"An Echo of an Echo": J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth as Elegiac Romance

Shane Hopkins-Utter

Department of English,
McGill University, Montréal.
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Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
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.

–J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

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Abstract

Tolkien's aesthetic enjoyment of distance and antiquity in literature, his interest in the power of imagination, and his use of medieval romances and ancient fairy-tales as a means of rediscovering an enchanted vision of the world are analogous to the literary endeavours of the Romantics. Like them, he perceives that the real world is inherently different from how he imagines an ideal world. This thesis discovers that Tolkien's writings correspond in numerous ways to the modern form of elegiac romance, most notably because of their positive portrayals of mortality, and their depictions of intense yearning. The moral imperative to accept death, exemplified by the heroic ethos of Old English literature, clarifies why the effect of historicity is often noted in Tolkien's fictions: time is mimetic rather than mythological. Tolkien demonstrates that Fantasy is capable of reflecting the most sombre issues of the real world, particularly the inevitability of death.

Résumé

Comme les romantiques, Tolkien s'intéresse à la distance et l'antiquité littéraire, ainsi que le pouvoir de l'imagination. Il utilise les romances médiévales et les anciens contes de fées afin de redécouvrir une vision enchantée du monde. Il se rend compte que sa perception de la réalité ne s'accorde pas avec sa conception du monde idéal. Comme cette thèse le démontre, les œuvres de Tolkien correspondent mieux à la romance élégiaque moderne en raison de sa représentation positive de la mortalité, ainsi que de la lamentation. L'aspect de la mort inéluctable, exemplifiée par le génie héroïque des anciennes oeuvres anglaises, explique pourquoi les critiques notent souvent l'effet de l'historicité dans les œuvres de Tolkien: le temps est mimétique au lieu d'être mythologique. Tolkien démontre que la littérature moderne de fantaisie peut présenter les problèmes les plus sombres de l'humanité, tel que la mort inévitable de l'homme.

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Of course, I could not have done this without my family. To my parents, I give my love and sincerest thanks. Their emotional (and financial) support over the years made this possible. I also appreciate having engaged them in so many intellectual conversations over the years; I credit them with my inquisitiveness and insatiable appetite for literature. Sara, my own Lúthien, maintained my confidence and resolution to see this project through. She gave me strength and understanding when I needed it most. And finally, to Meme and Paw, who will not have the opportunity to read this, I miss you, and would like to dedicate this work to your memory.

A Note on the Text

I have attempted to remain faithful to J.R.R. Tolkien's spelling and capitalization of various words throughout my work. I therefore capitalize, as he does, the names of the different races in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as Elves, Men, and Orcs, but not hobbits, for they are related to Men. Furthermore, terms like *Fantasy*, *Recovery*, *Escape*, and *Consolation* are capitalized when referring to Tolkien's concept of them.

Because of the availability of *The Lord of the Rings* in both three-volume and single-volume editions, and the numerous editions of *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*, citing passages by pagination alone is often problematic. To facilitate finding quotations in other editions, I have provided the book and chapter numbers in all citations of Tolkien's primary works, following the *MLA* format (e.g., *Lord of the Rings* 4.5.664). The first number given is the book (there are six books in all); the second is the chapter from the specified book; the third is the page from the single-volume edition I use.

For *The Hobbit*, only two numbers are given, referring to the chapter and page (e.g., 13.227).

Although *The Silmarillion* is divided into five books, only the third ("Quenta Silmarillion") has chapter divisions. The books of *The Silmarillion* are numbered as follows:

bk. 1: Ainulindalë
bk. 2: Valaquenta
bk. 3: Quenta Silmarillion (chapters 1-24)
bk. 4: Akallabêth
bk. 5: Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age

Some quotations from *The Silmarillion* have two numbers, being the book number and the page number (e.g., *Silmarillion* 2.23). References to book 3 will include the chapter number as well (e.g., *Silmarillion* 3.19.209).

Introduction

> I think it is plain that [. . .] a sequel or successor to The Hobbit is called for. I promise to give this thought and attention. But I am sure you will sympathize when I say that the construction of elaborate and consistent mythology (and two languages) rather occupies the mind, and the Silmarils are in my heart.
>
> —Tolkien, 16 December 1937, *Letters* 26

> I have written the first chapter of a new story about Hobbits—"A long expected party." A merry Christmas.
>
> —Tolkien, 19 December 1937, *Letters* 27

In a three-day burst of writing, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien began what was to occupy the next sixteen years of his life, the sequel to his children's book *The Hobbit*, known to the world as *The Lord of the Rings*. While it preserved much of the flavour of its predecessor, the book was quick to outgrow the first, and it became a darker and "more terrifying" tale of peril and doom in the land called Middle-earth (*Letters* 41). Much more was at stake in the new quest than obtaining a dragon's horde and the respect of a company of Dwarves—Tolkien's entire imagined world teetered on the brink of war with an enemy of mythic proportions who was bent upon the absolute eradication of any who opposed him. It was for this reason that it seemed to the author, as he wrote it, that the story was about "Power" and "Domination" (*Letters* 246): the corruption of those who sought to gain power over others and their enslavement to that power. Only in "rereading the work" himself, did Tolkien "become aware of the dominance of the theme of Death" (*Letters* 267). What he had instinctively been writing all along, in effect, was a meditation on death. That was my point of departure for this investigation of Tolkien's fictions, personal correspondence, and literary criticisms. An enhanced understanding of why Tolkien felt that "Death" had been his ultimate subject, I anticipated, could well open up his literary creations to a better appreciation.

Indeed, in the critical essays "On Fairy-Stories" and "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," Tolkien identifies and favours a strong consciousness of time and mortality throughout the literary texts that he valorizes, as well as a complementary attraction to temporal and spatial distances, and sublimity in nature. These qualities are implicit in his fictions, exhibiting his particularly strong appreciation for the effects of antiquity in literature, involving a recollection, as it were, of vanished generations, cultures, and their accomplishments.[1] Tolkien's own aesthetic principles are most readily identifiable in

these two essays and his shorter fictional work "Leaf by Niggle."[2] The essays are actually defences of the works being studied: he saw a great injustice being done to both fairy-stories and the Old English *Beowulf* by academic critics who judged them to be of poor quality because they contained monsters and fantastic events. They were considered, in W.P. Ker's words, "'simple'" and "'cheap'" (*The Dark Ages* 164).[3] Tolkien declared that the fantastic and mythological elements of such stories were not blunders but excellences, and that critics had drastically misjudged and overlooked much of their "lofty tone and high seriousness" ("Monsters" 23). By mounting a defence of his beloved *Beowulf* and folktales, Tolkien provides us an exposition of some of his central aesthetic beliefs, which I will use to assess his fictional work *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*, particularly in relation to his treatment of mortality and its implications. Powerfully drawn to Fantasy, Tolkien believes it has greater artistic potential than purely mimetic fiction because of its ability to depict human desires as tangible things, so that it is both more versatile in its subject and more appropriate for moral instruction. Ultimately, death is encountered in Fantasy literature, being the cause of abject fear for mortals: one of the first desires to be pursued is deathlessness. However, as shall be shown in chapter 2, desiring freedom from time is immoral in Tolkien's eyes, and death must be accepted as inevitable. The (reluctant) acceptance of doom by Tolkien's heroes instances how much the author partakes of the elegiac mood of poets meditating on mortality.[4]

Focusing on the implications of death in Tolkien's fictions newly illuminates the relations of his poetic to his central themes across his oeuvre, and thus enables an enhanced understanding of his literary importance. A salient feature of traditional Tolkien criticism is the analysis of the conflict between good and evil: his detractors thinking its depiction simplistic and polar, his supporters claiming it to be an accurate portrayal of evil caused by *akrasia* (weakness of will) rather than volition.[5] The abundance of such attacks and defences over the years, however, illustrates the tedium and circularity of the discussion. Derek S. Brewer offers the most reasonable resolution of this problem in "*The Lord of the Rings* as Romance," which is to consider Tolkien's fictions not as novels but as romances. The discrepancies of opinion, he proposes, arise from the assumption of some critics that the romance is "inferior" to the novel; they think

romance is a "debilitating, unrealistic wish-fulfilment, or abstract fantasy, whereas the novel shows life as it truly is, in all its concrete tragic elements" (249). Contrary to any reservations some might have about Brewer's romantic definition of Tolkien's text,[6] Tolkien referred to himself several times as a writer of "high romance" (e.g., *Letters* 247, 346). Tolkien criticism, Brewer judges, would benefit from categorizing this writer's fictions as such, thereby circumventing the debate over stylistic preferences and entering into a more fruitful genre study, allowing his writings to be considered according to their formal aims and horizons rather than by inappropriate standards. Building on Brewer's insight, I have reassessed the generic as well as thematic affiliations of Tolkien's major fictions according to his avowed concern with death, and propose that he is most fruitfully understood as a writer of "elegiac romance."

Elegiac romance is a modern genre arising from Romantic aesthetics and the medieval quest romance after centuries of gradual transformation.[7] To borrow Fowler's generic terminology, I define its "kind" as romance and its "mode" as elegy (107); its core features, including length and structure, are those of romance, while the mood, or tone, of the work is recognizably elegiac. The plot of a secular romance is a sequence of actions and encounters that brings the protagonist fame and fortune, whereas the rewards for a religious romance are enlightenment and often martyrdom. Elegy, however, unlike the action-oriented romance, is an introspective, and often a retrospective, genre; it is the meditative mourning of death, transience, and loss. Specifically, I associate the tone with the "elegiac spirit" of Old English poetry, from which Tolkien draws much of his literary inspiration. As Stanley B. Greenfield writes, Old English elegy is "a compound of Teutonic melancholia and Christian utilisation of the *ubi sunt* motif," that creates a "hauntingly beautiful" consideration of "universal relationships, of those between man and woman [. . .] and between man and time" (93).[8] Combining these genres produces a standard romance plot in which the outcome is shadowed by the recognition of mortality and transience. Unlike epic tragedy, in which the magnanimous hero performs superhuman feats and aspires to godliness yet ironically fails and is destroyed, elegiac romance anticipates—in fact *necessitates*—the fall of the hero, and valorizes him for his efforts despite the certainty of his death.

Foremost among the defining characteristics of elegiac romance is the hero's death or retirement from the world; his heroism is fixed in the past and will never be repeated. Unlike the tragic death of an epic hero, which is often mingled with irony, death is a natural and inevitable fate for the hero of elegiac romance. There is a narrator who is neither an epic nor even a chivalric hero, but who is a mimetic character whose life is altered while he acts as a subordinate to the hero whose tale he tells (e.g., he was the hero's squire, gardener, or a lower-ranking army officer). Also present in the narrative are a pervasive sense of alienation from nature and ideals, a desire to preserve the past, and a fear that redemption and hope are elusive if not wholly absent in the future. Unlike medieval romances in which happiness, innocence, and ideal societies are sought, elegiac romance locates these in an inaccessible past; the narrator concludes that all people and things are transient, and that reason, knowledge, and even the ability to communicate with one another will be destroyed by an increasingly violent and senseless world. Among the most mournful images of elegiac romance are the fallen monuments and crumbling ruins of lost civilizations. In elegiac romances inspired by ancient Germanic literature, shattered spears, broken shields, fallen swords, and empty thrones are particularly emotive; they signify the slow recession of society into chaos and darkness. The genre does not preclude the hope for redemption, however—it merely recognizes the rarity of "happy endings" in the real world, as opposed to their frequency in medieval romances and fairy-tales. The modulation of romance by elegy is a recent literary development that becomes a prominent subgenre in the early twentieth century with writers such as Joseph Conrad, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and, as I argue, J.R.R. Tolkien.

This formal reclassification has numerous interpretive advantages. While, for example, most recent studies of Tolkien attempt to identify the multitudinous influences of medieval romance literature, languages, and philosophy on his works,[9] and examine how such resonances create the illusion of history in his works, their consideration of Tolkien as a post-World-War author is somewhat problematic. Critics to date have had enormous difficulty in reconciling Tolkien's medievalist affinities with his unquestionably modern style, and are often forced to consider these two identities separately, as if they somehow remain two distinct and disparate identities. That is, he is considered in comparison either to medieval poets or to modern writers (such as his

fellow Inklings members: C.S. Lewis, Warren Lewis, R.E. Havard, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, and Hugo Dyson), but rarely both.[10] It is accepted that Tolkien based the languages, peoples, and places of Middle-earth upon the real languages, legends, and folkloric traditions of the ancient northern Germanic countries, but what is lacking is a convincing explanation of why Tolkien, a twentieth-century author and critic, did this, or why it appealed to him. The identification of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Silmarillion* as elegiac romances enables us to see clearly that Tolkien is a twentieth-century author who has espoused a literary form with ancient roots. Despite its definitive stress upon representing antiquity, elegiac romance is nonetheless a distinctive development of Tolkien's time, and one that he has much advanced in his own contribution to modernity. Furthermore, critics have consistently identified the effect of historicity as a characteristic feature of Tolkien's fictions,[11] and approaching them as elegiac romance much clarifies the operations, presence, and importance of this effect in them. In addition, the appearance of mourning is characteristic, and while many have been puzzled by its appearance in tales by this writer that would otherwise be *eucatastrophic*, or joyous, this element too becomes newly and more fully intelligible when considered in the context of elegiac romance. The study of Tolkien's works as elegiac romances demonstrates how and why he fabricated a fictional history filled with tragedy and death, while enabling us to reconcile hitherto apparently conflicting considerations of Tolkien as "a medievalist" and as "a modernist." His works evince defining features of elegiac romance such as the prevalent feeling of nostalgia, the deaths of heroes, and the telling of their tales by others.[12] Tolkien's literary work assumed this form in part because of its apt potential, in a twentieth-century context, to enable exploration and validation of his evident belief that so-called "escapist" Fantasy literature deals profoundly with serious philosophical and theological issues such as concepts of fate, death, the afterlife, the metaphysical nature of evil, *akrasia*, and the noble sacrifice of one's life to protect others, as well as social issues such as war, industrial pollution, and the feeling of alienation and helplessness in such a world, among others.

Tolkien's ideas about the value of Fantasy were not unlike some held by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantics who sought to defamiliarize and re-enchant the world through their poetry, and such connections can be traced through his love of

antiquity, his interest in memory and the imagination, and his desire to express artistically the infinite distances in time and nature. I begin chapter 1 by examining German Idealists and English Romantics to clarify probable origins or roots of these aesthetic and other views of Tolkien linked with his notions of mortality.[13]

There are considerable similarities between Tolkien and the English Romantics in their depictions of nature, and a number of critics have intuitively implied such a link by comparing Tolkien to one or another of these poets, but rarely go any further. The Romantics appropriated fairytales and medieval romances as a forum for their religious, secular, aesthetic, and philosophical beliefs, so that they could express their alienation from the natural world through the representation of the mystical and enchanting aspects of nature in romance and voyages into the fairy realm.[14] Tolkien's own aesthetic usage of Fairy in his works is reminiscent of this literary school.

Prior studies of a connection between Tolkien's works and those of the Romantics have been mostly limited to the theories of the imagination found in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and Tolkien's essay "Fairy-Stories," due to the similarities in their terminology and Tolkien's revision of Coleridge's concept of the suspension of disbelief.[15] But this relationship, I propose, runs much deeper than this single work in Tolkien's oeuvre, and it is primarily evinced in his similar manner of presenting an idealized, romanticized, or sentimentalized medieval world in which nature is the ultimate expression of artistic and emotional ideals as a contrast to the horrors of the modern world. The Romantics explored their interest in the infinite, as Thomas McFarland explains in *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, through images of the sublime, dreams, and fairy, and Tolkien uses similar motifs for similar purposes. Ultimately, the central literary effect that Tolkien inherits from the Romantics appears one that McFarland considers fundamental to their aesthetics: evocation of a powerful felt sense that the world we know is profoundly segregated from the world we desire, primarily expressed as an idealized past for which we can only yearn. McFarland calls this Romantic effect *essentia*, by which he means the artistic contemplation of a disparity between our perception of an ideal world (often belonging to the past) and our recognition of the real world, and I appropriate this concept and reapply it to Tolkien, because it newly clarifies much of his literary endeavour.

The Romantic fascination with the Middle Ages, contemporaneous with the Medieval Revival, helped ensure the rediscovery and preservation of many romances and folk ballads for the modern age, and Tolkien's own creation of Middle-earth, based on philological principles and folktales, illustrates a stunning continuity of ideas originating with Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in eighteenth century Germany.[16] After assessing these connections to clarify the antecedents of elegiac romance and Tolkien's particular development of it, I turn to consider Tolkien's beliefs about the particular virtues of Fantasy literature and its interplay with the imagination. Tolkien's theory of Secondary Belief and Sub-creation suggests that if a fantasy is skilfully made, the reader should be able to passively accept any fantastic elements as a qualified "truth" belonging only to the Secondary World, without having to actively suspend disbelief, a wearying process that results in a grudging or condescending reading of the fiction. A proper engagement with the Secondary World, Tolkien tells us, provides four unique benefits: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation. These, he argues, are the final justifications of fantasy literature and fairy-stories, which make writing and reading them meaningful and worthwhile. The "escapist" qualities for which fantasy is often criticized, as by Tzvetan Todorov, for example, are what Tolkien considers its greatest strength, for they free the human imagination from the mundane world to rediscover innocence and enchantment in fiction. This is for Tolkien a didactic effect, for he believes that his fictions are "fundamentally religious and Catholic" (*Letters* 172), but its benefits are dependent upon the reader being able to participate imaginatively in the fantasy: he must *desire* the Secondary World, and perceive it as plausible, for the enchantment of Fantasy to work.

Tolkien's presentation of a fictive world where the potential to realize one's desires is diminishing makes the Secondary World seem more like our world, and shows the degree of our resulting impoverishment: Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age is recognizable as the real world, yet the fading presence of magic and other beings with whom we can communicate and from whom we can learn reveals an enchantment that is lost with the beginning of the Fourth Age. In "Fairy-Stories," Tolkien specifically identifies two primary human desires: communication with the other and the avoidance of death. In chapter 2, I examine how these desires are manifested in his fantastic fictions

and relate to his abiding concerns with mortality.[17] Fantasy, I argue, is itself a literature of desire, for the Secondary World, as Tolkien calls it, is populated with peoples and places only dreamt of, and filled with potentials to be pursued and prohibitions to be broken—though not without consequence.[18] As Rosemary Jackson says in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Fantasy's inherent purpose is to "express" desire, *expression* being used to mean both "portrayal" and "expulsion" (4-5).

