MYTH, FANTASY AND FAIRY-STORY IN TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH

BUVENESWARY VATHEMURTHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY MALAYA
2016

MYTH, FANTASY AND FAIRY-STORY IN TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH

BUVENESWARY VATHEMURTHY

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR
2016

Abstract

This dissertation explores J.R.R. Tolkien's ideas and beliefs on myth, fantasy and fairy story and their roles in portraying good and evil in his famous works. Indeed, many authors and critics such as Bradley J. Birzer, Patrick Curry, Joseph Pearce, Ursula Le Guin, and Jay Richards have researched Tolkien based on this connection. They have worked on the nature of good and evil in his stories, the relevance of Tolkien in contemporary society, and the importance of myth and fantasy. However, my original contribution would be to examine the pivotal roles of myth, fantasy and fairy story as a combined whole and to demonstrate that they depend on one another to convey truths about good and evil. This research is aimed at showing that Middle-earth evolves from a combination of these three genres. This is made evident by the way Tolkien crafted his lecture *On Fairy Stories* for a presentation at the Andrew Lang lecture at the University of St Andrews in 1939. This dissertation then examines Tolkien's own definitions of myth, fantasy and fairy stories and his extensive research on these "old-fashioned" or forgotten genres. He believed they could provide a cure for the moral and human degradation triggered by modernism. This study also investigates various criticisms, biographical books written by Tolkien experts, Tolkien's personal letters, various philosophical and academic essays and mainly his works to unravel the questions that need answering. My discussion aims to show that the combination of these genres and their methods of representation, ultimately deliver a message of goodness, faith and a respect for tradition. Finally, this thesis finds that Tolkien's noble aims and ambitions behind his legendarium are tied to an enduring faith in God and in moral and social responsibility.

Abstrak

Disertasi ini meneroka idea-idea J.R.R.Tolkien pada mitos, fantasi dan cerita dongeng serta peranan mereka dalam menggambarkan kebaikan dan kejahatan dalam karya-karya beliau yang terkenal. Malah, ramai penulis dan pengkritik seperti Bradley J. Birzer, Patrick Curry, Joseph Pearce, Ursula Le Guin, dan Jay Richards telah mengkaji Tolkien berdasarkan topic tersebut. Mereka telah mengkaji unsur-unsur ini dalam karya-karya beliau, bagaimana ia relevan kepada masyarakat kontemporari, dan kepentingan mitos dan fantasi. Sumbangan saya adalah untuk menunjukkan peranan-peranan penting mitos, fantasi dan cerita dongeng secara keseluruhannya untuk menunjukkan bahawa mereka bergantung kepada satu sama lain dan menunjukkan kebenaran kuasa-kuasa kebaikan dan kejahatan. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bahawa "Middle-earth" sebenarnya adalaj hasil gabungan tiga genre dan ini dapat dilihat jelas melalui cara Tolkien telah merancang dan mempersembahkan kuliahnya bertajuk On Fairy Stories untuk presentasi Andrew Lang di University of St Andrews pada tahun 1939. Dengan penemuan itu, disertasi ini juga mengkaji definisi mitos, fantasi dan cerita-cerita dongeng Tolkien sendiri dan kajian meluas beliau terhadap genre-genre in yang dianggap sebagai genre-genre "fesyen lama" atau genre-genre yang tidak berkepentingan demi mencari penawar bagi masyarakat modern yang tidak berakhlak moral dan tidak berperikemanusiaan. Ia juga menyiasat pelbagai kritikan, buku-buku biografi yang ditulis oleh pakar-pakar Tolkien, surat peribadi Tolkien, pelbagai esei falsafah dan akademik dan terutamanya karya-karya beliau untuk mendapat jawapan bagi soal-soal penting. Dengan gabungan ketiga-tiga genre dan kaedah presentasi mereka, disertasi ini bertujuan untuk menyampaikan mesej megenai kebenaran kebaikan, moral, kepentingan dan menghormati tradisi. Akhirnya, tesis ini

mendapati bahawa matlamat mulia Tolkien di sebalik "legendarium" adalah dengan penuh

iman yang kekal kepada tuhan, moral dan tanggungjawab sosial.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

> Myth and fairy-story must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth (or error), but not explicit, not in the known form of the primary 'real' world.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters* [1]

When myth, fantasy and fairy-story unite and converge with reality, the effects can be astonishing as seen in the astonishing worldwide book sales of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series:

> *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), at about 50 million copies, is probably the biggest-selling single work of fiction in this century. *The Hobbit* (1937) is not far behind at between 35 and 40 million copies. And one could add the considerable sales, now perhaps over 2 million, of his dark and difficult posthumously published epic *The Silmarillion* (1977). The grand total is thus well on its way to 100 million. Tolkien's books have been translated into more than thirty languages including Japanese, Catalan, Estonian, Greek, Hebrew, Finnish, Indonesian, and Vietnamese. (Curry, *Defending Middle-earth*, Intr., 9, par 3)

W.H. Auden, a renowned British poet, wrote in *The New York Times*: "No fiction I have read in the last five years has given me more joy." Later in a radio program, he had this to say about *The Lord of the Rings*: "If someone dislikes it, I shall never trust their literary judgment about anything again" (*Profiles in Faith*, 1). Indeed Dr. Christopher Wright Mitchell went as far as to hail Tolkien as the "father of modern fantasy literature" (*Veritas Forum*, 2009).

---

[1] See page 167

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, better known as J.R.R. Tolkien, was born on the 3rd of January 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa to Arthur Tolkien and Mable Suffield. He was the eldest child in his family and he had a baby brother named Hilary. Arthur passed away due to rheumatic fever when Mable and her two sons were in Birmingham for a short vacation. After her husband's death, Mable and her sons did not return to South Africa and she raised her sons alone in England. Then against the will of the families on both sides (Suffields and Tolkiens), Mable converted to Catholicism and from that moment on Tolkien "remained a Catholic all his life" (Garth, 12). In 1914, Tolkien "served as a soldier in World War I and watched his son Christopher serve in World War II" (Kraus, 138). He was also a philologist and was a principal collaborator in the translation and literary revision of the First Edition of the Jerusalem Bible.[2]

Tolkien is best known for his three main novels: *The Silmarillion* (*S*), *The Hobbit* (*H*), and *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*. *The Silmarillion* was collected, edited and published in 1977 posthumously by Tolkien's son, Christopher. *The Hobbit* also known as *There and Back Again* was published on 21st September 1937. *The Lord of the Rings* was published between 1954 to1955. It is also called an epic trilogy because it contains three volumes and they are *The Fellowship of the Ring* (*FR*), *The Two Towers* (*TT*), and *The Return of the King* (RK). Tolkien's awe-inspiring myth-making is best expressed in *The Silmarillion*. *The Silmarillion* is the "enigmatic and unfinished work that forms the theological and philosophical foundation upon which, and the mythological framework within which *The Lord of the Rings*" (Pearce, 6) and *The Hobbit* were structured.

---

[2] See Birzer, *The Christian Gifts of J.R.R. Tolkien*, http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/

His fantasy novels were a phenomenal success and caused a shockwave which was also a double-edged sword. They received a combination of both incredible success and critical hostility. As Curry questions, "what are so many readers finding so rewarding in these books that so many professional literary intellectuals think is so bad?" (*Tolkien and His Critiques*, 1). Critics like Edmund Wilson, Catherine Stimpson, Brenda Partridge, Raymond Williams, and Kathleen Herbert have critically slammed Tolkien's works as "juvenile trash", as being sexist, racist, snobbish and most of all for not being relevant to modern society.[3] Perhaps the most bitter criticism came from Germaine Greer, an Australian theorist, academic and journalist. In *Waterstone's Magazine*, she expressed her frustration claiming that it had been her "nightmare" that readers would consider Tolkien as the "most influential writer of the twentieth century" and now "the bad dream has materialized" (qtd. in *Hands of a Healer*, 1).

Nevertheless, there are many writers like Joseph Pearce, Patrick Curry, Jane Chance and Christopher Synder who disagree with the denigrations placed on Tolkien. Patrick Curry, the author of *Defending Middle Earth*, argues that critics have always misinterpreted and misunderstood Tolkien and the messages implied in his books. Even Joseph Pearce, the writer of *Tolkien: Man and Myth, a Literary Life*, agrees that Tolkien was "a misunderstood man precisely because he is a mythunderstood man" (5). According to Pearce, Tolkien understood the nature and the meaning of myth in a different light which his critics and detractors misapprehended[4] and thus they failed to appreciate his works.

---

[3] Detailed description of criticisms found in Patrick Curry's *Tolkien and His Critiques* , pages 1-32

[4] See Pearce in *Sanctifying Myth*: fwd. 5, par. 1. Tolkien understood myths do not project reality but ineffable truths that derive from reality. I will discuss this in detail in Chapter 2

Regardless of the brutal lashing of the critics, it is imperative to note that Tolkien took his stories seriously. Tolkien strongly believed that "every sub-creator in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that the peculiar quality of this Secondary World (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it" (*Letters*, 155). Also, he wished his legendarium to be marvellous and fantastical while remaining consistent in believable ways. In *On Fairy-Stories* Tolkien discusses the "suspension of disbelief or the willing suspension of disbelief", a phrase which "indicates a kind of tolerance or tacit agreement".[5] According to Tolkien, a sub-creator aims not for the willing suspension of disbelief but for the "true" believing in the Secondary World as if it was as real as his/her own; in an "enchanted state".[6] This true believing of a reader is called the "secondary belief". On the contrary, the willing suspension of disbelief acts more like a "make-believe"; a "subterfuge".[7] Undoubtedly, he manages to establish this "secondary belief" amongst his readers. This is recognised through his meticulous explanations of his views and theories on myth, fantasy and fairy-stories in his famous essay *On Fairy-Stories*. And by the time he began working on *The Lord of the Rings*, his "theories appear to have been fully evolved" (Ryan, 107).

This then leads to the significance of sub-creating and mythopoeia[8] to Tolkien. For him sub-creating a new myth has a deep connection with Christianity; it is born through the bond between God and man. This is unmistakable when Pearce explains that Tolkien's philosophy of myth is "rooted as it is in the relationship between Creator and creature, and in consequence, the relationship between Creation and sub-creation" (qtd in *Sanctifying Myth*, fwd.5, par. 2). Below is the passage where Tolkien illuminates

---

[5] See Reilly in *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, page 97
[6] See Tolkien in *On Fairy-Stories*, page 132
[7] Ibid, page 132
[8] Myth-making

the transcendent value of mythopoeia to his dear friend C.S. Lewis who once believed that myths were just lies and deceit:

> But, said Lewis, myths are lies, even though lies breathed through silver.
>
> No, said Tolkien, they are not.
>
> ...just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth.
>
> We have come from God (continued Tolkien), and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed only by myth-making, only by becoming a 'sub-creator' and inventing stories, can Man aspire to the state of perfection that he knew before the Fall. Our myths may be misguided, but they steer however shakily towards the true harbour, while materialistic 'progress' leads only to a yawning abyss and the Iron Crown of the power of evil. (*J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, 143-144)

It is central to Tolkien's viewpoint sub-creation is a gift of God's grace unto human beings. Tolkien contends that myths are not lies and are the best way of conveying certain inexpressible truths. So although man-made mythologies are sub-created, they deliver truths that come from God. This explains why Tolkien views man as being one step closer to God when myth-making or sub-creating because this creative act reflects the divinity in human beings. The very same idea is reflected by James Hogan in *Reel Parables: Life Lessons from Popular Films* in which he explicates that all mythologies "illustrate the good dreams and desires of humanity, which have been implanted by the Creator" (17). Even if myths woven by human beings contain errors, they also remind readers of the timeless truth that God stands in direct contrast with materialistic progress and gains which only lead to evil and abyss.[9] What is more, according to Birzer, is that Tolkien argues that "a true myth has the power to revive us, to serve as anamnesis, or a way of bringing to conscious experiences with transcendence"

---

[9] Refer to Joseph Pearce in *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*, page 35

(*Sanctifying Myth*, intr. 15, par. 1). The conscious encounter with goodness and transcendence in mythologies have helped people keep order in society. This is because as mentioned previously, for Tolkien, myths do express transcendental and greater truths than historical facts. And this idea is also demonstrated by Birzer as he points out that a myth, "inherited or created", offers a "sudden glimpse of truth" and that truth is "a brief view of heaven" (*Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 36, par.2). Ultimately, both Tolkien and Birzer seem to agree that sanctified myths reveal human beings in a perfect state; a state of being before the "Fall".

Fascinatingly, Tolkien established this secondary belief in his personal life well. He was a man who practised what he preached and Birzer explains that Tolkien mythologized almost everything in his lifetime.[10] By mythologizing the world, Tolkien believed it optimized and intensified the appreciation for beauty and the "sacramentality" of creation and also made people realize that notions of beauty and love transcend time and space.[11] This is apparent in a letter written to his son, Christopher Tolkien on the 11th of July 1972:

> It is at any rate not comparable to the quoting of pet names in obituaries. I never called Edith Lúthien – but she was the source of the story that in time became the chief pan of *The Silmarillion*. It was first conceived in a small woodland glade filled with hemlocks at Roos in Yorkshire (where I was for a brief time in command of an outpost of the Humber Garrison in 1917, and she was able to live with me for a while). In those days her hair was raven, her skin clear, her eyes brighter than you have seen them, and she could sing – and dance. But the story has gone crooked, & I am left, and I cannot plead before the inexorable Mandos. (*Letters* 340, 463)

As his tombstone suggests, Tolkien beheld his life with his beloved wife Edith in both historical and mythological ways. Manifestly, Edith served as an inspiration for him for his fictional character Lúthien Tinuviel, an elf-maiden. From the quote, it is evident that

---

[10] Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 36, par.1
[11] Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, in *Sanctifying Myth*, Intr. 13, par.2

6

Tolkien's memories and pure sense of admiration for his wife's hair, skin, eyes, voice and dance is evergreen. At Tolkien's instructions, the names Lúthien and Beren were engraved below their names respectively on their shared gravestone. And by mythologizing life, I believe both Tolkien and Edith transcended death.

Tolkien was also serious-minded about his stories because he firmly believed that his myth and creativity were gifts that came directly from God. This could be garnered from a 1958 letter he wrote to Deborah Webster, where Tolkien declares "I am a Christian," and it can be "deduced from my stories" (*Letters*, 303). Joseph Pearce affirms that Tolkien's "development of the philosophy of myth derives directly from his Christian faith" (qtd. in *Sanctifying Myth,* fwd. 5, par. 2). Bradley J. Birzer, in his book, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-Earth*, shares the same understanding with Pearce that Tolkien truly believed that he served as a mere "scrivener" of God's myth and he credited God for bestowing the mythology of Middle-earth unto him alongside the task of recording it.[12]

In addition to that, Tolkien worked on his stories with utmost dedication because he deemed his legendarium as a tribute to his friends who died at the Great War.[13] His Tea Club, Barrovian Society members cum friends (T.C.B.S) served as an inspiration for Tolkien; they were Christopher Wiseman, Geoffrey Bache Smith, and Robert Gilson. The loss of his friends Gilson and Smith in World War I ignited in Tolkien "some spark of fire…that was destined to kindle a new light" by rekindling "an old light in the world…, to testify for God and Truth"… (Which is for all the evil of our own side

---

[12] See Birzer in *Sanctifying Myth,* Ch.2, 37, par 3 and Ch.2, 42, par.1
[13] Ibid, ch.1, 19, par. 1

with in the large view good against evil)" (Tolkien, *Letters,* 14). Thus, Tolkien wanted his legendarium to help restore knowledge of the old truths to a ravaged post-war world.[14] Besides his treasured friends, part of Tolkien's ambition was to present the English with a mythology of their own; to restore an epic tradition that he felt was "lacking in their national literature".[15] This desire to contribute to England's literature is reflected in his letter to Milton Waldman, where he confessed that he "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…which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country" (*Letters*, 167).

Also, working on his myth and stories helped him cope during the War as well. It helped maintain his "sanity and sanctity" amidst the "human stupidity" called war. They offered him escapism; they provided him a sense of relief from the chaos of World War I. The promising mythology and stories provided him liberation and most of all it served as a catharsis.[16] With these very serious aims, concerns and implications in his writings, why did Tolkien choose myth, fantasy and fairy-story particularly as genres to produce his legendarium? As noted by Tolkien scholars like Curry, Birzer, Pearce, Shippey, and Le Guin, Tolkien's fascination for myth, fantasy, and fairy-story had caused much dissatisfaction and heated debates amongst his critics. Yet interestingly, Tolkien has chosen to use all three genres and fuse them in his legendarium.[17]

---

[14] Ibid, ch.3, page 52
[15] See Curry in *Defending Middle-earth*, page 35
[16] See Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 41, par.2, and, Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, pages 78, 90
[17] See detailed description in *On Fairy-Stories*

1.1 Methodological Framework

This dissertation sets out to analyse three major ideas. First of all, to study Tolkien's and other scholars' definitions of the genres of myth, fantasy and fairy-story. Second, to highlight the merging of these genres and how they portray good and evil in Tolkien's works. Lastly, to emphasize that the merging provides readers with a powerful recovery, escape, and consolation. This will be done by analysing and evaluating Tolkien's related theories on these three genres found in his essay *On Fairy-Stories*, supported by examples from his novels: *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and other posthumous works as well. Having said that, this dissertation is not a textual analysis on *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The main aim of this study is to show how the convergence of the three genres in Tolkien's texts enables him to discuss the themes of good and evil with powerful effect. *On Fairy-Stories*[18] is a vital essay because it contains Tolkien's detailed explanation of his philosophy and his own beliefs in myth, fantasy and fairy-stories. His fantasy novels manifest Tolkien's applications of these genres. Besides *On Fairy-Stories*, truths in Tolkien's works can be discerned from an extensive study of the author's views and purposes, the points of view of critics, scholars and readers, and the examination of important passages and quotes, through the study of characterization, and the various symbolisms, representations, motives, and meanings in his texts.

It is also important to address the fact that Tolkien preferred to evaluate literary texts as things told in "entirety" and this is evident in his famous essays *Beowulf: The*

---

[18] Although the essay is primarily on fairy-stories or fairy tales, it is equally relevant to what we now call "fantasy."

Monster and the Critics, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and *On Fairy-Stories.*[19] The practice of studying and understanding a whole text eludes tendencies of over-simplifications of history and is relevant to fairy-stories as well.[20] Tolkien observed that critics, investigators and students of folklore are inclined to say that "any two stories that are built round the same folk-lore motive, or are made up of a generally similar combination of such motives, are 'the same stories'" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 119). They arrive at a general conclusion by looking at recurring similarities in the stories. To this Tolkien refutes and responds by saying, "it is precisely the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 120). For Tolkien, the subtleties and intricate nuances makes a literary text "unclassifiable" and special.

Moreover Tolkien deemed that art or literature should never be dissected too much as well. This is evident when Tolkien quoted George Dasent who had said, "we must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 120). The soup that Tolkien is referring to is the "story served up by its author" and the bones are "its sources and materials".[21] Hence this discussion adopts an in-depth analysis of Tolkien's essay as I believe one must read Tolkien's legendarium as whole because it (aka Middle-earth) is made of a combination of myth, fantasy and fairy-story. I could not agree more with J. Michael Stitt who says in his essay "Ox Bone Soup" that the "essence of great stories is not found in their bits" (www.faculty.unlv.edu).

---

[19] See Tolkien in *J.R.R. Tolkien: The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, pages 5, 74, and 119
[20] See *On Fairy-Stories*, page 119
[21] Ibid, page 120

The study of bits and pieces could be linked to Reductionism, a method of reading a text which "seeks to explain a particular phenomenon in terms of more basic, general principles" (Slingerland, 266). One example is the application of Vladimir Propp's theory of narrative structure in fairy tales. Propp's structuralist analysis of a fairy-story produces generalizations such as "all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure" and "the number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited" (Propp, 2-10). Furthermore, examining literary texts that deal with myth, fantasy and fairy-story from the standpoints of Marxism, feminism, or psychoanalysis, for instance, could limit the meaning of a text. Patrick Curry provides a good example of this, saying that although a Marxist reading of *The Hobbit* would be interesting and enjoyable, the study will only show the Marxist findings of a fairy tale instead of the beauty of *The Hobbit* story as a whole.[22] Sarah Bowen, the author of *A Light from the Shadows*, shares the same view as Curry when she states that although Tolkien's stories might share recurring similarities with other stories, the story of Middle-earth is different from others and this is precisely because it is about the land of Middle-earth.[23]

This could explain why Tolkien detested allegory:

> I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history true or feigned with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author. (Tolkien, fwd. *The Lord of the Rings*, xvii)[24]

---

[22] Curry, page 17
[23] See in *A Light from the Shadows*, page 20
[24] Foreword to the Second Edition

From the extract above, it is clear that Tolkien feared allegory because it forces the ideas of the author onto readers and thus limits the interpretations of stories. In the very same *Forward*, Tolkien claimed that neither Saruman nor the chapter *The Scouring of Shire* in *RK*, reflect the political situation of England "at the time when [he] was finishing [his] tale" (Tolkien, xvii). On the contrary, he felt that the reader should be free to derive meanings from narratives without having to adhere to any fixed interpretations or rules. In my opinion Tolkien's legendarium is an antithesis of allegorical reductionism because his characters, the realms he evokes and his discussions of good and evil are embodiments of infinite varieties.[25] Tolkien knew that allegorical interpretations in a story could diminish the truths of a story: "the more life a story has the more readily will it be susceptible of allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made the more nearly will it be acceptable just as story" (*The Silmarillion,* xiii).

Furthermore, myth, fantasy and fairy-stories are relevant to modernist and postmodernist contexts as well. By analysing Tolkien's application of myth, fantasy and fairy-story in his own life and his novels, it will become apparent that these genres are relevant to contemporary society. Although Tolkien may lead his readers through a world that is entirely different from our known world, his stories remain true to today. As Theresa Freda Nicolay in *Tolkien and the Modernists* points out, humanity has always looked to stories as a way to "preserve the past, guide the present, and shape the future" (10).This thesis attempts to study myth, fantasy and fairy-stories and their portrayals of good and evil as close to Tolkien's original ideas and intentions as

---

[25] The idea of allegorical reductionism is explained in *Reading the Allegorical Intertext* by Judith Anderson, page 392

possible by moving away from reductionist interpretations and treating his texts as whole and unabridged.

1.2 Literature Review: Reading Myth, Fantasy, and Fairy-Story in Tolkien's Works and   Criticisms

On Fairy-Stories was originally written and presented by Tolkien at the Andrew Lang lecture at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, on the 8th of March 1939. It was first published, "in the memorial volume Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford 1947), and reissued (first in 1964) together with the story *Leaf by Niggle* under the title *Tree and Leaf*" (Christopher Tolkien, 3). *On Fairy-Stories* is one of Tolkien's most important and significant essays on the fairy-story as a literary form. This essay is also revered by many critics and scholars who use it as a reference to validate, expand and refute theories of fantasy, myth and fairy-story.

Editors Douglas A. Anderson and Verlyn Flieger describe Tolkien's essay as a valuable text for "Tolkien's defining study of and the center-point in his thinking about the genre" (*Tolkien on Fairy-Stories*, 9). Tolkien's essay attempts to determine the nature, origin, and application of fairy-stories. Further, in this essay Tolkien establishes positive criteria on which fairy-story could be evaluated".[26] According to Reilly, the

---

[26] See Jason fisher, Review on *Tolkien On Fairy-stories*, www.mythsoc.org/reviews/tolkien-on-fairy-stories

genre and meaning of the trilogy can be traced in his essay although it was published seven years before the first volume of the trilogy.[27] Moreover, the lecture is a critical bridge that links *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and especially *The Lord of the Rings*.[28] Significant words and concepts like "sub-creation" (secondary creation), "Faerie" and "eucatastrophe" first took shape here.[29] The original creation belongs to Eru/God alone whereas Faerie: The realms found in fairy-stories are sub-created by human beings. Eucatastrophe is a paradoxical term meaning good-disaster which juxtaposes with the term dycatastrophe meaning sorrowful failure. Tolkien began his lecture by defining what he felt was a true fairy-story. He continued by arguing that fairy-stories are neither childish nor insignificant but are relevant to the modern world. In the essay, he constantly challenges notions of "real" and "reality" and he encourages his readers to reflect upon perceptions of truth and where it can be found.

