiled. 'It will serve,' he said. 'The worst is now over. Stay and be comforted!' Then taking two leaves, he laid them on his hands and breathed on them, and then he crushed them, and straightway a living freshness filled the room, as if the air itself awoke and tingled, sparkling with joy. And then he cast the leaves into the bowls of steaming water that were brought to him, and at once all hearts were lightened. For the fragrance that came to each was like a memory of dewy mornings of unshadowed sun in some land of which the fair world in Spring is itself but a fleeting memory. But Aragorn stood up as one refreshed, and his eyes smiled as he held a bowl before Faramir's dreaming face...

Suddenly, Faramir stirred, and he opened his eyes, and he looked on Aragorn who bent over him; and a light of knowledge and love was kindled in his eyes, and he spoke softly. 'My lord, you called me. I come. What does the king command?' (*LotR* 847-48)

The Lord of the Rings is a novel with two climaxes. The destruction of the One Ring is the obvious one, but the climax of Aragorn's story is subtler. The curing of Éowyn's and Faramir's illnesses is the true climax of his story, for everything that happens afterwards, from Aragorn's victory on the field of battle¹⁴ and his crowning as king, hinges on this moment. Through this act, Aragorn fulfills the prophecy known

¹⁴ Some readers may initially disagree with this statement, as the destruction of the Ring destroys both Sauron's guiding will and the Nazgûl's. However, one should note that Aragorn is the decisive element in the Last Debate. All the other lords bow to his position as heir to the throne. If he did not possess the authority to order the lords of Gondor, the delaying action fought at the Black Gates might not have provided Frodo the opportunity to reach the fires of Mount Doom. The two stories are entwined and there is a sense of providence to the order of events. Given the religious undertones in the novel that is exactly what it is.

among the commoners of Gondor: “*The hands of the king are the hands of the healer, and so shall the rightful king be known*” (LotR 844). The moment of his healings and the prophecy are complex images that should be examined.

First, the actual healing is done with *athelas*, or kingsfoil, an herb with the ability to restore a victim of the black breath and the Shadow. It is the same herb that keeps Frodo alive after he is stabbed by the Witch King’s Morgul knife on Weathertop. Something with the ability to refute the raw corrupting quality of evil is, by extension, raw good. It is the most manifest use of the divine good that permeates the nature of Middle-earth. In the healing of Faramir, Aragorn takes Ambient nature (the expression of God) and makes it manifest. His act is to restore the divine order of the world, to put things right, as it were. This is why the description of the healing uses so much natural imagery. The ‘living freshness’ is at once like the Holy Spirit and also the renewal of nature. It is part of the “monotheistic world of ‘natural theology’” that Tolkien designed (Letters 220). In the Houses of Healing, Aragorn fulfills the prophecy and changes from hero to king.

Secondly, the prophecy is entwined with Christian resonance. Christ was a king, but he was not king by battle, but by healing. Aragorn must take on the same characteristic to be successful. He cannot be king by violence. Of course, both Christ and Aragorn are kings by virtue of birth (a major factor in divine providential rule) but their actions define their kingships. The prophecy speaks volumes about Aragorn’s role: he is a healer, and only through mercy and grace shall the king be recognized. It might seem odd to some readers how quickly Aragorn is accepted by nearly everyone as the rightful heir. Denethor rejects him, but the Steward’s mind was damaged and corrupted by his use of

the palantír, which provided the infernal power of Sauron access to his thoughts. His monstrous attempt to burn himself and Faramir alive demonstrates what happens when a person is cut off from the moral nature of Middle-earth.

Although we have treated *The Lord of the Rings* as a single novel throughout our discussion, it is interesting to consider the title given to the third volume: *The Return of the King*. Tolkien preferred “The War of the Ring,” as he felt the title eventually used gave away too much of the story (*Letters* 170). But in the title used, our attention is focussed on the importance of Aragorn’s role in the story. Ultimately, that role is what allows us to understand why *The Lord of the Ring* is so popular and meaningful to the reader: it is a millenarian novel.

Modernism and Millennialism

Tolkien did not try to write for a specific audience, but in writing for himself, Tolkien hoped there were others like him in his generation. The twentieth century saw more technological development than any other. At the turn of the century, horses, trains, and rivers were the primary modes of transport for Western Europeans and North Americans. Now, horses are actually barred from common use in public roads and have become the subject of recreation, not a means of transport and labour. Automobiles and the long stretches of desolate concrete they require crisscross the landscape. Trains are still used, but have evolved into bullet trains: *Shinkansen* trains now reach speeds of 300 km/h in Japan (Japan-guide). The arts experienced drastic change as well. Music, once only accessible through live performance, and letters, once handwritten, first emerged physically into records and type. Now both media have undergone another transformation

into digital forms, where no physical impression of the art exists, only an electronic signature.

Radical social change also characterized the Western experience. A variety of social rights movements, from feminism to racial equality, destabilized many of the dominant sites of patriarchal, European/Anglo-Saxon Christian controls. Artistic forms changed immensely, with film and popular music engaging in mercurial transformations and reversals. Anti-war protests marked a sudden and complex change in the way western society feels about war, and the later acceptance of the Persian Gulf War seems to run counter to the current social commentary on the Iraq War, suggesting that modern society's opinions of war change radically with media representation (Keegan). In politics, the century saw the rise and fall of fascism and communism. Social theorists like Gramsci and Foucault advocated theories of hegemony and power that suggested democracy used more subtle but nonetheless coercive ways of controlling its population (Turner 204).