Communication with the other, in Tolkien's fiction, entails communicating with particular aspects of ourselves, selectively isolated and amplified to become separate peoples.[19] The Elves, for example, embody the human love for art, language, music, and nature, while Dwarves manifest human enterprise and cunning, and our joy in manual labour. These peoples, however, are dying or disappearing from the world in Tolkien's representation: the quest of the Ringbearer will bring about the passing away of the Elves, Ents, Dwarves, and even of hobbits themselves, as the enchantment of the world is lost. By manifesting the desire to converse with non-human beings and then revoking it, he creates a longing for what is no longer possible in the modern world.

Tolkien depicts the desire to avoid death much as he portrays the loss of communication. By manifesting the possibility of deathlessness and yet portraying it as something that is forbidden to Men, he focuses and elicits a longing while retracting its fulfillment. Unlike communication, however, Tolkien portrays deathlessness as itself a burden, and something that, unless given willingly by Ilúvatar, the God of Tolkien's world, should not be actively sought. The longevity of the Elves approaches immortality, and is thus contrasted with the short lives of Men and the Númenóreans' attempt to gain such immortality by martial force. Although the Elves have physical bodies that can be slain by "weapon[s] and by torment and by grief" (*Silmarillion* 3.9.99), they do not die of age or illness; when killed, their spirits are said to wait in the halls of Mandos, a Valar, until they are resurrected.[20] Tolkien says that "the doom of the Elves is to be immortal, to love the beauty of the world, to bring it to full flower with their gifts of delicacy and perfection, to last while it lasts, never leaving it even when 'slain,' but returning—and yet, when the Followers [Men] come, to teach them, and make way for them, to 'fade' as the Followers grow and absorb the life from which both proceed" (*Letters* 147). The *OED Online* similarly defines immortality as "the quality or condition of being immortal;

exemption from death or annihilation; endless life or existence; eternity; perpetuity" ("Immortality"). Although the physical bodies of Tolkien's Elves can be slain, the Elves are "immortal" in that their spirits endure until the world ends; they are exempted from annihilation by death, but they suffer an endless, wearying, existence. Lúthien Tinúviel is the first Elf whom the Elves say is "lost" to them because she chooses to become a mortal and to die with Beren (*Silmarillion* 3.19.228).

Tolkien's humans have spirits that depart the world entirely upon death, and have no possibility of being reincarnated. While this is supposedly a "gift" from Ilúvatar, Men fear death because of its mystery; there is no religious faith that promises an afterlife. Death remains the "undiscovered country," as Shakespeare writes, "from whose bourne / No traveller returns" (*Hamlet* 3.1.80-1). It is a heroic and moral victory to be able to accept death without extreme trepidation, a feat which only Tolkien's greatest heroes accomplish. For example, Aragorn in "A Part of the Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" lies down to die when he feels his life is ending, and Frodo journeys into Mordor without hope of rescue or return. The conclusion that death is a moral necessity, and indeed the end of all heroes, aligns Tolkien's works with the genre of elegiac romance as it is defined by both Kenneth A. Bruffee in *Elegiac Romance: Cultural Change and Loss of the Hero in Modern Fiction*, and by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*. Assessment of the features of this literary form enables us to gain greater insight into Tolkien's fictions, for they likewise stress meditation on death and the remembrance of heroes.

In keeping with elegiac romance, the events of Middle-earth's fictional history necessitate and constrain the actions of Tolkien's heroes, and chapter 3 thus assesses how, in a curious but highly fruitful paradox, the author presents time in a mimetic fashion, essentially transforming the nature of romance itself, despite his fantastic context. The reality of death undoes the cyclical time of the fairy-story world of romance. Tolkien's efforts to portray his fictions as a history—giving a history of the manuscript in which the stories are preserved and pretending to be a redactor who translates the text into English and compiles them into a single narrative[21]—indicates that he wishes his world to be perceived as the real world, one in which time passes and affects people just as it does now. He makes it very clear that Middle-earth is our world at an earlier time, and goes to great lengths to show the creation of the manuscript by Bilbo, and later Frodo and Sam.

The story we read is told, in that sense, from their point of view, and from their recording of the tales told to them by others.

Tolkien's fabrication of a fictional history creates one of his most loved literary effects—that of antiquity. Indeed, there are such numerous mentions of a beauty and poetic power residing in the appearance of ancient places and people, that we too begin to feel the thrill that Tolkien felt when reading *Von der Machandelboom*, one of "distance and a great abyss of time" ("Fairy-Stories" 31-32). This effect is increased by the transformation of the living memory of the Elves into the written histories of hobbits and Men. Whereas all events of the past were remembered by those who had been present before the Elves began to depart Middle-earth, after the One Ring is destroyed and magic and enchantment abandon the world forever, such events become little more than myths or legends that are distorted and lost over time and transmission.[22] Before Tolkien publishes the tales from the fictive ancient manuscript *The Red Book of Westmarch*, the name of Middle-earth is to us like that of "Mordor" to the hobbits: little more than "a shadow in the background of [our] memories," or "a shadow on the borders of old stories" (*Lords of the Rings* 1.2.42, 1.2.50).

Notwithstanding such tendencies of forgetfulness, Tolkien is committed to the enduring values of antiquity, and accordingly layers the narrative structure of *The Lord of the Rings* so that heroes of long ago are remembered and become incarnate in the narrative present. Recollection of such heroes appears at moments in the story when their strength and resilience are needed. Aragorn, by walking the Paths of the Dead, brings an army of ghosts with him to fight against the forces of Mordor, turning the tide of battle in Gondor's favour; without the dead warriors, the war would have been lost and the living people of Gondor and Rohan would have been slain.[23] Intensely moved by *Beowulf*, Tolkien desired to recapture the mood and dignity of the Old English poem. The remembrance of history and the honouring of the dead in his fiction accords with the desire of Old English warriors to win glory and to die in battle, so that their glory will live on long after them.

As Bruffee argues, a genre study "can help to explain aspects of works that had heretofore seemed problematical," and can thus, "as Thomas Friedmann has observed, 'disentangle old knots as well as . . . [spin] new threads'" (17). Tolkien's fictions,

characteristic themes, and aesthetics are all much elucidated by assessment of their relation to elegiac romance, a generic concept independently developed by both Bruffee and Frye. His aesthetic beliefs naturally lead him to contemplate the importance of death as a poetic subject in fantasy literature where the desire to avoid death is most potent, and this aspect of his fictions provides them with a depth, power, and literary originality, in the context of fantasy, that certainly establish them as serious literature deserving academic study and respect, despite any critical carpings. Furthermore, the identification of his fictions as elegiac romances shows why Tolkien consciously introduces a mimetic temporal structure into his Secondary World where previously mythical (cyclical) time had tended to exist instead.[24] With the transformation of memory into history, Tolkien's consideration of mortality is interwoven with his desire to portray the continuity of time; the multiple layers of the narrative give the impression that the heroes of Middle-earth are dead but not forgotten, nor ever truly lost to us. For someone such as Tolkien—whose father died in South Africa of rheumatic fever while the four-year-old, his infant brother, and their mother were visiting England; whose mother died suddenly of diabetes, orphaning Tolkien at the age of twelve; and two of whose three best friends died in the first World War when Tolkien was twenty-four—this thought would have been of immense comfort and consolation.

Notes for Introduction

[1] As Shippey implies, Tolkien attempts to uncover histories of vanished peoples unwittingly preserved in fantastic manuscripts. For example, in *Beowulf* the name "Eormenric" records the name of a fourth-century Gothic king named "'Hermanric,'" whose name, Edward Gibbon says in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "'is almost buried in oblivion'" (cit. Shippey *Road to Middle-earth* 13). Critics often compare Tolkien's Riders of Rohan in *The Lord of the Rings* to Anglo-Saxons, but in *Road to Middle-earth*, T.A. Shippey reveals that the Rohirrim's ancestors have Gothic names (12). Tolkien also composed a verse poem in Gothic, a language preserved only in prose (see, e.g., Shippey *Road to Middle-earth* 17), called "Bagme Bloma" in *Songs for the Philologists* (London: Privately printed in the Department of English at University College, 1936). Finally, Michael Drout explains that Tolkien once translated the name "Geats" in the *Beowulf* poem into "Goths," showing that Tolkien believed the poem recorded the disappearance of the Gothic tribes (Michael Drout, "J.R.R. Tolkien's Translation of *Beowulf*," *Beowulf* and Translation Session, 38th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 8, 2003).

[2] Tolkien's other works, e.g., the poem "Mythopoeia," the essay and short drama included in "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son," *Smith of Wootton Major*, *Roverandom*, and *Farmer Giles of Ham* also demonstrate these aesthetics, but are not considered within the scope of this analysis.

[3] Tolkien quotes from and directly responds to W.P. Ker's debasement of *Beowulf* at length in the manuscripts that were to eventually become his "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" essay. Michael Drout has recently edited and published two of Tolkien's manuscripts which provide us with expanded versions of ideas only briefly mentioned in the final essay, as well as many digressions and translations of works that show the measure of work that Tolkien put into the preparation of the text. See J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf and the Critics*, Ed. Michael Drout (Tempe, Arizona: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

[4] I say "reluctant" because I do not want to give the impression that Tolkien's heroes joyfully dance off towards their deaths. Their acceptance of doom is more of a resignation, a respect for the natural laws of the world, and (as Tolkien might suggest) an unspoken trust or faith in the providence of fate. The God Ilúvatar is entirely unknown to Men: only the Elves who travelled to Valinor know that Ilúvatar exists. Men must have faith that their deaths are not meant to be cruel or pointless, and that they serve a higher purpose, since they have no concrete concept of an afterlife.

[5] See, e.g., Tom Shippey's reply to Tolkien's most fervent detractor, Edwin Muir, in "Tolkien as a Post-War Writer" (Reynolds and GoodKnight 84-93); Bradley J. Birzer, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2002); Tadeusz Andrzej Olszański, "Evil and the Evil One in Tolkien's Theology," trans. Agnieszka Sylwanowicz (Reynolds and GoodKnight 298-300); Helen Armstrong, "Good Guys, Bad Guys, Fantasy and Reality," (Reynolds and GoodKnight 247-52); and Elizabeth Arthur, "Above All Shadows Rides the Sun: Gollum as Hero," *Mythlore* 18.1 (1991): 19-27.

[6] While T. A Shippey tells us that *The Lord of the Rings* "created its own genre" and is particularly difficult to label as "a novel," "a romance," "or even an epic" (*Author of the Century* 221), I would counter that the structure and subject, regardless of *"low mimetic"* hobbits or *"high mimetic"* humans, are those of *romance* (222; original emphasis). Not only does Tolkien refer to his works several times in his correspondence as "high romance," but the modern elegiac romance can function with mimetic literature; *The Great Gatsby* or *Heart of Darkness*, as Bruffee says, are both supreme instances of this elegiac form.

[7] The medieval romance, most often associated with the legends of Arthur and Charlemagne, has been the inspiration for countless authors over the centuries. Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe: a Romance*, Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and T.H. Whyte's *The Once and Future King* are a few examples of later contributions to the ancient genre that have greatly altered its conventions. "The medieval romance mode," Fowler writes in *Kinds of Literature*, "is not really the same with that of nineteenth-century romantic genres, and to proceed as if it were obscures more than it reveals of literature's continuities" (111). The genre underwent a further transformation under the pens of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantics; their adoption of material from chapbooks meant that the knight-errants of romance kept their place in literature, as evidenced by Coleridge's "Christabel" and "The Knight's Tomb." Additionally, the Romantics' internalization of the quest gives the romance hero a meditative aspect that he had lacked. The impact that Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* had on literature is significant—particularly for its introduction of the elegiac mode to romance. As Fowler says, "the term 'lyric' itself recalls an elegiac modulation: namely, that of ode," and that the word lyric "acquired the elegiac sense 'expressive'" in the nineteenth century (206).

[8] The relationship between man and time is an often-studied feature of the Old English elegies. Consider what Martin Green says in "Time, Memory, and Elegy in *The Wife's Lament*":

> the Old English poems traditionally called the elegies present a concise expression of a major portion of the Old English sense of time. They are pre-eminently concerned with the relation of past and present, and as lyrics, they are more concerned with subjective response than with cosmic perspectives (although cosmic perspectives are not far removed from the concerns of some of them). The elegies' special sense of time has been a major reason for their being so labelled. As Alvin Lee remarks, "the essential element [in the elegies] is always a melancholy sense of the passing away of something desirable, whether that something be a life, a civilization," or "a human relationship." (124)

[9] See, e.g., Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), and *The Road to Middle Earth* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); Verlyn Flieger, Carl F. Hostetter, eds., *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on the "The History of Middle-earth"* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2000); Jane Chance, ed., *Tolkien the Medievalist* (London: Routledge, 2003); and George Clark, Daniel Timmons, eds., *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000).

[10] See, e.g., Barton R. Friedman, "Tolkien and David Jones: The Great War and the War of the Ring," *Clio*, 11 (1982): 115-36; Tom Shippey, "Tolkien as a Post-War Writer" (see n.5); Mark R. Hillegas, *Shadows of the Imagination: The Fantasies of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1969); Gareth Knight, *The Magical World of the Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield* (London: Element Books, 1990); and David Sandner, "'Joy Beyond the Walls of the World': The Secondary World-Making of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis," (Clark and Timmons 133-45).

[11] The *OED* defines "historicity" as: "Historic quality or character (opposed to legendary or fictitious)" (*OED Online*, 12 Aug. 2003 <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00106588>). The term will be dealt with at length in chapter 3. See, e.g., Verlyn B. Flieger, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1997); Kevin Aldrich, "The Sense of Time in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," *Mythlore* 15.1 (1988): 5-9; Allan Turner, "Legendary and Historical Time in *The Lord of the Rings*," *Mallorn* 39 (2001): 3-6; Barton R. Friedman, "Fabricating History: Narrative Strategy in *The Lord of the Rings*," *Clio* 2 (1973): 123-44; E.L. Edmunds, "Echoes in Age: From the World of J.R.R. Tolkien," *Mythlore* 14.4 (1988): 19-26; John A. Calabrese, "Continuity with the Past: Mythic Time in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," Morse: 31-45; Sally Bartlett, "Invasion from Eternity: Time and Myth in Middle-earth," *Mythlore* 10.3 (1984): 18-22; and Jean MacIntyre, "'Time shall run back': Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 13.1 (1988): 12-16.

[12] In Tolkien's eyes, the remembrance of dead heroes would likely be exemplified by *Beowulf*, in which the scop in Heorot sings the story of Sigemund the dragon-slayer, and Wiglaf, Beowulf's retainer, laments the hero's death, wondering how he and the Geatish people will survive without their king. Tolkien identifies feelings of regret and doom throughout the "heroic-elegiac poem," and praises the nobility of their "doomed resistance" ("Monsters" 38, 28).

[13] It is generally accepted that Samuel Taylor Coleridge introduced the ideas of Kant, Goethe, and the German Idealists to England following a winter sojourn in Göttingen, Germany, with Dorothy and William Wordsworth.

[14] I use the capitalized word "Fairy" when referring to the fairy realm or literature about fairies. There are typically three acceptable variations of this word: fairy, faery, or the archaism faërie. Fantasy literature often contains elements of Fairy, specifically voyages to the otherworld as found in the Welsh *Mabinogion* and the Old Irish *Acallam na Senórach*, magical occurrences, and especially the appearance of fairies themselves. The otherworld is almost always described as a supernatural world in which trees are older, forests are larger, and the inhabitants are more closely attuned to nature. For further information on forested otherworlds, see Alexander Porteous, *The Forest in Folklore and Mythology* (1928, New York: Dover, 2002).

[15] See, e.g., Faye Ringel, "Women Fantasists: In the Shadow of the Ring," *J.R.R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, eds. George Clark and Timmons (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2000) 159-71; Chris Seeman, "Tolkien's Revision of the Romantic Tradition," eds. Patricia

Reynolds and Glen GoodKnight, *Mythlore* 80 (1996): 73-83; R.J. Reilly, "Tolkien and the Fairy Story," *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, eds., Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo (Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 1968) 128-50; Peter Russell, "Tolkien and the Imagination," *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 10 (1992): 77-91; and Dominic Manganiello, "'Leaf by Niggle': The Worth of the Work," *English Studies in Canada* 24 (1998): 121-37.

[16] These ideas culminate in the compilation of the Finnish national-epic *Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot, which Tolkien himself credits for being the origin of his mythology (*Letters* 214). T.A. Shippey, one of the foremost Tolkien critics, relates Tolkien's myths, fictions, and languages to the nineteenth-century academics Elias Lönnrot and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in Germany for their corresponding attempts to resurrect ancient traditions (See *Author of the Century* xv).

[17]The desires for communication and immortality are universal in fantastic literature, both before and after Tolkien's works began to influence the literary world. Fantastic literature, as it has been defined and identified by theorists such as Tzvetan Todorov in *The Fantastic* or Sigmund Freud in "The Uncanny," is mimetic in principle, depicting the real "Primary World," as Tolkien calls it, but can include appearances of elements of romance and myth in ghosts, revenants, and vampires. Some of the best practitioners of fantastic literature, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, only *hint* at the possibility of supernatural events; it is the subjective and uncertain point-of-view that prevents us from concluding whether it is the Primary World or the Secondary World we are looking at. It is this uncertainty, this hesitation, that Todorov and Freud call the literary effect of "the uncanny." See Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Ed. James Strachey et al, Vol. XVII (London: Hogarth, 1955, 219-252), and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre,* Trans. Richard Howard (London: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973).

[18] See "On Fairy-Stories" 32-33.

[19] The ideas of individuation and psychoanalysis proposed by Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud respectively might be applicable here. T.E. Apter says in *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality*, that psychoanalysis "can be viewed as an outgrowth of the Romantic glorification of emotion and impulse," and that Fantasy in literature provides "a special strangeness in discovering the inner world while exploring the external world (as happens in [Conrad's] 'Heart of Darkness')" (5, 25). For an interpretation of Tolkien based on individuation, see Timothy R. O'Neill, *The Individuated Hobbit: Jung, Tolkien, and the archetypes of Middle-earth* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

[20] The Elves are not "immortal" in the same sense as the Greeks gods, who are entirely immune to weapons and the effects of time. If we consider *The Iliad,* in which the mortals' battle ends with Hector's funeral and "the great battle of the gods ends with a spanking" (Whitman 247), we see that the seat of tragedy is in bloodshed. The gods responsible for the Trojan War are physically and emotionally unaffected by the slaughter of men, and suffer no consequences for their actions. Characters that are unable to bleed or die are comic: they experience a happy ending. The juxtaposition of gods with men in *The Iliad*

introduces a sense of irony that Tolkien wishes to avoid in his own fictions; Frye likens elegiac romance to tragedy devoid of irony (*Anatomy of Criticism* 36). Conversely, Tolkien's immortals grieve over human death because they perceive mortal lives as already brutally short, and are terrified to think that, unlike Elves, we do not come back to life. Elves do experience bereavement when they "die," however—they are forever removed from Middle-earth to the Undying Lands. Because of the intensity of their love for the forests of Middle-earth, which is why the Sindar ignore the Valar's summons (see, e.g., *The Silmarillion* 3.10.103-11), their deaths are also elegiac. See, e.g., Grant C. Sterling, "'The Gift of Death': Tolkien's Philosophy of Mortality," *Mythlore* 82 (1997): 16-8, 38.