The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy: One Book To Rule Them All, edited by Gregory Bassham and Eric Bronson, is a collection of essays by various scholars which provide philosophical views on *The Lord of the Rings*. Like Tolkien, the editors believed that fiction, mainly popular culture, "can serve as an effective medium for eliciting and presenting philosophical ideas" (*The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 2). This book was envisioned to validate the applicability of *Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* to the real world and to human emotions. According to the publisher of the book, Open Court Publishing Co, U.S., Tolkien himself claimed that his epic story of wizards,

---

[27] See Reilly, *Tolkien and The Fairy Story*, https://www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/TOLFAIR.HTM
[28] Ibid, Fisher and Reilly
[29] Also the terms sub-creation and Faerie will be discussed in Chapter Two; pages 21 & 22. The terminologies for both eucatastrophe and dycatastrophe will be explained in Chapter Three; page 93

orcs, hobbits, and elves were "aimed at truth and good morals in the actual world"[30] The book deals with themes such as the nature of good and evil, providence, and happiness which have been very useful to my study. Scholars in this book expand on the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche and St. Augustine (which are also included in my study as well). However, this collection of essays predominantly discusses *The Lord of the Rings* without an intensive reading of myth, fantasy and fairy-story in the trilogy.

Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism edited by Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs is also a compilation of critical essays on *The Lord of the Rings*. This book includes essays from prominent authors like C.S. Lewis and W.H. Auden and well-known Tolkien scholars like Verlyn Flieger, Tom Shippey, Jane Chance, and Patricia Meyer Sparks. In comparison to *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy,* this book contains a variety of critical approaches that encompass the "elements of myth, archetype, epic structure… and deep moral, psychological, and geopolitical insights" (Isaacs, *On the Pleasures of Tolkien Criticism*, 7). Critical essays like *Tolkien* and *the Fairy Story* by Reilly, and *Folktale, Fairy Tale, and the Creation of a Story* by J.S. Ryan examine Tolkien's understanding of myth, fairy-story, and sub-creation as a "method of literary composition".

J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth by Bradley J. Birzer discusses the significance of myth in depth. This book investigates the nature of myth and the realm of faerie as well as Tolkien's conception of mythopoeia. Like Tolkien, he challenges the notion that myths "represent lies" and deems that humans are responsible for sanctifying pagan myths by reviving the northern spirit of courage by

---

[30] http://www.barnesandnoble.com/

instilling it with the Christian doctrine of grace. Birzer also argues that through the genre of myth, Tolkien is able to create a world that is fundamentally true, a world that transcends the colourless disenchantment of the postmodern age. Birzer also delves into Tolkien's conception of evil and its role in Middle-earth.

Similarly, Patrick Curry's *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* is also a spirited defence of myth and Tolkien's mythological creation and its ever-increasing relevance to the real world. Comparable to Birzer, Curry challenges the hostile critics who label myth as "reactionary and escapist".[31] He supports Tolkien's profound advocacy of literary mythology as a remedy and a re-enchantment of community, ecology, and spiritual values against the destructive forces of modernity. Overall, both books quote extensively from Tolkien's various works and research on myth as genre and as a tool for sub-creation. These books explore fantasy and fairy-story but not as extensively as myth. Notably, Curry's fifth chapter entitled *Fantasy, Literature and the Mythopoeic Imagination* examines the connection between fantasy and myth and the analysis is, by far, the closest to my research. Therefore, to make up for limited research on fantasy and fairy-story, I had to read articles and theses that deal with these genres separately. These included *Fantasy and Realism: Tolkien, The Eucatastrophe, and Fantastic Realism*, *The Reality of Fantasy Tolkien, The Gospel,* and *The Fairy-Story The Fantasy of the Real: J.R.R. Tolkien, Modernism, and Postmodernism*.[32] In general, these works argue that fantastical tales (also known as fairy-stories) represent truths better than many other stories[33] by connecting the contemporary reader to a kind of historical epic, and by doing so creating a sense of verisimilitude. On the whole, all the criticisms evaluated in this study are significant

---

[31] See Curry, *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien: Myth and Modernity*, cover page (1998).
[32] Some of the articles and theses that were examined and analysed to understand the genres, fantasy and fairy-story.
[33] Stories that may not be considered fantasy at all

because they contain Tolkien's elucidation and justification of his philosophies on myth, fantasy, fairy-story, and mythopoeia.[34]

There were other astute literary criticisms on Tolkien as well. Yet none recognize the connection between myth, fantasy, and fairy-story which is elusive but evident in Tolkien's *On Fairy-Stories*. Indeed, these genres have their similarities but they do not overshadow their distinct qualities. On the whole, I certainly believe that all three genres, myth, fantasy, and fairy-story are present and effective in his legendarium[35] to fulfil Tolkien's purpose to educate his readers to be conscious about the various forms of good and evil. By amalgamating myths of past traditions to fantasy, old myths are enlivened and new myths are created (mythopoeia). In turn, the fairy-story genre empowers the mythical and fantastical elements in a narrative with a promise of a happy ending. For Tolkien, a happy ending in a fairy-story is eucatastrophic which in turn provides readers with consolation – "to open up the mind to the possibility of better things" (McMurry, *Story Matters*, 225). These significant ideas and arguments will be analysed and evaluated in the following chapters.

1.3 Statement of Objectives

Thus, my primary aim and contribution is to analyse how the convergence of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story help portray the good and evil in Tolkien's Middle-earth and how the themes of good and evil apply to the world of reality. My research method predominantly aims to select relevant and significant evidences from Tolkien's works

---

[34] Mainly *On Fairy-Stories*
[35] The legendarium is the entirety of J.R.R. Tolkien's works concerning his invented world of Arda/Middle-earth.

and letters and situate them within Tolkien's theories in *On-Fairy-Stories* and other well-known criticisms too.

In my attempt to demonstrate the applicability these genres to explore Tolkien's deep-held beliefs and notions, I will first discuss each of these genres individually, to explore the definitions and theories of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story by Tolkien, his scholars and critics. Once again, it is also important to address the fact that Tolkien preferred evaluating literary texts as things told in "entirety". Not only do I examine the theories and the conception of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story in Tolkien and his critics, but I also endeavour to show the connections between these genres to see Tolkien's works as an entirety, a legendarium.

The combination of these genres operate like a powerful vehicle: a medium to validate and reveal Tolkien's beliefs and to demonstrate his powerful portrayals of good and of evil in his works. All of these will be discussed in Chapter Two. Then in Chapter Three, I will explore Middle-earth's[36] ability to provide recovery, escape and consolation for his readers. Critics do question, and sometimes deride, the relevance of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story to the real world. However, they refuse to see that these genres do (as Tolkien so well demonstrates) provide readers with a distinct type of recovery, escape, and consolation to face challenging times. Finally, I believe I will be able to illustrate that Middle-earth, as a product of the combination of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story, is a fantastic medium sub-created by Tolkien, to provide, recovery, escape, and consolation.

---

[36] Tolkien's mythopoeia

CHAPTER TWO

Myth, Fantasy, and Fairy-Story

The realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*[1]

This chapter will take into account Tolkien's theories and definitions of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story mainly based *On Fairy-Stories*. Correspondingly, I will be looking into a number of theories and definitions of these genres, evaluating (making comparisons with and finding similarities in) the various and differing points of views. This assessment will highlight the significance of each genre, their connections to reality and their roles in depicting the good and evil forces present in Middle-earth.

Many interesting ideas Tolkien has put forward in his eminent essay *On Fairy-Stories* have been repeatedly discussed in numerous studies on the essay, especially studies based on the links between fantasy and reality, myth, and reality, and fairy-story and reality.[2] However, a subtler, yet equally important point has been often ignored. This point is that myth, fantasy, and fairy-story are connected. First of all, myth, fantasy, and fairy-story are "cognate narrative genres"[3] and therefore are associated with one another. Next, the fairy-story is part of the genre of fantasy and myth is a close relation

---

[1] Page 109

[2] *Myth-making and Sub-creation* by Carl Phelpstead, *Tolkien and the Fairy story* by Reilly, *Stories about Stories* by Attebery, *Defending Middle-earth* by Patrick Curry, and *The Making or Middle-earth* by Snyder are some of the noteworthy studies based *On Fairy-Stories* discussed in this dissertation

[3] See Carl Phelpstead in *Myth-making and Sub-creation*, pages 161-171. He has pointed out the problem of Modern English demarcation of myth from fantasy and fairy-story

of the folk and fairy-tale.[4] Moreover, the fairy-story is also regarded as a lower type of mythology in the sense of it being "part of the mythology that is humbler and closer to earth" (Purtill, 18). Furthermore, fantasy has inherited the qualities of the fairy-story such as the structure and the roles of characters, for example the hero and his subject, the basic plot and patterns, and the superficial attributes like wizards and dragons and talking animals.[5] At present, Tolkien's stories are categorized as fantasy literature which is defined as:

> Imaginative fiction dependent for effect on strangeness of setting (such as other worlds or times) and of characters (such as supernatural or unnatural beings)…Science fiction can be seen as a form of fantasy, but the terms are not interchangeable, as science fiction usually is set in the future and is based on some aspect of science or technology, while fantasy is set in an imaginary world and features the magic of mythical beings. (www.dictionary.com)

The definition above addresses the connection between fantasy and myth in Tolkien's works but unfortunately fails to include the fairy-story feature in it. However, Matthew Sterenberg argues that fairy-stories are myths in literary form and discusses that throughout *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien uses the terms "myth", "fantasy", and "fairy-story" interchangeably.[6] Hence the interconnections between myth, fantasy and fairy-story are an interesting aspect in Tolkien's work and challenge the act of categorizing Tolkien's legendarium into a precise genre. On the same note, Veryln Flieger, the winner of the Mythopoeic Award for *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of*

---

[4] Fairy-stories or fairy tales are equivalent to fantasy literature. Tolkien's legendarium is also classified as high fantasy defined by its setting; an imaginary world. It is also defined by the epical characters, themes and plot. High fantasy belongs to the subgenre of fantasy fiction as well

[5] See Donald Haase in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, page 332. This is the reason why Tolkien refers to fantasy literature as fairy-stories

[6] See in *Mythic Thinking in Twentieth-Century Britain: Meaning for Modernity*, pages 83 and 85

Middle-earth, also does not assign Tolkien's works to a particular genre but rather delves into the "soup" of his stories from which they emerged.[7] Hence it would be important to view Tolkien's stories of Middle-earth as a legendarium: the unison of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story.

Indeed these three genres are creations which derive from the creative imaginings of human beings. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist, claims that myths, fantasies, fairy-stories, and other genres like legends and dreams are products of men's fantastic imaginations based on elements taken from realities or human experiences.[8] Similar to Tolkien, Vygotsky took human creative imagination seriously stating that "imagination is not just an idle mental amusement, not merely an activity without consequences in reality, but rather a function essential to life" (*Imagination and Creativity in Childhood*, 7). Nevertheless through careful reading of *On Fairy-Stories*, the combination of the three genres in sub-creating Faerie, "the realization of imagined wonder", which he named as "Middle-earth" is discernible. Being cognitive in nature, the interweaving of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story, produces an effective Faerie that evokes manifestations of good and evil. Though Faerie may or may not contain inherent morality[9] but Tolkien made sure Middle-earth did.

Besides that, Faerie is also a product of "esemplastic" imagination, a term coined by the romantic poet and thinker Samuel Taylor Coleridge.[10] According to

---

[7] See Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, page 122
[8] Refer to Vygotsky in *Imagination and Creativity in Childhood,* pages 6 and7
[9] Especially moral values found in Christianity. For example kindness and forgiveness.
[10] Refer to R.J. Reilly's *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, page 97

Coleridge's explanation in *Biographia Literaria*, "imagination" is "esemplastic" because he believed that a man's imagination has the ability to "shape into one" and to "convey a new sense" (86). In line with this, it would appear that Tolkien had exercised his esemplastic imagination by amalgamating myth, fantasy, and fairy-stories to sub-create Middle-earth. Coleridge went on to distinguish imagination into primary and secondary imagination. The former produces and "perceives the world of reality"[11] and the latter employs "language and metaphor, reworks and reshapes" the Primary World.[12] Hence, secondary imagination is an echo of primary imagination. There is a striking resemblance between Tolkien's notion of the primary and Secondary Worlds with Coleridge's primary and secondary imagination.

Colin Duriez has stated that Coleridge had laid down the foundation for many of Tolkien's ideas and one of the most important would be sub-creation. However the difference between Tolkien and Coleridge is that for Tolkien, the highest function of imagination is sub-creation in linguistic form[13] and Tolkien did profess that "there is no higher function for man than the 'sub-creation' of a Secondary World" (*Letters*, 195). Sub-creating a successful Secondary World was no easy feat as it needs to naturally command secondary belief which has "the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency" for readers (Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, 138). In fact, it would appear Tolkien has successfully combined myth, fantasy, and fairy-story as a unified whole and shaped Middle-earth into a believable Secondary World to portray good and evil in the Primary World.

---

[11] Ibid, page 97
[12] See Duriez, *A Guide to Middle Earth*, Ch.1, 14, par.1
[13] Refer to *The Life and Work of J.R.R. Tolkien*, page 22

Interestingly, myth, fantasy and fairy-story share one thing in common in that these terms are often misunderstood and the complex meanings inherent in these terms are often overlooked. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), there are two distinct definitions for the word "myth". The first definition of myth is "a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events" and the second definition of myth is "a widely held but false belief or idea" (qtd in *The Making of Middle-Earth*, 21). This second definition has been widely accepted and still casts a shadow on myth as an authentic story about human life.

In actuality, Birzer[14] explains that the modernists viewed myth like religion, merely signifying a deep-rooted lie whereas according to the postmodernist perspective, myth is a mere story like other narratives, purely subjective. As for the religious fundamentalists myth represents lies that contend with Christian truths.[15] Even Tolkien's dearest friend, C.S. Lewis once believed that mythologies are made of "lies" and "worthless" even if they are "breathed through silver" (*C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church,* 36). The German folklorist and philologist Max Muller reasoned that myths are merely deviations of meaning from the truths of our world. Muller proposed that myths are "verbal misapprehensions" that have been passed down orally for many generations. What human beings have known as the sun, the moon, the solar system and other elements of nature have been given human or "heroic personifications" such as Thórr the god associated with thunder and lightning, and the god Pan with pasture and wild

---

[14] Bradley J. Birzer has done a thorough research based on Tolkien's mythology
[15] See in *Sanctifying Myth*, Intr. 14, par.2

earth. Muller sees this phenomena as things losing their real meanings and hence dismissed mythology as "a disease of language".[16]

Similarly, fantasy is often merely alluded to as a "literary discourse" and is perceived as childish and irrational by the modernists.[17] Many modern academicians who prefer the grim and honest treatment of reality in traditional realism, often see fantasy as escapism. Typically, realism is regarded as having the truest representation of reality while fantasy is considered as moving away from reality, defying facts and laws of our world in favour of creating different worlds with their own laws and rules.[18] Contemporary self-help book authors like Joy Browne and Joan Dixon Mathis claim that fantasies are lies, dangerous to believe in because they distract people from truths of life and although they may offer temporary pleasure, in the long run they can be destructive.[19]

When it comes to fairy-story, Tolkien was dismayed that the *OED* did not even have a proper definition for it. Instead, he referenced the supplement of the *OED* on the term fairy-tale and the available definitions are "(a) a tale about fairies, or generally a fairy legend; with developed senses, (b) an unreal or incredible story, and (c) a falsehood" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 110). Rosemary Jackson, a literary critic who powerfully leans on both Marxism and psychoanalysis, does not share the same passion for fairy-stories as Tolkien. She believes that "fairy tales discourage in the importance or effectiveness of action", and blames Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Kingsley, MacDonald and many other fantasy writers "as conservative vehicles for social and instinctual

---

[16] Refer to Verlyn Flieger in *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*, pages 68-69
   Tolkien *in On Fairy-Stories*, page 121
[17] Curry in *Defending Middle earth*, page 187
[18] See Ulrich in her research titled *Fantasy and Realism*, page 1
[19] Refer to *Dixon in Wisdom of the Soul*, pages 11-12, and Browne *in The Nine Fantasies That Will Ruin Your Life*, pages 3-5

repression...supporting a ruling ideology;" they serve only to "reinforce a blind faith in 'eternal' moral values, really those of an outworn liberal humanism" (*Fantasy*, 154-56). Consequently, the fairy-stories are often stereotypically viewed as suitable for only children and not to be taken seriously.[20]

In general, myth, fantasy, and fairy-story are seen as false, untrue, and turning away from actuality and truths of life in general. Undeniably, all fiction by definition is not real. However, Tolkien and his scholars believed that some types of fiction like myth, fantasy and fairy-story have a closer relationship with reality than others because they represent certain truths of good and of evil.[21] C. S .Lewis and scholars like Patrick Curry, Bradley J. Birzer, Bruce L. Edwards and Suzanne Bray believe that myth, fantasy, and fairy-story deliver truths through consciousness, imaginations and feelings. And in my opinion, truths are greater and superior when myth, fantasy, and fairy-story join forces. Hence, the amalgamation of past myths, traditions and cultures with fantasy, serves as an operating mechanism that enlivens a myth and the narrative of a story. The fairy-story in return facilitates the mythical and fantastical elements in a narrative and provides a happy ending.

The assessment of the connection of myth, fantasy and fairy-story is pivotal to my discussion. This dissertation aims to demonstrate the relevance of these genres to reality and the roles they play in portrayals of good and of evil in Middle-earth. In this chapter, I will be exploring the significance of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story individually in subsections and my discussion hopes to demonstrate that these genres are already powerful on their own. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how these genres are

---

[20] C.S Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, 13, also Edmund Wilson, *Oo, Those Aweful Orcs*! *The Nation 182* (14.4.1956)
[21] Curry in *Defending Middle earth*, pages 312-314

all the more powerful when they join forces, as they provide readers with recovery, escape, and consolation: potent survival tools Tolkien envisioned and gifted for his readers to survive grim times. As a whole, one must understand that Tolkien's Middle-earth is a composition of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story.

2.1 Myth

Being a steadfast Roman Catholic, for Tolkien the truest of all myths would be the Christian myth. Scholars like Birzer, Synder, Carpenter, Hooper, Clark, and Timmons point out that Tolkien had made C.S. Lewis realize that the story of Christ or the gospels were "the truest myth".[22] In contrast with the Christian myth, Lewis revealed that pagan myths work as mediums where God expresses Himself through the minds of poets, employing the imageries of their "mythopoeia" to reveal fragments of His eternal truth. Lewis maintained that Christianity is based on the same concept as pagan myths, except for the author who invented it.[23] Equally, Bruce W. Young added that Christianity is a true myth because it reflects a supreme expression of God who is truly good. He even states that "True religion will appeal to that in us which is rooted to the earth—our physical, emotional, and imaginative natures—but it will also appeal to the moral and rational faculties God has given us" (*Gospels as True Myth*, 6).

---

[22] Refer to *Sanctifying Myth,* Ch.2, 49*,* par.1. The *Making of Middle-earth*, 21, and, *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances:* and *Views of Middle-earth, 140.* In 1931*,* Tolkien expounded to Lewis about the gospel being "the truest myth" in an after-dinner walk Hugo Dryson was present as well

[23] In a letter to Arthur Greeves: written in 18th October 1931, Lewis expounded on the difference between God's myth and man's myth. Also, see to Pearce in *Catholic Literary Giants: A Field Guide to the Catholic Literary Landscape*, page 243

In addition, Lewis affirmed Tolkien's views on myth in his profound and moving essay entitled *Myth Became Fact*, written in 1944. The essay explores the connection between myth, fact, and the gospel story. Lewis states,

> A man who disbelieved the Christian story as fact but continually fed on it as myth would, perhaps, be more spiritually alive than one who assented and did not think much about it. The modernist . . . need not be called a fool or hypocrite because he obstinately retains, even in the midst of his intellectual atheism, the language, rites, sacraments, and story of the Christians. The poor man may be clinging (with a wisdom he himself by no means understands) to that which is his life. (67)

Hence mythology is a "profound tool" that aids human beings in shaping their perspectives, goals, and actions[24] irrespective of whether they are followers of the religion. Overall, Lewis's message is, people in general should grasp both the historical facts and the myth in the Bible story and that human beings must accord all the myths with that same "imaginative embrace".[25]

Furthermore, in the Christian myth, it was prophesied hat the Son of God will be born on this earth to redeem and deliver human beings from evil and sin. Definitely non-believers have disputed the idea of the presence of God in a mortal form. Yet, that mythical story has been passed down by believers for generations till Jesus was born on earth. That is when the myth became fact. After the death of Jesus and his Resurrection, this story and miracles became documented history in the form of the Bible. Yet again, the Second Coming of Jesus on earth is a story/myth anticipated by many believers to be true so that He may "execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jeremiah 23:5) once again.[26] Thus, if the Bible contains myth and myth is an invention of truth, it is clear why Tolkien had chosen myth to explain the reality and truths about the Primary World.

---

[24] Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 52 par. 2
[25] See C. S. Lewis in *God in the Dock*, page 59
[26] Refer to C. S. Lewis, *Myth Became Fact*, page 67 and in *The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves*, page 427, Martha C.

Apart from being the heart of the Gospels, mythology is also the origin and the foundation of fairy-stories as well as our lives because it is part of language and speech.[27] Mythology, Tolkien declares, "is not a disease of language…you might as well say that thinking is a disease of the mind. It would be more near the truth to say that languages especially modern European languages, are a disease of mythology" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 122). Here Tolkien links myth to the process of thinking and language. Myth reflects the human mind and is expressed using language. Thus myth is not a "degenerate function" of language and it is neither separated from nor has it strayed away from language — its roots.[28] Myth is also "not a cutting grafted onto a new stem but rather an organic and self-consistent whole with its own inner consistency of reality" (Flieger, 23). Owen Barfield, a good friend of Lewis and Tolkien, has addressed Muller's theory of myth in his book called *Poetic Diction* (1928). He argues that myth is "closely associated with the very origin of all speech and literature" (*Inklings*, 41). Undeniably, Tolkien also views myth as the origin of stories and this is reflected in *On Fairy-Stories* where he discusses mythology under the subheadings of *Origins*.[29] *The Silmarillion* serves as the mythology and foundation for Tolkien's two other works.

It is no surprise then why Tolkien was fascinated and attracted by the ancient and medieval cultures where mythologies were so important. One cannot dismiss the enormous impact of ancient and medieval cultures in Tolkien's legendarium. After all,

---

Sammons in *War of the Fantasy Worlds: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien on Art and Imagination*, 185, and James Hogan in *Reel Parables*, page 18 where they argued that the gospels are myths that came true

[27] Tolkien claims that fairy-stories are "found universally wherever there is language", and the human mind which conceived language is heavily influenced by mythology or mythical grammar such as "light", "heavy", "still" and "swift" (*On Fairy-Stories*, pages 121 - 122)

[28] See Flieger in *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*, 23. Similar arguments were made in Jane Chance's *Tolkien the Medievalist*, page 31

[29] *On Fairy-Stories*, pages 121-129

Tolkien was a philologist and a professor of Anglo-Saxon language. Tom Shippey writes that "Tolkien cannot be properly discussed without some considerable awareness of ancient works and the ancient world which he tried to revive" (*Author of the Century*, xxvii). In Tolkien's point of view, ancient works were old but antiquity had a charm in itself (*Letters*, 128). One cannot deny Tolkien's view that indeed "old is gold". Many of Tolkien's fans acknowledge Tolkien's great efforts in piecing together various medieval myths and ancient languages to weave the tapestry of Middle-earth.[30] By studying and learning ancient myths, Tolkien endeavoured to understand the poets who produced them and aimed to sub-create his own myth as a way of carrying on tradition for the modern generation.[31] Tolkien scholars have recognized and acknowledged that Tolkien has certainly applied mythical elements of Norse, Finnish and Anglo Saxon in his own mythology.

Moreover it is important to note that besides the disciplines of history and anthropology, we have come to know much about the cultures of Anglo-Saxons, the Norse and the other Northern people though literature. For example Snyder tells us, Tolkien's Middle-Ages are by no means a complete history of these cultures but it is "idiosyncratic" as "it runs from the barbarian Iron Age to about the fifteenth century," including "the great Gothic revival of the nineteenth century" (*The Making of Middle-earth*, 38). Furthermore Jane Chance points out that even Tolkien's other works are often a parody of medieval genres such as the romance, lays, lyrics, and fabliau.[32] Indeed Tolkien pointed out that a medieval bard was responsible for communicating

---

[30] See *Reader's Guide*, pages 969-70. Tolkien claimed his ideas came from the things he read and seen that had descended into the depths of his mind long time ago; i.e. "growing" stories out of "the leave-mould of the mind"

[31] See Synder in *The Making of Middle-earth*, page 21

[32] Jane Chance, *Tolkien's Art*, 4. Tolkien's *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* is modelled based on the Medieval Breton Lay

truth through the mediums of myth and history.[33] Detective writer Michael Innes in *More and More People Are Getting the J.R.R. Tolkien Habit* also felt that "with Tolkien you were in the meadhall in which he is the bard and we were the drinking, listening guests" (14). Like his predecessor William Morris of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, Tolkien struggled and endeavoured to bring forth the older legendary materials such as the understanding of the land and its myths to modern readers.[34]

Other than that, there is an evident and perceptible dichotomy within myth. Formerly, myth signified narratives concerning gods and demi-gods, heroic battles and journeys.[35] But Sean Kane the author of *The Wisdom of Mythtellers*, who researched on Palaeolithic origins of myth, argues that "myths are not stories about gods in the abstract…but are about "something mysterious, intelligent, invisible and whole" and therefore "the proper subject of myth is the ideas and emotions of the earth" (qtd in *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5, 128, par.2). Addressed earlier in this chapter[36], Kane's claim resonates with Bruce W. Young's statement that mythologies are based on the "ideas of emotions of the earth" and here it is noteworthy that Young sees "true religion" as being "rooted to the earth" too. Nonetheless, one must bear in mind that since humanity is part of the earth and nature, they occupy a major part of myth and deal with "the emotions of the earth" as well.