The twentieth century was also the bloodiest. The two World Wars, along with conflicts like the Vietnam War, consumed more lives than ever before. It was profoundly more violent than the previous century, which stood out as one of the most peaceful centuries in European history (although the American Civil War was an ominous sign of things to come). Through all of this radical change and trauma, the culture of the West was placed in a severe state of crisis. As power dynamics and traditional values and practices changed, cultures were left with many questions and a fractured sense of identity as they sought to incorporate the growing pluralism and globalization that characterizes modern society.

While these are vast generalizations of the period, they are representative of much of the century. As culture changed and experienced crisis, artists began to express their sense of dissociation. From the experimental painters Picasso and Pollock, to writers like Joyce and Kafka, to poets like Eliot and Ginsberg, and to songwriters like Dylan and Strummer/Jones, the art of the twentieth century reflects this modern/post-modern condition. Tolkien's understanding of fantasy and his writing rely upon his desire to escape from this condition. In the popular success of the novel, it seems Tolkien was not as alone as some might have wished.

While critics often deride *The Lord of the Rings* as "a work which many adults will not read more than once," "balderdash," and "juvenile trash," it has held an audience for fifty years (Shippey, *Author* 306; Wilson 312-314). This audience, as we have discussed, is complex and thoughtful; a tightly knit fan culture that is very fluent in fantasy. They find a need fulfilled in the genre and for fans of Tolkien that need is a millenarian story.

The Processes of Millennialism

In his study of millenarian activities, *New Heaven and New Earth*, Kenelem Burridge defines a structure to these real world social movements. He defines millennialism as a process by which a social group's lost power becomes transferred into religious expression through a prophet, who is a magician powered by charisma in the Weberian sense (Weber 46). Historically, movements like cargo cults and the Ghost Dance movement of the Sioux are examples of this process (Wallace 30-31, Burridge 65-72, 78-82). In fantasy, the narratives often express the same process, especially in the

most popular and successful stories. Burridge creates a general model that is based upon a set of basic requirements which enable a social process to occur in the culture.

The Basic Elements of Millennialism

The most basic requirement is the presence of religious elements at work (Burridge 4). Earlier we demonstrated that Tolkien's world is profoundly Christian in morality. The Fantastic device of magic, with its mysterious and unexplained process, is essentially faith-based and can be considered as a religious motif in the literature. Even in more science fiction-styled works like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, psychic powers, Vulcan telepathy, or the Force provide the magical a gateway into the rational world (*Star Trek: The Search for Spock*; *Star Wars: A New Hope*). With religion comes the notion of redemption, through which the fallen world can be returned to a state of grace (Burridge 5-8). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Middle-earth is an empty land of ruins and the small pockets of civilization are isolated or besieged, fallen from their former glory.

The notion of redemption is tied to the concept of renewal as well, and one of the most important things to understand about millennial movements is the idea of returning the past to the present and turning the future into a golden age. This is the promise of the second coming of Christ found in "Revelations 20:1-6,"¹⁵ and also the manifest intent of many real world social movements (Burridge). Fantastic narratives work in the same way. In Tolkien's story, the "Return of" signals the renewal of past traditions, which symbolise the return of prosperity. The kingship of Aragorn indicates that core moral values can be made new and resonant for the future.

¹⁵ Specifically 20:4-6:....They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Bible)

In order for a millennial movement to spring from this religious base there must be a level of oppression at work (Burridge 9-10). This is often a ruling power, the threat of conquest or, for our readers, the crisis of modernity. This oppression can only be resolved through the appearance of heroes and prophets (Burridge 10-12). These characters touch upon the religious elements in the work (Gandalf the wizard, or more contestably, Tom Bombadil) and ignite the process of change that results in a millennial movement. In the real world, this process takes the form of a religious movement and occasionally armed conflict. The Ghost Dance of the Sioux tribes is an important example of this process. A prophet named Wovoka became a messianic figure for the tribe and taught the Ghost Dance as a way in which the ghosts of the past would be made real and the tribe would live out their days in a revitalized Sioux society. Ultimately, the Ghost Dance came to a violent end in 1890, as the US army confronted the tribes involved (Mooney). In the fantasy novel, the narrative always moves towards conflict and resolution.

The Process of Millennialism: Phase One

Burridge delineates a clear three-phase process for Millenarian activities. Each of these phases can be related first to the readers of *The Lord of the Rings* and second to the narrative structure of the novel. The first phase is made of three stages. First, the culture experiences a “disenfranchisement and severance” that marks its loss of power and authority (Burridge 115). For the audience of the Fantastic, the disenfranchisement has been ongoing since the post-World War I period. Modernity’s disruptive effect on the mind of its participants forces them into a position of confusion and isolation. Many

artistic expressions rely on this experience, but unfortunately we do not have the space to examine them all.¹⁶

In the second stage, “lone individuals seek the basis of a common experience” (Burridge 115). Fan groups are brought together through common experience and knowledge. Therefore, this period is the one in which the fans are beginning to become interested in and exposed to the Fantastic; they intellectually and socially wander about, trying to find a common experience with which to construct peer group, often using a novel, television series or film as a starting point.