[21] Charles E. Noad writes about the form of Tolkien's *Silmarillion*:

> Since the material was mythical and legendary, it had to be presented in something like the form that such material usually takes; and Tolkien was by now familiar with such things: the *Kalevala*, the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, the *Völsungasaga*, and so on. These have survived more or less intact from antiquity or else incorporate ancient material, even if only relatively recently compiled. But it is not just their antiquity that distinguishes them, [. . .] but their literary and poetic character. Tolkien's mythology had to reflect the form of ancient epic transmitted over long periods of time. This typically involves a fixed text transmitted through time by being repeatedly copied; and it was as such a text or texts that Tolkien wanted to present his mythology. (Flieger and Hostetter: 37)

[22] Perhaps Tolkien actually felt that his works were an accurate reconstruction of a world that had once existed, as Lönnrot did of *The Kalevala*. It has been said that the silent and unifying ambition of all philologists is to reconstruct someday (idealistically) the first human language. Mythologists and folklorists, following in the footsteps of the Grimm brothers, Andrew Lang, or Max Müller, similarly try to reconstruct ur-myths from which all others were once derived or corrupted.

[23] Aragorn assaults the Corsairs of Umbar at Pelargir, and capturing their ships, moves his army upstream in time to join the battle on the Pelennor fields, turning the tide in favour of Rohan and Gondor (*Lord of the Rings* 857-9).

[24] In *The Silmarillion*, for example, lengths of time are not considered important among the Elves until mortal Men appear. Afterwards, time is measured by the generations of Men. Tolkien is by no means the first author to allow death to exist in fairy literature, for Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Willliam Morris had already done this, for example, in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *House of the Wolfings* respectively.

Chapter 1: Tolkien's Literary Aesthetics and their Romantic Inheritance

> [. . .] I feel like a castaway left on a barren island under a heedless sky after the loss of a great ship. I remember [. . .] this feeling, when I was not yet thirteen after the death of my mother (Nov. 9. 1904), and vainly waving a hand at the sky saying "it is so empty and cold." And again I remember after the death of Fr Francis my "second father" (at 77 in 1934), saying to C.S. Lewis: "I feel like a lost survivor into [sic] a new alien world after the real world has passed away." But of course these griefs however poignant (especially the first) came in youth with life and work still unfolding.
>
> —Tolkien, 24 January 1972, *Letters* 416

Following neoclassicism in England, old literary forms, not of the classical world but of Europe's own devising, appeared to have the greatest value. Influenced by the German Idealists such as Hegel, Schelling, and Kant who advocated an awareness of nature, spirit, the human capacity for imagination, and a passion for national history, the Romantics—such as Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott, and Shelley—unearthed, with a renewed interest and vigour, the medieval form of romance, and discovered a profound love of both the sublime and the ruins of ancient civilizations. These feelings were manifest in their poetry and prose, and, even after the anti-Romantic Victorian backlash, continued to influence writers of fairy tales whose inspiration frequently reflected Romantic imaginings of otherworlds, called by some the land of Faërie. J.R.R. Tolkien, influenced and perhaps somewhat inspired by the Victorian writers George MacDonald and William Morris,[1] who were similarly inspired by the Romantics, provides his readers with some keys to his literary works by explaining and applying his aesthetic beliefs in the critical essays "On Fairy-Stories" and "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" as well as the short story "Leaf by Niggle." In these, it becomes evident that he considers the fairy-story, or, as he terms it, "Fantasy," a serious literary genre and art form despite its numerous detractors ("Fairy-Stories" 46). The commonalities of thought in Tolkien, the German Idealists, and the English Romantics and Medieval Revivalists regarding the literary effect of antiquity as sublime, the concept of an ideal time and nature, and the usage of folklore in constructing nationalistic mythologies, as well as the pervasiveness of Fairy in their artistic writings, suggest that Tolkien is deeply moved by the melancholic (elegiac) poetic genius that typifies the Romantics. The supernatural world of Fairy becomes the literary subject that allows both the Romantics and Tolkien to express poetic *essentia*, in Thomas McFarland's sense regarding the Romantics, which I apply to

Tolkien because he likewise perceives a teleological schism in the world. In Tolkien's view, the ability to recognize the disenchantment of the world implies that the human imagination is aware of a disparity that is otherwise insensible; the real world, he realized, is fundamentally different from what he thinks an ideal world would be like. The fairy world provides both Tolkien and the Romantics the means of escape from the alienating and terrifying Primary World. However, despite the many instructive similarities between them, Tolkien should not be thought simply a latter-day Romantic, primarily because of his differences of opinion with the Romantics who sought to present everyday subjects, and thought that the mental faculty of fancy was a corrupted form of memory.

Tolkien and Romantic Aesthetics

One of the most readily identifiable and significant commonalities amongst Tolkien and his Romantic predecessors is the aesthetic pleasure they derive from antiquity, and especially from forgotten times. Like their Medieval Revivalist contemporaries, the British Romantics were enamoured of the Middle Ages, turning to that earlier period as a haven from the rapidly modernizing world.[2] Coleridge's "Christabel" and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, for example, are set in the world of chivalric romance and attempt to capture the spirit of an idealized, earlier period.[3] In Keats's compact expression of the poetic feeling of lost time in *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, the tales of heroes, "the mighty dead," are themselves beautiful, and will be preserved as testaments to the "grandeur" of their "dooms" (lines 20-22). This, in a sense, is the everlasting fame sought by heroes such as Achilles and Beowulf, or by Milton for his elegy "Lycidas": to be remembered for the tale of a heroic death. Later in the same poem, Keats seems to suggest the ability of the poet-visionary to recover lost knowledge: when "a sympathetic touch unbinds / Eolian magic," then "old songs waken from their enclouded tombs," "Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit, / Where long ago a giant battle was" (*Endymion* 1.785-7, 791-2). The echoes of long-dead voices and songs long-forgotten, somehow remembered by the poet, indicate Keats's own interest in regaining lost knowledge. The threat of being silenced by death, which Keats expresses in "When I have fears that I may cease to be," is counteracted by this ghostly chorus; he

desires that everything lost to the passage of time may eventually be recovered by the poetic genius.

It is this literary effect that Tolkien praises most in his "Monsters,"essay, and occasionally in other essays and stories: the ability of an author or poet to create the illusion of antiquity, or historicity, and to "remember" forgotten lore. In his letters, Tolkien occasionally writes that the story of *Lord of the Rings* seemed to be self-generating (somewhat echoing the first words in the "Foreword" to the text, "this tale grew in the telling"); but his perception was that he was reporting events that had in some sense already occurred. "One does not have to wait until all the native traditions of the older world have been replaced or forgotten," he writes on the *Beowulf* poem, "and the memories viewed in a different perspective [. . .] *become more ancient and remote, and in a sense darker.*" The *Beowulf* poet "cast his time into the long-ago, because already *the long-ago had a special poetical attraction*" ("Monsters" 26; emphasis mine). Tolkien's frequent mentioning of the artistic effect of antiquity, as well as the poem's actual age, make clear that he considers this to be one of the foremost aesthetic qualities he desires in literature. In the "Prologue" to *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien presents us with a narrator, or perhaps more accurately a translator, of events found in the (fictional) book of the hobbits, *The Red Book of Westmarch*. Not unlike Geoffrey of Monmouth presenting *Historia Regum Britanniae* as a true history, or Chaucer claiming to be adhering strictly to his (imaginary) historical sources in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Tolkien tells us the history of the manuscript and its numerous reproductions: "the original Red Book has not been preserved, but many copies were made [. . .] for the use of the descendents of the children of Master Samwise." In Minas Tirith the first copy made of the *Red Book* "received much annotation, and many corrections" ("Prologue" *Lord of the Rings* 14). "Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past," we are told, so that they have been forgotten by both legend and myth ("Prologue" *Lord of the Rings* 2). Tolkien situates the story in a prehistoric time on our own earth, forgotten until the rediscovery of his source, *The Red Book*.

History, then, both real and fictional, becomes our next area of inquiry. Since Tolkien expressed such an interest in the capacity of represented historical depth to induce aesthetic pleasure bordering on the sublime, consideration of the German Idealists

enhances our understanding of this author's metaphorical representations of passing time. In "Fairy-Stories," for example, he writes: "The beauty and horror of The Juniper Tree (*Von dem Machandelboom*), with its exquisite and tragic beginning, [. . .] has remained with me since childhood; [. . .] the chief flavour of that tale lingering in the memory was not of beauty or horror, but distance and a great abyss of time" (31-32). Tolkien represents time metaphorically through nature analogies as the German Idealists and Romantics do, calling it an "abyss." For the German Idealists as well as the English Romantics, history itself can be subsumed into the effect of the sublime by sheer force of its breadth; to attempt to consider all of time itself is impossible, and overwhelms the imagination more than even a vision of the deepest rift or highest peak. Hence Kant observes, in his *Critique of Judgment*,

> [. . .] any spectator who beholds massive mountains climbing skyward, deep gorges with raging streams in them, wastelands lying in deep shadow and inviting melancholy meditation [. . .] is indeed seized by *amazement* bordering on terror, by horror and sacred thrill; but since he knows he is safe, this is not actual fear: it is merely our attempt to incur it with our imagination, in order that we may feel that very power's might and connect the mental agitation this arouses with the mind's states of rest. (129)

In Schelling's *Ages of the World* (*Die Weltalter*), in which he contemplates the geological scale, magnitude, and quality of the world's features as an indicator of time, we find that the use of nature to signify time's passage itself produces an effect of sublimity:

> Everything that surrounds us points back to a past of incredible grandeur. The oldest formations of the earth bear such a foreign aspect that we are hardly in a position to form a concept of their time of origin or of the forces that were then at work. We find the greatest part of them collapsed in ruins, witness to a savage devastation. More tranquil eras followed, but they were interrupted by storms as well, and lie buried with their creations beneath those of a new era. In a series from time immemorial, each era has always obscured its predecessor, so that it hardly betrays any sign of

> an origin; an abundance of strata [. . .]. A great work of the ancient world stands before us as an incomprehensible whole [. . .]. (121)

The English Romantics' uses of nature and the effect of history to create sublimity in literature relates to Schelling's perception of "time immemorial" "as an incomprehensible whole" (*Ages of the World* 119). The "melancholy meditation" and "sacred thrill" within the imagination that arises in contemplation of ruins or landscapes such as we find in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" or Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and "The Excursion" suggests that this aesthetic notion of German Idealism, the sense of being amazed and thrilled by abysses in time and nature, was shared by the English Romantics.

Also using the natural world as an index of time's expanses, Tolkien, like the English Romantics, found that the easiest way for him to depict time was through his characters' changing perception of the world. For example, in the poem "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," Wordsworth represents the process of a child's maturation as a disillusioning loss of the ability to see the natural world with "enchantment" as he used to: "The things which I have seen I now can see no more" (lines 1-9). Or, as we find in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," the city, pleasure-dome, and citizens disappear into a yawning gap of time; like the course of the sacred river, they all "sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean" (line 28). The sea and wide expanses of water, especially in Coleridge's major supernatural poem "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," evoke forgetfulness; the mariner returns to his home port, but is neither recognized nor welcomed. It is unclear exactly how much time has elapsed from the beginning of his voyage until the end, especially since two spirits carry the ship across the oceans. In *Lord of the Rings*, we catch a glimpse of this disparity in the passing of time as the Fellowship leaves Lothlórien: floating downstream in a boat, Frodo thinks it is Lórien itself, "like a bright ship masted with enchanted trees, sailing on to forgotten shores" that is moving away from him while he stands still "upon the margin of the grey and leafless world" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.8.367). The river is most often read as a symbol of time, which shows the different manner in which time flows in the fairy world: journeying by water is synonymous with a journey through time, and Lothlórien's preservation by Galadriel's Ring of Power, Nenya, means that the forest does not move in time. To an observer who is acutely aware

of time as a sensation, as Frodo appears to be, the naturally-ageing world seems to stand still in time because both the observer and nature are ageing equally, but since Lórien is magically fixed in a distant past, the forest seems to withdraw from him.[4] The Fellowship's confusion as to the amount of time actually spent in the enchanted forest explains how Saint Brendan or Oisin might lose track of mortal time, for Aragorn says that in the fairy realm "time flowed swiftly by [them], as for the Elves" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.9.379).[5]

Of the multitude of natural images in Tolkien's works that express forgetfulness in time, the ocean especially takes on a sublime quality, for Tolkien identifies the sea with a sense of longing and yearning throughout his works and his letters, like a well of time and memory that have been lost.[6] "I think I like barrenness itself," he says, "whenever I have seen it. My heart still lingers among the high stony wastes among the morains and mountain-wreckage, silent in spite of the sound of thin chill water. [. . .] If there was not bare rock and pathless sand and *the unharvested sea*, I should grow to hate all green things as a fungoid growth" (*Letters* 91; emphasis mine). For Tolkien, the deep cracks of history into which so much memory has fallen produce an effect of the sublime. As in the seafaring tales of Coleridge or the Irish *imramma*—a voyage into the other world—the ocean can entail an embarkation through both time and space, and in Tolkien's works, the Elves voyaging over the sea pass from the mortal world. There is little else more vast and forbidding than the ocean in Tolkien's works, as for the Romantics as well. Analyzing a passage from Wordsworth, Thomas McFarland observes: "the ocean as a symbol of infinity is complemented by the stream as a symbol of process, two concepts, and two images, under which much of Romanticism can be subsumed, and perhaps all of it implied" (n.28).[7] Nowhere in Tolkien's works do the stream and sea more obviously represent infinity than in *The Unfinished Tales* story "Of Tuor and His Coming to Gondolin,"[8] but he pursues the infinite through his fascination with the sea throughout his works. As they voyage over the sea to the Undying Lands, Tolkien's Elves take with them the enchantment of Middle-earth.

Somewhat akin to Coleridge's representation of "the distant Sea" in "The Eolian Harp" (line 11), "Ancient Mariner," and numerous other poems, Tolkien also uses the voyage over the waves a number of times in his works as a symbol of division between

different orders of being, time, and space. Travelling the "Straight Road," which is inaccessible to Men, the Elves are able to return to Valinor as though the world had never been broken; it is as though for them the world reverts to its original form in that the undying lands are accessible to seafarers (e.g., *Letters* 186). Additionally, we are told that any Elves who do not leave Middle-earth will eventually be reduced to a feral state, forgotten and forgetful of their own true being. A poem that Tolkien included in *Farmer Giles of Ham and The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* entitled "The Sea-Bell" has been identified as belonging to the Irish *immrama* tradition typified by "The Voyage of Saint Brendan." There, Tolkien's speaker voyages across the sea in an enchanted ship, but is rejected by the Fairy world, and upon returning to his own world years later, finds himself ostracized and exiled by his own people (*Farmer and Bombadil* 140). Tellingly, Tolkien had once called the poem "Frodos Dreme," which seems to be a nightmare version of the dream of Fairy (Flieger *A Question of Time* 212).[9] As in the Irish *immrama* tales, years have passed since the speaker left his home, and his hair is grey and long; mortals returning from the Irish Otherworlds such as *Tir-na-nOg*, or the *síds* of the *Túatha Dé Danaan*, frequently learn that hundreds of years have passed them by.

Tolkien is spiritually or poetically moved by a sense of vastness, then, by rifts apparent between what humans now know and what we once knew, by the enormous unmapped terrains of history and literature. "The thing which attracted Tolkien most," Shippey says, "was darkness: the blank spaces, much bigger than most people realise, on the literary and historical map" (*Road to Middle-earth* 30). When Tolkien says he likes "barrenness itself, whenever I have seen it," he is expressing a tellingly "romantic" sentiment, since he claims, in effect, to be moved by the sublime in nature (*Letters* 91). Like the Romantics, he finds his mind drawn to bleak or sublime wastelands, because it is there that his imagination is the least constrained. In a later letter, Tolkien writes:

> There are two quit [sic] diff. emotions: one that moves me supremely and I find small difficulty in evoking: the heart-racking sense of the vanished past (best expressed by Gandalf's words about the Palantir); and the other the more "ordinary" emotion, triumph, pathos, tragedy of the characters. [. . .] A story must be told or there'll be no story, yet it is the untold stories that are most moving. I think [Christopher Tolkien is] moved by

> *Celebrimbor* because it conveys a sudden sense of endless *untold* stories: mountains seen far away, never to be climbed, distant trees (like Niggle's) never to be approached—or if so only to become 'near trees' (unless in Paradise or N's Parish). (*Letters* 110)

As we see here, Tolkien's strongest literary feeling appears to be the distance of things, temporally and spatially. It is the lack of specific detail caused by this remove that allows his imagination free rein. Tolkien fears that by telling a story in its entirety, it will lose its appeal or its cohesion, like a painting viewed too closely.

In "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien's attraction to "distance" becomes yet more apparent. What Niggle finds particularly mysterious, marvellous, and supernatural about the paradisal afterlife is that the effect of distance is never lost:

> the Forest [. . .] was a distant Forest, yet he could approach it, even enter it, without its losing that particular charm. He had never before been able to walk into the distance without turning it into mere surroundings. It really added a considerable attraction to walking [. . .] because, as you walked, new distances opened out; so that you now had double, treble, quadruple distances, doubly, trebly, and quadruply enchanting. ("Leaf by Niggle" 110-11)

Tolkien means us to see that the enjoyable distance of antiquity is not lost to us in art, but rather can be preserved by it. The layers of distance hold particular sway over Tolkien's imagination, and in his essay on *Beowulf*, the distance of time is the most pleasing of all:

> When new Beowulf was already antiquarian, in a good sense, and now it produces a singular effect. For it is now to us itself ancient; and yet its maker was telling of things already old and weighted with regret, and he expended his art in making keen that touch upon the heart which sorrows have that are both poignant and remote. If the funeral of Beowulf moved once like the echo of an ancient dirge, far-off and hopeless, it is to us as a memory brought over the hills, an echo of an echo. ("Monsters" 40-1)

For Tolkien, the enchantment of the temporally distant past is of primary importance for his artistic and aesthetic endeavour. However, he also believes that the greatest power of myth "is at its best when it is presented by a poet who feels rather than makes explicit

what his theme portends: who presents it incarnate in the world of history and geography" (Tolkien "Monsters" 19), so he is cautious of being too overt with this aesthetic principle in his works. Tolkien does precisely this in his representation of Middle-earth throughout his works. His aesthetic love of a distant past becomes "incarnate" in his descriptions of the history, geography, mythologies, and songs of his imaginary world.