The ideas of dual kinds of myths, examined above are expressed in Tolkien's mythology. According to Curry Tolkien's mythos includes the Vala who are god-like beings or "powers in a human form", and the beings who are part of Middle-earth like

---

[33] Ibid, page 21
[34] The Arts & Crafts polymath William Morri*s* influenced Tolkien greatly and this can be inferred in his letters to Professor L. W. Forster on 1960
[35] See Curry and Carl Kerenyi *in Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5, 123, par.2
[36] Refer to page 26

the Ents (enormous trees that can speak and walk), the Druedain who resemble the "indigenous Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherers" and the Elves, "the humanoid and chthonic beings".[37] This is indicative of Tolkien's profound knowledge of mythology in entirety. Lewis in his essay, *The Dethronement of Power* has also noted Tolkien's understanding of myth as part of the earth reflected in the conversation between a Rohirrim rider and Aragorn[38],

> 'Halflings!' laughed the rider that stood beside Eomer. 'Halflings! But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?'
>
> 'A man may do both said Aragorn,' for not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time. The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day!' (*TT*, 424)

So too is Middle-earth, like the Primary World, is made of "mighty matter(s) of legend(s)" and is constituted of myths from all over the world.

Besides Tolkien's profound understanding of the dual kinds of mythology, his immense knowledge in Medievalism also helped shaped his Middle-earth. Medievalism, as Synder explains, is a "reimagining of Middle-Ages that blends contemporary preoccupations with the historical realities of medieval Europe" (*The Making of Middle-earth*, 39). Medievalism is a strand of continuity that runs, for example, from "Sir Walter Scott's medieval-themed novels through Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Tennyson's Arthurian poetry, William Morris's novels and George McDonald's fairy tales, to Tolkien's own fiction" (Synder, 39). Jane Chance and Christopher Synder have pointed out that Tolkien's works owe much to the medieval genres such as the chivalric romance, lays, lyric, and fabliau[39] especially when it comes to medieval mythologies.

---

[37] Ibid, page 124

[38] *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, page 14

[39] Chance also stated that Tolkien's non Middle-earth works are often a parody of medieval genres. Refer in *The Making of*

For example Jane Chance in her book *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth* states that the Ainur or the "Holy Ones" are in essence a pantheon, but a pantheon designed to serve their creator, Eru, "The One" (9). Besides that, in Manwe the lord of the air and the leader of the vala, there is a clear similarity to Zeus, Ulmo the lord of the waters bears resemblance to Poseiden, Aule the smith is Hephaestus, likewise Mandos, the lord of the underworld represents Hades, Yavanna echoes Demeter and Vana mirrors Persephone. Even Mount Taniquetil, the tallest mountain of Middle-earth is seen as the antecedent of Mount Olympus.[40] Tolkien even acknowledged that the story of the sinking of the Isle of Numenor in *Akalebeth* represented his own version of the Atlantis myth.[41] Jen Stevens in his essay *From Catastrophe to Eucatastrophe: J. R. R. Tolkien's Transformation of Ovid's Mythic Pyramus and Thisbe into Beren and Luthien*, shows the associations of Tolkien's Beren and Luthien of *The Silmarillion* to Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe. Tom Shippey's *Tolkien and the Appeal of the Pagan: Edda and Kalevala*, demonstrates how Tolkien utilized his knowledge and fascination of Norse and Finnish myth to construct his mythical world.[42]

In *The Twilight of the Elves: Ragnarok and the End of the Third Age,* Andy Dimond explores the connections between the end of The Third Age of Middle-earth and Ragnarök, the destruction of the world in Norse tradition.[43] This is proven as Tolkien admitted that his legendarium "ends with a vision of the end of the world, its breaking and remaking…after a final battle which owes, I suppose, more to the Norse

---

Middle–earth, page 38

[40] Refer to Jason Fisher, *Greek Gods* in *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia*, page 258. Greek mythology is more apparent in Tolkien's Vala than to Scandinavian Gods such as Odin and Thórr

[41] See Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, pages 127, 171

[42] See in *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*, pages 125, 151, 180. Tolkien's works are also deeply inspired by the Arthurian Legends. The Fall of Gondolin was inspired by the Fall of king Arthur.

[43] ibid

vision of Ragnarök than to anything else, though it is not much like it" (*Letters*, 170).

Tolkien's "Ragnarök" is called Dagor Dagorath which in Sindarin means Battle of all

Battles. Dagor Dagorath is the Final Battle, an apocalyptic event prophesied by

Mandos[45]. Although the prophecy foreshadows apocalyptic events nevertheless there

will also be the reshaping of Middle-earth and The Second Music of the Ainur.[46] It is

pertinent to note here that although Tolkien applied these myths to his legendarium,

they are not the same because he did not replicate them but was inspired by them.

Overall through these inspirations, Tolkien was able to come up with a more relatable

and thus powerful myth; Middle-earth.

Mythology did reach its highest peak during the eighteenth century, the

Enlightenment. However, then it was perceived as mere "fabulous" or "unlikely

fiction".[47] On the contrary, Tolkien took myth very seriously. Tolkien declared that

history resembles mythology because it is made of the same matter and stressed that

myth and history are not separate and have always been together[48]. In fact, Tolkien

believed that great stories contain a mesh of both magnificent figures of myth and

history, disregarding rank or precedence made by great cooks (authors) in a "Cauldron

of Story" (*Letters*, 127). Therefore, myths can be accounts of historical or actual events

and people but are placed in another place or time which leads to a change in their

symbolic meanings. Tolkien's notion of myth is comparable to the definition myth in

the *OED*. Myths from all over the world contain many elements of the Primary World.

For example, in her paper entitled *An Anthropologist in Middle-earth,* Virginia Luling

says,

---

[45] It is Mandos' Second Prophecy. The First Prophecy was The Doom of Mandos, also called the Doom of the Noldor. For this refer to page Chapter: *Of the Flight of the Noldor*, page 94

[46] Refer to Chapter: *Of the Beginning of Days*, in *The Silmarillion* page 36. The first Great Music of the Ainur took place before Time began and Eä, created.

[47] See *in Defending Middle-earth*, page 171

[48] See Christopher Drawson in *Progress and Religion*, 86 who viewed myth and history were once separated.

> All mythologies are necessarily both universal and local: universal in their scope, because they deal with the nature of things: local in point of view and 'temper', because they arise out of particular cultures. This tension is present in the mythology devised by Tolkien, since it is about the human condition in general, and deliberately made specific to a certain part of the world. (qtd in *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia*, 56)

This is the reason myth is powerful because it is relatable and it is simultaneous with universality and locality. Myth is universal because it based on nature and the way of the world, and it is local because it is influenced by the culture which generated it. Tolkien's mythology is localised by the incorporation of the cultural traditions of England and of North-west Europe (his home land and the cultures that he has studied) and a universal one because it contains a great deal of feelings, and emotions, bestowing lessons for all.[49] Like Tolkien, Alan Garner, an English novelist famous for his retellings of traditional British folk tales and his children fantasy novels, took myth seriously and felt that myth was a powerful tool: "myth is not entertainment but rather the crystallization of experience" (*A Bit More Practice*, 199).

Tolkien's mythos and legendarium is very similar to the Primary World. The same forces that shape the lives in this Primary World, mould the lives of those in Middle-Earth as well which are "history, chance and desire".[50] So Middle-earth can be seen as one of many versions of the Primary World. Both Tolkien and Curry argue that the Elves of Middle-earth represent the mythologized version of human beings, who were once more enlivened, virtuous, noble, and powerful in non-selfish ways.[51] Moreover, like the Primary World, the presence of Evil and Darkness is as vehement as

---

[49] Refer to Curry in *Defending Middle-earth*, pages 173- 77 and to Anthony Cooney in *Tolkien and Politics*, 5 on the explanations based on universal and local myth
[50] See Peter S. Beagle, *Tolkien's Magic Ring* in *The Tolkien Reader*, page 33
[51] See further explanations in Carpenter's *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, page 254 and in *Defending Middle-earth*, page 181

the existence of Goodness.[52] Tolkien's Middle-earth is where the good endeavours to preserve and protect whilst evil strives to destroy, corrupt and dominate. For instance, his characters discern that darkness is growing and behind it evil lurks. It is seeking to oppress and avenge for past humiliation.[53]

> The world was fair, the mountains tall,
> In the Elder Days before the fall. (Tolkien, *FR*, 308)

The two lines above is part of a song sung by Gimli son of Gloin when the Fellowship of the Ring was at Moria. There is a deep, unspoken yearning among the Fellowship for something long lost; something of the past. The feeling of impending doom and the yearning for a long lost Eden are very much present in Middle-earth as in our world.[54] The Fellowship cannot decipher what that yearning is. Only few left in the Third Age of Middle-earth can remember and recite the tales of its splendour. As Alister E. McGrath in his book called *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis* argues, myths have the innate power to expand the consciousness and imagination of the reader because myth awakens a longing for something that lies beyond the grasp of reason through the reader's imagination.[55] Clearly, that longing is for Eden.

Tolkien truly believed that there was once Eden, even though it is known as a myth, on this earth when human beings were "humane" and "least corrupted" and their minds were filled with "peace and goodwill". Tolkien states:

> I do not now feel either ashamed or dubious on the Eden 'myth'. It has not, of course, historicity of the same kind as the NT, which are virtually contemporary documents while Genesis is separated by we do not know how many sad exiled generations from the Fall, but certainly there was an Eden on this very unhappy earth. We all long for it, and we are

---

[52] Refer to John Seland in *Dante and Tolkien: Their Ideas about Evil*, page 6
[53] *Finding God in The Lord of the Rings*, 2. Possibly, relating back to events that took place in *The Silmarillion*
[54] Carpenter ed., *Letters*, pages 124 and 125
[55] Refer to *The Concept of Myth in Lewis's Thought* in *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis*, page 64

constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of 'exile'. (*Letters*, 124).

Tolkien's disappointment above is akin to Galadriel's feelings of Middle-earth's history as a "long defeat".[56] Pearce identified Tolkien's sense of restlessness came from a sense of exile from Eden and from the "fullness of truths". This was the source that inspired his creativity.[57] In his conviction, human beings long for this heaven on earth where everything was fair and free from the "evil spirit (in modern but not universal terms: mechanism, 'scientific' materialism Socialism in either of its factions now at war)" (*Letters*, 124). Tolkien brilliantly evokes this strong yearning in the chapter: *The Field of Cormallen*, in *The Lord of the Rings*. After the Battle of the Black Gate, Legolas sang the *Song of the Sea* expressing his deep longing for the sea, to return to Eressëa, the "Elvenhome that no man can discover" and where he "shall walk in the woods of this fair land" (*RK*, 935). The phrase "no man can discover," also symbolises that human beings are capable of destroying beauty and are metaphorically possessed by "evil spirit(s)". Hence, Tolkien sees the world heading towards "perdition" and that human beings are carrying out the "Fall to its bitter bottom".[58] The Eden myth serves as a reminder that human beings were once pure and good but have reduced in stature due to their own undoing.

The theme of "the Fall" is prevalent throughout Tolkien's mythology too. From the most powerful Vala, the Maia, the Noldor Elves and to Men, they are all depicted to have fallen from grace. Tolkien contended that man's fall and evil deeds were not the

---

[56] See Theresa Freda Nicolay in *Tolkien and the Modernists: Literary Responses to the Dark New Days of the 20th Century,* page 94
[57] *Tolkien: Man and Myth*, page 87
[58] Carpenter ed., *Letters*, page 124

sole doing of Morgoth or Melkor.[59] In *Morgoth's Ring*, a book edited by Christopher Tolkien, the elf Finrod states that Morgoth has neither the power to create nor utterly destroy or wholly corrupt the creations of Eru Iluvatar. On the contrary, Morgoth can only seduce and corrupt the minds and wills of the inhabitants of Arda but he cannot make this heritable nor can he alter the designs of Eru Iluvatar.[60] Hence, the choice to be good or evil lies in the hands of human beings. Therefore myths (including Tolkien's) play an important role in portraying the nature of good and evil; that is good and evil are "natural or social phenomenon" that has been taking place since beginning of mankind.

The great myths of world literature depict the battles between good and evil which can be traced as far back as the Epic of Gilgamesh, Ramayana, Mahabharatha, and Nibelungenlied.[61] In *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil from the Earliest Times to the Present Day,* Paul Carus elucidates that mythology has always been a subject which personifies evil.[62] Most myths and religious texts in the world have their own evil monsters and demons who represent evil, great suffering, despair, and destruction. For example, in Egyptian mythology, the powers of darkness like Seth, Bess, and Typhon were feared and worshipped. On the other hand, in Hindu mythology, the ancient Gods of Brahmanism do not have the demarcation between evil and good deities; they have evil Mahisha who is the king of the giants.[63] The Buddhists named the incarnation of evil as Mâra, who is "the father of lust and sin, and the bringer of death" (*The History of the Devil,* 441). Thus, like the other great mythologies, in Tolkien's

---

[59] Refer to Christopher Tolkien, ed., *Morgoth's Ring* in *History of Middle-Earth*, page 334
[60] Ibid, page 334
[61] See Ernst E. Boesch's *The Myth of Lurking Chaos* in *Between Culture and Biology*, page 127
[62] Refer Paul Carus in *The History of the Devil*, page 440. This book is a massive work on the history of evil from various myths and religions.
[63] Ibid, page 440.

myth, Melkor reminds us of the age-old battle between good and evil originating from the Rebellion of Lucifer.[64]

In Middle-earth, commonly evil is typified by beings like Melkor, the Balrogs, Dragons and Drakes, Sauron, The Black Riders Trolls, the Uruks, the Orcs, and the Goblins. The portrayal of good is represented by most of the Vala, Maia, Wizards, the Elves, the Dwarves, the Hobbits and the faithful Men. It may seem that there is a rigid demarcation of black and white and of good and evil, but this is a faulty assumption.[65] Tolkien's mythology is not a straightforward one. On the surface level, it might look as if Tolkien's view of evil and good is a Manichean[66] one and that Melkor, the One Ring and other evil beings are independent forces of evil that is they originate as evil and will remain evil till the end.[67] Yet, Tolkien declared that he does not deal with "absolute evil" because for him it does not exist, hence it is "zero".[68] This notion on the nature of evil is reflected in Elrond's statement, "Nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so" (*FR*, 300). Therefore, mythologies can portray the multifaceted natures of good and evil as well.

For example, Melkor was once a Valar and was conceived by Iluvatar. Melkor is not pure evil because he originated from a pure and holy mind. He was once known as

---

[64] Refer to Carpenter ed., *Letters*, pages 90 and 259.
[65] C. S. Lewis, *The Dethronement of Power* in *Understanding the Lord of the Rings*, page 15
[66] Manicheanism is a view that describes that there are two equally powerful, independent and opposite forces in this world; Good and Evil. The term Manicheanism derived from a philosopher named Mani (pages 216-276 C.E) who viewed world in this manner
[67] Refer To Scott A.Davidson's *Tolkien and the Nature of Evil* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, pages 100, 101
[68] Carpenter ed. *Letters*, page 243

the mightiest amongst the Ainur till he decided to usurp the throne of his Creator.[69] Furthermore, the hideous race of Orcs were bred by Melkor in envy and derision of the Elves[70] and the Trolls are mere "counterfeits" made in "mockery of Ents".[71] But how about the One Ring that corrupts anyone who wears it (except Tom Bombadil)?[72] Elrond describes it as "altogether evil" but what he means is that no one could use the Ring for good purposes. He does not mean that the Ring itself is evil because there is no such thing as an evil ring or "evil metal".[73] Sauron made the One Ring powerful and evil by pouring his "strength and will" in it. Not only could he "see" whoever so that wears it, but he could also "govern" them.[74] And those he "governed he perverted" (*S*, 345). Sauron found Men the "easiest to sway of all peoples of Earth" for they lust for glory and wealth whereas the Elves had to be persuaded in a more subtle way because they had "greater power".[75] The Elves especially the Noldor gladly received Sauron's seeming counsels for they "desired ever to increase the skill and subtlety of their works" but Elves in general were not easily ensnared.[76] In the same manner, the Dwarves coveted great wealth, especially gold.[77]

In *The Mirror of Galadriel*, Galadriel the Lady of Lothlórien expressed her great desire for the Ring and "pondered" the countless possibilities, including the

---

[69] See Christopher Tolkien (ed.), *The Silmarillion, Quenta Silmarillion: Ainulindale*, page 4

[70] Ibid, *Quenta Silmarillion: Of the Coming of the Elves and the Captivity of Melkor*, page 47

[71] Tolkien, *The Two Towers*: *Treebeard*, 474. Here, Tree beard also mentions how the Orcs were made in mockery of Elves.

[72] Refer to Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*: *In the House of Tom Bombadil*, 130. The One Ring did not made Tom disappear but he made the Ring vanish

[73] Scott A. Davidson's *Tolkien and the Nature of Evil* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 101

[74] Chapter : *Of the Rings of Power*, *The Silmarillion*, page 344

[75] Ibid, page 343

[76] Ibid, page 344

[77] Ibid, page 346

preservation of Lothlórien if she ever got her hands on it.[78] Nevertheless, she transcends her temptation knowing that the One Ring infused with Sauron's malice will only degenerate and transform her into a "beautiful and terrible" Queen.[79] Thus, it is the will of Sauron that perverts their deepest desires and without his power, the "Ring" would be just a "ring": ineffective. This is once again established when Gandalf says, when the One is destroyed Sauron "will lose the best part of the strength that was native to him in his beginning, and all that was ever made or begun with that power will crumble, and he will be maimed for ever" (*RK*, 861). In fact, Jay Benett in *The Influence of Language: Belief in J.R. R. Tolkien's Fictional Mythology and The Lord of the Rings* also pointed a similar pattern in Boromir where he was driven mad under the influence of the Ring, attempts to take the Ring forcefully from Frodo. This compels readers to re-evaluate their perspective towards the understanding of good and evil. Benett adds that "perhaps that understanding is that good people are easily enticed by evil, or that evil deeds done for the sake of virtue will ultimately lead to ruin" (18-19). To summarise, the borders between good and evil are porous and it is easy to move from one side to the other as seen in the illustrations above.

So from the observations above it appears that Tolkien's view of evil is not a Manichean one. This is because evil beings in Middle-earth were initially good but gradually became perverted and corrupted. Davison compares evil to the darkness of a shadow and light to goodness and unlike light, he argues, darkness cannot exist without light.[80] This makes goodness an independent and primary force whereas evil is a

---

[78] Refer to chapter: *The Mirror of Galadriel* in *The Fellowship of the Ring* , page 356.
[79] ibid
[80] Scott A. Davidson's *Tolkien and the Nature of Evil* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 102

secondary force that is dependent on goodness. It could be said that Tolkien's ideas resonate with the "Augustinian" notion of evil.[81] According to St. Augustine:

> Wherever you see measure, number, and order, you cannot hesitate to attribute all these to God, their Maker. When you remove measure, number, and order, nothing at all remains...Thus, if all good is completely removed, no vestige of reality persists; indeed, nothing remains. Every good is from God. (*On the Free Choice of the Will*, 83)

According to St. Augustine, "absolute evil" does not exist. Evil is a lack of goodness, darkness is the lack of light and the more goodness is removed from something, the more it gets farther from the truth and closer to nothingness.[82] Evil will always be the perversion and derivative form of goodness like Sauron who is nothing but a mere and "poor substitute" of Morgoth.[83] The perversion as St. Augustine explained is evil that comes from an "inordinate desire" which is out of order, violates and disrupts how things should be. Avarice is unrestrained desire which turns into wickedness which is the cause of all evil.[84] Middle-earth contains numerous occurrences of inordinate desires such as the excessive desire for the Silmarils in *The Silmarillion*, the greedy desire for the Arkenstone in *The Hobbit* and the lust for the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*. In this, one could see how close Tolkien's own ideas on the nature of evil accords with St. Augustine's.

Besides addressing the portrayals of the nature of evil and goodness, myths also teach the virtue one must uphold when facing evil and difficult times. Tolkien found this virtue in Northern myths and was mostly inspired by the Northern lands, be it England, Iceland or Scandinavia. Their literature, history, cultures, language and myth

---

[81] It was called so because St. Augustine (354-430 C.E) introduced this viewpoint. He is a very famous and influential Christian leader

[82] Scott A. Davidson's *Tolkien and the Nature of Evil* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 104

[83] Refer Tolkien in Christopher Tolkien, ed., *Morgoth's Ring*, page 334 and to Birzer in *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 5, 87, par.1

[84] Refer to St. Augustine in Anna S. Benjamin and L.H Hackstaff, trans., *On the Free Choice of the Will*, page 83

have deeply touched him. "Like Walter Scott or William Morris before him," Shippey wrote, "Tolkien felt the perilous charm of the archaic world of the North (*Road to Middle-earth*, 70). Additionally, in a talk given at Church House, Westminster, Tolkien shares,

> The ideas aroused by the sufferings of long, hard cruel winters, the dazzling beauty of the short flowering of Spring and Summer, and the sadness of seeing this once more pass back into the darkness...Such a climate also nourished the virtues which he held in such high regard: heroism and endurance, loyalty, and fidelity, both in love and war. (*Reader's Guide*, 655)

According to the passage above, Tolkien was expressing the immense "presence of land and climate" felt in northern myths.[85] Most importantly, he believed that the land, climate and atmosphere of northern myths act as pathetic fallacies, influencing and cultivating noble values and promoting goodness. And mythologies exemplify these good values and virtues through its execution of model heroism.

Tolkien scholars like Johnsrud, Birzer, Curry, Shippey, Joe Kraus, and Flieger have noted that Tolkien greatly admired the Northern and traditional notion and virtue of heroism. Flieger in her essay, *Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of Hero*, argues that all mythologies contain recurring motifs like "the hero, the quest, the struggle against monstrous forces of evil, the ordeal and its outcome" and whenever these motifs are used "they move the reader and put him in touch with what is timeless" (in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, 124). She further explains that Tolkien had used these motifs to reaffirm important values in the modern era and he has done so by writing a medieval story which had an epic/romance hero and a fairy-tale hero. Flieger

---

[85] See Synder in *The Making of Middle-earth*, page 93

in her essay symbolises Aragorn as a traditional epic hero who is of noble birth, a fighter, healer and a strong leader whereas she presents Frodo as a fairy-tale hero who is ordinary and represents the everyday heroes in life.[86]

Tolkien termed the Northern and traditional idea of heroism as "Northern Courage":

> The theory of courage, which is the great contribution of early Northern literature. The Northern gods are on the right side, though it is not the side that wins. The winning side is Chaos and Unreason — mythologically, the monsters — but the gods, who are defeated, think that defeat no refutation…It is the strength of the northern mythological imagination that it faced this problem, put the monsters in the centre, gave them victory but no honour, and found potent but terrible solution in naked will and courage. (*The Monster and the Critics*, 20)

Shippey and Brian C. Johnsrud examine Tolkien's attraction towards the "Northern theory of courage" and point out that in Northern myths, gods inspire and encourage heroic deeds and Tolkien found this element absent in the Anglo-Saxon myths. Moreover, unlike Christianity, Northern heroism offered no promise of perpetual reward for merits other than the self-satisfaction of having done the right thing and being remembered for their glories and fame in tales.[87] Obviously, Tolkien was fascinated by the potent conviction of bravery especially when it was reflected in English literature and he made sure Middle-earth reflected this virtue of great courage and heroism.