The third stage is based on a “loss of integrity turning on: (a) Qualitative measure: Industriousness; capacities of intellect; courage or warfare [or] (b) Quantitative measure: Handling money” (Burridge 115-16). In the real world of our readers, they often experience a loss of agency over all these elements. From a Marxist position, money plays an important part of power dynamics in modern society, and therefore exerts a great deal of pressure on the reader. It can also be seen as the impetus for the proliferation of the genre, because publishers and producers would not engage in the production of the novel and films if it were not profitable. Burridge allows for a political concession at this stage, which mitigates the actual process of revolution. In modern Western societies, democracy functions on the illusion of constant political concession to the will of the electorate (i.e. hegemony). Therefore, modern citizens are rarely able to organize into groups and form effective social movements.

¹⁶ Many novels from the Modernist period and afterwards, alongside many films, the recent *American Psycho*, *American Beauty* and *Lost in Translation* come to mind, as do many successful popular songs and albums, such as Pink Floyd’s *The Dark Side of the Moon* and *The Wall*, The Who’s *Tommy* and failed *Lifthouse* project, John Lennon’s “Imagine,” and Radiohead’s *O. K. Computer*, which are all examples of artistic conflicts with modernity. Of course, many of the major works of fantasy are also millennial: the entire arc of *Star Wars* can be mapped out in Burridge’s terms.

Although an argument could be made that feminism and the racial equality movement are examples of successful social movements, I would suggest that they were responding to Althusser's Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), while the millenarian voice of the Fantastic is responding to the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (Althusser 1971). Althusser describes a process by which all states maintain power and the status quo through processes of coercion. In absolute monarchies and totalitarian states, the state primarily relies upon processes of repression: military and police violence. In democratic states, the technique is subtler. Governments use ideological processes, such as voting, participating in capitalism, or discussions and legislation enforcing gender and race equality to maintain the status quo (Althusser 127-186). One might further argue that part of the complex process of modernity and hegemony is the incorporation of feminism and racial equality into the ISA upon the failure of the RSA's efforts to contain the problem.¹⁷ This idea of ideological coercion is related to ideas of hegemony, the process by which we are complicit in our own oppression. By adopting the values of the ideology, we continue to oppress others and ourselves. It is this mechanism of oppressive thought that fantasy allows the reader to escape from. It is the psychic strain that Tolkien thought that fantasy allows us to recover from and to clear our perspective.

The Process of Millennialism: Phase Two

The second phase of the millenarian movement is the most active. This is the "externalization of thought or ideas" resulting in either a lack of a prophet and the collapse of the movement into "diffuse and inchoate activities" or the "emergence of [a] prophet" and organized actions with the potential of transcending the social problems

¹⁷ In no way am I suggesting that feminist and racial equality movements have accomplished their goals. Rather, I would suggest that these movements have made significant social gains, but now have to deal with a much more complex and insidious form of oppression.

(Burridge 116). We might view the multitude of conventions held worldwide for fans of the Fantastic to be indicative of social activities. But because the group lacks a real world prophet, the fans become disparate groups and do not create a serious threat to authority. A few figures might have the possibility of being prophets—J. R. R. Tolkien, Gene Rodenberry, or George Lucas—but the political concession of hegemony does not allow for the fans to express their millennial crisis in the real world. Instead, they must turn to their imaginary worlds for release.

The Process of Millennialism: Phase Three

The third phase is the “Aftermath” of the socio-religious movement (Burridge 116). The millennial movement then ends in one of three possible conclusions: “Complete victory; or sect; or recurrence into Phase 1” (Burridge 116). In the real world, the fan subculture becomes a sect—a small quasi-religious group based upon exclusive knowledge and practices. In the narratives they enjoy, victory is experienced vicariously, allowing readers to alleviate their modern condition and experience a simulated millennial experience. However, the reader’s victory is not complete. As a vicarious experience, the reader’s triumph passes with the reading. It is a momentary respite that passes too swiftly. Hegemony and the status quo it creates forces the individual back into modern existence and causes him or her to re-accumulate the strain the novel released. This is why the Fantastic has flourished as a genre throughout the twentieth century, selling book upon book and film upon film, and it is also why so many of the its narratives are similar. Whether the reader re-experiences the same story over again or enters into a new world of fantasy does not matter: the excitement and psychic release of the work is what is important.

Millennialism and *The Lord of the Rings*

Now that the millennial process has been mapped out and we understand why fans gravitate towards millennial stories, we are left with examining the process in the actual narrative. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Elendil's death and Isildur's failure to destroy the Ring is the moment of severance that marks the beginning of the third stage. Isildur's failure to act seals the doom of the kingdom, and the slow decline of Man (sic) (*LotR* 51). The kingship being lost and a Steward being placed in charge of Gondor further represent this state of disenfranchisement.