Frequently in his letters he comments that he feels he is not so much inventing Middle-earth as rediscovering something previously lost in history—such as the Ents or Faramir (*Letters* 79, 211, n.211-12). He even attempts to leave much of the story unwritten while he is telling the story, for what is "remembered" in Tolkien's works is far outweighed by what remains hidden to us. Again, we find in "Leaf by Niggle" the idealized artistic endeavour, in which Niggle's entire painting is in a sense brought to life in the afterlife. Niggle found "the curves of the land were familiar somehow." And then, "before him stood the Tree, his Tree, finished. [. . .] All the leaves he had ever laboured at were there, as he had imagined them, [. . .] and there were others that had only budded in his mind" (109-10). It is left ambiguous in the story whether Niggle's Parish, as the forest comes to be known, preceded or followed Niggle's painting of it. We are told that Niggle's picture "did not look [. . .] *real*" on canvas, because "it was only a glimpse then" ("Leaf by Niggle" 114-15; original emphasis). This is comparable to Tolkien's presentation of *Lord of the Rings* as a "history, true or feigned" ("Foreword to the Second Edition" xvii); Tolkien expresses, through Niggle, an artistic desire to represent something that is true. As Coleridge suggests in *Biographia Literaria*, truth can be a quality of a poem primarily concerned with pleasure, while pleasure can arise in a scientific or historical tract primarily concerned with truth. It is clear to Tolkien from the outset of writing his legendarium, posthumously published as *The Silmarillion* and the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth*, that he does not want to monopolize the stories therein: he writes that he "would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme" to "leave scope for other minds" (*Letters* 145). In this way he shows a particular desire to share the world he has created, as well as the process of creation itself, as a means of preserving and propagating the feeling of enchantment offered by Fantasy literature.

Tolkien's favoured impression of incompleteness, then, must also be considered, and it is related to his fascination with distance and vastness. Somewhat akin to Keats's "*Negative Capability*," the idea of "being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" ("To George and Thomas Keats" 492; original emphasis), Tolkien's interest in "blank spaces" and the gaps in human memory and consciousness suggests that, from his viewpoint, the most vibrantly "alive" literature is that which does not attempt perfection or completion. Kant himself says that works of genius often contain contradictions that, were they to be effaced, would lessen their impact. Nowhere do the Romantics and Tolkien find more promising and alluring incompleteness than in relics of ancient civilizations whose memories have been lost. In *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, McFarland examines the poetics of Wordsworth and Coleridge at length, and emphasizes the Romantic love of lost memory, embodied in crumbling ruins. Taking a philosophical approach to the topic, McFarland finds this effect inextricable from human existence:

> Incompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin—the diasparactive triad—are at the very center of life. The phenomenological analysis of existence reveals this with special clarity. Heidegger's twin conceptions of *Geworfenheit* (the sense of being hurled into reality, broken off) and *Verfallen* (the sense within life of its continuing ruin) are ineradicable criteria of existence. In truth, the largest contention of this book can be rendered by Heidegger's formulation that "in existence there is a permanent incompleteness (*ständige 'Unganzheit'*), which cannot be evaded." (5)

This sensation, whether emotional, intellectual, or poetical (artistic), is inherent to the human condition. McFarland calls this effect generated by Romantic poets, and by Tolkien as well in my view, *essentia*. It is "an awareness that is 'existential' or 'metaphysical' [. . .] represented by rather than derived from language," and "it expresses nothing less than the nature of human existence itself" (McFarland 276). By nature, McFarland explains, "our lives are split. We have a double nature: an existence 'now,' which is palpable and concrete, and an existence in the past and future, which though spectral is none the less truly our own existence. The paradox is what Jaspers recognizes

by his two terms for existence: *Dasein* and *Existenz*. But the paradox [. . .] is the most inescapable fact of human life" (276).

For those who believe in a fall from grace, as those who have been raised in a Judaeo-Christian belief system may tend to do, this dual mode of being results from Original Sin. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it is only following the exile of Adam and Eve from the garden that what *was*, what *is*, and what *should be* are sundered. Tolkien, himself a devout Catholic, says that "certainly there was an Eden on this very unhappy earth. We all long for it, and we are 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* 110). In the Romantics, this schism is nowhere more apparent than in their vision of nature both as a mirror for the human mind, and as the embodiment of an unknowable deity: the natural and the supernatural as one. Our awareness of this paradoxical phenomenon indicates to the Romantics and Tolkien that the vision of unified existence was once ours, and was lost—because of a trespass.

Like the Romantics, then, Tolkien views time in a manner that suggests a dichotomy between the present and the past, in that the present and the future will eventually be lost to us in the widening gulf of the past and forgetful oblivion. Their project, it would appear, is to reclaim that which has been lost through the contemplation of nature, or, for Tolkien, "Faërie." Wordsworth says:

> [. . .] what we feel of sorrow and despair
> From ruin and from change, and all the grief
> The passing shews of being leave behind,
> Appeared an idle dream that could not live
> Where meditation was. ("The Excursion" 1.520-5)

The belief that the past exists in an eternal present, accessible by meditation, implies belief in, or at least desire for, a world that is in some sense "unfallen."[10] The meditation on nature for the Romantics, and on Fairy, allows them to overcome their grief for their loss, after a fashion, by reconciling the passage of time with the natural world; so must all things pass. It is this nostalgia for an idealized temporal continuity that is often identified in the Romantics as "sentimental" (Frye *Anatomy of Criticism* 35). Like McFarland on the Romantics, I shall call this effect in Tolkien's works *essentia*.

The recognition of a discontinuity in the human perception of past, present, and future suggests that the mind has lost its connection to nature; we are exiles in our own minds. Poets who produce the effect of *essentia* in their works are, in a manner of speaking, attempting to regain the unity of mind and nature. As McFarland indicates:

> *Essentia*, in short, is the feeling of the whole of our existence in its cloven reality. And to be fully aware of the cloven nature of existence is in a sense to restore its wholeness. Every act of true poetry succeeds in some way in rendering, in Wordsworth's beautiful phrase, "The life where hope and memory are as one." [Wordsworth *Poems*, v, 87.]
>
> [. . .] *Essentia*, in its disposition of awareness between "now" and "then," is accordingly fleeting and intangible—is in the nature of an *evanescence*. Indeed, the most immediate awareness of "now" is that which not only vanishes into "then," but is in itself fragile. (McFarland 277)

Our ability to perceive a disparity between reality and the ideal suggests to many poets and philosophers that the two were once singular. Compare Wordsworth's words, "the life where hope and memory are as one," with those of Schelling, who says that nature "becomes ever more the visible imprint of the highest concepts." "There will then no longer be a difference between the world of thought and the world of reality," Schelling continues, and so "the world will be one, with the peace of the golden age heralded in the harmonious connection of all the sciences" (*Ages of the World* 119). The desire to recover the golden age is one of the most fundamental desires of humanity for all who subscribe to the age-old belief that humanity is gradually decaying, ever falling from some prior ideal form. There is also the suggestion of barbarity in humanity, whose distance from the ideal may be taken to imply that life itself, and the spirit of living beings, has become so alien to us that we slaughter it, uncomprehending, in our attempts to study and rationalize it. We find such belief in the fragility of *essentia* in the writings on spirit and nature by the German Idealist Hegel, citing Goethe's *Faust*:

> If you want to describe life and gather its meaning,
> To drive out its spirit must be your beginning,
> Then though fast in your hand lie the parts one by one

The spirit that linked them, alas is gone [. . . (part I, sc. 4)].

"The true infinite," Hegel goes on to say, "is the unity of itself and the finite; and this, now, is the category of [. . .] the Philosophy of Nature" (*Essential Writings* 207-8).

Tolkien's notion of Fairy incorporates aspects of German Idealism and Romanticism summed up in McFarland's concept of *essential*; Tolkien identifies this realm as a place where desire is realized, and as a state of mind—a mind enchanted by the craft of the author—that is too fragile to survive a vigorous probing. As he writes in "Monsters," "myth is alive at once and in all its parts, and dies before it can be dissected" (19); or in the essay "Fairy-Stories," "it is dangerous to ask too many questions" during our readerly sojourn in Fairy, lest we destroy the story's pleasurable enchantment (3). As Gandalf says, "he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.252). The "Faërian" realms of *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and especially *Lord of the Rings* are the sole places where Elves have living memories of the ages forgotten or unknown to men (Tolkien "Fairy-Stories" 52); and Fantasy is a place where mortal desires meet with reality. For Tolkien, the ability of Fairy or Fantasy to present one's innermost desires suggests that a return to the golden age of the world should be manifest in such fiction.

A feeling of disenchantment, of alienation from time and nature such as is found in the Romantics, motivates Tolkien's works, and in a similar manner. In attempting to mend the alienation from nature that the Romantics feel, they introduce effects of enchantment, supernaturalism, and mysticism from medieval romances, lays, and ballads into their works, indicative of the realm of Fairy borrowed from folklore and myth. The appropriation of the fairy realm from medieval romance by the Romantics, Medieval Revivalists, and their successors until Tolkien's time clarify the expression of *essentia* in his Fairy.

Preservations of the Past: Romance, History, and Myth

The German Idealists and English Romantics were particularly interested in tales from medieval Europe, and sought to reuse events and aesthetic effects found in the old texts, believing that in doing so they could learn more about their origins and ancestors. The tales of Germanic warriors and enchantment in particular, recovered in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, strongly influenced some Victorian authors such as George MacDonald and especially William Morris, who in turn appealed highly to J.R.R. Tolkien.[11] Tolkien's interest in medieval works as inspiration for his fictions indicates a high probability that he was engaging in a Herderian exploit for the same reason that the Romantics were fascinated by the Middle Ages: they sought an enchantment that appears to have been lost to the modern everyday world.

Tolkien was not, of course, the first scholar and author to turn his thought to old stories and to reuse their material, and a great part of his interest in the Middle Ages can be attributed to the Romantic effort to recapture a medieval literary sentiment.[12] Writers such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott, Keats, Shelley, and later Tennyson found that the heroes and settings of medieval romances provided them with both an abundance of material, and a type of escape from the world in which they lived, which Tolkien finds commendable, even one of the key features that validates fairy-stories as a genre. As Georg Lukács explains in *The Historical Novel*, the Romantic movement witnessed and reacted to a number of changing social conditions: "the inhumanity of Capitalism, the chaos of competition, the destruction of the small by the big, the debasement of culture by the transformation of all things into commodities—all this is contrasted, in a manner generally reactionary in tendency, with the social idyll of the Middle Ages, seen as a period of peaceful co-operation among all classes, and age of the organic growth of culture" (22).[13] The emphasis that Romantics place on the Middle Ages, as well as their affinity with nature and all things organic, may well imply such rejection of the transformation of the world into an artificial, commodified, and perhaps even industrial world, alien to individuality and tranquility.[14] Of course, the Romantic vision of the Middle Ages was somewhat, as Northrop Frye calls it, "sentimental."

The means by which the original texts were preserved for the Romantics influenced the manner in which they reworked those traditional materials and subjects to reflect their concern with nature and time, and Tolkien's reworkings as well. The past, as a poetical feeling, can be created after a fashion: Johann Gottfried Herder suggests that the common folk-songs (*die Volkslied*), should be used in creating a purely national mythology, unique to Germany and free of any taint from other cultures. He does not claim to be altering history itself, but rather its kindred, mythology and legend.[15] Because

of their foundation on pre-existing songs, such newly-made myths and fairy tales (*Märchen*) are not considered new creations, but rather a recovery of forgotten events and stories. In his introduction to Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, an epic compilation of traditional Finnish folksongs, Keith Bosley writes that Herder "was developing ideas of a world of nations defined by their vernacular and by folk culture," and "urged his disciples to refresh the use at the pure spring of folk song" (xv). Perhaps influenced by Herder's theories, Tolkien hopes to do much the same when he claims to be creating a mythology for England: "having set myself a task, the arrogance of which I fully recognized and trembled at: being precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own: it is a wonderful thing to be told that I have succeeded, at least with those who have still the undarkened heart and mind" (*Letters* 230-1). Tolkien liberally used materials gleaned from folklore and medieval literature which he felt reflected a British and somewhat Germanic Anglo-Saxon literary sentiment, in an attempt to depict the "noble northern spirit [. . .] in its true light. Nowhere, incidentally, was it nobler than in England" (*Letters* 56).[16] But Tolkien always had the feeling that he was writing something already known, or more exactly, that he was reporting events as a historian might.[17] He genuinely felt that his fiction was a reconstruction of an ancient world hidden within language; his characters and stories are often philologists' jests, such as naming Bilbo Baggins's home Bag End from the French *cul-de-sac* (Shippey *Road to Middle-earth* 55), Smaug the dragon from "the primitive Germanic verb *Smugan*, to squeeze through a hole" (*Letters* 31), or especially creating Samwise Gamgee's name from the Old English *samwis*, meaning "halfwit" (*Letters* 83).[18]

Ideally, from Herder's viewpoint, the recreated national epic accurately depicts historical events that had been all but forgotten, being inadvertently preserved in folklore. That Herder's ideas had such an impact in Lönnrot's creation of the *Kalevala* is in itself significant for Tolkien's work.[19] Tolkien used a method similar to Lönnrot's in crafting Middle-earth, that is, by drawing stories and characters out of folklore which he considered to be English in character: the fairies, or Elves, of Tolkien's writings are more like the Welsh and Celtic fairies than those from continental Europe.[20] Tolkien always conceived of Elves as being similar to humans in size and appearance, if more beautiful in their features, which is common to tales such as *The Mabinogion*, and the *Acallum na*

Senórach. But Lönnrot's *Kalevala* has a very particular importance for Tolkien's writings, for he credits it with the idea for Middle-earth, and in his letters frequently mentions that his obsession with Finnish nearly caused him to fail in school:

> Finnish [. . .] set the rocket off in story. I was immensely attracted by something in the air of the Kalevala, even in Kirby's poor translation. I never learned Finnish well enough to do more than plod through a bit of the original, [. . .] being mostly taken up with its effect on "my language." But the beginning of the legendarium, of which the Trilogy is part (the conclusion), was in an attempt to reorganize some of the Kalevala, especially the tale of Kullervo the hapless, into a form of my own. That began [. . .] in the Honours Mods period; nearly disastrously [. . .]. (*Letters* 214)

Since Tolkien drew inspiration from the *Kalevala*, an epic poem constructed using the principles that Herder devised, and claimed to have pieced together much of his mythology and stories from the legends and history of England as Herder theorized could be done, it follows that we might find numerous similarities between both the Romantics (themselves influenced by both Herder and Goethe), and Tolkien, who attempted to construct a national epic for England out of fairy-stories and romance.[21]

For a moment let us consider what George Webbe Dasent calls "the soup" in *Popular Tales from the Norse*, cited by Tolkien in "Fairy-Stories," and what Tolkien stirs in his "Cauldron of Story," as he calls it, which contains "many things older, more potent, more beautiful, comic, or terrible that they were in themselves (considered simply as figures of history)" ("Fairy-Stories" 20, 27, 29). All myth and legend, as well as history, becomes a part of the soup, and changes by its interaction with other events and tales in the Cauldron, and later can be drawn upon by any storyteller who knows the traditions or has heard tales emerging from the interaction. King Arthur, as Tolkien reminds us, "once historical, [. . .] 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 Faërie, and even some other stray bones of history (such as Alfred's defence against the Danes), until he emerged as a King of Faërie" ("Fairy-Stories" 29). Tolkien had no illusions as to the ability of the historian to discover the absolute truth and present it objectively; our background

conditions us all, and in this sense fairy-stories have always been a part of the course of human development. All stories, both fictional and real, are added to this soup, a type of primordial stew which continues to spawn new forms: "History often resembles 'Myth,' because they are both ultimately of the same stuff" ("Fairy-Stories" 30). Tolkien sees the history of humanity and the world itself as a story that, as is true of oral transmission, is changed through each telling. The ideas of fairy-romance[22] and Fantasy have some tie with history, in that the story is altered somewhat from its original state. But as Tolkien would say, this is a difference of degree, not of kind. As W. P. Ker suggests in *Epic and Romance*, "the connection of epic poetry with history is real, and yet "the epic poem is cut loose and set free from history, and goes on a way of its own" (23-4). Fairy stories, for Tolkien as well as the Romantics, are the best practical form in which a sense of the past, both medieval and legendary, can be recaptured.

Tolkien himself describes the transformation over time—perhaps "regression or digression" would be more fitting—of fairy-stories into nursery-tales, which those stories in the chapbooks eventually became: "At one time it was a dominant view that all such matter [of folk-tale and myth] was derived from 'nature-myths.' [. . .] Epic, heroic legend, saga, then localized these stories in real places and humanized them by attributing them to ancestral heroes, mightier than men and yet already men. And finally these legends, dwindling down, became folk-tales, *Marchën*, fairy-stories—nursery tales" ("Fairy-Stories" 23-4). While Tolkien agrees with this theory of development in principle, he rejects the particular hypothesized chronology involved. He says it "would seem to be the truth almost upside down" ("Fairy-Stories" 24). He illustrates his own belief by giving the example of the Norse god Thórr, and explains that man and myth are one:

> the tale that is told of him in *Thrymskvitha* (in the Elder Edda) is certainly just a fairy-story. [. . .] But there is no real reason for supposing that this tale is "unprimitive" [. . .]. If we could go backwards in time, the fairy-story might be found to change in details, or to give way to other tales. But there would always be a "fairy-tale" as long as there was any Thórr. When the fairy-tale ceased, there would be just thunder, which no human ear had yet heard. ("Fairy-Stories" 25-6)

The fairy-story cannot be separated from the myth; they are, and always have been fused, despite our attempts to sunder them, presumably to rescue the noble myth from the ignoble product of fancy. For the religious beliefs of a noble and heroic people such as the Goths or the Vikings to have become little more than shadows of their former selves, caricature gods of nursery-stories, was to Tolkien an affront.