---

[86] Refer to *Frodo and Aragorn: The Concept of Hero*, pages 124 and 125

[87] See Shippey in *Author of the Century*, 150, and Brian C. Johnsrud in *The Monsters Do Not Depart": Re-Unifying Norse, Anglo-Saxon, and Christian in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, pages 78-81. He even explains about how the Romans who once rule England embraced a* pantheon of gods and goddesses to inspire confidence and bravery to their battle troops

In Northern heroism, Tolkien was really attracted to the word "Wyrd", the Anglo-Saxon term usually rendered as "fate" which indicates the pagan view that the world is partially governed by unknown forces. Tolkien called them "fate", "doom", "luck", or "chance".[88] He believed myths actually revealed that there are unforeseen powers at work. Ralph C. Wood describes these forces found in Norse sagas and Germanic fables as "malevolent" and "inscrutable" powers. As an example, at Ragnarök the gods like Odin, Thórr, Freyr, and Loki were defeated by these overwhelming forces and the earth was returned to the "black night of chaos". Nevertheless, through it all, the northern ancestors were undaunted and fought and died valiantly amidst a hopeless world.[89] As a consequence, Tolkien was deeply moved by the heroism portrayed in the Northern literature but despaired at the fact that twentieth- century men lacked this form of heroism.

Of course having been a soldier of World War I, Tolkien would have felt disheartened with what was happening and sought for an ideal heroism. At that point in time, Anglo-Saxon literature and myths offered him catharsis. For example the valour of Byrthwold, the generosity of Byrthnoth, and especially the courage of Beowulf greatly inspired Tolkien. For him, these noble attributes were pertinent in creating a new mythology. Yet, Tolkien felt the absence of divine intervention or mythology in the Anglo-Saxon literature.[90] This is because as Johnsrud enlightens, "by the time the Anglo-Saxons entered England, they had abandoned any significant or organized worship of gods or higher powers, carrying with them half-forgotten names of rejected gods (*The Monsters Do Not Depart*, 78).

---

[88] Refer to Ralf C. Wood's *Confronting the World's Weirdness: J.R.R. Tolkien's Children of Hurin* in *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings,* page 145
[89] Ibid, 145
[90] *The Monsters Do Not Depart*, page 78

On the whole, Tolkien discovered that Christianity lacked the noble virtue of the northern pagan mind — "courage and raw will" — whereas paganism lacked the element of Christian hope.[91] And certainly, as a Christian, Tolkien was not going to allow Middle-earth to be overthrown by monsters or demons. Unlike other works of literature, Tolkien found *Beowulf,* the Anglo-Saxon epic poem, exceptional. Although the Beowulf poet had placed the monsters in the centre poem[92], both Curry and Birzer have acknowledged that Tolkien had applauded the poet's efforts to infuse the old and the new: paganism and Christianity. Beowulf's poet may have placed the monsters in the spotlight but gave them no honour ("naked will and courage") and Tolkien decided to emulate his endeavours.[93] Tolkien believed that the northern (imagination) has power to revitalise its spirit even in current times and believed that Christianity was in need of the "mythologically oriented", northern pagan spirit. Therefore, Tolkien truly felt that the greatest and the highest pagan virtues should be sanctified. This very idea is reflected in St. Augustine's concept of "Christian Duty" whereby philosophers should not run away from but boldly venture into uncharted territories and claim ideas and virtues that resonate with Christianity by sanctifying them.[94] Both Tolkien and St. Augustine understood that the "calm ideas and virtues" in mythologies should be given great importance.

Indeed, it is evident in profound works like *Beowulf* that Christianity has adopted the spirit of pagan barbarian but Guardini knew that the "impetus" of such a spirit did not come directly from raw human will but from the grace of divine

---

[91] See Birzer in *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 45, and see Tolkien in *The Monster and the Critics*, page 78
[92] See Tolkien in *The Monster and the Critics*, pages 5 and 6. Critics consider the Beowulf poet placed great importance on frivolous things like the monsters
[93] See *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch. 4, 154, par.1, and *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 4, 99, par.1
[94] Refer in *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 45, par.4

intervention.[95] Obviously, as a sub-creator who believed that his own mythology was a gift from God, it was quite natural that Tolkien would agree with Guardini. This is reflected in the closing conversation in *The Hobbit* where Gandalf reminds Bilbo that the quest to the Lonely Mountain was orchestrated by greater forces unseen for greater purposes:

> Of course!" said Gandalf. "And why should not they prove true? Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all! (Tolkien, 365)

Besides that, in the epic poem *Beowulf,* the poet displayed two types of heroism. Beowulf's heroic acts were usually driven by the desire for personal glory instead of the sense of duty and duty to God. But his loyal subordinate Wiglaf, followed his master's orders out of love, duty and not out of personal gain. This is why Tolkien held high in reverence the immediate subordinate characters like St. John, Sir Gawain, and his very own Samwise Gamgee.[96] Such ordinary men do not relish personal pride but revere love and loyalty. For a Christian like Tolkien, grace, mercy, and love are the driving force replacing the "raw self-directed" pagan will as the motivating power of the world.[97] To sum up, Tolkien wanted to sub-create a mythology that contained the best of both worlds: the virtues of paganism and Christianity.

As discussed previously, for Tolkien God intercedes directly and indirectly in the happenings of the Primary World, as well as in the sub-created world:

---

[95] See for example, Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of the Western Culture*, pages 51-52. Birzer in *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 3, 82, par.2 revealed the very same idea that "true heroism comes from grace, and not human will" alone

[96] *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.4, 72, par. 1 and 2. Birzer explains further that Tolkien rather felt the companions of the heroes as truer heroes.

[97] Refer to Birzer in : www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2011/05/tolkien-and-hope-of-christian-humanism.html

> Tolkien re-created Anglo-Saxon heritage, linking their ancestry and mythological background to their Scandinavian cousins. Furthermore, he introduced Christianity to the Northern theory of courage, and —- unlike in documented history — the combination in Middle-earth is seamless, (Johnsrud, *The Monsters Do Not Depart*, 78)

This is proven in *The Silmarillion* which is a mythical narrative of God's creations and His interventions in Middle-earth. Iluvatar operates through his angelic-agents, the Vala and the Maia. Tolkien wanted to retell a myth that contains the combination of pagan heroism and the virtues of Christianity and as Johnsrud pointed out, the result was seamless. Moreover, one realizes that during the First Age, even if the evil valar Melkor was causing chaos and destruction, the Vala and the Maia were more present as themselves in the lives of the inhabitants of Middle-earth and the inhabitants were cognisant that they were angelic beings. However in the Third Age, Mordor, the stronghold of Barad-dur and the Shadow, was closer to the inhabitants and more visible to them.[98]

Even though there is no apparent presence of Iluvatar or the Vala and Maia in the Third Age, undeniably a divine and unknown force was at work guiding the members of the Fellowship in their mission to destroy the One Ring. The presence of the force is felt when Gandalf says,

> Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by 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 may be an encouraging thought. (*FR*, 54)

The "something else" in the passage above could refer to divine providence. Kreeft thought it was a good thing that Tolkien made sure the presence of "something else"

---

[98] See Shippey's *Road to Middle-earth*, pages 134 and 148, and Tolkien in *Letters*, page 170

was "encouraging", and that it was sensed throughout his works.[99] All in all, through his myth, Tolkien wanted to show that there must be indomitable courage, loyalty, mercy, love, and compassion in the battle against evil because it is the right thing to do. One must do it without expecting anything in return and have complete trust and faith in God. This notion of heroism is reflected through many of his characters in his legendarium.

In Tolkien's mythos, the Elven-King Fingolfin challenges the mightiest of the Ainur, Morgoth, to a single combat to avenge the defeats and heavy casualties of the Noldorians, resulting in his death.[100] Both Earendil the Mariner and his wife Elwing undertake a crucial errand on behalf of Men and Elves (not for their own sakes), to search after Valinor. They go before the Vala, and plead for aid in Middle-earth to fight against Morgoth.[101] In the same way, in *The Hobbit*, Bilbo who in the face of the most perilous dangers struggles to keep the Dwarf-company safe and Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* accepts the burden of the Ring. He is almost a Christ figure who embodies the virtues of long suffering and perseverance for the sake of Middle-earth.[102] Frodo is an allusion to Christ, by his sacrificial actions and virtues.

Most importantly, myths portray the courage of human beings and their will to survive when facing arduous challenges in life. In a 1971 BBC radio interview Tolkien said, "I've always been impressed that we're here surviving because of the indomitable courage… against impossible odds: jungles, volcanoes, wild beasts... they struggle on, almost blindly in a way".[103] In 1968, Russell Kirk in *Tolkien and Truth through*

---

[99] Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind The Lord of the Rings*, page 59
[100] Refer to the Chapter: *Of The Ruin Of Beleriand in The Silmarillion*, page 178
[101] Ibid, Chapter: *Of Beren And Luthien*, page 212
[102] Refer to 1971, BBC-Interview with Tolkien
[103] ibid

Fantasy, commented that Sauron's "scheme would destroy man as the son of God; it would abolish the moral freedom which distinguishes men from brutes. Only the sacrifice of heroes can save us from such degradation and Tolkien appealed to the gallantry which was latent in the youth of the twentieth century" (29-30). Tolkien knew that in evil times when "men slept", the infusion of the virtues of pagan and Christianity should be renewed and redeemed.[104]

Besides that, even with the acceptance of Christianity in mythologies, Tolkien reminds his readers that the understanding of goodness fluctuates. However the nature of evil stays unchanged:

> For monsters do not depart, whether the gods go or come. A Christian was (and is) still like his forefathers a mortal hemmed in a hostile world. The monsters remained the enemies of mankind, the infantry of the old war, and became inevitably the enemies of the one God. *(The Monster and the Critics*, 72)

The "true battle", the struggle between "the soul and its adversaries" transcends space and time. Tolkien counsels readers that the fight against evil must continue until the end of time.[105] Tolkien's myth tells us that evil powers like "Sauron is eternal" and there will be many wars waged against him. And every time a battle against evil is won, readers are reminded that victory is ephemeral and many new evils are yet to come.[106] Such is the power of myths in their portrayals of good and evil.

From the discussion above, mythologies unquestionably endow human beings with a deeper, more layered understanding of life. Yet, one must keep in mind that to reap the inherent moralities in a myth one must not approach it like a scientific

---

[104] See Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 244 and Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.4, 85, par.2
[105] Tolkien, *The Monster and the Critics*, 22
[106] C. S. Lewis, *The Dethronement of Power* in *Understanding the Lord of the Rings*, 15

experiment because "myth is alive at once and in all its parts, and dies before it can be dissected" (Tolkien, *Beowulf*, 15). To Tolkien, it is difficult to pin down the significance of myth analytically.[107] This is because myth is beyond the material and physical sense, and therefore one cannot scientifically verify it. Myth offers a way of knowing truths by "first tasting"[108] and Lewis elucidates further, "what flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that about which truth is), and, therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths in the abstract level" (*Myth Became Fact*, 14). According to Lewis, only myth has the power to connect "propositional truth and experimental reality". [109] Like all propositional truths, myth is not abstract but it presents truth in a way that can be experienced and felt. Thus myth has the ability to communicate truths and portray good and evil by tapping into the deeper consciousness of human beings. As this chapter progresses, I will try to show how fantasy and fairy-stories share this same quality with myth.

Lastly, Damien Walter in his article *Tolkien's Myths are a Political Fantasy* says that myths function as lens through which one can discern the mysteries of the world. Walter adds that Tolkien believed that if you "change the myth . . . you can change the world".[110] Alongside Tolkien, other writers like C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell agree that creating new myths, inspired by old myths, can help society better understand the modern world[111] i.e. Middle-earth.

---

[107] Tolkien in *The Monster and the Critics*, page 15
[108] Refer to Bruce L. Edwards in *C. S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*, page 14
[109] *Re-Embroidering the Robe: Faith, Myth and Literary Creation since 1850*, page 117
[110] Damien Walter, *Tolkien's Myths are a Political Fantasy* in *The Guardian* (12.12.2014)
[111] Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth: Myth and the Modern World*, page 52

2.2 Fantasy

If myth is the groundwork of a story, then fantasy is the driver and a metaphor for inspiration. Fantasy inspires the sub-creation of new myths motivated by old myths and this is called "Mythopoeia", also frequently defined as myth-making.[112] The roots of fantasy or myth-making extends as far back to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, the Arthurian Romances like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the medieval legends of Alexander the Great.[113] Below, Curry vividly describes Tolkien's myth-making process (to sub-create Middle-earth) and its significance. Tolkien inspired by his ancestors, drew on:

> the power of ancient Indo-European myth, in the form of fantasy"…and invited "the reader into a compelling and remarkably complete modern world, saturated with corresponding earlier values…whose jeopardy we most now feel: relationships with each other, and nature, and (for want of a better word) the spirit, which have not been stripped of personal integrity and responsibility and decanted into a soulless calculus of profit-and-loss; and practical-ethical wisdom, which no amount of economic or technological progress will ever be able to replace. (*Defending Middle-earth*, Ch. 1, 26, par. 1)

Tolkien brilliantly drew inspiration from ancient and archaic myths that encompass "earlier values" and sub-created a fantasy world that could correspond with the modern world. Through mythopoeia, Tolkien reintroduces older yet precious morals such as "personal integrity", "responsibility" and "practical-ethical wisdom" into contemporary society. In Middle-earth Tolkien exemplifies these virtues primarily through his protagonists. Kreeft agrees and acknowledges that Tolkien and all pre-modern societies knew that "personal integrity is the basis for social integrity" (*The Philosophy of Tolkien*, 207). For example, King Theoden of Rohan and King Finrod Felagund, the

---

[112]Trevor A. Hart, Ivan Khovacs, ed., *Tree of Tales: Tolkien, Literature, and Theology*, page 26. Mythopoeic is a concept that both Tolkien and C.S. Lewis discussed much about. Today, the word is associated with Tolkien and the genre of fantasy

[113] Douglas A. Anderson, ed., *Tales Before Tolkien*, page 8

Lord of Nargothrond. King Theoden was eulogized as "a great king" who "kept his oaths" (*RK*, 851), and also through King Finrod, a Noldo who had sworn an oath of friendship to Beren's father, and died saving Beren when he wrestled with Sauron's wolf.[114]

Tolkien's Huan, the Hound of Valinor, a great wolf-hound is the fitting exemplar for "practical-ethical wisdom". Despite being Celegrom's "faithful" wolf-hound, Huan was "true of heart" (*S*, 203). Huan knew that the right thing to do was to help Lúthien escape from the clutches of his oppressive and scheming master and to assist her to save her true love, Beren from Morgoth. At last, mortally wounded, Huan died protecting Beren by killing Carcharoth (the greatest werewolf to have ever lived).[115] Finally, the theme of "responsibility" is well presented through Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*. In the midst of challenging events, Bilbo has "thought of himself frying bacon and eggs" in the comfort "his own kitchen at home" (*H*, 91). Nevertheless Bilbo never break his contract,[116] rescued Thorin and his company of Dwarves from the great spiders[117] and helped them escape the Thranduil's dungeons.[118] The instances above are in line with Walter's belief, "*The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* are not fantasies because they feature dragons, elves and talking trees. They're fantasies because they mythologise human history."[119] As explored earlier, Tolkien utilized his knowledge and fascination of ancient myths and histories, to sub-create his very own Middle-earth mythology[120] with old yet timeless virtues that resonate with contemporary society.

---

[114] Refer to *Of Beren and Lúthien* in *The Silmarillion*, pages 198 and 205
[115] Ibid, pages 218,219 and 220
[116] The contract is stated in Chapter : *Roast Mutton* in *The Hobbit*, pages 44 and 45
[117] Chapter : *Roast Mutton* in *The Hobbit*, pages 192, 193 and 200
[118] Chapter : *Barrels Out of Bound*, page 219
[119] www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/dec/12/tolkiens-myths-are-a-political-fantasy
[120] Refer to this chapter, pages 29 and 51

Next, Brian Attebery in his book *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* has closely depicted the connection between fantasy and myth. In his discussion, he states that fantasy, as Curry points out, draws heavily on earlier mythological traditions. Aligned with Tolkien's concept of mythopoeia, Attebery believes that fantasy provided "new contexts" to "reframe" myths and to "construct" new ways, and new meanings out of "traditional stories", ancient beliefs, and timeless mysteries.[121] Similar to Tolkien, Attebery also reminds us that one must not discern modern fantasy by only quarrying for old myths in them. Instead, he says that one must look at how the fantasists engage with myths to sub-create "new contexts, and thus inevitably [form] new meanings" to address the contemporary issues, events and challenges.[122] Likewise, Diana Dimitrova agrees that,

> Mythologizing of contemporary literature (like fantasy) is linked to modernism and has replaced nineteenth century realism. A number of modern writers have asserted that an integrative mythology, whether inherited or invented, which fuses hereditary myths, biblical history, and the author's own visions, is essential to literature. (*Religion in Literature and Film in South Asia*, 8)

Indeed, Arda or Middle-earth is an integrative mythology and its theology has its own God and Satan, Creation and Fall. Be that as it may, Christopher Tolkien assured that it is neither a "parody" nor "parallel" to Christianity but is based centrally on Christian belief. Thus, Christopher Tolkien and Birzer wrote approvingly that Tolkien's mythology is more like an "extension" and is "represented as a vision, hope and prophecy"; an "incarnational theology".[123] Here it is visible that Tolkien's mythology is viewed in a similar light as the Christian myth because it represents the qualities of the gospels: "vision, hope and prophecy". This would explain why Tolkien's Middle-earth is often held as an "incarnational theology" because like the embodiment of God in the

---

[121] *Stories about Stories*, 2. Attebery even noted that Shakespeare has borrowed plots from the Ovid
[122] Ibid, page 3
[123] Refer to Christopher Tolkien, ed*., Morgoth's Ring*, 318, and Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.3, 60, par. 2

person of Christ, it conveys abstract concepts like the portrayal of god, good and evil in a concrete form. This was all possible through Tolkien's employment of mythopoeia. Besides Tolkien, fantasists like Kafka in *The Trial* and *The Castle*, Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain* and in *Joseph and His Brothers*, and Faulkner in *The Bear* have intertwined contemporary events either with the pattern of ancient myths or created their very own mythology.[124] Therefore, it would appear that myth and fantasy are inseparable when it comes to myth-making.

According to Tolkien fantasy is an art of "image-making" that varies in "vividness and strength" in comparison to Imagination, (though "not a difference in kind") because it gives the reader "the inner consistency of reality"… It is "the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation"…[125] Furthermore, Tolkien explicates that fantasy also embraces "both the sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the expression, derived from the image" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 139). To Tolkien fantasy is a "higher form of art" because it engages with the human ability to make mental images which have the power in "arresting strangeness".[126] Moreover, Tolkien scholars like Birzer, J. S. Ryan, and R.J. Reilly point out that for Tolkien, fantasy is potent because it is difficult to achieve as it deals with strange and mysterious images that cannot be found in the Primary World but nevertheless has "the inner consistency of reality" of the Primary World.[127] This paradoxical statement suggests that fantasy has the power to make unbelievable things

---

[124] See Dimitrova, *Religion in Literature and Film in South Asia*, 8. Dimitrova also argued that authors who have consciously abandoned myths and traditional plots to create realistic works have realized that they cannot run away from the influence of myths

[125] *On Fairy-Stories*, pages 138, 139

[126] Ibid, 139

[127] See J. S. Ryan *Folktale in Fairy Tale, and the Creation of a Story*, 113, also R.J. Reilly in *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, pages 98-99, and Tolkien in *On Fairy-Stories*, page 140

believable and a successful fantasy does not make the reader conscious of it, or in other words, readers would not feel that it is inauthentic.

Other Tolkien scholars like Purtill argue that in contrast with "the inner consistency of reality", the "willing suspension of disbelief suggests something self-consciously insincere, some deliberate element of 'let's pretend'" (*Myth, Morality, and Religion*, 19). This is proven as Tolkien's fantasized stories deeply moved his readers because Middle-earth is relatable. Once such example is clearly evident in James S. Spiegel's *Gum, Geckos, and God: A Family's Adventure in Space, Time, and Faith*. Spiegel writes, "reading Tolkien's books, and I occasionally found myself in tears with his descriptions of the Black Riders, who hotly pursue Frodo and his loyal company of friends….Tolkien's book communicated to me only sub-consciously: no matter how hard I try. I cannot shelter my child (Bailey) from evil in this world" (Ch.1, 14, par 1-2). Thus, fantasy possesses the advantage of being able to arrest and to facilitate the strange, mythic, and fantastic elements of old myths and at the same time making them new, credible and believable.

Tolkien also established that fantasy is not a mere image-making process. Like myth, "fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, or obscure the perception of, scientific verity" *(Tolkien, On Fairy-Stories, 144)*. This is because every fantasized sub-creation has significant underlying meanings found in the Primary World. For example, when a "bestial worm" presents itself in a story, readers should take its significance and symbolism seriously.[128] Medieval Christians associated the dragons in myths and

---

[128] See Tolkien, *The Monster and the Critics*, 17, and Michael D. O'Brien, *A Landscape with Dragons*, page 31. O'Brien stresses that, in western literature whenever a dragon appears, it represents the manifestation of the devil or his demons

fantasies with the serpent in the Garden and the seven-headed creature that St. Michael battles with during the Apocalypse.[129] To Tolkien, dragons represent "personifications of malice, greed, destruction (the evil side of heroic life), and the undiscriminating cruelty of fortune that distinguishes not good or bad (the evil aspect of all life)" (*The Monster and the Critics*, 17). When it comes to Mordor, the fantasized-hell, it shares similar descriptions of the hells in Christian, Sumerian, and the Anglo-Saxon mythologies, symbols of fire, ash, barrenness, desolation, and suffering. [130]

Edmund Wainwright in *Tolkien's Mythology for England: A Middle-Earth Companion*, recognizes that the Rohirrim allude to the ideas the Angles revered and the virtues of the Riders are similar to the virtues which the Angles held in honour, "courage, loyalty, generosity, self-reliance".[131] According to John Garth, Tolkien imaginatively created certain unforgettable things for example, the new destructive machines of war that were introduced at the Western Front during the Great War, particularly the flame-throwers which served as an inspiration for flame-throwing dragons and iron dragons carrying Orcs in their hollow bellies as tanks.[132] Hence in Tolkien's texts, the creation of fantasy is not an irrational activity but a coherent image-making activity that carries particular significance in the portrayals of good and evil. For most critics, fantasy might seem to defy reality, but Carson L. Holloway states categorically that fantasy does not and cannot defy reason, as it is work produced by rational beings in a state of consciousness for rational beings, i.e. the readers and Tolkien.[133]

---

[129] Snyder, The *Making of Middle-earth*, page 117
[130] John Walsh, *Hell* in *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopaedia,* page 269
[131] qtd in *The Making of Middle-Earth*, page 57
[132] Refer to Christopher Tolkien (ed.), *The Book of Lost Tales: Part Two*, page 170, See Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War*, who invented and pages220-221, and Snyder In *The Making of Middle-earth: Tolkien Middle Ages*, 79. Tolkien blamed the chemists and engineers supplied powerful weapons to modern tyrants during the Great War
[133] Paul E. Kerry, ed., *The Ring and the Cross*, page 181

Furthermore, like myth, fantasy for Tolkien is also rooted in the relationship between Creator and human beings. Carpenter and Birzer have noted that Tolkien found myth-making and fantasy acts of sub-creation which fulfil God's purpose.[134] This is evident when Tolkien says:

> Although now long estranged,
> Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
> Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned,
> and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned:
> Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light
> through whom is splintered from a single White
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind.
> Though all the crannies of the world we filled
> with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build
> Gods and their houses out of dark and light,
> and sowed the seed of dragons- 'twas our right
> (used or misused). That right has not decayed:
> we make still by the law in which we're made… (*On Fairy-Stories*, 144)

According to the passage above it appears that for Tolkien, inspired by God's true myth, human beings have always endeavoured to create their own myths. Enkindled by God, not only did Tolkien filled "the crannies of the world" with elves, goblins, dragons but also "dared to build Gods and their houses out of dark and light".