The period of "lone individuals wandering" is found in Aragorn's travels to Rohan and Gondor, where he serves under kings and stewards, "exploring the hearts of Men" (*LotR* 1035). Aragorn eventually becomes dissatisfied with what he finds, and with the burden of his doom (the kingship and its connection with the One Ring) he loses faith in humanity (*LotR* 1035). A key element of Aragorn's character becomes fully formed at this point in his life: his role as a Ranger. Aragorn's knowledge of the wilderness and his easy, skilled way with animals are clues as to his special role in the story. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings*, good characters are connected with nature and though that connection, the intrinsic natural theology of Middle-earth and the divine will of God. This symbolism directly connects Aragorn with the prophecy and divine purpose (the renewal of Middle-earth) of his ascension to the throne.

Phase two is the basis of the novel. Gandalf serves as the prophet figure. Like Aragorn, he is also connected with natural imagery, and characters like Treebeard think highly of his behaviour. We are provided with further evidence of "natural theology" in the other Wizards, or Istari, in the story. The Istari, of which there are five, were sent to

Middle-earth to oppose Sauron (*Unfinished Tales* 502). In *The Lord of the Rings*, we only learn the names of three of the Istari: Gandalf, Saruman, and Radagast. All three are in some way related to nature. Gandalf describes Radagast as “a worthy Wizard, a master of shapes and changes of hue; and he has much lore of herbs and beasts, and birds are especially his friends” (*LotR* 250-51). Gandalf is in turn described by Treebeard as “the only wizard that really cares about trees” (*LotR* 455). Saruman is a fallen figure: Treebeard does indicate that the white Wizard once walked among the trees and cared for nature, but he grew steadily distant and finally grew to hate nature (*LotR* 462). We have discussed Saruman’s obsession with technology earlier, but another important symbolic shift indicates that he has been severed from the divine.

All the Istari are related to a colour: Saruman the White, Gandalf the Grey, Radagast the Brown. It can be safely assumed that this is something of a ranking system or a way of indicating the role of the Wizard within the Order, because Gandalf is returned to Middle-earth as Gandalf the White. Saruman’s fall is likewise represented in his adoption of the title Saruman the Many-Coloured. This adoption of all colours indicates his hubris: to master the world and bend the moral nature of Middle-earth to his will. As he is cast out, or excommunicated, from the Order by Gandalf, he is told: “You have no colour now” (*LotR* 569).

In his role of prophet, Gandalf creates two heroes, Frodo and Aragorn. He becomes more and more pivotal after his transformation into Gandalf the White. Through Gandalf’s initial actions, Aragorn takes steps to become king, and following the Council of Elrond wields his re-forged hereditary sword and frequently declares his lineage,¹⁸ in

¹⁸ The film adaptation varies wildly here as Aragorn spends far more time agonizing over the decision. This is done to maximize the climactic decision he makes in the third film.

evident in his declaration to Éomer: “I am Aragorn son of Arathorn, and am called Elessar, the Elfstone, Dunadan, the heir of Isildur Elendil’s Son of Gondor. Here is the Sword that was Broken and is forged again” (*LotR* 423). Gandalf, the prophet that heralds the new age, is so important that he is returned after death, a clear indication of his divine status.

The final phase culminates in the victory of the forces of good. Throughout the final books of the novel, Gondor is described as a city of “doubt and great dread” (*LotR* 937). Once evil is shown to be selfish and self-defeating in Gollum’s tragic end, the world begins to change: “the days that followed were golden” (*LotR* 925; 942).

It is important to analyse the symbolism of Aragorn’s crowning. The new Steward, Faramir, meets Aragorn at the Gate of Gondor. This meeting happens amidst rumours of the healing prophecy being fulfilled. Aragorn does not seize the white rod of the Steward as his own, but shows generosity in allowing Faramir to retain his familial role. Faramir then announces Aragorn’s titles, and the intertwining of current deeds, renewal of the past and prophetic fulfillment, should be noted:

‘Here is Aragorn son of Arathorn, chieftain of the Dúnedain of Arnor, Captain of the Host of the West, bearer of the Star of the North, wielder of the Sword Reforged, victorious in battle, whose hands bring healing, the Elfstone, Elessar of the line of Velandil, Isildur’s son, Elendil’s son of Númenor.’ (*LotR* 946)

The people are then asked if they will accept him as king, and they unanimously agree. The crown of Gondor is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship, tied, we are told, through symbols to the kings who came over the Sea. Those kings from across the Sea hailed from the divine land of Valinor, where the Valar (or Angels) reside. Through the crown,

the religious dimension is made manifest, and the crowning begins to reach its millennial peak. Aragorn begins to move towards the symbolic climax of the ceremony by connecting himself to the kings from the West and through them the divine:

Et Earello Endoreenna utulien. Sinome maruvan ar Hildinyar tenn' Ambar-metta!

And those were the words that Elendil spoke when he came up out of the Sea on the wings of the wind: 'Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place will I abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world.' (*LotR* 946)

Then Aragorn sets into motion a key semiotic event: the transmission of narrative authority. As mentioned above, Gandalf has created two heroes. In order for the millennial process to complete itself, one of the heroes must become the focus. Because he must be king to provide stability and closure to the millenarian movement, Aragorn must achieve a transmission of authority, not only from the prophet, but also from the other hero.