Tolkien and the Romantics felt, collectively, that tales of Fairy deserved better treatment than to be locked behind nursery doors, for those tales contained insight into the human spirit when more attuned to the natural world, and that was a state preferable, in their view, to the alienation caused by the industrial revolution and ceaseless war which Wordsworth decries in "The Excursion." As Fowler notes, the literary canon is often modified when someone finds value in an often neglected work or genre, and "infusions of elements from popular art have also a vital influence. In this way the narrative ballad, after centuries of belonging to popular literature and of exclusion from the literary canon, attracted the impartial interest of Gray and received art treatment from Wordsworth and Coleridge" (214). The Romantics frequently use Fairy enchantment in their poetry, as Wordsworth does, though understatedly, in "We Are Seven," "The Thorn," "I travelled among unknown men," and "Nutting," for example. As Coleridge once claimed, Wordsworth's task was to make the natural seem supernatural, while his own task was the reverse. Coleridge's poems depict the enthralling quality of the Fairy realm, such as in "Christabel" where the suggestions of enchantment are overt, and more explicitly in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" where the wedding guest is held by the Mariner's "glittering eye" (line 13).[23] For Tolkien, this "Enchantment," as he calls it, arises out of artistic craft rather than any form of magic ("Fairy-Stories" 53). He says that engaging the imagination of a reader "demand[s] a special skill, a kind of elvish craft" ("Fairy-Stories" 49). By using Fairy and Faërian enchantment prominently in their individual works, targeting mature readers as well as children, both Tolkien and the Romantics seek to rescue the fairy-tale from the oblivion to which moralists of the neo-classical and Victorian eras sought to consign it.

Tolkien on Fairy Stories and the Literary Imagination

The enjoyment of fairy-stories arises not from any particular childish mentality, Tolkien advises, but rather from a personal aesthetic taste of individuals of any age.[24] This belief is central to his argument in "Fairy-Stories," which is a defence against critics who claim that fairy-stories should not be considered a serious literary form, and should especially not be of interest to adults. Children, in his view, cannot grasp the full meaning of such tales.[25] His own passion for fairy-stories, he admits, came later in life than childhood: "a real taste for fairy-stories was wakened [. . .] by philology on the threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war" ("Fairy-Stories" 42). The reason, as he conceives it, is that Fantasy provokes several unique effects in literature, which are more needed by adults than by children. "If written with art," he states, "the prime value of fairy-stories will simply be that value which, as literature, they share with other literary forms. But fairy-stories offer also, in peculiar degree or mode, these things: *Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation*" ("Fairy-Stories" 46; emphasis mine). These four virtues play an extremely important role in Tolkien's artistic and didactic project, and ultimately demonstrate why Fantasy literature, in his mind, should be read at all. His beliefs, we will find, are closely connected with those of the Romantics, who similarly desired to distance themselves from the modernizing world.

Tolkien identifies the primary criterion for the genre as Fantasy, an artistic effect that requires tremendous skill and meticulous attention to detail in order to create the effect of Secondary Belief. This intellectual faculty, he suggests, was either overlooked or depreciated by countless other artists, and he disagrees with Coleridge on its function in the interaction of Imagination and Fancy.[26] Drawing upon Schelling's concept of "two Imaginations," which are "based on his view of Art" as a means of reconciling "the conscious and unconscious" (Prikett 20), Coleridge claims:

> the primary IMAGINATION [. . . is] the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination [. . . is] an echo of the former [. . .] differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create [. . .]. FANCY, on the contrary, [. . .] is indeed no other than a mode of Memory

> emancipated from the order of time and space. [. . .] Equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (*Biographia Literaria*: XIII. 1: 202)

Coleridge's claim that Fancy is merely "a mode of Memory" that has evidently lost its grip on reality suggests to detractors of Fantasy that such a mental faculty is merely hallucinatory or delusional ("Fairy-Stories" 48), an idea that Tolkien finds erroneous. In responding to this passage by Coleridge, Tolkien refuses the strict association between Fancy and memory, and reclaims the latter's Secondary Imagination as "Fantasy":

> The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present. [. . .] But in recent times, [. . .] Imagination has often been held to be something higher than the mere image-making, ascribed to the operations of Fancy (a reduced and depreciatory form of the older word Fantasy) [. . .]. The perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression, may vary in vividness and strength: but this is a difference of degree in Imagination, not a difference in kind. The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) "the inner consistency of reality," is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation. ("Fairy-Stories" 46-7)

Sub-creation, as Tolkien pictures it, produces a fictional world sufficiently well constructed that its internal laws of nature are maintained throughout, and hence engages the imagination of the reader so that "disbelief" does not arise. This is why, Tolkien says, true Fantasy, serious Fantasy, is so difficult to achieve, for "'the inner consistency of reality' is more difficult to produce, the more unlike are the images and the rearrangements of primary material to the actual arrangements of the Primary World" ("Fairy-Stories" 48). Rather than accept the judgment that works of Fantasy are less artistic and less creative than stories set in the real world as the Neo-Classicists and Victorians claimed, Tolkien instead suggests that a fictional world that does not merely

copy the real Primary World, and yet is credibly consistent in its internal principles, is a more challenging fiction to write.

It is at this point that Tolkien most clearly breaks with the Romantics, and asserts that Fantasy, properly crafted, may transcend the more stiffly calculating Imagination that Coleridge and others held in such high regard, for it is capable of gaining a level of autonomy outside the intention of the author. This is not to say that the fictional world becomes "real" on any physical or sensory plane, but rather that, in the creator's and reader's minds, the Fantasy world begins to draw out subconscious ideas and images in answer to particular desires. Tolkien writes at one point that Faramir, Boromir's brother, "has come on the scene," but confesses: "I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but there he came walking into the woods of Ithilien" (*Letters* 79). Fantasy, Tolkien believes, is a combination of the "older and higher" use of the word *fantasy* "as an equivalent of Imagination" (which Coleridge calls the prime agent of human perception), with "the derived notions of 'unreality' (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed 'fact,' in short of the fantastic" ("Fairy-Stories" 47). "That the images are of things not in the primary world (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue not a vice," he continues. "Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent" ("Fairy-Stories" 47-8). Rejecting Coleridge's disparaging assessment of fancy, Tolkien concludes that Fantasy is the human ability of "forming mental images of things not actually present" ("Fairy-Stories" 46). Such creation of a Secondary World, he avers, is when humans most approach divinity, becoming makers of an independent world.

Tolkien's view of humanity as creators of fictional worlds reflects his Catholic faith, which says that God created man in his own likeness. God intended men and women to have a predisposition for artistry and creative thought, he assumes, for "we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker" ("Fairy-Stories" 56). On the subject of the Resurrection of Christ, Tolkien declares: "man the story-teller would have to be redeemed in a manner consonant with his nature: by a moving story" (*Letters* 101-2). Such is his belief that authors are able to create, in a

manner derivative of God's "Word" as the Neoplatonists held, a world revealed to the human mind only through the human faculty for fantasy.

Calling the created fictional world the Secondary World, Tolkien further explains the imaginative process of reading a work that has been meticulously crafted to that end: "the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside" ("Fairy-Stories" 37). Sir Philip Sidney had similarly asserted the poet's imaginative power to create a more perfect, fictional nature in his *Defence of Poesy*: "give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings" (79). In a manner of speaking, then, the artist becomes the Creator of that fictional reality, and the reader is able to imagine being inside this world and trusts its "god" to conduct him or her safely through "the Perilous Realm" (Tolkien "Fairy-Stories" 10). The author appears to turn his creation over to the mental process that Coleridge termed a mere "mode of Memory," which allows for dragons, immortals, or demigods to walk the earth in the Secondary World, which can in turn be thought believable by readers who possess the capacity for Fantasy. Tolkien's account of the reader's reception of the Fantasy world may helpfully be compared to Kant's consideration of moral faith, and briefly, history, as concepts dependent upon either faith or credulity. Kant writes:

> *Faith* (as *habitus*, not as *actus*) is reason's moral way of thinking in assenting to [*Fürwahrhalten*] what is not accessible to theoretical cognition. [. . .] A wholly moral faith is one that refers to special objects that are not objects of possible knowledge or opinion (otherwise, above all in the case of history, it would have to be called credulity [*Leichtgläubigkeit*] rather than faith [*Glaube*]). (365)

As a type of fictional history, the subcreated world that Tolkien values in literary art similarly necessitates both a kind of faith and credulity. Even without a religious faith in Tolkien's "Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar" (*Silmarillion* 3), it is nevertheless possible to believe the fictional events as a kind of history. However, the reader's

experience and imaginative participation in the Secondary World depends on the author's ability to present the fiction as credible.

One attribute of the "inner consistency of reality" in fiction, Tolkien feels, is that other minds should be able to interact with its world as though it were real, that is, as though the fictional events actually happened *at some earlier time*. We should note that in the "Foreword" to *Lord of the Rings* Tolkien begins by calling the work as a whole a fictional history: "This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it"; he further declares, "I much prefer history, true or feigned" (xv, xvii). In "Monsters," he urges the importance of the poet's consciously artistic use of antiquity, as opposed to the attempts of historians and anthropologists to glean simply historical information from the poem:

> *Beowulf* is in fact so interesting as poetry, in places poetry so powerful, that this quite overshadows the historical content, and is largely independent even of the most important facts [. . .]. The illusion of historical truth and perspective, that has made Beowulf seem such an attractive quarry, is largely a product of art. The author has used an instinctive historical sense—a part indeed of the ancient English temper (and not unconnected with its reputed melancholy), of which Beowulf is a supreme expression; but he has used it with a poetical and not an historical object. (10-1)

By placing Middle-earth in our world at a much earlier, prehistoric time, Tolkien implies that we can accept its events and imagine them to be as real as our own history: reading both out of a book, we can imagine events in the Fantasy world as well as we can historical events. Also, the temporal distance suggests that any physical evidence for the existence of a Fantasy world would have been lost long ago, so that it cannot be disproved that such a world could have existed at some time. In conjunction with a consistent Secondary World—one in which the events of the story accord with the laws of the setting—the effect of fictional history makes us more readily accept the credibility of such stories as being "true." Our beliefs and interests can be like those of historians or anthropologists studying ancient societies and civilizations, seeking to uncover lost cities

and forgotten stories. Or, if like Tolkien, we believe that simply mining *Beowulf* for historical facts is misleading and does a great injustice to the poem, we can approach the text out of a desire to hear a story, and for that time imagine ourselves to be of the society that birthed the tale while preserving the enchantment of antiquity.[27]

Following the discussion of Fantasy, Tolkien identifies Recovery, Escape, and Consolation as a set of virtues that merit the journey into the fantastic fairy otherworld. These can only be gained, though, through the reader's ability to set aside his worldly experience and the belief that such literature is mere fancy, and accept the truth value of the Secondary World. Although it is often more difficult for an adult to accept marvellous events as being possible in some fictional world than for a child who believes his own world to be a place where the marvellous is possible,[28] Tolkien believes fantasy is rewarding also for adults who can maintain an appropriate outlook:

> I do not deny that there is a truth in Andrew Lang's words [. . . :] "He who would enter into the Kingdom of Faërie should have the heart of a little child." For that possession is necessary to all high adventure, into kingdoms both less and far greater than Faërie. But humility and innocence –these things "the heart of a child" must mean in such context – do not necessarily imply an uncritical tenderness. ("Fairy-Stories" 44)

To be receptive to the world of fantasy, then, and to benefit from Recovery, Escape, and Consolation, we must be as children in our foray into the Secondary World, for indeed we do not know what to expect from a book the first time that we read it. As Sidney once said, though,

> so is it in men (most of which are childish in the best things, till they be cradled in their graves): glad will they be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely, that is to say philosophically, set out, they would swear they be brought to school again. (92)

It would appear that humanity, which Tolkien thought had been redeemed by Christ through a rousing story (*Letters* 101-2), naturally inclines towards storytelling and story-

hearing, and tends to accept these through innocent ears. We are enchanted by tales of fantasy.

For those people who enter the Fairy realm willingly and in good faith, Tolkien believes great treasures await them. The first is Recovery, which allows the reader to return from the Secondary World and behold her own world as if for the first time, refreshed from the journey rather than weary or jaded. Through Recovery, he believes, "we should look at green again, and be startled anew."[29] "We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold [. . .] sheep, and dogs, and horses—and wolves":

> Recovery [. . .] is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view. I do not say "seeing things as they are" and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say "seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them"—as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean out our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness. ("Fairy-Stories" 57-8)[30]

For Tolkien as well as the Romantics, Fantasy and writings in general that engage in the Faërian realm of enchantment appear to have provided a felt Recovery from the despair caused by ongoing war and the suffering of labourers under the yoke of industrial tyranny. Wordsworth similarly suggests achieving a type of Recovery, or defamiliarization, through the association of humans with nature, a concept compatible with Tolkien's notion of enchantment: "the principal object" was "to choose incidents and situations from common life," so as "to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way" ("Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*"). It is through fantasy that these writers were able to regain their vision of the world "as it was meant to be seen" and to overcome the oppressive silence of an alien and violent world; Recovery returned their artistic voices to them. It is no coincidence that Fantasy literature has become a major genre following the horrors of World War II and the threat of nuclear war.[31]

Recovery, as Tolkien describes it, results from our return—following an absence—to our own world, and is thus intimately connected to the further virtue of

Escape, as it were, from the Primary World. One of the foremost criticisms levelled against fantasy literature is the charge of "escapism." For Tolkien, this is not necessarily a failing, but one of fantasy's greatest strengths. The modern world, he finds, is filled with horrors enough that it is natural for us to desire to escape from it periodically, as prisoners might desire to escape from a prison ("Fairy-Stories" 60):

> It is part of the essential malady of such days—producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present time and self-made misery—that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil. [. . .]
>
> But there are also other and more profound "escapisms" that have always appeared in fairy-tale and legend. There are other things more grim and terrible to fly from than the noise, stench, ruthlessness, and extravagance of the internal-combustion engine. There are hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death. And even when men are not facing hard things such as these, there are ancient limitations from which fairy-stories offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires (touching the very roots of fantasy) to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation. ("Fairy-Stories" 65-6)

Differentiating "the Escape of the Prisoner" from "the Flight of the Deserter" ("Fairy-Stories" 61), Tolkien points out that there is no particular duty that we are avoiding when reading or writing fantasy, and so its provision of release from a world that, to Tolkien as well as the Romantics, can no longer hold any solace for the individual, allows the reader to "return" to a past time that is more desirable.[32] Ultimately, as Tolkien states, "Fairy-stories were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability. If they awakened *desire*, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded" ("Fairy-Stories" 40-1). The ability to conceive of a plausible Secondary World is secondary to the ability to evoke and realize desires in that world. I will return to the topic of desire again in relation to romance literature's use of the Fairy realm in the next chapter. The creation of the Secondary World does not necessitate belief, for its effectiveness depends not on whether we know the events to be true or fictional, but on whether we *desire* that the fantasy world should have happened.

The attraction to antiquity inheres in the works of the German Idealists, the English Romantics, and Tolkien. Represented through natural imagery as an experience of the sublime, time becomes a tangible aspect of the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Tolkien merged such a method of presenting time with his particularly powerful love of antiquity made most explicit in his "Monsters" essay. The ocean in particular symbolizes for him the loss of memory and alienation from an ideal world, and as we shall see in later chapters, the return of the Elves to the Undying Lands across the sea, beyond the mortal world, reflects Tolkien's own desire to recover a happier, golden age through Fairy. The felt loss of such an ideal state of innocence is attended also by a felt schism endemic to human perception of time and existence; the poetic recognition of loss produces the literary phenomenon that McFarland designates *essentia*. Mysticism, pantheism, supernaturalism, and the otherworld in the Romantics are, he argues, means of attempting to unify an existence suspended between an ideal and reality. Tolkien evinces a similar sensibility, I have proposed, and such concerns are most sharply focused in his fictional representation of the Elves as long-lived beings perfectly attuned to nature. In large measure, the idealization of the past common to both the Romantics and Tolkien results from the transmission of quest romances in the form of children's fairy-tales in chapbooks and ballads whose tragic lamentations for lost ages are signal features. Tolkien thoroughly rejects the idea that fairy-tales are children's literature alone, and instead says that the purpose of Fairy is to offer a re-enchantment with the world to adults who have become jaded—far more appropriate for adults than children who have not yet lost the capacity for fantasy in everyday life. Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, and Consolation become his focus, and ultimately the justification for his representation of Fairy in Middle-earth, for he believes that Fantasy can to an extent remedy the existential schism of humanity, and that our enchantment in reading a story of a fictional-historical time returns us to a state of enhanced innocence and humility. If the fictional world is believable in its internal cohesion—the inner consistency of reality—the benefits of Fantasy become ours through our imaginative participation in the tale. Ultimately, this usage of the Fairy realm in both Tolkien and the Romantics seems to be a result of their desire to escape from their respective contemporary world, similarly threatened by industrialization and the horrors of unending war. It is the desires of Tolkien himself to

which we must now turn in order to understand their manifestation in his works; his passion for medievalism and folklore, as we see, becomes the skeleton for his own stories, and his feeling for antiquity and *essentia* becomes their musculature.

Notes for Chapter 1

[1] Tolkien writes in "Fairy-Stories": "Death is the theme that most inspired George MacDonald" (68), and in *Letters* he says "MacDonald is the chief exception" for Tolkien's disavowal of Victorian sources for *The Hobbit* (31). He also says of *Lord of the Rings*: "The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon [. . .] owe more to William Morris and his Huns and Romans, as in *The House of the Wolflings* or *The Roots of the Mountain,*" than they do to either World War (*Letters* 303).

[2] Hans Fromm writes in his article "*Kalevala* and *Nibelungenlied*: The Problem of Oral and Written Composition" that "it was only Romanticism [. . .] with its return to a sentimental, stylized notion of the Middle Ages, that laid claim to the Hohenstaufen epic [i.e., the *Nibelungenleid*] for its unfulfilled dream of the great empire" (Honko: 98).

[3] As Elizabeth Fay says of Keats in *Romantic Medievalism*, "the standard act of romance is the act of looking back, *a nostalgic regard that opposes presentness*. We also realize that it is the moment of romance, of projected memory, which is more felt and more real than the freezing quality of the frame's 'now'" (128; emphasis mine).

[4] The visual effect Frodo sees as he leaves Lothlórien is analogous to an observer standing on a large ship, which is sitting next to another ship. If the observer's ship begins to move forwards, he might for a moment be uncertain whether his is moving or the other is going backwards, because he feels no acceleration. In *Lord of the Rings*, re-entering the mortal world means that Frodo and the others are again subject to time, and feel themselves to be temporally motionless while the enchanted forest moves backwards.

[5] Traditionally, mortals lose track of time while in the fairy realm, as in the case of Saint Brendan in "The Voyage of Saint Brendan," and Oisin in "Oisin and Niam" from Rolleston's *High Deeds of Finn* collection; the heroes return home only to find that a century or more has passed since their departure, and that their friends and families are long dead.