Dragons, like so many other literary devices, shaped great events in Tolkien's fiction. And mainly they embody of evil, destruction and malice. There are total four infamous dragons[135] in Tolkien's legendarium. Glaurung and Ancalagon made a substantial appearance in the First Age as great servants of Morgoth whereas, Scatha and Smaug in the Third Age. Glaurung, a wingless great worm who was hailed as the father of Dragons was first introduced in the chapter: *Of the Return of the Noldor* as

---

[134] See *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 3, 54, par.2, and Carpenter, *A Biography*, pages 197-198
[135] In Middle-earth, dragons were also referred to as serpents, great Worms or Drakes

"the first of the Uruloki".[136] Túrin Turambar with his sword thrust "into the soft belly of the Worm" thus bringing about Glaurung's demise (*S*, 266). However, Ancalagon the Black[137], a winged fire drake was the "mightiest of the dragon-host", was defeated by Eärendil in the War of Wrath (*S*, 302). Next, Tolkien's account of Scatha[138] the long-worm of the Ered Mithrin can be found in *The House of Earl*, *Appendix A*, *The Lord of the Rings*. Fram son of Frumgar "slew Scatha… and the land had peace form the long-worms afterwards (1039). Finally, Smaug[139] the Golden was the greatest fire-breathing dragon and in the chapter: In *An Unexpected Party*, *The Hobbit*, Thorin Oakenshield described him as "a most specially greedy, strong and wicked worm" (38). Smaug met his end when Bard the Bowman shot him with his Black Arrow.[140]

Equally, Tolkien's Goblins (Tolkien usually calls them Orcs) are the infantry men of evil overlords. Two noteworthy ones are found in *The Hobbit* and they are the Great Goblin, who was the chief of the Goblins who dwelt in Goblin-town beneath the High Pass in the Misty Mountains[141] and Azog was an Orc-chieftain of Moria who killed Thrór "in the Mines of Moria" (40) and beheaded Náin the father of Dáin II in the Battle of Azanulbizar.[142] The former was slain by Gandalf with his sword Glamdring, and the latter was slain by Dáin II Ironfoot in the Battle of Azanulbizar[143]. When it comes to house of Gods, Tolkien sub-created the Undying Lands (Deathless Lands) which covers both Aman and Eressëa. Aman (the Blessed Realm) and Eressëa (The Lonely Isle) lies in "easternmost of the Undying Lands" (*S*, 314). In Aman, Valinor is

---

[136] Refer to *The Silmarillion* in pages 132-133. Urulóki in Quenya means fire-drake
[137] In Sindarin Anca means "jaws" and alak means "rushing" a.k.a rushing jaws
[138] In Modern English, "to Scathe"
[139] According to Tolkien in his Letters, the name Smaug is "the past tense of the primitive Germanic verb *Smugan*, to squeeze through a hole" or *meag*, connoting a worm in Old English - Peter Gilliver, Weiner and Jeremy Marshall, *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary*, pages 190-1
[140] See *Fire and Water*, *The Hobbit* page 301.
[141] The Great Goblin has a "huge head" and was hailed as "truly tremendous one" by his subjects. Refer to *The Hobbit*, pages 83, 85 and 87
[142] Look at *Durin's Folk*, *Appendix A*, *The Lord of the Rings* page 1049
[143] Ibid. Dáin II Ironfoot avenged his father's death by hewing Azog's head in the very same battle.

the abode of the Valar and the Maiar dwelt with them as well.[144] On the whole, Tolkien "exercised" his "right" as a sub-creator through his intricate subtleties and nuances in every sub-creations of his. Additionally, as a Christian, Tolkien viewed the doctrine of sub-creation as "a form of worship" and a way for human beings to "express the divine image" in them.[145] Tolkien asserts that fantasy remains a "human right" because human beings were made in the "likeness of a Maker".[146] Therefore, human beings strive to emulate His Creations the best they can.

Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, fantasy is often viewed as unnatural and divergent and a perversion of the truth.[147] To that, Tolkien answers:

> For creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it. So upon logic was founded the nonsense that displays itself in the tales and rhymes of Lewis Carroll. If men really could not distinguish between frogs and men, fairy-stories about frog-kings would not have arisen. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 144)

Tolkien's theory of fantasy is similar to that of Coleridge who also viewed fantasy as "mode of memory" emancipated from the laws of time and space.[148] Fantasy provides human beings the freedom to utilize the unexplainable and the indescribable to express truths that cannot be expressed through the rational world.[149] According to Basney, Koucher and Curry, although Middle-earth consists of many fantastic elements and marvels that cannot be found in our world, it still can be trusted because it contains familiar landscapes, geography, climate, and skies.[150] Fantasy actually glorifies the ordinary things on earth. For instance, in the context of fantasy, "by the forging of

---

[144] Refer to the chapter: *Of the Beginning of Days*, *The Silmarillion* page 30, and refer to pages 299, 310, 314, 334, 337, 424, and 427 to understand the terminologies
[145] David C. Downing, *Sub-Creation or Smuggled Theology*, http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/1207
[146] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 145
[147] Refer to this chapter, page 23
[148] See Reilly, *Tolkien and the Fairy Story* in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, page 97
[149] Martha C. Sammons, *A Far-off Country*, page 29
[150] Refer to Paul Kocher, *Middle-earth: An Imaginary world?*, page 147, and Lionel Basney, *Myth, History, and Time in The Lord of*

Gram[151] cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; in the Trees of the Sun and Moon[152] root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory" (Tolkien, 147). Therefore, fantasy produces imaginative and creative versions of myths and reality.

The very same idea is reflected in Madeleine L'Engle's discussion which defines the reality of fantasy as mythic, because "it may never have existed in concrete fact; it has always existed as truth." (qtd in *Reality of Fantasy*, 549). On the same note, Attebery argues that even though fantasy is "fundamentally playful", it is serious about encouraging readers to see that truths (the portrayals of good and evil) can be found in symbols that are "unstable and elusive".[153] In actuality, modernity and the Primary World contain things that are unpredictable, short-lived, and impermanent[154] as well. Therefore, fantasy and myths are not any different than modernity. As Marshall Berman puts it, modernity "is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity" and to be modern is being part of a universe in which, as Marx says, "all that is solid melts into air".[155] So for Tolkien, the characteristics of fantasy such as instability, elusiveness and the ability in arresting strangeness are definitely virtues instead of vices.[156] Fantasy actually

---

the Rings, page 184, and Patrick Curry in *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch. 3, 57, par. 2

[151] In Norse mythology, tilted *Völsunga saga*, Gram, is the name of the sword that Sigurd (central character) used to kill the dragon Fafnir

[152] See *The Power of Form: Recycling Myths,* 204. Tolkien could be referring to The Two Trees of Valinor, two axis-mundi trees that once existed on Middle-earth. They are much alike Yggdrasil in Norse Mythology and also the trees in the Garden of Eden.

[153] *Stories about Stories*, 8

[154] Refer to Carmen C. Richardson, *The Reality of Fantasy*, page 549, also Joe Kraus, *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 13

[155] See Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 139

[156] *On Fairy-Stories*, 139

demands and teaches readers to cope with the overwhelming changes of daily life. As the readers face up to these challenges, fantasy helps develop the "inner resources"[157] which will prepare them to face and conquer the overwhelming realities of life i.e. the "dragons of tomorrow".[158]

Inspired by myth, fantasy can also inspire courage especially in ordinary human beings. In Tolkien's fantasy, the hobbits represent the common human beings. His hobbits thrive, succeed, and fail just like any regular human being, especially Samwise Gamgee. Many scholars including Blount Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Stratford Caldecott, have concurred that Sam is the "most heroic character" in *The Lord of the Rings* because he is the actual representation of the common people.[159] Bilbo and Frodo do not best exemplify ordinary men because unlike Sam, they were entrusted with significant tasks. For example, in *The Hobbit*, Bilbo goes on a quest to defeat Smaug the dragon and help Dwarves reclaim their treasures while Frodo volunteers and undertakes the most difficult task: to destroy the One Ring at the fiery pits of Mount Doom. Samwise (half wise) however, does not portend great things, subordinates himself and declines personal glory at his master's expense.[160] Sam's loyalty for Tolkien is of a common soldier in the Great War. This is evident when Tolkien says, "My 'Sam Gamgee' is indeed a reflection of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognized as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter, *A Biography*, 89).

---

[157] Life skills found in recovery, escape and consolation
[158] *The Reality of Fantasy*, pages 549-550
[159] See Tolkien, Carpenter ed., *Letters*, 261, Bradley, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*: *Men, Halflings, and Hero Worship*, page 91, also *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*: *Uberhobbits,* and for an excellent analysis on Sam, refer to Caldecott's *Over the Chasm of Fire,* pages 29-32
[160] Blount, *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*: *Uberhobbits*, page 97

Additionally, for Birzer Sam's loyalty is biblical in nature as he resembles the character of St. John the Evangelist to Frodo's Jesus.[161] Above all, he represents the good that remains good throughout his journey despite the temptation (of the One Ring). He is resilient against tremendous pressures and emerges a sturdier hobbit in the end. Hence, Richardson states that fantasy, undeniably, plays a significant role in showing that the human spirit, after undergoing trials, toils and tumults will emerge fuller and stronger. It allows readers to observe and experience the natural emotional responses of each character. Through experiencing the "inner workings" of a fantasist, readers may come to view their own "inner trials" as part of the human condition. And this could encourage them to face inevitable human quests and conflicts fearlessly while still being reassured that the human spirit has survived and will continue surviving.[162]

Besides that, Shippey writes that fantasy inspires "a memory of something that could in reality have existed" (*The Road to Middle-Earth*, 65). For example, the word "hobbit" is "pure inspiration"[163] due to the fact that it was Tolkien's original invention, but he quickly gave the word its philological roots by linking it to the Old English word "hol-bytla", meaning "hole-dweller".[164] Thus the author painstakingly wove in truths and characteristics of the Primary World. He went even further by placing the hobbits in an English context and their names echoes English culture. The name Baggins for instance resembles the English word "Baggins" which means any type of food eaten in

---

[161] *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 4, 71, par. 2
[162] Richardson, *The Reality of Fantasy*, pages 549, 551
[163] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-Earth*, pages 66
[164] Ibid, page 67

between meals.[165] Even as Catherine Stimpson, founding editor of Signs, who in 1969 attacked Tolkien by calling him an "incorrigible nationalist . . . (who) celebrates the English bourgeois pastoral idyll" (qtd. In *Tolkien and His Critics*, 5), Curry and Harrison celebrate Tolkien's "pastoral fantasy" for aspiring towards a better world.[166] This suggests that Tolkien wanted his mythopoeic world to be in a healthy, green and conducive setting or environment.

But Tolkien warns that fantasy can be misused as well:

> Fantasy can, of course, be carried to excess. It can be ill done. It may even delude the minds out of which it came. But of what human thing in this fallen world is that not true? Men have conceived not only of elves, but they have imagined gods, and worshipped them, even worshipped those most deformed by their authors' own evil. But they have made false gods out of other materials: their notions, their banners, their monies; even their sciences and their social and economic theories have demanded human sacrifice. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 144)

Therefore, one must not disregard or belittle the power of fantasy. Although fantasy is "fundamentally playful"[167] it creates symbols that carry serious connotations. As Attebery noticed, literalists fear fantasy not because it denies Christian myths, but because it reinterprets and changes the meaning of it.[168] Undeniably, their concern is fathomable since H. P. Lovecraft's[169] the Cthulhu Mythos stirred "various Cthulhuean cults and occult lodges that in the 1970s sprung up one after the other like fungi from damp soil, including The House of Starry Wisdom or Typhonian ideologist Kenneth Grant, whose books fuse secret knowledge about outer space allegedly glimpsed in

---

[165] Ibid, page 72
[166] Refer to Curry and Harrison, *Defending Middle-earth*, Intr: Radical Nostalgia, page 50, par 3
[167] See *Stories about Stories* page 2
[168] Ibid, page 1. Attebery also pointed out that on religious viewpoint book burners believe[fantasy] "encourages witchcraft and devil worship"
[169] Howard Phillips Lovecraft is a prevalent American author and a myth-maker (born August 20, 1890 and died March 15, 1937). His notable works were "The Call of Cthulhu", *The Shadow Out of Time* and *At the Mountains of Madness*

Lovecraft with Crowleyan teachings" (Matolcsy, *That Is Not Dead which Can Eternal Lie*, 450). However, for Tolkien fantasy facilitates the reimagining of old myth and that includes the Christian Myth. Indubitably Tolkien's fantasized Middle-earth is based on the Christian myth. Particularly, fantasy "encourages the reader to see meaning as something unstable and elusive, rather than single and self-evident" (Attebery, *Stories about Stories*, Intr. 8, par 1). Thus fantasy is subjective in nature; it can either be put to a good or evil cause. Tolkien as a skilful fantasist, illustrates the dual nature of fantasy through his use of Magic in Middle-earth. Yet he also proves why the former surpasses the latter.

As a matter of fact, Middle-earth is not entirely devoid of magic. Usually fantasists use magic as a tool to drive a plot forward.[172] In *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien argued that there are two types of "magic" but he delineates them differently. Faerie to a certain extent is viewed as product of Magic. But not the vulgar kind of magic which "pretends to produce, an alteration in the Primary World…" which in turn seeks only "power in this world, domination of things and wills" (143). Tolkien rather preferred the magic "of a particular mood and power"; "Enchantment". In contrast to the former kind of Magic, Enchantment (elvish craft) "does not seek delusion, nor bewitchment and domination; it seeks shared enrichment, partners in making and delight, not slaves" (143). A great scene that epitomises this type of magic is when Frodo encounters the beauty of the music at Rivendell (an elven town):

> At first the beauty of the melodies and of the interwoven words in elven-tongues, even though he understood them little, held him in a spell, as soon as he began to attend to them. Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the firelit hall became like a golden mist above the seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the

---

[172] See Philip Martin's *The Writer's Guide to Fantasy Literature: From Dragon's Lair to Hero's Quest*, page 143

world. Then the enchantment became more and more dreamlike, until he felt that an endless river of swelling gold and silver was flowing over him, too multitudinous for its pattern to be comprehended; it became part of the throbbing air about him, and it drenched and drowned him. Swiftly he sank under its shining weight into a deep realm of sleep. (*FR*, 227)

In Rivendell, Frodo was "enchanted" and the elven songs and music put him in a "spell." Tolkien describes the spell as "dreamlike" and it "took shape of…bright things". This type of magic is different from that of the One Ring in that it **"**is the surrender, or submission, of the soul to the beauty of nature and art" (Kreeft, 91). While the Enemy (Morgoth, Sauron and Saruman) uses magia to "bulldoze both people and things, and [their] *goeteia* to terrify and subjugate" (Tolkien, *Letters*, 215). In view of the fact that, Tolkien's "myth derives directly from his Christian faith", Middle-earth reflects the Christian ideals of love, kindness and respect.

2.3 Fairy-Story

In *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien establishes that fairy-story is not a debased sub-genre of mythology. He defends that there is no "fundamental distinction" between higher and lower mythology because both myth and fairy-story are the products of human imagination.[173] The fairy-story then, of which Tolkien's trilogy is an example, uses myth and fantasy to produce "story-making in its primary and most potent mode" (Tolkien, 140). The definition of a fairy-story says Tolkien,

> does not…depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country... It cannot be done. Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible…a "fairy-story" is one which touches on or uses Faerie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 114)

---

[173] *On Fairy-Stories*, pages 122-123

For Tolkien the fairy-story genre is a narrative that should include Faerie, a synonym to the Secondary World.[174] Birzer concurs by saying, "certainly, myth, of which faerie is one kind, holds an estranged place in a modern world as Tolkien well knew" (*Sanctifying Myth*, Intr. 13, par. 2). Tolkien made it clear that the "fairy" part of fairy-story did not derive from fairies but instead from adventures of men in Faerie, the Perilous Realm. Tolkien wanted his reader to see that faerie holds many beings besides fairies, like elves, dwarfs, oliphaunts, wizards, giants and dragons. It also holds things from the Primary World as well like the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky, the earth and even human beings, all in a state of enchantment.[175] The unique domain of a fairy-story is the Faerie, a Perilous Realm that contains magic and enchantment where ordinary mortals must sometimes venture to fulfil a quest.[176]

Reilly argues that Tolkien found it difficult to describe Faerie accurately because it can only be perceived.[177] Like myth and fantasy, Tolkien rejected the analytical study of fairy-stories as this was a "bad preparation for enjoying or writing them" *(On Fairy-Stories*, 145). Tolkien was not the only one who was of that view. Wordsworth in his poem *The Tables Turned* writes, "Our meddling intellect/ Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things; /-We murder to dissect" (*The Poetical Works*, 6). Also, Moulin points out that Seamus Heaney "avoids reading academic criticism of his poetry because it makes him feel like a pig in a bacon factory" (*On Tolkien's Reappraisal of the Fairy-Story*, 5).

---

[174] Ibid, page 114. Tolkien strongly advocated that fairy-stories are stories that deals with Faerie. He disqualified the Travellers' tales, stories that employ "the machinery of Dream" and Beast-fable from the fairy-story genre.
[175] Ibid, 113 and See Lin Carter, *A Look Behind The Lord Of The Rings*, Ch. 9, page 39, par.3
[176] Downing, *Sub-Creation or Smuggled Theology*, www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/1207
[177] *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, page 93

As pointed out before, fairy-story is the appropriate genre to facilitate both the mythical and fantastical in a narrative. This is evident in Tolkien's descriptive example of the "Olympian nature myth": The Norse god Thórr. He revealed that Thórr means "thunder" in Norse and Miöllnir his hammer acts as a symbol for lightning. Yet Tolkien denoted that Thórr's distinct character, or personality, for instance, "his red beard, his loud voice and violent temper, his blundering and smashing strength" cannot be found in thunder or in lightning. [178] Definitely, Thórr was a product of human fantasy. Tolkien noticed that Thórr is the personification of the "thunder in the mountains, splitting rocks and trees". On the other hand, Thórr could also be "an irascible, not very clever, redbeard farmer, of a strength beyond common measure, a person (in all but mere stature) very like the Northern farmers, the bœndr by whom Thórr was chiefly beloved" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 124). Tolkien acknowledged that Thórr was part of a higher mythology; "one the rules of the world". Nonetheless, he confidently claims that the story that is spoken of him in *Thrymskvitha* (in the Elder Edda) is certainly a fairy-story and as long as there is a fairy-story, there is Thórr. And when the fairy-story ceases, what would remain is just thunder.[179] Thus, Tolkien concludes that, "an essential power of Faerie is thus the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of fantasy" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 122).

Tolkien sometimes personifies nature, using them to signal shifts in the plot. In *The Hobbit*, mountains under thunderstorm became rock-hurling stone-giants[180], forcing Bilbo and the Dwarves to camp inside a cave nearby only to be smuggled by goblins. Also, Tolkien personified The Two Trees of Valinor, Telperion and Laurelin, the Silver

---

[178] Ibid, page 123
[179] Ibid, page 124
[180] Chapter: *Over Hill and Under Hill* in *The Hobbit*, pages 79 and 78

and the Gold Trees that brought light to Aman in the beginning of days: when "Telperion ceased his time of flower; and at the twefth hour Laurelin her blossoming" (*S*, 32). Their destruction[181] caused the Darkening of Valinor and which in turn outset the Days of the Sun and the Moon. In the same way, Tolkien personified Caradhras[182] as "Cruel", with an "ill will" and "he does not love Elves, dwarves".[183] Caradhras even laid a snow drift in the path of the Fellowship to cut off their escape.[184] Consequently, the Fellowship of the Ring was forced to go to South; which lead them to Moria where Gandalf challenged the Balrog of Morgoth and unfortunately "slid in to abyss" saving the rest of the members.[185] The power of fantasy enabled Tolkien to make nature determine certain major outcomes in his stories.

Other than that, in his essay Tolkien touches on the theory of the "Cauldron of Story" where "soup containing bones" has "always been boiling". According to Tolkien, the soup is the "story served up by its author or teller", the bones are "its sources and materials", and the significant "cook" is the author or teller.[186] The continuously boiling soup contains all sorts of stories that have been told especially of myth, fantasy, and faerie. Exalted figures of mythologies and histories are just waiting for her/his moment to be thrown into the simmering soup in the Cauldron.[187] For Tolkien, it is an honour to be thrown into soup (as a historical figure) where there were "many things older, more potent, more beautiful, comic, or terrible than they were in themselves (considered simply as figures of history)" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 126). Besides

---

[181] Melkor "smote" the Trees down to their cores and Ungoliant the Spider "sucked" and "drained" away their lights, page 80
[182] Tolkien describes Caradhras as "A mighty peak" in the Misty Mountains, "tipped with snow like silver, but sheer naked sides, dull red as if stained with blood" (*FR*, 279)
[183] Refer to Chapter : *The Ring Goes South* in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, page 285
[184] Ibid
[185] Ibid, page 322
[186] Refer to *On Fairy-Stories*, page 120, also Matthew Dickerson, David O'Hara, *From Homer to Harry Potter*, page 112. According to Dickerson and O'Hara, Tolkien borrowed the idea of soup as story from Dasent but then he improved it
[187] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 127

the example of Thórr, Tolkien discusses the legend of King Arthur as an example of a story imbued with myth and fantasy as well:

> It seems fairly plain that Arthur, once historical (but perhaps as such not of great importance), was also put into the Pot. There he was boiled for a long time, together with many other older figures and devices, of mythology and Faerie, and even some other stray bones of history (such as Alfred's defence against the Danes), until he emerged as a King of Faerie. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 126)

And once a historical figure like Arthur and a mythical figure like Thórr come out of the cauldron imbued with the power of Faerie, they transform and are "more potent, more beautiful, comic, or terrible" than they were originally.[188] Tolkien viewed these stories from the Cauldron as "spells" which mean "both [stories] told, and a formula of power over living men" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 127). Kath Filmer-Davies elaborates by saying that the "spells" from the Cauldron are "imaginative sub-creations" which have certain powers that could reveal "divine truths".[189] Following this line of argument then, fairy-stories contain elements of various mythoi and fantasies which could reveal to the readers the divine, metaphysical, intangible and unexplainable truths of life, God and of good and evil.

On top of that, Tolkien has declared that other genres use fantastic elements only "occasionally" and then for decorative purposes. But in a fairy-story, "fantasy is the core" subject because fantasy is an "art of making" using materials from the Primary World such as clay, stone and wood.[190] Also Tolkien argues that the "adjective", the part of speech used in a fairy-story is in "mythical grammar" which he believed acts like an incantation or spell, that can transform things.[191] Mark Atherton reiterates,

---

[188] Refer to *On Fairy-Stories*, page 125, and Dickerson and O'Hara, *From Homer to Harry Potter*, page 113. They provided the example of the Goose-girl of the Grimm's fairy tale and Charlemagne's mother, Bertha Broadfoot
[189] Davies, *The Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth Century Fantasy Literature* in *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.4, 102, par 2
[190] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 147
[191] Ibid, page 122

> in a mythical grammar the colour that is normally applied to the sky can be reapplied creatively to something else, so we can have "blue moon; same goes for the colour of leaves or wool which can be made silver or gold, and the burning fire can be given to the cold-blooded reptile, transforming him into a dragon. (*J. R .R. Tolkien and the Origins of The Hobbit*, 46-47)

A fairy-story harnesses the power of both myth and fantasy (derived from the materials of the Primary World), and employs them to sub-create a mythical world where the "blue moon" and the "green sun" are a plausible reality. Despite being an ardent defender of Tolkien's Middle-earth, Curry expresses concern that the rubric of fairy-story and fantasy still leaves Tolkien vulnerable to vagueness and to the attacks of critics. But on the other hand Curry argues that the mythic mode of imagination sets Tolkien apart from and gives him an advantage over many authors as well. Curry adds that by "giving mythic its full cultural and historical due (through *The Silmarillion*)…Tolkien "raises *The Lord of the Rings* above even excellent books which however embody a more purely personal and idiosyncratic mythology like David Lindsays' *A Voyage to Arcturus*, and Mervyn Peake's Gothic *Gormenghast* trilogy" (*Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5 ,192, par.1). Likewise, Anita Miller Bell, in *The Lord of the Rings and the Emerging Generation*, views myth as the weighty and potent medium through which "reality can be seen in the unreality of the fairy-story" (132). From the evidences discussed, it is perceptible that myth, fantasy, and fairy-story are inseparable.

Nonetheless, modern readers fail to appreciate fairy-stories and Birzer reveals that Tolkien was saddened by the fact that modernity has shrouded the mystery that surrounds life and has deformed and defiled the true perception of reality.[192] So he

---

[192] Refer to *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 35, par 1

aimed to offer his reader a good fairy-story that could provide "certain things which realistic stories do not offer, or do not offer to the same degree" (Reilly, 99); and they were recovery, escape, and consolation. Through recovery, escape, and consolation, Tolkien managed to unravel good and evil. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how Tolkien's fairy-stories of Middle-earth, the product of mythopoeia (the amalgamation of myth, fantasy and fairy-story) bequeaths a powerful[193] recovery, escape, and consolation to readers to face the modern world in an optimistic manner.

---

[193] Powerful because they are impactful and effective. The skills received from recovery, escape, and consolation equip readers to face contemporary life with positive hope

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Carol E. Leon. I have been fortunate to have a supervisor who gave me the freedom to explore my own ideas and, at the same, has supported me throughout my dissertation with her patience and immense knowledge. I will always appreciate her for her encouragement whenever I faltered. One simply could not wish for a better or friendlier supervisor.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without my family. My father Mr. Vathemurthy Pillai, my mother Mrs. Sarojini Devi Ramasamy and my siblings; Bragathiswary Pillai and Hariharan Pillai to whom I dedicate this dissertation. They have been a constant source of love and motivation. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to my family.