Therefore, Aragorn is humble and acknowledges his debts, declaring that "by the labour and valour of many have I come into my inheritance." He then asks that "the Ring-bearer bring the crown to me, and let Mithrandir set it upon my head, if he will; for he has been the mover of all that has been accomplished and this is his victory" (*LotR* 946). This act allows for a transition of power to take place: Frodo takes the crown from Faramir and transfers his role as hero as he passes the crown to Gandalf, who in turn transfers his authority to Aragorn by placing the White Crown upon Aragorn and declaring: "Now come the days of the king, and may they be blessed while the thrones of the Valar endure!" (*LotR* 946).

Aragorn achieves his kingship, reuniting his people under one nation. His ceremony does not diminish Frodo's role in the story, but only deepens the readers understanding of why the Ring-bearer must leave Middle-earth. Frodo has undertaken a terrible journey and in many ways journeyed deep in to the heart of evil and, through the power of the ring, experienced the separation from life and the natural theology of Middle-earth that all who bear the ring undergo.

As for Aragorn, he must fulfill his self-described role as "*Envinyatar*, the Renewer" (*LotR* 845). His successful ascension to the throne is not achieved through military conquest, but through Christian morality. He fights no war of unification; neither does he lead a band of knights on a quest. Instead, he fulfills the prophesy of healing (*LotR* 844).¹⁹ Aragorn's ultimate act, the healing of Faramir and Éowyn, parallels Christ's acts of healing and advocates compassion and love over violence. Frodo's journey likewise embodies Christian notions of sacrifice, pity and compassion.

Aragorn's success marks the beginning of the Fourth Age for Middle-earth, a period of prosperity and peace. It thus marks the culmination of the millennial narrative. It is important to point out that fantasy authors do not necessarily deliberately map out these stages. It is through observation of the genre that we can apply the template Burridge designed to the literature. Perhaps fantasy fans are expressing religious phenomenology, as Durkhiem might suggest. We can definitely demonstrate the workings of religious expression in the majority of fantasy novels, and therefore we

¹⁹ The theatrical version of *The Return of the King* lacks this scene and therefore radically changes the meaning of the narrative. The extended version of the film returns this scene, but it is represented in a very abstract manner, robbing the film of the key meaning of the Houses of Healing (*The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, extended edition). In this alteration the film radically changes Aragorn's role to that of a warrior-king.

might consider them secular modes of religious expressions (Durkhiem 1994). While not all fantasy novels or films will fit this format, the most successful certainly do.

A Weberian Coda

However, there is awkwardness in adopting this position. Certainly there are semiotic commonalities between the religious and the Fantastic, but the former is an important social institution and the latter a literary genre. While it is far beyond the scope of this study to attempt to answer all the possible relationships between faith and fantasy, we can examine some of the common symbols.

First of all, magic lies at the heart of Middle-earth. In *The Sociology of Religion*, Max Weber defines magic as a kind of “charisma” through which a magician affords himself social power and economic influence (Weber 2). This social power applies to the notion of the prophet in our model of millennialism. Furthermore, in complex societies, symbolic acts and images become integral parts of religious activities. As we discussed earlier, the fan culture of *The Lord of the Rings* and the verisimilitude of fantasy are based upon a consistent set of symbols and terms, through which social sub-groups form and propagate themselves.

Weber also discusses the role of prophets and rebirth in his study. He argues that there is no serious distinction between “a ‘renewer of religion’ who preaches an older revelation, actual or superstitious, and a ‘founder of religion’ who claims to bring completely new deliverances” (Weber 46). Perhaps here is an important point of divergence between fantasy and religion. While Weber is attempting to define large, cross-cultural trends, fantasy is often rooted in a specific culture’s mythic imagination.

The time and needs of that imagination differ with circumstance. In Tolkien’s

lifetime and afterwards, modernity is the key circumstance to respond. Millennialism is the best possible response because it both moves imaginatively forward into a golden age, while renewing the past. This dualism of past and future allows the reader to become comfortable in the present, just as Aragorn's journey along the paths of the dead put to rest the dark history of betrayal that has plagued the Kings of Gondor. The confrontation with the dead is another key prophecy of the King, as spoken by "Malbeth the Seer, in the days of Arvendui, last king at Fornost"...

The heir of him to whom the oath they swore.

From the North shall he come, need shall drive him:

he shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead. (*LotR* 764)

Aragorn's kingship allows Middle-earth to embrace the new and the hopeful out of a dark time. With a complex mixture of religious metaphor, natural images and symbolic passage, the millennial message of *The Lord of the Rings* can reach the reader.

Conclusion

When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton (*LotR* 22).