[6] Tolkien and his mother left South Africa by sea and travelled to England while Tolkien's father remained behind, and that may have contributed to such an association in the author's mind. Young enough to still remember parts of the country of his birth, Tolkien may have associated the sea with his loss of his father; an ocean separated them, and his father died before the two were reunited. The sense of longing that the sea produces in Tolkien's Elves to return to the Undying Lands may have its origins in his own life; hence we might expect a voyage such as that of the Elves to coincide with a return to a former time of happiness and security.

[7] Citing Hegel and Goethe, McFarland considers the stream and ocean as indicators of the "Romantic concern with infinity" (28): "compare Hegel: 'The ocean gives us the idea of the indefinite, the unlimited, and infinite; and in *feeling his own infinite* in that infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited.' [. . .] Compare further Goethe: 'Ah, how often at that time has the flight of a crane soaring above my head inspired me with the desire to be transported to the shores of the immeasurable ocean, there to quaff the pleasures of life from the foaming goblet of the infinite [. . .] I

remember so well how I sometimes watched the course of that stream, following it with strange feelings, and romantic ideas [. . .] and I lost myself completely in the contemplation of the infinite distance.'" (McFarland n.28)

[8] Tuor goes "in search of [his] doom" by following a stream that leads him through a secret passage in a "wall of rock" and out to the Western ocean (*Unfinished Tales* 27, 29). The sea-bird—a crane in Goethe, and an albatross for Coleridge's Mariner—also appears in "Tuor" in the form of swans, who lead the protagonist to a ruined hall of the Elves who "had gone, none knew whither, [. . .] deathless but doomed" (*Unfinished Tales* 35). There he meets Ulmo, god of the oceans, one of Tolkien's Valar, who gives him a vision of "the Great Sea," and allows him to see "through its unquiet regions teeming with strange forms, even to its lightless depths, in which amid the everlasting darkness there echoed voices terrible to mortal ears" (*Unfinished Tales* 40).

[9] Tolkien's narrator says that it is "unlikely" that Frodo himself wrote the poem "Frodos Dreme," although "it was associated with the dark and despairing dreams which visited him in March and October during his last three years" (*Tom Bombadil* 81). Furthermore, he says: "the thought of the Sea was ever-present in the background of hobbit imagination; but fear of it and distrust of all Elvish lore, was the prevailing mood in the Shire at the end of the Third Age, and that mood was certainly not entirely dispelled by the events and changes with which that Age ended," meaning the exodus of the Elves across the waves (*Tom Bombadil* 81-2).

[10] Tolkien's "Lost Road" and "Notion Club Papers" revolve around a group of scholars who learn to visit the past in their dreams. See, e.g., J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lost Road and other writings: Language and Legend before The Lord of the Rings,* ed. Christopher Tolkien (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993); and Verlyn Flieger, *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1997).

[11] W.R.J. Barron says in *English Medieval Romance* that "The Matter of England," the body of medieval romances concerned with the national identity of England, is rooted in the Germanic Anglo-Saxon "oral literature" and "folk-culture" that survived the Norman Conquest (63).

[12] In *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, Sir Walter Scott laments the loss of heroes of bygone days, saying that "their castles themselves are but green mounds and shattered ruins: the place that once knew them, knows them no more—nay, many a race since theirs has died out and been forgotten in the very land which they occupied with all the authority of feudal proprietors and feudal lords" (Scott 88). The phrase "green mounds and shattered ruins" is reminiscent of the Green Chapel in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a work that held Tolkien's imagination throughout his life (Tolkien translated the work). A burial mound of Celtic kings, the Green Chapel is where Gawain receives Bercilak's stroke in the beheading game. Fairy appears to be a mortal world lost in time: men's building of the Green Chapel lies in a forgotten past. It is this sentiment of loss embodied in elegies dedicated to remembering those knights and people whose names are lost to us that I consider the hallmark of Tolkien's elegiac intent. Also, consider Gildor's words to Frodo about the Shire: "others dwelt here before hobbits were; and others will dwell here after hobbits are no more" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.3.82).

[13] Tolkien establishes a direct opposition between hobbits and industry: "Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools" ("Prologue" *Lord of the Rings* 1). The Shire is a rural agrarian society, temporally situated in a past beyond memory, for hobbits are entirely unknown to us: they have passed out of the social consciousness of humanity. Tolkien also reacts against an industrialized and war-torn world in his essays and short stories as well as the primary works. In *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, we find countless references to the evils of technology and warfare: "Labour-saving machinery only creates endless and worse labour. And in addition to this fundamental disability of a creature, is added the Fall, which makes our devices not only fail of their desire but turn to new and horrible evil. So we come inevitably from Daedalus and Icarus to the Giant Bomber. It is not an advance in wisdom!" (88). Both Tolkien and the Romantics respond to a loss of social conscience caused by increased commercial activity, as well as by endless warfare. The desire of the Romantics to reclaim an affinity with nature, their idealization of human imagination and spirit, the prevalence of otherworlds in their works, and a desire to return to an idealized vision of the Middle Ages are recreated in Tolkien's works as a result of his perception of similar social conditions.

[14] A possible further reason for the Romantics' tendency to view the medieval era so favourably might be the manner in which the fairy romances survived in ballads and the chapbooks; the Romantic poets would have encountered the stories in childhood, and may have nostalgically associated romance with a lost childhood. The ballad is the first of the forms into which medieval romance was transformed: originally sung aloud to music, and then later written or printed out as broadside ballads, many of these were collected in 1765 by Thomas Percy in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The origin of the ballad form, as has been noted by numerous scholars, is difficult to determine, but as Karasek says in her study of Arthurian romance's transformation into children's literature, "the ballads reached the height of their production during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, although they had begun to circulate as early as the fourteenth" (29). The popularity of the ballad gave way, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to a proliferation of the chapbook because of "convenience and a demand for more extensive cheap reading material" (Karasek 31). Karasek agrees with MacEdward Leach, claiming that "although the surviving traditional ballads [. . .] date from the Middle Ages, their subject matter does not." Many "of the oldest ballads have their source in folk tales, old beliefs and superstitions, and fairy lore" (35). The tales of "other worlds," stories of the realm of Faërie and its interaction with the human world, held particular interest for the audience, and the result is that romance and fairy-stories are now for the most part interchangeable. Almost as if by accident, the romances were infused with oral and literary traditions that far preceded medieval romances; this in itself gives the stories the alluring quality of timelessness.

[15] See, e.g., Eino Karhu in "The Role of Mythologism, Past and Present," in which he says "for the Romanticists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries the mythological world was not opposed to the

historical one, the former did not contradict the latter. On the contrary, mythology as a reflection of ancient prehistory was logically introduced into the entire concept of historical development." "The enlighteners," he continues, "considered everything in the history of mankind in the light of some eternal, normative and ahistorical reason; the accent was on what seemed to be universal and common to all times and nations," which are considered to be the characteristic views "of Vico, Herder and the Romanticists proper" (Honko: 541).

[16] Compare W. P. Ker, who says: "if Romance be the name for the sort of imagination that possesses the mystery and the spell of everything remote and unattainable, then Romance is to be found in the old Northern heroic poetry in larger measure than any epic or tragic solemnity, and in no small measure also even in the steady course of the Icelandic histories" (*Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* 321). Also, as Northrop Frye says, "Romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest" (*Secular Scripture* 15).

[17] Tolkien writes in a letter that "always [he] had the sense of recording what was already 'there,' somewhere: not of 'inventing'" (*Letters* 145). He does not take credit for inventing the Ents or Boromir's brother Faramir; they simply "appear" in his work of their own accord and volition.

[18] T.A. Shippey studies Tolkien's philological sources at great length in his books and articles.

[19] Herder's method for recreating mythologies was put to use in numerous places. Elias Lönnrot, a Finnish scholar of the nineteenth century, went about collecting the various folk songs of his people much as Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm did in Germany. Rather than turn these stories into fairy-tales and nursery-rhymes, however, Lönnrot instead produced the *Kalevala*, which the Finnish adopted as "a rallying-flag for national aspirations, [. . .] the national epic" (Bosley "Introduction" *Kalevala* xiii). As Lauri Honko writes in her article "the Kalevala and the World's Epics": "Folk poetry opened up a channel to the history, language, mores and thinking of a community. In addition to his nationalistic view, Herder also thought of Folklore in the global perspective, not only as the "living voice of nationalities" but of all mankind. [. . .] In Finland Romantic ideas were absorbed by an undeveloped new nation which lacked literature in its own language but was rich in oral poetry. [. . .] Finland came closest to the fulfillment of the Herderian dream when an epic based on folk poems, the Kalevala, was published in 1835-36 and became the cornerstone of Finnish literature. The work almost instantly acquired the status of national epic" (Honko 8).

[20] For further information about Herder's impact on Romanticism and folklore compilations in the nineteenth century, see Lauri Honko's article "The *Kalevala* and the World's Epics: An Introduction," in *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics*, ed. Lauri Honko (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990) 1-26.

[21] As Douglas A. Anderson says, "*The Lord of the Rings* is an example of a genre that had its origins thousands of years earlier, in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, in *Beowulf*, and in the Arthurian tales—a genre that by the early twentieth century had been marginalized, particularly after the rise of modernism in

the 1920s and 1930s. The genre of romance didn't die out by any means, but had limped along quietly for a few decades. Tolkien's work is firmly rooted in this romantic tradition, but it is also a development of that tradition along the lines of modern novelistic conventions" (138). See Douglas A. Anderson, "Tolkien After All These Years," *Meditations on Middle-earth*, ed. Karen Haber (New York: St. Martin's, 2001) 129-152.

[22] On the use of "fairy-romance" to describe Tolkien's works, he himself uses the term: "as the stories become less mythical, and more like stories and romances, Men are interwoven [. . .]. As such the story [of the *Silmarillion*] is (I think a beautiful and powerful) heroic-fairy-romance, receivable in itself with only a very general vague knowledge of the background" (*Letters* 149).

[23] Coleridge was intensely moved by his early exposure to and enjoyment of fairy-romances in his chapbooks, and became a frequent traveller into the Faërie realm in poems such as "Christabel," "The Eolian Harp," "Kubla Khan," and "The Ancient Mariner." In them, we catch glimpses of the enchantment that Coleridge might have felt as he read fairy-stories for the first time (see Watson 18).

[24] "Fairy-stories should not be *specially* associated with children," Tolkien writes. "They are associated with them: naturally, because children are human and fairy-stories are a natural human taste (though not necessarily a universal one); accidentally, because fairy-stories are a large part of the literary lumber that in latter-day Europe has been stuffed away in attics; unnaturally, because of erroneous sentiment about children [. . .]" ("On Fairy-Stories" 42-3).

[25] Tolkien calls on adult authors and readers to sample the genre to form their own conclusions: "if fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can. [. . .] Though it may be better for them to read some things, especially fairy-stories, that are beyond their measure rather than short of it. Their books like their clothes should allow for growth, and their books at any rate should encourage it" ("On Fairy-Stories" 45-6). Both through this essay and his works, Tolkien accomplishes exactly this: the fairy-story, or, as it is now called after Tolkien's coinage of the phrase, "Fantasy" ("On Fairy-Stories" 46), has become a genre written by, and largely for, adults.

[26] For more on the similarities and differences between Tolkien's and Coleridge's theories of the imagination, see Chris Seeman, "Tolkien's Revision of the Romantic Tradition," *Mallorn* 33 (1996): 73-83.

[27] Alastair Fowler does not believe that we can, or should, attempt to imagine ourselves as a part of the originating society of a tale. He claims:

> In all this coming to terms with original meanings, we must not forget what age we live in ourselves. It is a delusion to suppose that we could ever become contemporaries of the original readers. And even if we could, it would be treachery to ourselves. It is right to bring one's own preoccupations to works of antiquity. In any case, part of the experience of an old work is precisely a sense of its distance, its alterity. For in interpretation—as distinct from construction—we do not suspend our sense of the present, but call up all the awareness we can muster of our

> place in history. Only then can we freely grasp, for what they are, the perennialities of a classic that has also been allowed to exist in its own freedom. (269)

Like Tolkien, he too believes that the distance of time is itself an important literary quality that he does not wish threatened. I do not suggest that we come to *believe* ourselves contemporaries of the *Beowulf* poet, but that in our imaginative participation in the tale, our modern world might fade from consciousness for a time.

[28] This maturation is discussed by Freud in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, in which he claims we begin our lives in fantasy, and later develop memory and the ability to differentiate reality from fantasy.

[29] Compare Tolkien's idea of being "startled anew" by green to a quote attributed to Pablo Picasso on the manner in which he paints from inspiration: "'I take a walk in the forest of Fontainbleau. There I get an indigestion of greenness. I must empty this sensation into a picture. Green dominates it. The painter paints as if in urgent need to discharge himself of his sensations and his visions'" (cit. Beardsley 388). I interpret Picasso's "indigestion" as a Recovery of green –his imagination conceives of greenness, in a sense becomes pregnant with it –so that he has to empty his imagination of such a feeling by "giving birth" to a green creation. The artist is, in a manner of speaking, participating in the growth of the vegetable world by filling a canvas with its essence, just as moss will grow across the entire surface of a rock. See Monroe Beardsley, "On the Creation of Art," in *Problems in Aesthetics*, 2nd ed., ed. Morris Weitz (London: Macmillan, 1970) 386-406.

[30] By engaging in fantasy literature on the level of Secondary Belief, we should see, upon a return to the Primary World, that horses are not dragons by straightforward observation, as well as through the Pseudo-Dionysian concept of cataphasis: the dragon is what the horse is not. Tolkien himself writes that he "never imagined that the dragon was of the same order as the horse, [. . .] not solely because [he] saw horses daily, but never even saw the footprint of a worm" ("On Fairy-Stories" 41).

[31] In *Agon*, Harold Bloom argues that Fantasy is a sub-genre of romance (201). Similarly, Northrop Frye says that "romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest" (*Secular Scripture* 15).

[32] Like other postwar writers, Tolkien believes that escaping from the horrors of war and of the modern world is not deplorable in the least. Yossarian, the hero of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, comes to this conclusion when Major Danby accuses him of being "escapist" for turning his back on his responsibilities to the army. "'I'm not running *away* from my responsibilities," Yossarian replies, "I'm running *to* them. There's nothing negative about running away to save my life" (*Catch-22* 461). He suggests that the true escapists aren't those who try to escape from the world, but those who don't seem to notice that the world has gone mad.

Chapter 2: Fantasy, Desire, and Tolkien's Elegiac Romance

But we have known that there is often found
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,
A power to virtue friendly; were't not so,
I am a dreamer among men, indeed
An idle dreamer!

—Wordsworth "The Excursion" 1.632-36

wæfre ond wæl-fus,
se ðone gomelan
secean sawle hord,
lif wið lice,
feorh æþelinges

Him wæs geomor sefa,
wyrd ungemete neah,
gretan sceolde,
sundur gedælan
no þon lange wæs
flæsce bewunden.[1]

—*Beowulf* lines 2419b-24b

The rewards of Fantasy, as Tolkien defines them, being Recovery, Escape, and Consolation, refreshes the reader's view of the Primary World following an absence in the Secondary World, making the disenchantment experienced in the Primary World easier to bear. Tolkien's "Fairy-Stories" essay attempts to illustrate the benefits of imaginatively participating in the Secondary World—someone whose attitude towards the fantasy is disdainful or disbelieving does not receive these rewards. However, how or why an artistic creation can elicit such a participatory response from any rational thinker, who can differentiate between reality and the imaginary, may still remain unclear. Ultimately, it is the ability of fairy and its literary counterpart Fantasy to actualize human desire that is most appealing to readers and writers alike, and makes them accept the fantasy as a means of seeking pleasure.[2] Accordingly, in this chapter I seek to clarify the relations of Fantasy and its rewards, in Tolkien's view, to human desire, and the moral necessitation of death.

Recovery, Tolkien tells us, is a "regaining of a clear view": that is, it frees us from the "triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness," that comes from living and being enmired in so-called *real* life ("Fairy-Stories" 57, 58). Fairy-stories, Tolkien says, "deal largely with simple [. . .] or fundamental things," made "more luminous by their settings" (59). McFarland's concept of Romantic *essentia* is again helpfully comparable here, for he says "poetic *essentia* is generated by the simultaneous awareness of our existence in these two forms. When we stand in a 'now' and look at a 'then,' we generate *essentia* by

making the sense of 'now' more vivid (and thereby treasuring its nowness), and simultaneously becoming more aware of its difference from 'then.' Or conversely, we may devalue 'now' and treasure 'then'" (276-7). The effect of reading Fantasy is that the reader becomes enamoured with a time that is "no more" and views "now," the world we are familiar with, as an opposition to what he thinks *ought to be*. Recovery thus implies a moralizing force: the sweet sadness might be enough to incite readers to take action to close the widening gap between the ideal "then" of Fantasy, and the real "now" of the Primary World. The power of Fantasy to grant desires makes *essentia* possible in Tolkien's work: the disappearance of such desires with the passing of time and the reader's return to the Primary World creates the diasparactive impression that "now" should be more like "then," even though "then" belongs to a world of Fantasy.

As we found in considering Tolkien's concept of Escape, Fantasy allows the reader the ability to actualize the desire to escape from a world that has lost its appeal—the escape of the prisoner from the alienating modern world. Obviously, this feature of Fantasy holds tremendous appeal for readers and writers alike, for in the creation of and participation in a Secondary World, our imaginations can wander for a time through another world unlike our own, a world modelled upon desirability rather than on reality or practicality.[3] Writing of his own literary experience, Tolkien recalls his childhood readings and identifies several traits that hold particular appeal:

> Red Indians were better: there were *bows and arrows* [. . .] and *strange languages*, and glimpses of an *archaic mode of life*, and above all, *forests* in such stories. But the land of Merlin and Arthur was better than these, and best of all the nameless North of Sigurd of the Völsungs, and the prince of all *dragons*. Such lands were pre-eminently *desirable*. [. . .] The dragon had the trade-mark *Of Faërie* [sic] written plain upon him. In whatever world he had his being it was an Other-world. Fantasy, the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds, was the heart of the desire of Faërie. I desired dragons with a profound desire." ("Fairy-Stories" 41; emphasis mine)

In turn, we see that the Elves of Tolkien's world shoot arrows with bows, speak strange languages, live in forests and love trees. Furthermore, we find a Merlin figure, the wizard

Gandalf, and an Arthur figure, Aragorn, who inherits a mythical sword. Additionally a dragon, Smaug, while hardly "the prince of all dragons" such as Glaurung from Tolkien's *Silmarillion*, is confronted in *The Hobbit* and slain by Bard the archer. Smaug himself is sometimes compared to the *Beowulf* dragon, as *The Hobbit* is compared in structure to the *Beowulf* poem itself, for the dragon is roused to anger by Bilbo's stealing of a cup from his hoard (13.206). And lastly, Angbad, Morgoth's fortress, is said to lie in the nameless North of Middle-earth. Tolkien includes in his fictional world the elements from literature, myth, and folk-tale that he finds pleasing, or that he desires to revisit. As Tolkien explains, "there are ancient limitations from which fairy-stories offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires (touching the very roots of fantasy) to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation" ("Fairy-Stories" 66). He thinks of fairy as a place where human desires can be answered, but only to an extent, and not without consequences.