Also, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Andrew Lim Zhi Heng. His patience and kindness helped me overcome many obstacles and finish this dissertation. I would like to thank Andrew who has always been my love, comfort and support.

Despite the adversities and hardships, writing this dissertation meant a lot to me. This study comes from a heart that loves and reveres J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien has been my inspiration and idol ever since I was young. I regard this study as my very own modest contribution to Tolkien studies. Most of all, writing this dissertation has been a profound literary and humbling experience from which I have learnt that "wisdom is knowing how little we know" (Socrates).

CHAPTER THREE

A Powerful Recovery, Escape and Consolation

We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses— and wolves.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*[1]

In this chapter the discussion is primarily on how the genres of myth, fairy- story and fantasy are all the more powerful when they converge and how Middle-earth is the successful product of that merging. Through this convergence, Middle-earth is able to provide emotional and psychological healing through recovery, escape, and consolation. Moreover, this chapter will explore the benefits of escaping to Middle-earth where the beauty and darkness of everyday life are amplified in a believable manner, so that one can recover from sheer ignorance. Finally, this chapter aims to show that through escapism and recovery, one attains consolation; not the kind that promises a reader that all problems will magically disappear but more of the acceptance that the world is made of evil and good and the consolation is that good can even come from cataclysms. Indeed, his inclusion and employment of mythical, fantastical, and fairy-story elements in his Middle-earth stories vividly manifest his theories on recovery, escape and consolation. In this chapter, I will explore the importance of Tolkien's theories of recovery, escape, and consolation individually in sub-sections. I will then go on to discuss how myth, fantasy, and fairy-story strengthen and enliven these theories.

---

[1] Refer to page 146

3.1 Recovery

Recovery, according to Tolkien, "(which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view". It means "seeing things as they are" that is, "'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them'— as things apart from ourselves'" (*On Fairy-Stories,* 146). The word "things" mentioned above is applicable to people, moral codes, religious dogmas, objects, ideas and almost everything from the Primary World.[2] Many scholars including Ryan, Zipes, Curry, and Reilly discuss that for Tolkien, recovery is the regaining of a clear view of things blurred by "triteness and the familiarities"[3] in daily-life. Tolkien realized that once a thing comes into one's possession, and is used frequently, it loses its delight and sparkle. This leads to boredom and human beings get bored because they see things only in relation to themselves. Sadly, they lose sight to see things as they are and are meant to be seen.[4] This impairment of vision, Reilly argues, is caused by selfishness and egotism.[5] But Tolkien deemed it fortunate that reading good fairy-stories lifts the veil of drab blurriness and helps readers to recover from the dangers of boredom or anxiety.[6]

Fairy-story, myth, and fantasy each offer recovery in their own distinct ways but when they are put together, they offer powerful and effective recovery. Good fairy-stories ("untouched by fantasy") have the power even to make the simplest and most fundamental of things "more luminous" by its setting, i.e. faerie. In faerie like Middle-earth, living things, inanimate objects, landscapes, and the portrayal of good and evil

---

[2] See R. J. Reilly, *Understanding The Lord the rings*: *Tolkien and Fairy Story*, page 99
[3] Refer to J. S. Ryan, *Understanding The Lord the rings: Folktale, Fairy Tale, and the Creation of a Story*, page 114, Jack Zipes*, Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, page 162, Curry, *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5 ,192, and, R. J. Reilly, *Understanding The Lord the rings*: *Tolkien and Fairy Story*, page 99
[4] Curry *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5 ,192, par.1, also Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 162, Ryan, *Understanding The Lord the rings*: *Folktale, Fairy Tale, and the Creation of a Story*, page 114
[5] Ibid, 99 and Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, page 146
[6] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 145

become more incandescent and unforgettable. Alana M. Vincent argues that "as a narrative element, recovery is characterized by a strong visual emphasis and almost overabundance of descriptive detail and sensory language" (*Culture, Communion and Recovery*, 44). Likewise, Tolkien's landscapes, creatures and peoples are hyperbolized images of truths. For instance, when one encounters Ents or Huorns, centaurs, Dwarves and Hobbits in Secondary World, it enables him/her to truly see the huge trees, horses, the hard and sturdy men and honest little English Yeomen of the Primary World.[7] That is why Tolkien claims that it was in fairy-stories that he realised the "potency" and "wonder" of ordinary things like "wood", "stone", "bread and wine".[8] Colin N. Manlove, the author of *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, elaborates on this, saying that in fairy-stories "common things are not transformed but appear more luminous as themselves" (165). Reilly calls this recovery a "recovery of perspective" which is one with the "Mooreeffoc, or Chestertonian fantasy" too.[9] Charles Dickens invented the word "Mooreeffoc." He uses it in his abandoned autobiography, written when he was a poverty-stricken youth. Dickens says,

> in the door there was an oval glass plate, with COFFEE-ROOM painted on it, addressed towards the street. If I ever find myself in a very different kind of coffee-room now, but where there is such an inscription on glass, and read it backward on the wrong side MOOR-EEFFOC (as I often used to do then, in a dismal reverie,) a shock goes through my blood. (*The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, 65)

Chesterton used Dickens' quotation to illustrate how seeing things from a new angle and perspective can enliven things that have become trite.[10] However, Milbank and Manlove noted that Tolkien delved deeper than Chesterton into the notion of fantasy. In

---

[7] See Chapter: *Ordinary Magic* in *The Power of Tolkien's Prose* page 19, *On Fairy-Stories* page 146. According to Tolkien this sort of fantasy a "virtue" as it "recovers the freshness of vision" makes one "wholesome" (147).
[8] Ibid, page 147
[9] Ibid, page 146 and, also Reilly, *Understanding The Lord the rings*: *Tolkien and Fairy Story*, page 99, and see Milbank, *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians*, page 39
[10] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, page 146

Tolkien's understanding, Milbank writes, "fantasy is opening up a hoard and letting things fly away, to be transformed and reformed" (*Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians*, 39). This is proven in Tolkien's quotation below where he takes the word ''Mooreeffoc'' further.

> The word Mooreeffoc may cause you to realise that England is an utterly alien land, lost either in some remote past age glimpsed by history, or in some strange dim future reached only by a time-machine; to see the amazing oddity and interest of its inhabitants and their customs and feeding-habits…Creative fantasy, because it is mainly trying to do something else (make something new). (Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, 147)

Based on his statement above, it is observable that fantasy can even turn a mundane word like coffeeroom into something new. And a bit of fantasy can even make England something it was never before; an "alien land". However there is more to Tolkien's Middle-earth. It is a combination of both fairy-story and fantasy so as to provide a powerful recovery.[11] Manlove recognized this combination in Tolkien's stories. His fantasized birds, river, mountain, grass, horses and men (although quite different) look and behave like they do in the Primary World.[12] Moreover, even if there are no Elves, Dwarves, Orcs and Ents in the Primary World, they appear to be relatable to the reader because their attributes resemble the inhabitants of the real world.

Besides fairy-story and fantasy, myth also plays an important role in recovery. Lewis defends the relevance of myth in a fairy-story:

> The value of myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by 'the veil of familiarity'… If you are tired of the real landscape, look at it in a mirror. By putting bread, gold, horse, apple, or the very roads into a myth, we do not retreat from reality: we rediscover it. As long as the story lingers in our mind, the real

---

[11] See *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, page 165
[12] Ibid, page 166

things are more themselves. This book (Tolkien's) applies the treatment not only to bread or apple but to good and evil, to our endless perils, our anguish, and our joys. By dipping them in myth we see them more clearly. (*Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, 114)

As Lewis explicates, myth removes the veil of familiarity that shades the eyes and exposes the richness of significances in all things in life. Lewis felt that by applying myth to daily life, one is not withdrawing him or herself from reality but rediscovering the beauty in life once again. Correspondingly, Tolkien truly believed that myths did teach both men and women to be humans,[13] to be truly themselves, and not some mindless machine of modern, technological society. Furthermore, as Donald Lutz adds, myth plays a vital role in keeping people together because societies share symbols and myths that give great significance to their existence as they link them to some transcendent order which allows them to act as human beings.[14] Thus, mythoi reminds people to see the beauty within life. They also remind people to remain humane. By highlighting the transcendent order, myths seem to assert that unity is strength.

Hence the combination of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story produce stories which are effectual. Applying the theory of recovery, Tolkien was able to show a rediscovery in the importance of heroism and friendship through the members of the Fellowship of the Ring. They put aside their differences, and endeavour to help Frodo complete his task. Rediscovery of evil and the endless struggles against time are portrayed in Melkor, Smaug, Saruman and Denethor through their huge, dark, terrible forms, desire for personal glory, and domineering power. Not only did Tolkien vividly portray the dangers of excessive materialism, greed and lust through Gollum's nasty and stunted

---

[13] See Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Intr. 14, par.1
[14] Refer to Donald Lutz, in *Sanctifying Myth*, Intr. 14, par.7

figure and big eyes, but also through the noble Thorin Oakenshield and wise Saruman.[15] Birzer and fantasy writer Ursula Le Guin argue that through Tolkien's portrayals of goodness in the heroes of Middle-earth, one recognizes and perceives "the evil that the good opposes".[16] For example, Le Guin states that "Saruman is Gandalf's dark-self, Boromir Aragorn's; Wormtongue is, almost literally, the weakness of King Theoden. There remains the wonderfully repulsive and degraded Gollum. But nobody who reads the trilogy hates, or is asked to hate, Gollum. Gollum is Frodo's shadow; and it is the shadow, not the hero, who achieves the quest" (qtd in *Sanctifying Myth* Ch.5, par. 6). Frodo who was appointed the task of destroying the One Ring fails to do so. On the other hand, the Ring was destroyed by the evil and mischievous Gollum due to divine intervention. Through the examples above, not only do the readers rediscover the interdependence of good and evil to defeat evil and achieve victory but also that nothing is possible without God's involvement.

Tolkien has also claimed that fairy-story provides recovery of humility and both Flieger and Dalfonzo note that Tolkien executed this notion of recovery through humble heroism.[17] Dalfonza states that Tolkien had visualised a hero who embodied old-fashioned ideals of heroism—"but not at all in a conventional way".[18] This unconventionality, as mentioned before,[19] is the role of the hero that was given, not to titanic warriors or mighty wizards but to "a three-foot high bundle of timidity with furry feet" (Helms, 40): the Hobbits. Critic Chance agreed that the humblest and the least powerful member of the Council, Frodo Baggins was ultimately chosen to carry the

---

[15] See Minore and Bassham, *The Hobbit and Philosophy*: *My Precious*, page 90
[16] Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.5, par. 5
[17] Refer to Flieger, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*: *The Concept of the Hero*, 124 and, See Gina Dalfanzo, www.cslewis.org/journal/humble-heroism-frodo-baggins-as-christian-hero-in-the-lord-of-the-rings, pages 1-6
[18] Ibid, page 1
[19] Refer to pages 17 and 22

most powerful Ring of them all.[20] Tolkien chose the Hobbits because "larger-than-life heroes are rare in twentieth-century literature; they do not fit comfortably in an age which seems preoccupied with ordinary" (Flieger, 124). Furthermore, Tolkien even took the idea of humility further by letting Frodo, the hero, fail in his task to destroy the Ring and making Gollum, the monster, the saviour, the anti-hero of Middle-earth by biting the Ring off Frodo's finger and falling into the pits of Mount Doom.[21] This switch of roles of hero and monster was done deliberately to remind readers that things do change constantly and therefore one must remain humble at all times. Tolkien writes, "Frodo had done what he could and spent himself completely (as an instrument of Divine Providence)" (*Letters*, 326) and then it was Gollum's turn to play his part. Here Tolkien asserts the importance of being humble and self-effacing.

In addition, Tolkien's Secondary World plays a significant role in recovering and rekindling a true love for nature. Reilly recognized this in the waning of beauty, splendour and innocence in the passing of the elves leaving Middle-earth forever for the Undying Lands (Valinor).[22] Readers behold the elves as Frodo does: "a living vision of that which has already been left far behind by the flowing streams of Time" (Tolkien, *FR*, 364). This is because in Middle-earth, the elves desired only "understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained" (Tolkien, *FR*, 301). Through the departing elves, Tolkien has indeed magnified the diminishing beauty and peace in our world. Moreover, Andrew Light in his essay *Tolkien's Green Time* puts forward that Tolkien portrayed the various people in his books as "stand-ins" for the various parts of Middle-earth: the elves "embody" the forests, the dwarves "reflect" the mountains, and

---

[20] See Chance, *The Lord of the Rings*: *Tolkien's Epic*, pages 79-106, also Shippey, *Author of the Century*,
[21] Ibid, Chance, *Tolkien's epic*, page 203
[22] *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*: *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, page 100

the hobbits 'represent" the domesticated countryside.[23] Through the many beautiful regions like Lothlorien, Rivendell and the Shire, Tolkien rekindles "a deeper appreciation for the spiritual significance and sacredness of nature" (Dickerson, 232). Tolkien also manifests this notion of myth through the Ents. He gave them the power of speech, human-like locomotion, human-like emotions and personalities. This is to demonstrate empathy i.e. trees are part of the earth, and like any living being, they have feelings too and if threatened, they will "fight back".[24]

Tolkien strongly believed that fairy-stories, which carried myth and fantasy, were "prophylactic against loss".[25] Indeed, Joanny Moulin, Ralph C. Wood, Kurt Brunner, and Jim Ware understood that Tolkien, being a staunch Roman Catholic, was devoted to rekindling religious faith amidst the flow of modernity which marginalised religion. Like Tolkien, both Blount and Kraus associated modernity with diminishing belief in traditional values and faith in God. The disconnection from faith and god are best reflected in Friedrich Nietzsche's bold statement that "God is dead", representing the mind-set of modern civilization.[26] Nietzsche was not referring to the demise of God in a literal sense, but to the fact many could not believe in the existence of God.[27] Blount warns that there are grave implications when one disbelieves in the connection between God and human beings because it makes life meaningless. He says,

> for if God does not exist, it follows that humans have not been divinely created; and if they have not been divinely created, they have not been designed for any specific purposes. Humans thus exist for no purpose. Their lives have no inherent meaning. (*Uberhobbits* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 90)

---

[23] Light, *Tolkien's Green Time* in The *Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, page 152. Men however, Light noticed as "interlopers" to who are not closely attached to nature like the elves, hobbits, and dwarves. This is due to humans who see themselves as dominant and not in relation with nature

[24] Ibid, refer to Kraus, page 141 , and Light, pages 158-159

[25] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 146

[26] *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy,* pages 90 and 140

[27] Refer to Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 208-209, Blount, *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*: *Uberhobbits*, page 90

Thus Blount asserts that this understanding that God does not exist makes human life futile. Wood notices that Tolkien's myth is hierarchical for a reason (the highest is Iluvatar and the lowest is the minerals of the earth).[28] This reason, he continues, is not to establish that certain things are better than others but rather to show that the chain of command of Middle-earth was built on love.[29] Wood elaborates: "together with St. Augustine and the whole Christian tradition, Tolkien holds that the essential task of all people is to set their loves in order: to love the triune God first and to love all other things in right relation to him" (38). In Middle-earth, Tolkien set up a hierarchical structure to demonstrate that each order has its own distinctive and indispensable place. This view is proven in the dialogue between Gandalf and Bilbo at the end of *The Hobbit*:

> "Then the prophecies of the old songs have turned out to be true, after a fashion!" said Bilbo.
>
> "Of course!" said Gandalf. "And why should not they prove true? Surely you don't disbelieve the prophecies, because you had a hand in bringing them about yourself? You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your sole benefit? You are a very fine person, Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all!
>
> "Thank goodness," said Bilbo laughing, and handed him the tobacco-jar (365).

The quotation above reflects Bilbo's contentment at being small but playing an important part in a bigger picture, which is the drama of life written by the Creator. Gandalf reminded Bilbo that they are part of an order; a providence. In the same way, Nicolay in *Tolkien and the Modernists* explains that for Tolkien, one of the most significant lessons that literature imparts to a reader is the lesson that "we are more than ourselves at any given moment because our stories are part of a larger narrative that is

---

[28] See Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien*, page 38
[29] Ibid, page 38

God's plan for humanity" (19). Most importantly Tolkien reminds his readers that everyone and everything is significant and has its own part to play, however small or big, in shaping this world.

On the other hand Saruman, as Kraus states, represents the modern man who rejects God's plan for Middle-earth.[30] He abandons God and discards his responsibilities to protect the world. Saruman, a wizard of the highest order, was sent by the powers of Middle-earth as an emissary, yet he "fell from his high errand, and becoming proud, impatient and enamoured of power sought to have his own will by force, and to oust Sauron, but he was ensnared by the dark spirit, mightier than he" (*UT*, 505) When the Ents learn about Saruman's mass deforestation of the Fangorn forest, they march to the stronghold of Isengard and overthrow him. This is one of Tolkien's vivid examples of how certain unforeseen deeds orchestrated by a higher and benevolent power could take place. In his essay titled *Saruman*, Johnathan Evans compares Saruman to Milton's Satan who refused to repent. Due to malice, cruelty, power lust, betrayal and defiance of his order and Iluvatar, Saruman was overthrown and dethroned. Alas, as Saruman was betrayed and murdered by his own servant, Wormtongue.

The "nothingness" mentioned by Evans is connected to Tolkien's reference of the nature of evil being "zero". In an earlier discussion, Davison argues that "the more evil something is, the more nearly it approaches nothingness" (*The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, 104). There is a recognizable link between Davison's argument on nothingness and Blount's argument on the association between God's absence and

---

[30] Ibid, Kraus, pages 140, 142

worthlessness. The further a person is away from God, the further he/she is away from truths of life and thus his/her existence becomes meaningless, approaching nothingness. Tolkien has provided a few examples based on the connection between evil and nothingness. For example, Feanor, the mightiest amongst the Children of Iluvatar denies Vala the Silmarils for the restoration of the Trees, causes the kinslaying at Alqualonde, and at the moment of his death, is reduced to a pile of ashes.[31] The Nazguls[32], the faithful and ominous servants of Sauron, ride on real horses and dress in real robes "to give shape to their nothingness when they have dealings with the living" (*FR*, 249). Next, when the Lord of Nazgul attempts to enter Minas Tirith, Gandalf taunts him, "Go back to the abyss prepared for you! Go back! Fall into the nothingness that awaits you and your master" (*RK*, 100).

The very same thing happens when Frodo looks into the mirror and sees the Eye of Sauron, the "black slit of its pupil opened on a pit. A window into nothing (*FR*, 409). It is important to take note that the Dark Lord Sauron forged the One Ring of power not to create or construct but to destroy Middle-earth and to annihilate its peoples. Shippey states that Sauron's conquest is more of an "anti-quest, whose goal is not to find or regain something but to reject and destroy something" (*Author of the Century*, 114). Furthermore besides its master, the Ring itself exposes Tolkien's "ambiguity" about evil's simultaneous nature of "being and non-being".[33] Paradoxically, the One Ring was forged to rule but also was designed to bind those it ruled in darkness. Tolkien writes, "One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them /In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie" (*FR*, 49). As examined in Chapter Two, darkness and evil has

---

[31] See chapter *Of The Return of The Noldor* in *The Silmarillion*, page 121
[32] Also called the Ringwraiths or the Nine
[33] Steeves, *Deadly Nothingness: A Meditation on Evil*, page 97

parasitical relationship with light and goodness [34] Evil can only unmake what goodness has created. In addition darkness and shadow embodies void; a perpetual state of zero and nothingness. Lastly when Saruman was murdered[35] "a grey mist gathered" around his body, and "rising slowly to a great height like smoke from a fire…out of the West came a cold wind, and it bent away, and with a sigh dissolved into nothing" (*RK*, 997). The evidences above validate that there is a dramatic juxtaposition between the end results of evil and good. Middle-earth "making immediately effective by the will the visions of fantasy"[36] gives the reader the ability to see that despite how extreme evil deeds may be, they will be forgotten and become nothing. Only the good deeds, be they small or big, will be remembered.

3.2 Escape

Hence, to recover above mentioned consciousness, one must escape to Faerie (Perilous Realm), the realization of myth, fantasy and fairy-story. In Middle-earth, it is proven that fairy-story imbued with fantasy and myth provides escape from dullness, conformities, restrictions, and modernity that mechanizes everything and lead to "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, and death" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 151). For Tolkien, it is an escape from the modern, materialistic and Dark Age where "goodness is bereft of its proper beauty" and where the reality of heaven and hell is denied and subsequently, there is no moral responsibility. However he cautions that such escape is not an escape from reality.[37] Tolkien is well aware that the word "escapism" has

---

[34] Chapter Two, Pages 40 and 41
[35] Refer to chapter: *The Scouring of Shire* in *The Return of the King*, page 996. Gríma Wormtongue henchman to Saruman killed his master by cutting his throat after he was publicly humiliated by Saruman,
[36] Refer to Chapter Two page 67
[37] See Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. 2, 46, par. 1

negative connotations and he believed that the word had been misused.[38] Critics have accused escapism as a means of "desertion" and "treachery". They have confused "Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter… and to prefer the acquiescence of the 'quisling' to the resistance of the patriot" (Tolkien, 148). However, Tolkien did not view escape in a negative light. In defence of escapism Tolkien responded:

> Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. (*On Fairy-Stories*, 148)

The quotation above implies that Tolkien truly believed that escapism is a form of catharsis for the mind and soul. To Lewis, Tolkien once said that those who hated and detested escapism were "jailers".[39] Lewis also denies the accusation that fairy-stories are "objectionably escapist".[40] He argues that all reading materials are forms of "immediate withdrawal" from reality and there are good and bad forms of escapism. It all depends on "what are you escaping from?" and "what are you escaping to?" Lewis claims if the reader of the fairy-story habitually escapes into wrong things or uses escape for inaction where action is needed, then escapism can be dangerous.[41] Tolkien's escape on the other hand is an exceptional one because it endeavours to show the portrayals of good and evil. An escape to Middle-earth aids in the recovery of sight and mind: to be guided by faith in goodness and god instead of being predisposed to evil and negative thoughts and behaviour.

---

[38] *On Fairy-Stories*, pages 147-148
[39] Kirk, *Enemies of the Permanent Things*, in Sanctifying Myth, Ch. 6, 101, par. 2
[40] *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher*, ed., David J. Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, Jerry L. Walls, page 259
[41] Ibid, page 260

According to Birzer, Tolkien believed that mythologizing life and the world increased one's capability to see the splendour and sacramentality of creation.[42] But Tolkien did not escape by running away from modernity. Rather, he encouraged his readers to face the world from a perspective that is informed by myth, fantasy and fairy-story i.e. Middle-earth. His stories of Middle-earth are portrayed in terms,

> Of a good side, and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control. (Tolkien, *Letters*, 196)

It would appear that the depictions of good and evil are very similar to the Primary World. James Stuart Bell in his book *The Spiritual World of the Hobbit*, found that Tolkien's portrayal of the Orcs as the perverted version of the Elves best describes how evil operates in this world both in scripture and everyday life.[43] In other words, by escaping to a world where the impossible is presented as ordinary, Tolkien pressed the reader to "re-examine and question everything they assume to be true in the story, even the realistic aspects, and perhaps come away with a new perspective on a concept they previously thought they understood" (Benett, 10). Similarly, Lindsley states that "to escape from a false view of reality to a truer view of reality is not an escape from reality but an escape to reality" (*Profiles in Faith*, 2). In general, modernity is filled with evil and immorality and they are distorted views of goodness and virtuousness. An escape to Middle-earth will verify that evil and immorality do not last and will eventually become nothing and meaningless.

---

[42] Birzer, *Tolkien and the Hope of Christian Humanism*,
  www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2011/05/tolkien-and-hope-of-christian-humanism.html
[43] Refer to page 16

In *The Silmarillion*, a monstrous and spider-like malignant spirit named Ungoliant[44] serves as a good example of how evil does not endure. In the beginning, Ungoliant disowned her master, Melkor to live being a "mistress of her own lust, taking all things to herself, to feed her emptiness" (*S*, 77). Nevertheless in Middle-earth, she aided Melkor in his attack on the Two Trees and drank the light out of them. Ironically, she lusts for light and hates it as well. However, Tolkien described that she devoured herself, unable to quench her unsatisfied famine and unfulfilled emptiness.[45] Ungoliant felt empty because she was evil and it consumed her till she ceased to exist. In a similar way when the One Ring was unmade, Sauron who coveted dominion was vanquished and became "a mere spirit of malice that gnaws itself in the shadows, but cannot again grow or take shape" (*RK*, 861). Thus once defeated, Sauron turn into a spirit with no power nor strength and thus became meaningless.