As we began with the end, so we end with the beginning. From a slightly unusual birthday party to the crowning of Aragorn, the reader has gone on a very intense millennial quest. As the pressures of the modern world descend upon us, we must find ways of releasing the strain. The Fantastic is one of those outlets. The readers can experience Tolkien's Recovery, Escape and Consolation, and, through their love of fantasy, develop peer groups. While in the real world hegemony might bar these groups from truly escaping their circumstance, through the narratives of Imagination, the fans can imaginatively subvert their oppressors and, while using their powers of creation, express non-conformist views and engage in protest. After all, it was *Star Trek* that featured the first interracial kiss on U.S. television (Kirk kissing his communication officer Uhura in the episode "Plato's Stepchildren") (www.startrek.com). Furthermore, the lack of positive critical and audience response to George Lucas' *Star Wars* prequels may be due to the fact that they run counter to the millennial story of the original films. Millennialism, the core narrative of the genre, allows the fans to cope with their modern existence, and perhaps even transcend it.

The One Ring

No discussion of The Lord of the Rings is complete without some mention of the One Ring. It is a symbol par excellence. Embodied in its simple golden circle are all our fears regarding power and modernity. Tom Shippey makes the crucial point that despite

the various critical attacks on Middle-earth, no critic has ever taken issue with the Ring (Shippey, *Author* 114-15). Its portrayal of power and its temptation is a very modern symbol. The oft misquoted Lord Acton did not write “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” until 1887 (qtd. in Shippey, *Author* 115).

Of course, the Ring’s relationship with nature connects it to our earlier reading of the novel. The invisibility effect of the Ring is not like most Fantastic invisibility devices. Instead, the bearer is moved into the realm of shadow, where the Ringwraiths and their master Sauron are forced to abide. The Ring and those under its power are completely removed from nature, cut off from the divine will and grace of Middle-earth. While these creatures are virtually immortal, they are not alive. Instead, the vast power of the Ring appears to be based upon slavery.

This fear of modernity leading to an evil that is slavish, hollow and cruel is a common part of modern literature: consider Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and *1984*, Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, or Heller’s *Catch-22* (Shippey, *Author* 128). The One Ring, indeed all of the evil in Middle-earth, stems from an alienation that is very modern and very familiar. This is why all the powerful people Frodo could have given the Ring to decline it. It is why Boromir is a sad and tragic character and why his brother, Faramir is a braver soul and a clearer thinker than most men.

The Ring is a symbol that readers and critics alike instantly identify. It is the most important symbol Tolkien devised because it represents the absolute antithesis to his beliefs. It is the crowning piece in a complex series of semiotic tropes which fans use as linguistic and behavioural building blocks for their subculture. Using semiotics, we can reveal the profound symbolism at work in the novel’s portrayal of nature. Once we take

this semiotic representation and place it in opposition with modernity, it can be shown how Tolkien's masterpiece responds to our psychological needs through a millennial process. This is a more complex way of discussing the popularity of the work than dismissing it as juvenile adventure literature or by quoting sales figures.

Millennialism and Environmentalism

Throughout the preceding chapters, millennialism and environmentalism have been discussed in connection with each other, just as anthropology and literary studies have informed one another throughout. While my argument has, in part, examined an imaginary realm, it has also connected with the real world millennial response to environmental crisis. Elf Lore can be understood as a millennial group advocating for a golden age of harmony between humanity and nature.

In a very recent study of environmentalism and religion, historian Thomas R. Dunlap responds to the debate over the historical nature of "wilderness" as a social construct started by William Cronon's article "The Trouble with Wilderness" (Dunlap 3). His work, *Faith in Nature* examines the possible connections between religious faith and environmentalism. What we have discussed here involves a similar set of questions, as we have tied readers and environmental groups to a novel and nature, modernity, and religion to a novel. Millennialism plays an important role in environmental movements, as they can be often divided into apocalyptic or millennial groups (Dunlap 97). It is difficult to estimate how deeply the Environmental Liberation Front views their work as religious but they are certainly apocalyptic, while Elf Lore is obviously religious, supporting new age faiths like Wicca (www.earthliberationfront.com; www.Elflore.org). The violence that ELF advocates is not encouraging from the standpoint of religion, but it

does interact with violent fundamentalist groups throughout the world. It certainly alienates sympathetic individuals and groups, as the conflict between Elf Lore and ELF demonstrates. However, both can be viewed as modern attempts to spark millennial changes in society.

However, this is not a study of religion and environmentalism. This is a study of *The Lord of the Rings*. Nevertheless there are important questions raised in the process of this study. If readers experience an emotion and psychic millennial process in the reading of fantasy, and some of these readers take away an environmental message, are the two entwined? The simple answer is no. The more difficult answer is maybe. Environmental movements walk a fine line between passion and science. Fears of over environmental crisis, the future of the planet and emotional connection with the “sanctity” of nature are not easily quantified, whereas many of the organizations both for and against environmental protection attempt to deal in hard scientific data with all its illusion of truth behind it (Dunlap 168-69). Fringe religious elements of environmentalism, like Elf Lore with its elf scout children’s camps and witches festivals, clearly hold spiritual elements in their doctrine. One only has to read their own description of their organization:

On may (sic) 23, 1983, when Elf Lore Family Inc. began it was just an idea: To buy and maintain a piece of land to be owned in common by anyone who bought a membership. It was to be a place to protect the green earth, to replant, to regreen (sic) where it was damaged, and to experiment with earth friendly methods of building, gardening and living. A place where the land and everyone who walks it, is respected no matter their beliefs. A place to heal the earth and to

be healed by it. Festivals, psychic fairs performances and other events were held to raise money to buy the land...Although we have aspired to be our elvish (sic) selves, full of grace, wisdom and beauty Following our truest stars toward the blooming of the dream, we have sometimes faltered. Though in our deepest hearts we are made of finer stuff, we are yet human and torn between the call of the dream and the needs of everyday life. Our elfin spirits may yearn for; beauty, for stars and trees, for clarity and wisdom and the wonder of fair places and fair folk but oftentimes we are more hobbit-like than elfin. Thinking only of the next meal and a warm seat by the fire. An (sic) yes our decisions and meetings may move at the speed of an Entmoot and we may at times squabble like a band of orcs fighting of (sic) fresh meat, but we are yet striving toward something finer and greater than our meager selves. Every child is a star, yet some flicker from time to time...The work of creating Lothlorien (sic) as nature sanctuary, green haven and woodland meeting ground has rested always in the hands of a few ever-changing folks backed always by the love and support of others...grounding what was only an idea and brought to Earth the vision of a piece of common ground.

(www.elflore.org)

While it is rather longwinded, this statement clearly echoes Tolkien (“Entmoot” and “orcs”) but incorporates new age mysticism. New age faiths are often a mixture of old tales and new responses to spiritual demands. In many ways, the ideas of renewal intrinsic to them are millennial: “it is difficult to imagine a millenarianism that is not implicitly or explicitly religious, the New Age appears to be the end of time and dawn of eternity” (Taylor 36).

A Final Parting

While Tolkien himself was an orthodox Catholic, he created a world open to non-Christian interpretation. By removing the trappings of faith and making the moral values of Christianity the philosophical underpinning of Middle-earth, he allowed the reader to experience a self-reflective internal process. This was what the counter-culture of the sixties found in *The Lord of the Rings*. It is what Christian authors today are using Tolkien's novel for: books like *Finding God in The Lord of the Rings* are representative of the adoption of Tolkien as a pastoral tool. The faith hidden in Middle-earth allows it to respond to modernity in both overt and subtle ways. It allows fans to achieve respite in the secular, bureaucratic world by utilizing their imaginations. Whether religious leaders, environmentalists, or purely fantasists, they find the millennialism of *The Lord of the Rings* and through it clarity of thought and freedom of imagination.

There are profound connections between Tolkien's understanding of the Fantastic and other genres, such as the pastoral (Gifford). This historically important genre's concern with the intrusion of the anti-pastoral into an idyllic reality has a great deal of relevance not only to Tolkien but also to many other fantasy authors. The same questions raised by Tolkien are found throughout literature. The readers of *The Lord of the Rings* are provided a possible answer to their modern crisis through the millennial expressions found in Tolkien's masterpiece. It is implicit in the work, from the very structure of nature to the events of the narrative. The Recovery, Escape and Reconciliation that lie at the heart of Tolkien's notions of fantasy are contained within the millennial reading.

It is my hope that through this study the world of Middle-earth has been rendered a bit more magical and a bit more real. This work has walked a fine line between the various schools of criticism associated with Tolkien and tried to harmonize them. Likewise, I hope that Tolkien's charisma as writer, visionary, [sub-]creator of new symbols, and, therefore, magician has been made clear. He gave the world the entirety of his imagination and opened the minds of many readers and gave inspiration to authors throughout the world.

Works Cited

"A Tour of the Downtown Dublin of Ulysses." 10 March 2004

<<http://www.2street.com/joyce/maps/tour.html>>

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 1999.

Algeo, John. "The Toponymy of Middle-earth." *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 33.1-2 (March-June, 1985): 80-95.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

Auden, W. H. "A World Imaginary, but Real." *Encounter*. Vol. 3 (November 1954): 59-62.

Basso, Keith H. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

Bates, Brian. *The Real Middle-Earth: Magic and Mystery in the Dark Ages*. London: Sidwick and Jackson, 2002.

Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology*. Toronto: Routledge, 1991.

Berger, Arthur Asa. *Popular Culture Genres: Theories and Texts*. London: Sage Publications, 1992.

The Bible. New International Version Student Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002.

Birzer, Bradley J. J. R. R. *Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth*. United States: ISI Books, 2002.

- Bormann, Ernest G. "Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation" in "Homo-Narrans: Story-telling in Mass Culture and Everyday Life." *Journal of Communication* 35 (1985): 128-37.
- Bradley, Richard. *The Social Foundations of Prehistoric Britain: Themes and Variations in the Archaeology of Power*. New York: Longman Press, 1984.
- Burridge, Kenelm. *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities*. Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1969.
- Byock, Jesse L. trans. *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.
- Campbell, Joesph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002.
- Chance, Jane. *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology of England*. Revised edition. Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2001.
- Dagorhir Battle Games*. 10 March 2004 <<http://www.dagorhir.com/dagorhir/dagorhir.htm>>
- DeVries, Kelly. *Medieval Military Technology*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1992.
- "Digital Grading." *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Special Extended DVD. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2001.