The ending of Fantasy is also dependent upon the desirability principle, which leads Tolkien to his final literary virtue, Consolation, or "the Consolation of the Happy Ending" ("Fairy-Stories" 68). This quality, he says, is especially tied to the stereotypical fairy-tale "happy ending" in which all wrongs are set aright, and is best summed up by the phrase "they lived happily ever after." He recognizes that the anticipated fairy-tale ending is often tragic, and that a sudden stroke of good fortune makes it comic and joyful instead. In order to create a literary vocabulary that could express this subtle difference, Tolkien coins the terms *eucatastrophe*, and its antonym *dyscatastrophe*, to posit and clarify an opposition he wishes to emphasize. *Eucatastrophe*, he says, is

> the consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous "turn" [. . .]: this joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially "escapist," nor "fugitive." In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies [. . .] 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. ("Fairy-Stories" 68-9)

Unlike modernist literature depicting the real world, it is still possible in Fantasy and the Faërie realm of the Romantics for unexpected good fortune to save the heroes at the moment of greatest danger and despair. This saving grace accords with Tolkien's religious belief, as he assumes the *eucatastrophe* of the Primary World is the Resurrection of Christ; in his Secondary World, we might conclude that any such turn of events relates to Tolkien's desire to portray the benevolence of God, or Ilúvatar as Tolkien names him in Middle-earth. For the joy to be more poignant, as he suggests, tragedy must also be possible, and as we find in Middle-earth, its pervasiveness heightens the moment of "grace." This theologically informed aesthetic concept of a happy ending necessitates the elegiac form that Tolkien's major literary works take, most visible in the passing of time and the passing of heroes from Middle-earth.

One of the foremost human desires to be addressed, in his view, is the will to cheat death, to have immortality. A reader of a fairy story cannot fictionally experience the desire to avoid death if death is not possible in its world, and by presenting us with the apparent immortality of the Elves in contrast to that of other creatures, he entices us with such desire for ourselves, and introduces the contemplation of mortality into Fairy. By representing longevity as he does, Tolkien strikingly shows that mortality and death are preferable, and he brings death to the forefront of his works partly to contrast mortality and immortality. Through analysis of Tolkien's representation of desire for communication with the other, and desire for immortality, and finally his pervasive portrayals of death, I will show how *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *Lord of the Rings* relate to elegiac romance, and how that generic definition enhances our understanding of these inherently nostalgic works. Tolkien offers us glimpses of our greatest and most noble desires, and tantalizes us by insisting that they could once, but can no longer, be realized. The prohibition only intensifies our wish to immerse ourselves entirely in the Secondary World, and makes Tolkien's presentation of depth and history through elegiac modulation more poetically potent.

Talking to the Other

Among the numerous "'escapisms' that have always appeared in fairy-tale," Tolkien identifies two "profounder wishes" than diving deeply into oceans or flying through the skies, and aside from immortality, to which we will soon return, the other one is "the desire to converse with other living things" ("Fairy-Stories" 66). This desire to communicate with beings other than humans is met at nearly every turn in Tolkien's writings, and in his view it is "as ancient as the Fall," which he considers "the root" of our loss of the Edenic language, and thus our inability to commune with non-humans ("Fairy-Stories" 66). In the "Prologue" to *Lord of the Rings*, we are told that modern humans have lost touch with hobbits, and that at one point the two were, if not friends, at least fully aware of one another. However, Tolkien's editorial voice tells us that with the passing of time, communication was lost; we are meant to regret this alienation, for it simultaneously suggests the loss of the simple lifestyle of hobbits that humanity once enjoyed, and of our former understanding of nature. "A vivid sense of that separation is very ancient," he tells us in "Fairy-Stories," and yet "also a sense that it was a severance: a strange fate and a guilt lies on us. Other creatures are like other realms with which Man has broken off relations, and sees now only from the outside at a distance" (66). It is noteworthy too that, for the hobbits, much of the outside world has become little more than legend, such as Sam's oliphaunt,[4] the "Tree-men,"[5] dragons,[6] and the name of Mordor itself, which Gandalf says "hobbits have heard of, like a shadow on the borders of old stories" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.50). Meanwhile, hobbits, or halflings, have likewise become little more than fairy-tales for the Riders of Rohan. Éothain says that the former "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?'" Aragorn responds, "'a man may do both'" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.2.424). Tolkien, it seems, wishes to indicate that "myths are largely made of 'truth'" (*Letters* 147). He seeks to satisfy the desire to communicate with other beings by reintroducing halflings to our modern world, showing that there were, at one time, creatures unlike us with whom we could nonetheless converse.

It has long been a human desire to converse with non-humans, to see the universe through another's perspective, one that is unlike our own.[7] As fantasy theorists such as Freud in "The Uncanny" and Todorov in *The Fantastic* suggest, attempts to see through

another's eyes tie into the theme of the *other*, who embodies the desires of the protagonist, and often becomes fetishized in the process; the protagonist becomes obsessed, possessed of the desire to unite with the other entirely, and ultimately to *become* the other. The figure of the doppelgänger is relevant too, for we find in Tolkien's works—as in those of other writers of the fantastic, such as Edgar Allan Poe—a doubling effect between Frodo and Gollum.[8] Frodo becomes much more understanding of Gollum's pain the longer he bears the Ring; he goes from wanting to kill Gollum to wanting to redeem him, for he sees a possible future self in Gollum, who was once a hobbit of the Stoor family named Sméagol. For Tolkien, who is less concerned with depicting the extremes of desire than other fantasists, the doppelgänger effect ends in a greater empathy for one another, a greater understanding of the other because of its similarities to the self.

Also indicative of this desire for others in whom the self is visible is Tolkien's creation of the Elves, for he says in his *Letters* that "Elves are certain aspects of Men and their talents and desires," and that "they have certain freedoms and powers we should like to have, and the beauty and peril and sorrow of the possession of these things is exhibited in them" (189). The Elves, made by the one god Ilúvatar (as is humanity), as well as the Dwarves made by the Vala Aluë (*Silmarillion* 3.2.40),[9] and all peoples possessing language, provide us with the fictional opportunity to make contact with other beings, whose lives and thoughts are for the most part alien to us, though there are many aspects of both that are familiar.

Tolkien's Elves especially fulfill the desire to speak with other sentient beings,[10] because they possess the super-natural (see endnote) ability to speak and listen to trees and natural elements such as wind or water.[11] Treebeard tells us that it was the Elves that first awoke the Ents, "waking trees up and teaching them to speak and learning their tree-talk, [. . .] they always wished to talk to everything, the old Elves did" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.4.457). Furthermore, Treebeard compares the three species of Ent, Elf, and Man: "Ents are more like Elves: less interested in themselves than Men are, and better at getting inside other things. And yet again Ents are more like Men, more changeable than Elves are, and quicker at taking the colour of the outside [. . .]. Or better than both: for they are steadier and keep their minds on things longer" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.4.457). The Elves

are significantly more anthropomorphic than Ents, and at first seem to be little different from Men, except perhaps in beauty. And yet the idea that the tree-like Ents are more like Men than Men are like Elves—being mortal and mutable, though so exceedingly long-lived as to be considered nearly immortal—further indicates the barriers that can be crossed through language usage.[12] Elves, Tolkien tells us, "cannot escape" the world, and "are bound to this world, never to leave it so long as it lasts, for its life is theirs," whereas the "home" of Men "is not here, neither in the Land of Aman nor anywhere within the Circles of the World" (*Silmarillion* 4.326-7). Tolkien considers the two races intrinsically alien to one another:[13] one is an entirely natural being, the other belongs rather to the spiritual world and merely passes through the natural world as a transition.[14]

Even plants in Middle-earth possess rational thought, if not necessarily the ability to speak aloud. Old Man Willow of the Old Forest is said to speak somehow, for as Sam tries to use fire to make the tree release the trapped hobbits, Merry cries out "'He'll squeeze me in two if you don't. He says so!'" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.6.116). Tom Bombadil rescues the two by whispering into Willow's hollow. The Ents as well, although not exactly vegetal, are more than sufficiently associated with vegetation to be thought of as talking, agile trees. Treebeard, in conversation with Pippin and Merry, says that many Ents are "growing sleepy, going tree-ish" while some trees are "getting *Entish*" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.4.457). Tolkien suggests that trees and Ents are inseparable, for as Treebeard says: "sheep get like shepherd [sic], and shepherds like sheep, it is said; but slowly [. . .]. It is quicker and closer with trees and Ents, and they walk down the ages together" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.4.457). The association of Ents and trees makes the awakening of the Ents by the old Elves (before the second darkening of the world when Melkor and Ungoliant destroy the Two Trees that light Valinor gold and silver) a true communication with the vegetal world. Furthermore, Treebeard reports that many of the trees that are awakening have become capable of speaking with him. By providing us with a vision of a world in which all things possess some sentience, and can communicate with humans, Tolkien implies that much of the original enchantment of the world has been lost with the passing of time; we can speak with trees and Eagles no longer. But this is not the end of desire, as he sees it. The second and greatest desire that Tolkien presents to us in the "Fairy-Story" essay is that of escaping from death.

Life, Death, and Immoral Immortality

The passing of time is linked to maturation and death, in life as well as in literature. Of particular relevance to Tolkien are the Anglo-Saxon *ubi sunt* poems such as "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer," where the speakers yearn for their former lives and wonder where their happiness has gone: "þinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten / clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge / honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær / in geardagum giefstolas breac" ("it seems to him in his mind that he embraces and kisses his lord and on his knee he places his hands and head, as he had done in the past, making use of the gift-throne"; "The Wanderer" lines 41-4; translation mine). In the *Beowulf* essay, Tolkien summarizes the Anglo-Saxon poets' feelings of transitory life by saying that Beowulf "*is a man, and that for him and many is sufficient tragedy*. [. . .] It is the theme in its deadly seriousness that begets the dignity of tone: *lif is læne: eal sceaceð leoht and lif somod* [life is transitory: light and life together all hasten away]" (23; Tolkien's emphasis and translation).[15] This dignity of tone is what Tolkien tries to renew in his own works, creating Elves that are somewhat paradoxical: while immortal and vibrantly alive, they still dwindle, grow weary with the long ages, and finally pass from the mortal world into the Undying Lands where they shall continue to weary until the end of the world itself. Again Thomas McFarland's notion of Romantic *essentia* helps show how this paradox intrinsic to Tolkien's major fictions should be interpreted:

> The moment when we most truly feel ourselves alive, and in the same awareness most feel ourselves passing into time—that is poetic *essentia*. That is the lyric instant. [. . .] Lyric awareness is always an awareness [. . .] of "the rude/ Wasting of old Time"; [. . .] the ultimate poetic theme is the elegiac theme. Great poems are monuments to our lost selves. "A Poet," says Shelley, in recognition of this unceasing loss of human experience in time's flow, "is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds." (280)

The constant recognition of the passing of time, and of the loss of a former glory rooted in the past, gives *Lord of the Rings* its elegiac quality. Yet because one of Tolkien's primary goals in writing Fantasy is the creation of *eucatastrophe*, "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy

beyond the walls of the world" ("Fairy-Stories" 69), we may ask how the elegiac tone can be simultaneously present. Nothing is more sharply delineated than when it is held up in contrast to its diametrical opposite. To offer his readers this reward, and have them treasure it, Tolkien understood that conditions opposite to those of immortal life and eternal happiness had to be not only possible but prevalent in his fiction.

For such sorrow and loss to be thought possible in his Secondary World, Tolkien created a golden age, from which that world and its inhabitants had fallen, in his extensive and ever-expanding legendarium. When the Elves awoke from "the sleep of Ilúvatar" in Cuiviénen, they "walked the Earth in wonder; and they began to make speech and to give names to all things they perceived" as Adam does in Genesis; but we are immediately thereafter told that "in the changes of the world the shapes of lands and of seas have been broken and remade [. . .] and to Cuiviénen there is no returning" (*Silmarillion* 3.3.54). As with the Christian tradition of the Garden of Eden, the alienation of Tolkien's beings from their mythic Creator brings misery and ruin. M.H. Abrams suggests that "the fall of man is conceived to be primarily a falling-out-of and falling-away-from the One," into "a condition of alienation from the source" (*Natural Supernaturalism* 151). However, Christian theology's proposition of a reconciliation and return to God that is far more joyous because of the interposed grief does not seem available to the Elves, but rather their lives will continue to become wearisome and they will desire Death. Tolkien created not only the languages of Middle-earth but also a unique and believable mythology for that world, and as Northrop Frye says of imagery in mythos:

> Poets, like critics, have generally been Spenglerians, in the sense that in poetry, [. . .] civilized life is frequently assimilated to the organic cycle of growth, maturity, decline, death, and rebirth in another individual form. Themes of a golden or a heroic age in the past, of a millennium in the future, of the wheel of fortune in social affairs, of the *ubi sunt* elegy, of meditations over ruin, of nostalgia for a lost pastoral simplicity, of regret or exaltation over the collapse of an empire, belong here. (*Anatomy of Criticism* 160)

Following their awakening, the Elves are called by the Valar to the Undying lands of Valinor. In the journey, the Teleri linger long on the road, not entirely willing to leave their homeland, while others are sundered from their kinsmen and remain in Middle-earth to become the Grey Elves. Those that reach Valinor, the Vanyar and the Noldor,[16] are privileged in seeing the two Trees of the Valar, and with living amongst the Valar, the "gods" of the world.[17] The Paradisiacal images of the Blessed Realm, and of the joy that the Elves knew there, illustrates how even the wisest and most beautiful race of Middle-earth depicted in *Lord of the Rings* is fallen from its original state, and suffers that sundering until the end of the world.[18]

In Tolkien's *Silmarillion* we are told of the Second Age of the world, in which the Noldor, a tribe of the beautiful and immortal Eldar, as the Elves call themselves, become susceptible to greed and arrogance, and declare war against Melkor, the evil Vala, whom they rename Morgoth for his transgressions against them.[19] They defy an edict of the good Valar forbidding revenge, kill their kin the Teleri who try to stop them, and pursue Morgoth, thief of the Silmarils, into Middle-earth with the intent of destroying him.[20] To do this, they must leave behind the "Blessed Realm" and all others of Elven kin to become exiles from what is, in effect, heaven on earth (*Silmarillion* 3.11.118). For these transgressions, the fate of the Noldor, known as "the prophecy of the North, and the Doom of the Noldor," is pronounced (*Silmarillion* 3.9.98-9). The Valar tell the vengeful Elves:

> Tears unnumbered ye shall shed; and the Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains. [. . .] Their Oath [i.e., to retrieve the Silmarils] shall drive them, and yet betray them, and ever snatch away the very treasures that they have sworn to pursue. To evil end shall all things turn that they begin well; and by treason of kin unto kin, and the fear of treason, shall this come to pass. The Dispossessed shall they be forever. [. . .] Though Eru appointed to you to die not in Eä, and no sickness may assail you, yet slain ye may be, and slain ye will be: by weapon and by torment and by grief [. . .]. And those that endure in Middle-earth and come not to Mandos shall grow weary of the world as with a great burden,

> and shall wane, and become as shadows of regret before the younger race that cometh after. (*Silmarillion* 3.9.99)

The Elves have bodies that can be slain, and their souls come to dwell in the Halls of Mandos, where they await rebirth.[21] So it is that in the following Ages of the World, we are told of the unending suffering experienced by the Dispossessed Elves in adherence to their Oath, and of their losing battle against Morgoth throughout the First Age of the Sun, which ends when Eärendil the Mariner carries a single Silmaril, cut from the crown of Morgoth by the human Beren, to Valinor to plead for clemency. The Valar come to Middle-earth and capture Morgoth, and exile him from the World forever. However, the exile of the Elves has not ended, and against the evil created by Morgoth, now embodied by Sauron, the Noldor continue to die while fighting "the long defeat," as Galadriel calls it (*Lord of the Rings* 2.7.348). This elegiac idea arises again in our consideration of doomed resistance, which Tolkien holds to be the greatest literary effect.

Since even the immortal Elves suffer a kind of death, Tolkien's world is far from an idyllic one: it is fraught with peril and filled with sorrows unbounded. However, it is in the midst of these that Tolkien's Fairy functions. Recalling the gifts of Fantasy, which Tolkien says are not needed by children so much as by adults, we find here that the Recovery, Escape, and Consolation that he perceives in fairy-stories are needed even by the fictional beings within the Secondary World; it is in this way that we are able to identify with the Hobbits, Elves, and Men of Tolkien's worlds. Rather than approach the world as outsiders and observers, we are made to feel that the peoples of Middle-earth suffer in the same manner as we do, and also feel sorrow and despair in the darkest of times. We are able to feel their joy, then, when the darkness is lifted by *eucatastrophe* and when the innermost desires of the heart are realized.

Through these and other means, then, Tolkien commits his Fantasy world to addressing the desires of the author and the readers to escape suffering, and death itself, and in doing so he builds on Romantic and later precedents. The manifestations of fairy from the chivalric romances of the Middle Ages usually depict it as an idyllic world in which sickness, sadness, and death are not present, or at least are indefinitely suspended and are outside the scope of the work. "And they all lived happily ever after" is a standard ending here.[22] However, this began to change as early as the romance revival by

the English Romantics and the collections of fairy-tales (*Märchen*) and folk songs (*Volkslieder*) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as fairy begins to take on aspects of the nightmare world. As Jeanie Watson says of Coleridge's use of fairy in his works:

> Faery is the home of the soul before the Fall; it is the garden, the place of Oneness with Spirit. But the garden also held the Snake and the Forbidden Fruit—possibilities for disorder, division, irrationality. Faery is the desire of the heart, but the Land is perilous indeed. As Coleridge's tales of Faery grow more complex, they inevitably shift from fairy tale to ballad, from the happy ending to the tragic. At the most fundamental level, [. . . Faery] is the place of the soul's journey, the place where nightmare is as possible as vision, where the truths of the psyche sleep, where we can encounter the One. (23-4)

So it is that fairy had once been synonymous with security, being a safe-haven from evil, as well as the residence of fairies who by all accounts are immortal. And yet there is danger in the fairy world, or as Tolkien says, "beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril" ("Fairy-Stories" 3). The nightmare vision, as Watson says, is also a possibility in fairy, and in Tolkien, we often catch glimpses of it, particularly in our dealings with the minions of Sauron such as the phantom Nazgûl, or the twisted Orcs. Tolkien's presentation of the Elves, too, is radically different from the simplistic tradition of portraying fairies as joyful, tiny sprites—while not lacking in longevity, they are for the most part unable to succour themselves, let alone humankind.