Besides that, Tolkien applied escapism in his life as well. In a letter to his son Christopher dated 6th May 1944, Tolkien stated that by outlining his myth, he was able to escape the brutality, mechanized horror, and dehumanized warfare. It offered him a sense of relief from the anarchy of World War I.[46] His mythology proved to be a powerful weapon that could renew assumptions based on a false reality; a reality generated by power and domination. The terms "the darkness" and "the Shadow" symbolise the dark power of Sauron and the territories under his dominance.[47] And during the War of the Ring Mordor became a false and dreadful reality made in mockery of Iluvatar's Middle-earth.[48] In contrast to this false reality, faerie emphasizes

---

[44] Ungoliant in Quenya (fictional language devised by Tolkien) is Ungwë liantë, meaning dark spider.
[45] Refer to *The Silmarillion*, page 86
[46] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 90
[47] Chapter: *The Shadow of the Past*, *The Lord of the Rings*, page 49
[48] Look in Chapter Two page 39

the beauty and sacrament of God's creations.[49] Eminent fantasy and science fiction author Ursula K. LeGuin agrees with Tolkien, "If we value freedom of the mind and soul, if we are advocates of liberty, then it's our duty to escape and to take as many people with us as we can" (*The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 204). Tolkien did just that by providing a fairy-story steeped in myth and fantasy.

Tolkien even proclaimed that this form of escape was "practical" and "may be heroic".[50] Bagget, Habermas, and Walls mentioned that Tolkien's nonconformity to modern civilization could also be viewed as a heroic act. They even compare Tolkien's escapism with Thoreau's withdrawal to Walden Pond.[51] Also, it is noteworthy that Tolkien hated tyranny "whether it came from Left or Right of the political spectrum" (Birzer, *Sanctifying Middle-earth*, Ch.6, 97, par. 2). For instance, nonconformity to Hitler's ideology is a rebellion, a stand taken to establish the idea and belief against tyranny[52] and the escape from his reign and realm is never a desertion. In line with that, escapism is a heroic fight against tyranny: a movement towards freedom. Earendil, Beren and Luthien, Turin Turambar, and High King Fingolfin are just a few amongst the many of Middle-earth's heroes who reject the false reality of malicious power and fight for good and against evil. In addition to that, writer Steven Lawhead expounds that "The best of fantasy offers not an escape from reality but an escape to a heightened reality" (qtd in *C. S. Lewis's Case for Christ*, 97). This "heightened reality", he explains further, is an escape to the best fantasy/faerie, an idyllic world where magnificent heroes and heroines (who are actually representations of our true selves) behave in an

---

[49] Ibid, 147
[50] *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher*, ed., David J. Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, Jerry L. Walls, 258
[51] Ibid, 258
[52] Reilly, *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*: *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, 101

admirable way. For him Tolkien's mythology presents human life as it should be, not all bliss, but a series of heroic undertakings defeating overwhelming challenges and distress.[53]

Middle-earth is not entirely alien from the Primary World. According to Curry, Middle-earth besides its fantastical creatures, also deals with its own wars, struggles, hardships and suffering and takes into account of things like factories, machine-guns and bombs.[54] The inevitable is evident in the departure of Frodo and Gandalf from the Grey Havens[55] to the Undying Lands.[56] Sam "stood far into the night, hearing only the sigh and murmur of the waves on the shores of Middle-earth, and the sound of them sank deep into his heart" (*RK*, 1007). At the end of *The Lord of the Rings* we as readers, stand with Sam, Pippin and Merry at the shores of the Haven as our hearts sink with Sam's accepting the fact that Frodo despite his sacrifices to save Middle-earth, is still "deeply hurt" and "could not enjoy Shire" (*RK*, 1006). But most of all Sam learned that "when things are in danger: someone has to give up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (*RK*, 1006). To a certain extent, Tolkien's "evangelium"' permits only a "fleeting glimpse of Joy" in this world;[57] suggesting that both joy and sadness are impermanent. Relative to Sam's nostalgia, Tolkien's readers are then redirected back to their world, much stronger.

Lastly in the essay, Tolkien speaks about the "oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 153). Tolkien states that man-made stories are concerned with deathlessness. Tolkien himself revealed that real

---

[53] Refer to Lawhead, in *C. S. Lewis's Case for Christ*, 97).
[54] See Curry, *Tolkien and His Critics: A Critique*, page 18 , Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, page 150 and also look at page 56 in Chapter Two. Wars happens in Primary World and in the Secondary World.
[55] Also known as Mithlond, was a seaport on the Gulf of Lune at the mouth of the River Lhûn in western Eriador
[56] See Curry, *Tolkien and His Critics: A Critique*, page 18
[57] See Curry, *Tolkien and His Critics: A Critique*, page 18 and Tolkien, *On Fairy- Stories*, page 159

themes of his legendarium are "Death and Immortality".[58] He explains further, "the point of view of this mythology is that 'mortality' or a short span, and 'immortality' or an indefinite span was part of what we might call the biological and spiritual nature of the Children of God, Men and Elves (the firstborn) respectively" (*Letters*, 218). His notions on death and immortality are complex and differ among the different races in Middle-earth. The Elves were immortal and "no sickness nor pestilence brought death to them" (*S*, 117) but they could be slain. Meanwhile, Men are the direct opposite of the Elves; mortal and are prone to sickness.[59] Dwarves however, live longer than Men (not forever) and "suffer toil and hunger and hurt body more hardily than all other speaking peoples" in Middle-earth (*S*, 39). While the idea of immortality is very appealing, Tolkien sees mortality as a gift to human beings rather than a curse. Lessons on immortality as both a curse and a blessing could be traced to other mythologies too.

For example, in Japanese mythology, the legend of Yao Bikuni also known as the "Eight Hundred Nun", is about a teenage girl who was cursed with immortality after eating the *ningyo* (mermaid) meat. Immortality took a toll on her as years of sorrow passed and she remained young and alive but her husbands and children died. Eventually, Yao Bikuni became a nun and wandered through various regions. Finally, weary of her perpetual youth, she ended her life at the age of eight-hundred.[60] Apart from that, in Hindu mythology the absence of death is feared by the gods as it can lead to overpopulation and possibly the undermining of gods by immortal human beings.[61] Greek mythology especially encompasses many stories that deal with death and deathlessness. One of them would be the story of Selene, the daughter of Titans

---

[58] See Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, page 263
[59] See the chapter *Of Men* in *The Silmarillion*, page 117
[60] Refer to Hank Glassman, *At the Crossroads of Death and Birth* in *Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*, pages 182-184, also www.worldlibrary.org/articles/yaobikuni. There are many versions of this legend
[61] Refer to Struik Publishers, Janet Parker, Alice Mills, and Julie Stanton, *Mythology: Myths, Legends and Fantasies*, page 343. This book contains compilation of legends, myths, and fantasies from all around the world

Hyperion and Theia and Endymion, the son of Zeus and the nymph Calyce. Selene took Endymion as her lover and under her spell he was immortal but in actuality he was in everlasting slumber. Only in the state of eternal slumber did Endymion remain youthful and handsome.[62] Finally, "The Wandering Jew" a significant figure that became a fixture of Christian mythology and literature.[63] According to the definition of *Encyclopedia Judaica,* the "Wandering Jew, figure in Christian legend condemned to wander by Jesus until his second coming for having rebuffed or struck him on his way to the crucifixion" (www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-2587520603/wandering-jew.html).

In the same way, Tolkien believed fairy-stories could educate readers on the moral lessons of death and immortality. He states, "Few lessons are taught more clearly in them than the burden of that kind of immortality, or rather endless serial living, to which the 'fugitive' would fly. For the fairy-story is especially apt to teach such things, of old and still today" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 153). For Tolkien, "Death is not an Enemy"[64] but God's will unto good men. Pearce writes that Tolkien revealed that immortality actually evokes "sadness" and "melancholic wisdom" in the elves. By doing so, Tolkien evokes realization in human beings that mortality is god's gift and in death they will achieve "mystical union" with the Divine.[65] Principally, Tolkien strongly felt the best death was the self-sacrificial death which "glorifies God and acknowledges even more his sovereignty" (Birzer, Ch. 4, 80, par. 1). Christ is the perfect example of self-sacrificial death. Like Christ, both Gandalf and Glorifindel laid down their lives for

---

[62] Ibid, page 67. There exists several subtle variations about the life of Endymion.
[63] "The story has given rise to a variety of folktales and literature still flourishing into the twentieth century. Like the image of the Jew in popular conception, the personality of and tales about the Wandering Jew reflect the beliefs and tastes of the age in which he is describe" (*Encyclopedia Judaica*). For example, Simon Tyssot's, *The Wandering Jew and the Travels and adventures of James Massey* and Thomas Percy's *Reliques* in which, *The Wandering Jew* which was published in 1765
[64] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, page 267
[65] Pearce, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch. Fwd., 7, par. 1

their friends and perished in duels against Balrogs[66]. And like Christ they were both resurrected as more powerful beings.

Aragorn was also given a choice by Iluvatar to end his own life voluntarily. Birzer expounds that this act was not suicide but Aragorn's willingness to end his worldly journey and begin his perpetual journey with God.[67] Tolkien was of the opinion that man "would or should die voluntarily by surrender with trust before compelled" (*Letters*, 286). But not all men were contented with the idea of impermanent life. In the chapter titled *Akallabêth* in *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien exhibits the fear of death in men through the Numenoreans. Morgoth manipulated the idea of death and induced fear amongst the Numenoreans and that resulted in their desperation for immortality and vehement rebellion against the Vala. The rebellion ended tragically as Iluvatar sank the Island of Numenor into the sea.[68]

Finally, Kreeft argues that all pagan Gods both of Northern (Germanic) or Southern (Mediterranean) mythology, resemble modern human beings who are "partly good and partly evil". They are not embodiment of goodness like the Biblical God but they are superior and divine because of immense power.[69] He further explains that the pagan gods possess "power over nature by supernatural or "magical" technology, power over ignorance (cleverness, farsight, and foresight), and power over death (immortality)" (*The Philosophy of Tolkien*, 179). In their supremacy over nature, ignorance, and death, one can see characteristics of modernism, a movement which embodies the notion of superiority over God and past traditions.[70] Overall, through his

---

[66] See Birzer, Ibid, Ch. 4, 80, par 1
[67] Christopher Tolkien, ed., *Morgoth's Ring*, page 341
[68] Refer to chapter: *Akallabêth* in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, page 334
[69] See *The Philosophy of Tolkien*, page 179
[70] Ibid, page 179

sub-created mythology and fairy-story, Tolkien hoped to demonstrate that God intended

death for men as a virtue instead of a punishment and the restlessness placed in man

was intended to prompt them to accept and desire eternal life with Him instead of

extending life on earth.[71]

3.3 Consolation

The last characteristic of a fairy-story is consolation and one attains it by

escaping to faerie in a fairy-story. Tolkien asserted that all fairy-stories depend upon the

"Consolation of the Happy Ending" and Tolkien named this neologism as

"Eucatastrophe" (good catastrophe, happy disaster or happy sudden turn). Besides that,

he argued that when this joy is presented in a fantastical world, it will reveal an

underlying truth and reality:

> I coined the word 'eucatastrophe': the sudden happy turn in a
> story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which I
> argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce). And
> I was there led to the view that it produces its peculiar effect
> because it is a sudden glimpse of Truth, your whole nature
> chained in material cause and effect, the chain of death, feels a
> sudden relief as if a major limb out of joint had suddenly
> snapped back. It perceives – if the story has literary 'truth' on the
> second plane (....) – that this is indeed how things really do work
> in the Great World for which our nature is made. (*Letters*, 89)

The Resurrection of Christ, for Tolkien, was the greatest 'eucatastrophe' of all and the

gospels are possibly the greatest fairy-story ever told in history, for it produces an

essential emotion, the Christian joy where both Joy and Sorrow are merged, "as

---

[71] Christopher Tolkien, ed., *Morgoth's Ring*, 313, see also Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.5, 88, par. 1

selfishness and altruism are lost in Love" and the story of Christ "begins and ends in joy".[72] The gospels are the most successful and greatest fairy-story of all time because it contains many fantastical marvels and is mythical in significance. And among the marvels of eucatastrophe it is the "greatest", the "most complete and conceivable one".[73] Inspired by the greatest fairy-story, Tolkien employed fantasy to sub-create Middle-earth to tell a great fairy-story enriched with mythical significance that ends happily.[74] John J. Davenport argues that Tolkien wanted to include this exceptional happy ending in his legendarium because it echoes the "Western religious promise" that our battles in overcoming evil are never fruitless and that justice will be delivered in the end.[75] Other than that, Tolkien claimed the joy felt in the happy ending of a fairy-story is of the "exact quality" and "same degree" as the joy readers feel when they read the gospels;[76] especially the Resurrection of Christ whereby it is asserted that good will prevail.

However, not all believe in happy endings. Timothy Keller the author of *King's Cross*, expressed that happy endings are widely believed to be a "mark of an inferior art" because they mislead and give false hope to meaningless life. It is also commonly accepted that happy endings are there for children and not for "thinking" adults and life is best represented by paradox, irony, and a sense of frustration" (125). But then again, Tolkien contended that fairy-stories do not deny "dyscatastrophy" (sorrow and failure). Akin to Evil that is dependent on goodness, fairy-stories are in need of dycatastrophic

---

[72] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, page 89
[73] *On Fairy-Stories*, pages 155, 156
[74] Ibid, pages 153, 156, and 157. Tolkien asserted, a complete fairy-story must have a happy ending.
[75] Davenport, *Happy Endings and Religious Hope* in *The Lord the Rings and Philosophy*, page 204.
[76] *On Fairy-Stories*, page 156

events to deliver eucatastrophe, the "deliverance of joy".[77] In addition, at the start of *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien already explains that in the realm of fairy-story, one can find both "beauty that is an enchantment", and "an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords" (109). Many critics including Davenport and Spacks recognize that the poignant sadness that permeates Middle-earth is very similar to the darker view of life in northern mythology. According to Spacks, in northern mythology, the battle between man and monster will ultimately end in man's defeat.[78]

Similarly, in Middle-earth, there are inevitable losses like the loss of the entwives, passing of the High Elves, and the waning greatness of Gondor.[79] Moreover, great wars between good and evil like the Battles of Beleriand, the Great Armament, the War of the Last Alliance, the Battle of Five Armies, the Battle of Hornburg and the Battle of the Pelennor Fields caused innumerable fatalities and casualties. Yet, one of the most heart-wrenching tragedies Tolkien wrote was the tale of *Narn i Chîn Húrin* ("The Tale of the Children of Húrin"). The tale is about Túrin Turambar a tragic hero and his sister Nienor Níniel, who were subjugated by Glaurung's curse. The curse made them oblivious to their incestuous union. And when Túrin finally defeats Glaurung, the dragon with his last words exposed their incestuous relationship, leading them to take their own lives.[80]

Nevertheless, they also note that Tolkien's mythology incorporates the "possibility of grace," a quality pertinent in Christian mythology.[81] For instance,

---

[77] Ibid, page 159
[78] See Spacks, *Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings*, in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings*, page 83
[79] *Happy Endings and Religious Hope* in *The Lord the Rings and Philosophy*, page 205.
[80] Read the Chapter 21; *Of Túrin Turambar* in *The Silmarillion*, pages 235-271. Refer to pages 270-271 for the account of Túrin's and Nienor's deaths.
[81] Refer to *Happy Endings and Religious Hope* in *The Lord the Rings and Philosophy*, page 207, also Spacks, *Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings*, in *Understanding the Lord of The Rings,* page 54

comparable to Christ, Frodo had to suffer many pains and withstand many obstacles in the journey before he is allowed passage to the Undying Lands. Tolkien wanted to show that eucatastrophe provides consolation and that good things can come from catastrophes. The most poignant eucatastrophic moment in *The Lord of the Rings* is when Aragorn is crowned king:

> And he sang to them, now in the Elven-tongue, now in the speech of the West, until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness. (*RK*, 933)

Aragorn's coronation can be viewed as a commemoration; a tribute for those who had to suffer and sacrifice their lives to obtain peace and happiness for future generations. There must be death so that new life can flourish. And so the joy of the happy ending for Tolkien is related to reality. But there is more to it as Reilly describes the reality of a fairy-story differs from the reality of this world.[82] Alike the Primary World, death, loss, and failures are inevitable in faerie as well. Yet, the reality in fairy-stories also denies the "universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 159). In other words, fairy-stories are not all about sugar, spice and everything nice, and certainly not all stories end in a good way but it provides "hope where there is none" and "open[s] up the mind to possibility of better things" (McMurry, 225). This is the inherent truth in a fairy-story that Tolkien wishes his readers to see. Davenport says that in Middle-earth there is promise of ultimate redemption, an eschatological end and healing of the world much like the Primary World.[83] The promise that good will triumph over evil is not only reserved for the Christians but also the rest of the world. That is the reason Tolkien sets Middle-earth in a "monotheistic world of 'natural theology'. The odd fact that there

---

[82] Reilly, *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*, in *Understanding the Lord of the Rings*, page 102
[83] Ibid, page 206

are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply a part of historical climate depicted" (*Letters*, 220). It certainly would appear that the lessons of good and evil that are learnt from Middle-earth are applicable to everyone.

In Tolkien's Middle-earth, the eagles play a critical role in such eucatastrophic events[84] and in a moment of complete despair, the magnificent eagles suddenly appear to aid and conquer. In *The Silmarillion*, when the Hidden City of Gondolin was besieged, Thorondor, the lord of the eagles and Glorifindel come in time to rescue Tuor, Idril, Earendil and the remaining survivors of the City.[85] When it comes to *The Hobbit*, as the tide was against the Free Folk of Middle-earth (the Elves, Dwarves and Men) in Battle of Five Armies, a great army of giant eagles led by Gwaihir the Windlord arrived precisely at the right moment to save Thorin's company from certain death.[86] And in *The Lord of the Rings*, the eagles swept in at the Battle of Morannon in the time of dire need to fight off the menacing Nazguls, protecting the heroes from certain annihilation.[87] The unexpected and sudden appearances of the great eagles definitely changes the tide of evil and this produces intense joy, an immense sense of relief and gratefulness.

However, most importantly, Tolkien wanted the eucatastrophic moment to be experienced not as "triumphant revenge" but rather as a providence from God. Furthermore, the eucatastrophic turn in the fairy-story serves as an echo of eschaton; that the Primary World is "destined for a divine transformation" as well.[88] All in all, eucatastrophe generates positive beliefs concerning the future regardless of present

---

[84] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, page 116
[85] See Christopher Tolkien, ed., *The Silmarillion*, page 292
[86] Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, page 343
[87] Refer to Tolkien, *The Black Gate Opens* chapter in *The Return of the King,* page 874
[88] See Davenport, *Happy Endings and Religious Hope* in *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy*, pages 210, 211

circumstances. The evidence of mythical, fantastical, and fairy-story elements in Middle-earth convey Tolkien's theories on recovery, escape and consolation more effectively. This is proven when his fans wrote to Tolkien confessing his fairy-story had "a power in itself" which actually guided them in finding both "sanity and sanctity".[89] Similarly for Curry, Tolkien's Middle-earth awakes "the longing for a world at peace with itself can have powerfully positive effects, as well as the negative ones" and when it is intensely felt "'pain and delight will flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness'" (*Defending Middle-earth*,Ch.5, 121, par.2 and par.3). Curry's juxtaposition of paradoxical ideas like "positive… and…negative effects", "pain and delight" and "tears" as "wine of blessedness" emphasizes the elusive[90] and eucatastrophic (the mingling of sadness and happiness) nature of Tolkien's stories as well.

Besides Curry, Clyde Kilby perceives the importance of reading Tolkien's stories which is reflected in his encouragement to read *The Lord of the Rings*. He says:

> I said I thought our present world had been so drained of elemental qualities such as the numinous, the supernatural and the wonderful that it had been consequently drained of so much – perhaps most – of its natural and religious meaning. Someone wrote me of a sixth grade pupil who, after reading *The Lord of the Rings*, had cried for two days. I think it must been a cry for life and meaning of joy from the wasteland which had somehow already captured this boy. (qtd in *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5, 121,par.1)

For Curry the young student's cry symbolises a "social and general awareness of a human 'loss of innocence' and "the longing for home"[91] – free from fears and worries of modernity and postmodernity which allowed the "powers of the states" to do whatever they desire, restraining the "willing or unwilling citizens" (*Defending Middle-earth*,

---

[89] Carpenter, ed., *Letters*, 450. A letter correspondence between Miss Carole Batten-Phelps and Tolkien
[90] Refer to Chapter Two page 60
[91] *Defending Middle-earth*, Ch.5, 121,par.2)

19,Ch.2, par.5). From the student's reaction, Kilby received consolation that Tolkien's

stories has the power to recover the consciousness of a young person; to awaken him

from being a "typical a product of the Robot Age, that combines…ingenuity of means

with ugliness" (*On Fairy-Stories*, 148). His fairy-stories makes both Curry and the

young student genuinely realize that our world is but a "wasteland" depraved of

wonder.[92]

What is more, Tolkien's Middle-earth, the product of myth, fantasy, and fairy-

story, acts upon readers in a similar manner to the way in which the "incarnation-

resurrection" narrative operates, that is mythopoeically.[93] Lewis says,

> A man who disbelieved the Christian story as fact but
> continually fed on it as myth would, perhaps, be more spiritually
> alive than one who assented and did not think much about it. The
> modernist . . . need not be called a fool or hypocrite because he
> obstinately retains, even in the midst of his intellectual atheism,
> the language, rites, sacraments, and story of the Christians. The
> poor man may be clinging (with a wisdom he himself by no
> means understands) to that which is his life. (*Myth Became Fact*,
> 67)

Like the Christian story, Middle-earth conveys a powerful reality (especially in its

portrayals of good and evil), regardless of whether one truly believes in the actuality of

it or not.[94] In the way the Christian story prods many people today to "comment about

how nice it would be if the story of Jesus were true" (Lewis, qtd in *The Work of Christ

Revealed*, 257), Tolkien's fairy-story prompts a yearning for eternal and transcendental

good---such is the power of a fairy-story imbued with fantasy and myth. And of the

myth-makers Tolkien praises,

---

[92] Refer to page 62 of this chapter for the meaning of "wonder" discussed previously.
[93] Brazier, *C.S. Lewis-The Work of Christ Revealed: The Work of Christ Revealed*, page 257
[94] Ibid, page 257

they have seen Death and ultimate defeat,
and yet they would not in despair retreat,
but oft to victory have turned the lyre
and kindled hearts with legendary fire,
illuminating Now and Dark Hath-been
with light of suns as yet by no man seen. (*Mythopoeia*, 100)

The extract above is part of Tolkien's famous poem *Mythopoeia* and here I believe he eulogises the mythmakers who employ myth, fantasy, and fairy-story to sub-create marvellous and magnificent faeries. Tolkien glorifies them because although they face "Death" and "ultimate defeat", they do not lose hope or "retreat". The word "Death" is capitalised to emphasise the ominous presence of inevitable death in the mythmakers' lives. And yet they never fear it because their sub-creations are aimed at transcendent "victories". The phrase "legendary fire" symbolises the mythmakers' hearts filled with knowledge of ancient legends, kindled by their fiery spirits, ready to illuminate the "Now" and the "Dark" with the "light of suns" that are waiting to be made. The "light of suns" is an extended metaphor for man-made suns inspired by the real sun. All in all, human beings are made in the image of God and are the ultimate storytellers who are blessed with the gift to produce fairy-stories fused with fantasies and myths that reflect eternal truths of good and evil.

In conclusion, the convergence of fairy-stories, myth and fantasy in Middle-earth not only portrays truths about the ugliness and beauty of the Primary World but also guides readers to move away from triteness and restrains, provides recovery from unawareness, leads to the discovery of long, forgotten values and lastly offers consolation of a happy ending that comes with sacrifices and hard work. It teaches that evil deeds are futile and corrosive. Therefore Tolkien's Middle-earth and its fairy-stories do not mislead but brings readers to an understanding that by using our creative

imagination, we can still consciously transform our world into a better place; a place of wonder and hope.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The chief purpose of life, for any one of us, is to increase according to our capacity our knowledge of God by all the means we have, and to be moved by it to praise and thanks. To do as we say in the Gloria in Excelsis…We praise you, we call you holy, we worship you, we proclaim your glory, we thank you for the greatness of your splendour. And in moments of exaltation we may call on all created things to join in our chorus, speaking on their behalf … all things that creep and birds on the wing.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters*[1]

Overall, the main aim of my dissertation is to show that Tolkien's Middle-earth is a combination of myth, fantasy, and fairy story. I began this dissertation by providing some background details about J.R.R. Tolkien's life, his legendarium and its phenomenal success. At the same time, it was obvious that not everyone accepted Tolkien's works with open arms due to the fact that it was constructed upon myth, fantasy, and fairy story. But there are scholars who recognized the great significance of Tolkien's faerie Middle-earth, especially in the lessons learnt through the portrayals of good and evil. In the introductory chapter, I explained Tolkien's theory on "secondary belief", which is a complete belief by the reader which Tolkien preferred over Coleridge's theory of "suspension of disbelief or the willing suspension of disbelief". This is because the former belief is a voluntary act of the reader whereas the latter belief is more of a charitable-like trust given by a reader. Next in the methodological framework section, I discussed that I will be employing a close textual analysis of Tolkien's famous essay *On Fairy Stories*. In this prominent essay Tolkien expounds on his theories of myth, fantasy, and fairy story and defends their

---

[1] Refer to page 432

relevance and importance to contemporary times. Here I explain how one should discern a text in its entirety with regards to Tolkien's texts (or any text for that matter), to avert generalisation and oversimplification which results in reductionism. And reductionism leads readers to overlook the significant, transcendental truths in Tolkien's Middle-earth such as its inherent moralities and its portrayals of good and evil.