- Dunlap, Thomas R. *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.
- Durkheim, Émile. *Durkheim on Religion*. Ed. W. S. F. Pickering. Georgia: Scholar's Press, 1994.
- The Earth Liberation Front*. 24 November 2003 <<http://www.earthliberationfront.com>>.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Elf Lore*. 21 February 2004 <<http://www.elflore.org>>
- Flieger, Verlyn. "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-conflict in Middle Earth." *J. R. R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances: Views of Middle Earth*. Ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons. London: Greenwood Press, 2000: 147-58.
- Fonstad, Karen Wynn. *The Atlas of Middle-earth*. rev. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.
- Forster, E. M. *A Room with a View*. London: Hodden & Stoughton, 1977.
- Garth, John. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Gellner, Ernest. "Knowledge of Nature and Society." *Nature and Society in Historical Context*. Ed. Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter, and Bo Gustafsson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 9-17.
- Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. New York, Routledge Press, 1999.
- Girouard, Mark. *The Return of Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. London: Yale University Press, 1981.

- Goff, Richard, et al. *The Twentieth Century: A Brief Global History*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.
- Hatto, A. T., trans. *The Nibelungenlied*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1979.
- Helms, Randel. *Tolkien's World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
- Hoskins, W. G. *The Making of the English Landscape*. Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988.
- Japan-guide.com*. "Shikansen (Japanese Bullet Train)." 4 April 2004 <<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2018.html>>
- Johnson, Judith Anne. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Six Decades of Criticism*. London: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Jones, Gwyn and Thomas Jones. *The Mabinogion*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.
- Keegan, John. *A History of Warfare*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1994.
- Keller, Christian. "The Theoretical Aspects of Landscape Study." *Decoding the Landscape*. Ed. Timothy Collins. Galway, Ireland: University College Galway Press, 1994. 79-98.
- Kroeber, Karl. *Ecological Literary Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- — —. *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2000.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. Special Extended DVD. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2001.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2001.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers. Special Extended DVD. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2003.

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King. Dir. Peter Jackson. Perf. Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, Elijah Wood. New Line Cinema, 2002.

Matless, David. *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion Books, 1998.

Mooney, James. *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Morris, William. *The Well at World's End*. 2 Volumes. Berkeley Heights, New Jersey: Wildside Press, 2000.

Nygaard, Roger. *Trekkies*. Neo Motion Pictutres, Los Angles, 1998.

The One Ring.net. 10 March 2004 <<http://www.theonering.net>>

The One Ring.net. *The People's Guide to J. R. R. Tolkien*. Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Oxford English Dictionary. On-line. 2 April 2004 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.

Pearce, Joseph. *Tolkien: Man and Myth*. San Fransisco: Igantius Press, 1998.

Pope, Rex. *War and Society in Britain, 1899-1948*. New York: Longman, 1991.

Rabkin, Eric S. *The Fantastic in Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

- Sayer, George. "Recollections of J. R. R. Tolkien." *Tolkien: A Celebration*. Ed. Joseph Pearce. Great Britain: Fount, 1999: 1-16.
- Schoen, Lawrence M. "A Brief History of Klingon." *Futureframe*. 31 January 2000
<<http://www.morgenwelt.de/futureframe/000131-klingon.htm>>.
- Shippey, Tom. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001.
- . *The Road to Middle-earth*. Rev. Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Siebers, Tobin. *The Romantic Fantastic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Society for Creative Anachronism*. 20 October 2004 <www.sca.com>
- Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory*. New York: Verso, 1989.
- Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West*. Trans., Charles Francis Atkinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Startrek.com*. "Episode Guide: Plato's Stepchildren." 8 April 2004
<<http://www.startrek.com/startrek/view/series/TOS/episode/68794.html>>
- Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. Dir. Leonard Nimoy. Perf. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelly. Paramount, 1984.
- Star Wars: A New Hope*. Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher. Lucasfilm, 1977.
- Taylor, A. J. P. *English History: 1914-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Thorpe, Andrew. *Britain in the Era of the Two World Wars, 1914-45*. New York: Longman, 1994.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.

- Tolkien, J. R. R. "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1997: 5-48.
- — —. *The History of Middle-Earth*. 12 vol. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollinsPublishers 1984-1996.
- — —. *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers 1998.
- — —. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1981.
- — —. *The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.
- — —. "On Faerie Stories." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1997:109-161.
- — —. *The Silmarillon*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999.
- — —. *Unfinished Tales*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1998.
- Tourism New Zealand*. "The Official Tourism NZ Site for Destination NZ." 10 March 2004. <www.purenz.com>
- Turgon. *The Tolkien Fan's Medieval Reader : Versions in Modern Prose*. Cold Spring Press, 2004.
- Turner, Jonathan H. *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. 7th edition. Toronto: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2004.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. *Religion: An Anthropological View*. New York: Random House, 1966.

Walmsley, Nigel. "Tolkien and the '60s" *J. R. R. Tolkien: This Far Land*. Ed. Robert Giddings. London: Vision Press, 1983: 73-86.

Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*. Trans. Ephraim Fischhoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

West, Richard C. *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist*. Kent State University Press, 1981.

White, Hugh. *Nature, Sex and Goodness in a Medieval Literary Tradition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Wilson, Edmund. "Oo, those Awful Orcs." *Nation* (14 April 1956): 312-14.