Then in Chapter Two I presented my findings on Tolkien's theories and definitions of myth, fantasy, and fairy story based on his essay *On Fairy Stories*. I also discussed in depth the various theories and definitions of these genres deriving from numerous sources such as the dictionary.com, Oxford English Dictionary (OED), critics like Jackson and Muller and most importantly Tolkien scholars such as Birzer, Curry, Purtill, Pearce, and Flieger. Not only did I analyze the various and differing points of view based on these genres, I also compared and contrasted them with Tolkien's ideas from his essay. This assessment of finding the differences and similarities moved towards giving an overall, vivid analysis of myth, fantasy, and fairy story. Most of all, this dissertation aims to demonstrate the relevance of these genres to reality and the roles they play in portrayals of good and of evil in Middle-earth. Also, in this chapter, I discussed the significance of myth, fantasy, and fairy story individually, and in so doing, it was apparent how these genres were, on their own, already powerful.

Myths function as foundations for fairy stories because they contain ancient histories and people and the perennial battle between good and evil. As for fantasy, it is neither a false view of reality, nor does it elude truths. In actuality, fantasized images are

sub-created based on things found in our world but are magnificently portrayed. Then again, fantasy has the power to enliven forgotten truths and transcendental matters such as God and good and evil, presenting truths in unconventional ways. Most of all, fantasy inspires and drives mythopoeia — the act of sub-creating new myths from old myths. Fairy stories are often undervalued because they are seen as a denigrated genre suitable only for children who believe in happy endings. Yet in this chapter, I argue, alongside Tolkien and his scholars, that fairy stories do not convey the message that happy endings come easy. In truth, Tolkien inserts these genres to underline inherent moralities like unwavering faith in god, humility, model heroism, and ultimate sacrifices. Preeminently, fairy stories operate as vehicles to embody the inherent moralities in myths, revitalized by fantasies to demonstrate that happy endings come with great sacrifice and an undying faith in good and god. And as one explores these genres, it is apparent that they share connections especially when it comes to their effects and impact on readers which are discussed in Chapter Three.

In Chapter Three, I endeavour to reveal how these genres are all the more powerful when they join forces. Middle-earth is one of the prime examples of this unification and thus provides Recovery, Escape, and Consolation: potent survival tools Tolkien envisioned for and gifted to his readers to survive forbidding times. Like in the previous chapter, I discuss these devices individually in subsections too. For Tolkien's recovery, escape, and consolation to work effectively, I believe that both myth and fairy story have to be present in a fairy story. Recovery for Tolkien, as I have elaborated, is the "regaining of a clear view" of ordinary yet meaningful things in life. For one to recover from a lack of understanding, one must escape to a faerie-like Middle-earth where ordinary and forgotten

things like true love, virtues, and God are reawakened and represented in glorious ways. Lastly there is the element of consolation. By means of escaping and recovering, one attains consolation, specifically the consolation of a happy ending. Happy endings in good fairy stories are not arrived at without effort but they console readers that the sacrifices made and struggles endured by good people will never be in vain. That is the reason Tolkien named this particular kind of the happy ending as eucatastrophe, where the feelings of sorrow and happiness are intertwined.

Besides his duties of honouring God, his fallen friends, and England, Tolkien found it difficult to sub-create a Secondary World which was consistent, believable, had inherent moralities and, at the same time, contained fundamentals of Christian beliefs.[2] Although, his fantasy novels were successful, Tolkien was worried that his readers might misinterpret his legendarium especially when it comes to the Elvish immortality.[3] Birzer claims that Tolkien rightly feared this because readers might misconstrue the myth and the spiritual elements in his legendarium as "pagan or, worse, as the heralds of a new religion" (*Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.3, 52, par. 2). This indicates the magnitude of Tolkien's act of mythopoeia but at the same time reflects his responsibility towards his readers and his loyalty to his religion and God.

On the whole, Tolkien's legendarium is like the *lembas* (way-bread or life-bread)[4] and the Elven lembas[5] is truly Tolkien's most apparent symbol of Christianity as it

---

[2] Refer to Birzer, *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.3, 52, par. 2
[3] Christopher Tolkien, qtd in Cater, *The Filial Duty of Christopher Tolkien* in *Sanctifying Myth*, Ch.3, 54, par. 6
[4] Refer to Tolkien, *The Peoples of Middle-earth, 404*
[5] Lembas, was a special food made by the Elves. It was made first by Yavanna from special corn that grew in Aman, and Oromë gave it to the Elves of the Great Journey. For this reason, it was an Elven custom that only women should make lembas; they were called

represents the pre-Christian Eucharist. For Tolkien, the Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament represented the greatest gift from God; the actual Body and Blood of Christ.[6] In his legendarium, the lembas is a type of "food-concentrate" which only a fortunate few were privileged to consume in Middle-earth. On the contrary, evil refuses it; both Gollum and the Orcs detest it.[7] The lembas plays a vital role throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. It feeds and sustains the nine members of the fellowship throughout their strenuous and arduous journeys and perilous encounters. The lembas also appears in *The Silmarillion* and in the *History of Middle-earth* when Turin Turambar receives it from Luthien's mother, Melian the Maia. Tolkien writes that no man was as blessed as Turin to have received such an honour from Melian. During their mission, it serves Turin and his company greatly as it aids in the speedy recovery of all illnesses and wounds. The Elves rarely share it with Men or any other race on Middle-earth save only their kind.[8]

Besides the lembas, Tolkien's descriptions of the Blessed Sacrament best fit his legendarium as well. In Middle-earth, readers can find love, glory, nobility, devotion, faithfulness, death and deathlessness and "the true way of all your loves upon earth". Tolkien's mythopoeic sub-creation is just a sample, a "foretaste" of a blessed life. Like the Eucharist and lembas, Middle-earth amends, alleviates, enriches and guides the reader as to how to maintain "earthly relationships".

Yavannildi who knew the secret of its recipe. Also, the custom requested that only an Elven Queen should keep and distribute the lembas for this reason she was called also massánië or besain

[6] *Letters*, 62
[7] On Gollum hating lembas refer to *The Return of the King*, pages 190-191
[8] *The Silmarillion*, pages 205-207

In conclusion, Tolkien saw that our world is neither completely good nor completely evil but rather the good and beauty in it has been violated and marred. "The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater" (Tolkien, *FR*, 339). Despite the contemporary evils we face, he encourages us not to despair and not to falter in hope although it might be just a fool's hope. "It is not despair, for despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubt. We do not. It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed, though as folly it may appear to those who cling to false hope" (Tolkien, *FR*, 262). The most significant message in Tolkien's works is to pledge one's life to goodness and righteousness. As a devoted servant of Christ, a humble yet gifted sub-creator, and a loyal friend and responsible man, Tolkien has dedicated his whole life to present us with his legendarium. In this twenty first century, life and faith require light and hope because we live in times darkened by sin, spiritual apathy, moral relativism, and cultural decadence.

The path towards the truth leads us through many realms which include Middle-earth. The journey to Middle-earth nourishes our minds and souls and it fulfils its duty by evoking the good inside of us. Furthermore, it mirrors our world and in doing so, it "accentuates and clarifies its deepest psychological, spiritual and even physical processes. It has sometimes been noted, for instance, that religious worship has no place in Middle Earth, and one critic has even concluded that Middle Earth is 'pre-religious'"(www.csulb.edu). In Middle-Earth, the mind plays an important role and comes into contact with nature and other minds. Prophecy and fate intervenes and moral efforts

are acknowledged as the Middle-earth reaches Eschaton. Thus, Tolkien's unyielding and steadfast defense of Fairy-stories (Fantasy stories), myth, his legendarium, and creative imagination is acknowledged and hailed. Tolkien firmly believed that "there is no higher function for man than the 'sub-creation' of a Secondary World" (195). For him, "it might be mankind's one chance to create a vision of Paradise which would be true in the future if never in the past" (Shippey, 53). He saw secondary imagination as an echo of God's Imagination. The power of human imagination, unleashed in a fairy-story is able to sub-create a glimpse of Paradise and brings us closer to the truths in life. To Tolkien the Gospels tell us the greatest fairy-story — the Resurrection.

It is no surprise that Tolkien's Middle-earth is a combination of myth, fantasy, and fairy-story. Most definitely, Tolkien has presented us with a very "moving" mythical and fantastical fairy-story with a happy ending where evil falls and wronged human beings are avenged. In this Tolkien shows us "the making of God and the making of a man so close that they nearly touch" (Reilly, 104). Undeniably, this is a very happy ending indeed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Judith H. *Reading the Allegorical Intertext*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. N. pag. Print.

Atherton, Mark. *There and Back Again: JRR Tolkien and the Origins of the Hobbit*. New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2014. Print.

Attebery, Brian. *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Print.

Baggett, David J., Gary R. Habermas, and Jerry L. Walls, eds. *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009. Print.

Bassham, Gregory, and Eric Bronson, eds. *The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy: One Book to Rule Them All*. U.S: Open Court Publishing Co, 2003. N. pag. Print.

Bassham, Gregory, and Eric Bronson. *The Hobbit and Philosophy: For When You've Lost Your Dwarves, Your Wizard, and Your Way*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Print.

Bell, Anita Miller. "The Lord of the Rings and the Emerging Generation A Study of the Message and Medium J.R.R. Tolkien and Peter Jackson". Diss. Drew University, 2002. Print.

Bennett, Jay. *The Influence of Language: Belief in J.R. R. Tolkien's Fictional Mythology and The Lord of the Rings*. Thesis. University of Colorado, 2014. Boulder: Dept. of English, U of Colorado, 2014. Print.

Birzer, Bradley J. "The Christian Gifts of J.R.R. Tolkien." *OrthodoxyToday.Org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Feb. 2015. Path: http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles/BirzerTolkien.php.

Birzer, Bradley J. "Tolkien and the Hope of Christian Humanism." *The Imaginative Conservative*. N.p., 4 May 2011. Web. 15 Jan. 2014. <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2011/05/tolkien-and-hope-of-christian-humanism.html>.

Birzer, Bradley. J. *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth*: *Understanding Middle-earth*. Wilmington: ISI Books. http://books.google.com. May 13, 2014.

Brady, Hannah, "The Fantasy of the Real: J.R.R. Tolkien, Modernism, and Postmodernism" (2011). *English Seminar Capstone Research Papers.* Paper 7. http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/english_seminar_capstone/7

Bray, Suzanne, Adrienne E. Gavin, and Peter Merchant, eds. *Re-Embroidering the Robe: Faith, Myth and Literary Creation since 1850*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. http://books.google.com.

Brazier, Paul H. *C.S. Lewis The Work of Christ Revealed*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012.http://books.google.com.

Browne, Joy. *The Nine Fantasies That Will Ruin Your Life (and the Eight Realities That Will save You)*. New York: Crown, 1998. Print.

Bruner, Kurt D. and Jim Ware. *Finding God in The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Tyndale, 2001.Print.

Calco, Lauren. ""The Hands of a Healer:" J.R.R. Tolkien's Understanding of Kingship." Thesis. Ashbrook Center, 2006. "The Hands of a Healer:" J.R.R. Tolkien's Understanding of Kingship. Ashbrook Center. Web. 11 Dec. 2015.

Campbell, Joseph, and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. Print.

Carter, Lin. *Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord Of The Rings: A Look Behind The Lord Of The Rings.* London: Gollancz, 2003. http://books.google.com. 21 July 2011

Carus, Paul. *The History of the Devil: With 350 Illustration*. New York: Dover Publications, INC, 2008. N. pag. Print.

Chance, Jane. "The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien's Epic." *Modern Critical Interpretations: J.R.R.Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadephia: Chelsea House, 2000. Print.

Chance, Jane. *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*. Lexington: U of Kentucky, 2004. Print.

Chance, Jane. *Tolkien the Medievalist*. London: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Chance, Jane. *Tolkien's Art a Mythology for England*. Rev. ed. Lexington: U of Kentucky, 2001. Print.

Curry, Patrick. "Tolkien and His Critics: A Critique." *Root and Branch: Approaches towards Understanding Tolkien*. Ed. Thomas Honegger. 2nd ed. Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2005. 75-139. Print.

Curry, Patrick. *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity*. London: HarperCollinsUK, 1998. http://books.google.com. 6 December 2012.

Dalfonzo, Gina. "Humble Heroism: Frodo Baggins as Christian Hero in The Lord of the Rings." *In Pursuit of Truth | A Journal of Christian Scholarship..* cslewis.org, 28 Sept. 2007. Web. 11 Oct. 2014. <http://www.cslewis.org/journal/humble-heroism-frodo-baggins-as-christian-hero-in-the-lord-of-the-rings/>.

Dawson, Christopher. *Progress and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929.

Dawson, Christopher. *Religion and the Rise of the Western Culture*. New York: Image Books, 1991. N. pag. Print.

Dickerson, Matthew, and David O'Hara. *From Homer to Harry Potter: A Handbook on Myth and Fantasy*. U.S: Brazos Press, 2006. Print.

Dimitrova, Diana, ed. *Religion in Literature and Film in South Asia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.

Dickens, Charles. *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*. Vol. 15. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986. Print.

Dixon, Joan M., *Wisdom of the Soul*. Indiana: Trafford Publishing, 2012. Print.

Downing, David. "Sub-Creation or Smuggled Theology: Tolkien contra Lewis on Christian Fantasy." *C. S. Lewis Institute*. N.p., 1983-96. Web. 10 Feb. 2015. <http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/1207>.

Drout, Michael D. C. *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Duriez, Colin D. *Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings: A Guide to Middle-Earth*. The History Press, 2013. ISI Books. http://books.google.com. April 2, 2014

Duriez, Colin. *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to His Life*, *Writings, and World of Middle-earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992. Print.

Ebecca Janicker. "Myth Maker." *Science Fiction Studies* 33.3 (2006): 553-54. Web.

Edwards, Bruce L., ed. *C. S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy*. Vol. 4. U.S.A: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007. http://books.google.com.

Fernandes, Ana Raquel, José Pedro Serra, and Rui Carlos Fonseca, eds. *The Power of Form: Recycling Myths*. U.K: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. Print.

Fisher, Jason. "Tolkien On Fairy-Stories." *Mythopoeic Society*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Jan. 2015. Path: http://www.mythsoc.org/reviews/tolkien-on-fairy-stories/.

Flieger, Verlyn. *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 2005. Print.

Flieger, Verlyn. *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983. Print.

G. Taneja R., ed. *In-between:Essays & Studies in Literary Criticism*. Vol. 14. New Delhi: Department of English, R.L.A. College, 2005. 1 vols. Print.

Garth, John. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth*. London: HarperCollins, 2003. Print.

Haase, Donald. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*. New York: Greenwood, 2007. Print.

Hart, Trevor, and Ivan Khovacs. *Tree of Tales Tolkien, Literature and Theology*. New York: Baylor University Press, New York. Print.

Hogan, James. *Reel Parables: Life Lessons from Popular Films*. New York: Paulist Press, 2008. http://books.google.com

Humphrey, Carpenter. *Tolkien: A Biography*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977. N. pag. Print.

J.R.R, Tolkien. "Mythopoeia." *Tree and Leaf*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988. Print.

Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen & Co.Ltd, 2009

Johnsrud, Brian C. *"The Monsters Do Not Depart": Re-Unifying Norse,Anglo-Saxon, and Christian in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings*. Vol. XVIV. U.S: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006. 78-87. The Year's Work in Medievalism. Web. 15 Jan. 2014. <https://www.academia.edu/6271556/_The_Monsters_Do_Not_Depart_Re-Unifying_Norse_Anglo-Saxon_and_Christian_in_Tolkiens_Lord_of_the_Rings>.

Keller, Heidi, Ype H. Poortinga, and Axel Scolmerich, eds. *Between Culture and Biology Perspectives on Ontogenetic Development*. Vol. 10. U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2002. N. pag. Print.

Kerry, Paul E. *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings*. Madison [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011. http://books.google.com. 6 December 2014

Kreeft, Peter. *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind The Lord of the Rings*. Ignatius Press, 2005. http://books.google.com.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Ed. Susan Wood. New York: Ultramarine Publishing, 1980. http://books.google.com.

Lee, Stuart D., ed. *A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014. http://books.google.com. April 2, 2014

Lewis, C S. "Myth Became Fact." *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdman's, 1970. N. pag. Print.

Lewis, C S. *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002. Print.

Lindsley, Art. "J.R.R. Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings." *Profiles In Faith*. Knowing & Doing.2003.

Lindsley, Art. *C. S. Lewis's Case for Christ: Insights from Reason, Imagination and Faith*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005. http://books.google.com.

Lowentrout, Peter. *The Evocation of Good in Tolkien*. www.csulb.edu, n.d. Web. 1 Jan. 2013. <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.csulb.edu/~plowentr/Tolkien%2520Evocation.html&num=1&strip=1&vwsrc=0>.

Matolcsy, Kálmán. ""That Is Not Dead Which Can Eternal Lie"" *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 17.2 (2011): 447-50. Web.

Manlove, Colin N. *Modern Fantasy*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Print.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis*. U.S: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. 31-54. Print.

McMurry, Margarida. "Stories Matter". *Collision of Realities: Establishing Research on the Fantastic in Europe*. Ed. Lars Schmeink, and Astrid Boɡer. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. 224-225. Print.

Mythology: Myths, Legends and Fantasies. South Africa: Struik, 2007. Print.

Milbank, Alison. *Chesterton and Tolkien as Theologians*. New York: T&T Clark, 2009. http://books.google.com

Nicolay, Theresa Freda. *Tolkien and the Modernists: Literary Responses to the Dark New Days of the 20th Century*. North Carolina: McFarland, 2014. http://books.google.com. May 20, 2014

Noad, Charles E., ed. *Tales Before Tolkien: The Roots of Modern Fantasy*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003. Print.

O'Brien, Michael D. *A Landscape with Dragons: The Battle for Your Child's Mind*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998. Print.

On Free Choice of the Will. Trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L H. Hackstaff. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964. Print.

Pearce, Joseph. *C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003.

Pearce, Joseph. *Catholic Literary Giants: A Field Guide to the Catholic Literary Landscape*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005. http://books.google.com

Pearce, Joseph. *Tolkien: Man and Myth*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999. N. pag. Print.

Purtill, Richard L. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003. Print

Reilly, J. *Tolkien and the Fairy Story*. Eternal Word Television Network, 1 Dec. 2015. Web. 2 Jan. 2015. <https://www.ewtn.com>. Path: https://www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/TOLFAIR.HTM.

Richardson, Carmen C. "The Reality of Fantasy". *Language Arts* 53.5 (1976): 549–563. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41404203

Russell, Kirk. "Tolkien and Truth through Fantasy". *To the Point*. General Features Corporation. 1968. Print

Sammons, Martha C. *A Far-off Country: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Fantasy Fiction.* Boston: University Press of America, 2000. http://books.google.com.

Sammons, Martha C. *War of the Fantasy Worlds: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien on Art and Imagination*. California: ABC-CLIO, 2010. http://books.google.com.

Sarah, Bowen R. *A Light from the Shadows*. U.S.A: Xulon Press, 2005. Print.

Scafella, Frank. "Tolkien, The Gospel, And The Fairy Story". *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64.3 (1981): 310–325. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41178192

Seland, John. "Dante and Tolkien: Their Ideas about Evil." *Inklings Forever* 5 (2006) www.taylor.edu/cslewis

Shippey, Tom A. *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. Print.

Shippey, Tom A. *The Road to Middle-earth*. Revised ed. U.S: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003. N. pag. Print.

Snyder, Christopher A. *The Making of Middle-earth: A New Look inside the World of J.R.R. Tolkien*. New York: Sterling, 2013. Print.

Spiegel, James S. *Gum, Geckos, and God: A Family's Adventure in Space, Time, and Faith.* Michigan: Zondervan, 2009. http://books.google.com.

Steeves, Rouven J. "Deadly nothingness: a meditation on evil." *Humanitas*21.1/2, 2008

Sterenberg, *Matthew. Mythic Thinking in Twentieth-century Britain: Meaning for Modernity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Stitt, Michael. "Ox Bone Soup: Issues and Elements Of Folk Lore, Fairy Tales, And Fantasy Literature." *English 477 Tolkien & Fantasy Literature*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Jan. 2015. Path: https://faculty.unlv.edu/jmstitt/Eng477/papers1/bone.html.

Stone, Jacqueline I., and Mariko N. Walter, eds. *Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism*. U.S: University of Hawaii Press, 2009. http://books.google.com.

Tolkien, J.R. R. "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen and Unwin. 1983. Print.

Tolkien, Christopher, ed. *Book of Lost Tales, Part Two*. Vol. 12. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983-96. The History of Middle-Earth. Print.

Tolkien, Christopher, ed. *Unfinished Tales*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014. Print.

Tolkien, Christopher, ed. *History of Middle-earth*. Vol. 10. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. Print.

Tolkien, J. R. R, Humphrey Carpenter, and Christopher Tolkien. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981. Print.

Tolkien, J.R. R. *On Fairy-Stories* in "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen and Unwin. 1983. Print

Tolkien, J.R. R. *The Hobbit*. London: Harper Collins, 1998. Print.

Tolkien, J.R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*. The film tie-in ed. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002. Print.

Tolkien, J.R. R. *The Peoples of Middle-earth.* Vol.12, *History of Middle-Earth*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1996. Print.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "J.R.R. Tolkien Interview Jan. 1971." Interview by Dennis Gerrolt. *Radio 4 Programme*. The British Broadcasting System. United Kingdom, Jan. 1971. Television

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Tolkien Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1978. Print.

Tolkien, J.R. R. *The Silmarillion*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: HarperCollins. 1999. Print.

Ulrich, Andrea Margarette. *Fantasy and Realism: Tolkien, The Eucatasrophe, and Fantastic Realism*. Master of Arts in English. University of Regina, 2006. Print.

Vincent, Alana M. *Culture, Communion and Recovery: Tolkienian Fairy-Story and Inter-Religious Exchange.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012. Print.

Vygotsky, Lev Semenovich. "*Imagination and Creativity in Childhood*." *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42.1 (2004): 7-97. Web. 12 June 2015. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/imagination.pdf>.

Walter, Damien. *Tolkien's Myths are a Political Fantasy.* The Guardian, n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/dec/12/tolkiens-myths-are-a-political-fantasy>.

Walter, Hooper, ed. *The Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves,1914-1963*. New York: Collier Books, 1979. Print.

Walker, Steve. *The Power of Tolkien's Prose: Middle-Earth's Magical Style*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Wandering Jew. Ed. Yvonne Glikson. World Public Library, 2007. *Encyclopedia,com.* Web. 11 Aug. 2014. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-2587520603/wandering-jew.html>.

White, Michael. *The life and work of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Indianapolis, IN: Alpha, 2002. Print.

Wilson, Edmund. 1956. "*Oo, Those Awful Orcs*!" *The Nation*, 182, April 14: 312–313. Reprint in The Bit Between My Teeth: A Literary Chronicle of 1950–1965, edited by Edmund Wilson, 326–332. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965.

Wordsworth, William. *The Poetical Works*. Vol. V. London: Bradburyand Evans, 1837. http://books.google.com.

Wordsworth, William. *The Poetical Works*. Vol. V. London: Bradburyand Evans, 1837. http://books.google.com

Wood, Ralph C. *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-Earth*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003. Print.www.taylor.edu/cslewis

Zipes, Zack. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Revised ed. U.S: University Press of Kentucky, 2002. Print.

Yaobikuni. World Public Library, n.d. World Heritage Encyclopedia. Web. 11 Aug. 2014. <http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/yaobikuni>.

Young, Bruce W. "Lewis on the Gospels as True Myth". *Inklings Forever 4* (2004) www.taylor.edu/cslewis

Zimbardo, Rose A. *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Print.