Tolkien's interest in manifesting the dialectic of death and the desire for deathlessness in his works as a means of moral contemplation favours both his religious beliefs and the instructive quality that he perceives in his tales. Death is one of the oldest themes of any storytelling culture. At the same time that humans attempt to rationalize their existence on earth, the question of what follows must arise. Whether we wish to have more time on earth or are merely afraid of death, at the same time that we recognize our mortality we may experience some desire to escape its effects. To quote Tolkien, "lastly there is the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death" ("Fairy-Stories" 68).[23] Ultimately, Tolkien writes, "the real theme" of *Lord of the Rings* is "Death and Immortality: the mystery of the love of the world in the hearts of a race

'doomed' to leave and seemingly lose it; the anguish in the hearts of a race 'doomed' not to leave it, until its whole evil-aroused story is complete" (*Letters* 246). Tolkien's writings are characterized by a death-drive fundamental to the overall structure of his narrative. Through Tolkien's Men especially, the mortal Children of Ilúvatar, we are shown the potency of this desire to become physically immortal, and especially its ability to corrupt.

The story of the fall of the Half-elven mortals called the Númenóreans most evinces Tolkien's view of the desire to avoid death. In the appendices of *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien briefly tells of the founding and fall of Númenor, "the full tale" of which, as he says, "is told in *The Silmarillion*" (*Lord of the Rings* 1010). It is said that Elros and Elrond, the two sons of Eärendil the Mariner, were given a choice either to become mortal and die, though after many times the lifespan of the Edain (humans), or to be Elves, and to be as long-lived as the world itself.[24] Elros's choice to be mortal granted him and his descendents the "Gift of Men," although in later times it was referred to as "the Doom of Men" and was begrudged (*Lord of the Rings* 1010). Sauron's corruption of the idyllic Númenóreans, so that they come to think death is a curse rather than a blessing bestowed by the god Ilúvatar, defines the desire to escape death as an evilly degrading alienation from one's creator. Consider Tolkien's "*Beowulf*" paper, in which he praises the Anglo-Saxon ability to fight heroically despite overwhelming odds, or his belief that "a 'good' man would or should *die* voluntarily" (*Letters* n. 286). He explains that in *Beowulf* it is made explicit that "man, each man and all men, and all their works shall die. A theme no Christian need despise. Yet this theme plainly would not be so treated, but for the nearness of a pagan time. The shadow of its despair, if only as a mood, as an intense emotion of regret, is still there. The worth of defeated valour in this world is deeply felt" (28). The pursuit of immortality out of greed becomes, in Tolkien's mythos, one of the foremost signs of fallenness, whereas an acceptance of mortality is one of the greatest moral and spiritual victories that can be achieved.

In Tolkien's view, the wish to avoid death is the oldest and deepest desire of humanity, and so he feels that he must offer it as a possibility in his fantasy world, and the ultimate temptation. The eventual and inevitable loss of life to which all mortals are subject makes fantasy literature especially appropriate for expressing this desire, for, as

Rosemary Jackson says, fantasy "is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence or loss" (3). Tolkien's attempt to portray the desire for deathlessness as the source of corruption for both Men and Elves, indicates he seeks to restrain and empty us of this desire: he shows the cataclysmic consequences of the Númenreans' attempt to become immortal with the destruction of their island and the rending of the world by Ilúvatar. Tolkien makes immortality a manifest possibility in order to evoke and thus "express" such desire. Applying a further general insight of Jackson to Tolkien in particular, we might further say that Tolkien portrays this deathless-drive in order to

> *expel* desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity (expression in the sense of pressing out, [. . .] getting rid of something by force). In many cases fantastic literature fulfils both functions [i.e., expression as manifestation and expression as expulsion] at once, for desire can be "expelled" through having been "told of" and thus vicariously by the author and reader. In this way fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality [. . .]. One of the recurrent features of fantastic narrative [. . . is to] tell of the impossible attempt to realize desire, to make visible the invisible and to discover absence. (Jackson 3-4)[25]

Tolkien portrays the ancient human quest for immortality as the source of the corruption of Númenóreans' bodies, souls, and society; he thus makes it clear that mortals must embrace death. In his world, a possessive attitude towards life results in greater suffering and the death of others.

From Elven emissaries sent to the Númenóreans by the Valar, we learn in *The Silmarillion* that "the Doom of Men, that they should depart, was at first a gift of Ilúvatar. It became a grief to them only because coming under the shadow of Morgoth it seemed to them that they were surrounded by a great darkness, of which they were afraid" (4.327). These Elves warn the Númenóreans not to pursue their desire to become deathless, "lest soon it become a bond" by which they become "constrained" (*Silmarillion* 4.327). But the mortals nonetheless attempt to become immortal, and under the tutelage of Sauron,

corrupt themselves in worship of Morgoth and in prayer to become deathless; ironically, Tolkien writes, their deaths come all the sooner and more horribly than ever before:

> But for all this [human sacrifice] Death did not depart from the land, rather it came sooner and more often, and in many dreadful guises. For whereas aforetime men had grown slowly old, and had laid them down in the end to sleep, when they were weary at last of the world, now madness and sickness assailed them; and yet they were afraid to die and go out into the dark, the realm of the lord that they had taken; and they cursed themselves in their agony. (*Silmarillion* 4.338)

This hellish scene of the once-great Númenóreans falling into evil is more terrible even than that of the cataclysmic destruction of their island in the Change of the World, when the Undying Lands are removed by Ilúvatar and the world becomes spherical— "fire burst from the Meneltarms, and there came a mighty wind and a tumult of the earth, and the sky reeled, and the hills slid, and Númenor went down into the sea" (*Silmarillion* 4.345). That final breaking of Númenor comes with the greedy attempt of its last king, Ar-Pharazôn, to assault Valinor and take immortality by force.

In his *Letters*, Tolkien meditates on this, saying of the Númenóreans that "their reward [i.e., of a triple, or more than triple, span of years] is their undoing—or is at least the means of their temptation. Their long life aids their achievements in art and wisdom, but breeds a possessive attitude to these things, and desire awakes for more *time* for their enjoyment" (154). Possessiveness, as we see throughout Tolkien's mythos, in turn breeds its own misfortunes, for Men as well as Elves and Dwarves.[26] Fëanor, for instance, the creator of the Silmarils, refuses the Valar their request for the jewels so that they can save the Two Trees broken by Ungoliant, saying, "if the Valar will constrain me, then shall I know indeed that Melkor is of their kindred" (*Silmarillion* 3.9.87). The narrator conjectures that had Fëanor agreed to give the Valar the Silmarils, "it may be that his after deeds would have been other than they were," and the fate of the Elves would have been less tragic (*Silmarillion* 3.9.88). Furthermore, Tolkien says that the physical "nature" of mortals "could not in fact endure" the immortality they seek, saying that "each 'Kind' has a natural span" that "cannot really be *increased* qualitatively or quantitatively; so that prolongation in time is like stretching a wire out ever tauter, or

'spreading butter ever thinner'—it becomes an intolerable torment" (*Letters* 155). This being the case, all attempts of Men to become immortals are absurd, for the object of that desire is, in the end, more spiritually detrimental than death itself.

In *Lord of the Rings* there are several examples of the torment that results from the unnatural prolongation of life. The Ringwraiths, for example, are said to be Númenóreans whose immortality is bought with the absolute loss of self.[27] They become little more than shadows, hollow and soulless, dependent upon their lord Sauron for their existence; when he is destroyed, the Nine vanish from the earth. As Cecilia Sjöholm says of Schelling's philosophical works, desire "is not so much directed towards reconciliation in the future, as it traces a fullness that has been lost. In Schelling the subject exists only as a lack" (201). Desiring life, in such a context, signifies a lack thereof. The paradoxical quality of desire—we may only desire what we do not possess, and we often do not desire what we already possess—means that the Númenóreans literally lose their lives by desiring life. As Patricia Parker suggests of romance in general, "the paradox that questing may prevent the attainment of a desired end" is not "new to romance" (173). In a letter written long after *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien admits:

> it is only in reading the work myself (with criticisms in mind) that I become aware of the dominance of the theme of Death. [. . .] But certainly Death is not an Enemy! I said, or meant to say, that the "message" was the hideous peril of confusing true "immortality" with limitless serial longevity. Freedom from Time, and clinging to Time. The *confusion* is the work of the Enemy, and one of the chief causes of human disaster. (*Letters* 267; original emphasis)

As Sméagol/Gollum, Bilbo, and Frodo discover in their possession of the One Ring, the strain of such immortality is more than the souls of mortals are able to withstand. Sméagol's possession of the "precious" Ring drives him mad (*Lord of the Rings* 1.1.33). The life that is preserved is a torturous one that hardly seems worth living; rather than giving the wearer more life, it instead appears to *prolong* a natural lifespan by partially removing the wearer—or bearer—from the world, thus reducing the amount of life "consumed." The longer Frodo possesses the ring, the more translucent he seems; at one point Sam thinks he sees Frodo glowing with an inner fire, and Faramir thinks that Frodo

has an "elvish air" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.5.653).[28] But this inner light comes from bearing the Ring, for he, like the Ringwraiths, begins to lose his physical integrity, and his goodness—if the inner light of the elves can be called that—shows through rather than the black, malignant evil of the wraiths.

Whereas "the candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long," it would seem that the candle that merely glows might do so for a long time—Gollum holds the ring for almost five hundred years. It is Bilbo, an authorial figure, who best expresses the feeling of one whose mortal life is thus extended when he says he feels "all thin, sort of *stretched*, if you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.1.32). Tolkien's assumptions that long life creates a greater desire for immortality, and immortality in turn alienates Man from his Creator, entail his conclusion that death should be accepted, and even pursued through self-sacrificing heroic action.

Although the Elves are themselves immortal in spirit, and are as long-lived as the world itself, Tolkien's writings imply they too fall victim to a desire analogous to cheating death. Rather than desiring longevity for themselves, they become enamoured with nature, the green world of Middle-earth, and become reluctant to leave or to let it die. Their desire to preserve the forests in which they live allows them to be deceived by Sauron. By teaching them to forge Rings of Power that can magically maintain their realms, he hoped to entrap them and bend them to his will. Here we perceive a desire of immortals to make the mortal and transient nature that they love likewise immortal; the doom of the Elves is to witness the slow decay of the world, and be consumed themselves by the fiery souls they are said to possess. Thus Tolkien tells us of the Elves that they "became obsessed with 'fading,' the mode in which the changes of time (the law of the world under the sun) was perceived by them":

> They became sad, and their art (shall we say) antiquarian, and their efforts all really a kind of embalming—even though they also retained the old motive of their kind, the adornment of earth, and the healing of its hurts. [. . .] Many of the Elves listened to Sauron [. . . who] found their weak point in suggesting that, helping one another, they could make Western Middle-earth as beautiful as Valinor. [. . .] With the aid of Sauron's lore they

> made *Rings of Power* ("power" is an ominous and sinister word in all these tales, except as applied to the gods).
>
> The chief power (of all the rings alike) was the prevention or slowing of *decay* (i.e., "change" viewed as a regrettable thing), the preservation of what is desired or loved, or its semblance [. . .]. (*Letters* 151-2)

The identification of Elves as *embalmers* illustrates their attempt to preserve beauty in nature as a futile enterprise bordering on necrophilia; the Elves love what is already dead, or what should be dead but instead has had its life artificially prolonged.[29] The forests remembered by Treebeard, ones that stretched across the entire continent, have faded already into islands of forests such as the Old Forest, Fangorn, and Mirkwood, and the forests that the Elves cannot bear to leave such as Lothlórien exist only by Galadriel's possession of "Nenya, the Ring of Adamant" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.7.356). Tolkien admits that even his most beloved creations are capable of being led astray, but that "their temptation is different: towards a fainéant melancholy, burdened with Memory, leading to an attempt to halt Time" (*Letters* 267). In contrast with Men, Elves feel themselves to be too long of the earth, and by preserving the lands and trees that they love against the effects of time, they hope to ignore—or even to forget—the passing of the ages. And yet, as we will see in the next chapter, the Elves are the living memories of the Ages of the World; their departure means a loss of memory, and the passing of history into its oblique forms, legend and myth.

The only proper moral judgment that Tolkien can envisage, both from the perspective of his faith and from his absolute reverence for the Old English ethos exemplified in *Beowulf*, is the acceptance of death. In a letter written in 1954, Tolkien confesses of *Lord of the Rings* that its "purpose" is, "if you don't boggle at the term, didactic" (*Letters* 189), and Tolkien no doubt sought to draw readers toward his views on death and its significance. As *Beowulf* was among Tolkien's most passionately loved works, so it is in that epic poem that we can find much of the ethos that Tolkien seeks to reconstruct and glorify in his own fictions. He recognizes at one point that there is "a real question of taste involved: a judgement that the heroic or tragic story on a strictly human plane is by nature superior. Doom is held less literary than *αμαρτια* [i.e., hamartia, or

tragic flaw]." But he himself retorts, "I dissent" ("Monsters" 19). This emphasis on doom and the heroism of fighting a hopeless battle is prevalent in the essay, for Tolkien says of Anglo-Saxon Heroic lays:

> (if we had them) we could see the exaltation of undefeated will which receives doctrinal expression in the words of Byrhtwold at the battle of Maldon. [. . .] This paradox of defeat inevitable yet unacknowledged, its full significance, it is in *Beowulf* that a poet has devoted a whole poem to the theme, and has drawn the struggle in different proportions, so that we may see man at war with the hostile world, and his inevitable overthrow in Time. ("Monsters" 22-3)

Tolkien thinks there is little more noble in the world than being willing to lose one's life in pursuit of a righteous and doomed cause. He finds a "dignity of tone" in this, a maturity in the recognition that "the wages of heroism is death" ("Monsters" 31).[30] Certainly, in the description of the Númenóreans' deaths since they rejected Ilúvatar, the true god, in favour of Morgoth, they are depicted by Tolkien as cowards, snivelling and desperately grasping at the life that flees from their grip, rather than as the magnificent Men that were the original Númenóreans, who chose the moment of their death and seemed to fall asleep. Aragorn's own death, described in the appendices, is just such an image of serenity.

As Aragorn is the last true Númenórean alive in Middle-earth, his death serves two functions: one, he redeems his people by choosing to die at the proper time, and two, he demonstrates Tolkien's ideal of an acceptance of mortality. Aragorn is arguably the true "romance" hero of *Lord of the Rings*, in that it is he who exemplifies the martial characteristics of the knight errant of medieval romance. In the appendices, the excerpt from "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" involves motifs clearly belonging to medieval romance, for example the raising of the hero by his mother as found in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the courting of a maid and her father's demanding of an impossible task to win her hand, and the hero's quest to achieve that goal. The story also brackets the entirety of *Lord of the Rings* by showing Aragorn's life with Arwen both before and after the events of *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*; the romance begins ten years before Bilbo meets Gandalf and finds the One Ring in *The Hobbit*, and ends years

after Sauron has been defeated and the Elves have departed the shores of Middle-earth.[31] But Tolkien makes one tremendous alteration to the standard romance ending "*he lived happily ever after to the end of his days,*" even though Bilbo considers it no worse for the wear (*Lord of the Rings* 1.1.32). Tolkien anticipates the death of his hero. Whereas death is usually portrayed as a failure, an indication of weakness, or as something to be contended with, Aragorn's passing from the world appears a victory, a restoration of balance and harmony to the mortal Half-elven line lost in the corruption of Númenor.

This innovation has a literary context beyond Tolkien himself, one that apparently arose in the later nineteenth century and may be traced, for example, in the works of Joseph Conrad and F. Scott Fitzgerald. I am speaking of elegiac romance, the most recent descendent of the romance genre that has evolved since the Middle Ages.

Tolkien's Elegiac Romance

Introduced by Northrop Frye when addressing the formal transformations of literature in *Anatomy of Criticism*, the term "elegiac romance" designates a mixed genre descending from medieval romance yet informed by the low mimesis of Cervantes and the concept of the internal quest developed by the Romantic poets.[32] Kenneth Bruffee studies the genre in much greater detail in his eponymous book, recognizing its origins but primarily concerning himself with defining the genre's characteristics. We can aptly modify or enhance their notions of the genre in view of studies of romance by M.H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*, Harold Bloom in *Agon*, and Patricia Parker in *Inescapable Romance*. On account of Tolkien's medievalist sentiments and desire to express the necessity of death, *Lord of the Rings* and the two other major works *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion* are best understood as developments of elegiac romance. This generic approach enables me, in the next chapter, to analyze history and memory in Tolkien's nostalgic presentation of *Lord of the Rings*, for he infuses it with the effect of mimetic time both as a means of creating the illusion of historical depth (as we shall see), and of emphasizing that all things must—and will—vanish from the world whether they would or no.

Both Frye and Bruffee identify elegiac romance as the modern incarnation of medieval quest romance,[33] while Bloom calls fantasy "*a belated version of romance*"

(206; original emphasis). On medieval romance, Frye says "the suspension of natural law and the individualizing of the hero's exploits reduce nature largely to the animal and the vegetable world. Much of the hero's life is spent with animals, or at any rate the animals that are incurable romantics, [. . .] and the typical setting of romance is the forest" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 36-7). Tolkien's quintessential romance hero, Aragorn, is a ranger and woodsman; of all of Tolkien's characters he is the one most clearly correlative to a knight errant. Another comment of Frye in *Secular Scripture* further clarifies the romantic affinities of Tolkien's major fictions:

> The characterization of romance is really a feature of its mental landscape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds [. . .]. There is, first, a world associated with happiness, security, and peace; the emphasis is often thrown on childhood or on an "innocent" or pre-genital period of youth, and the images are those of spring and summer, flowers and sunshine. I shall call this world the idyllic world. The other is a world of exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more pain. I shall call this world the demonic or night world. Because of the powerful polarizing tendency in romance, we are usually carried directly from one to the other. (Frye *Secular Scripture* 53)

The Shire is often associated with the innocent, idyllic world, and the hobbits are frequently said to look like children, standing about three feet tall on average.[34] Immediately outside the Shire, however, lies the Old Forest with Old Man Willow at its heart, and the Barrow-downs with Barrow-wights waiting to capture and kill the hobbits.[35] Some have criticized Tolkien for a simplistic dualism between good and evil, thinking that the moral aspects of characters and landscapes are too easily delineated, and that this is a failure of sorts. However, Tolkien meant his fictions to be seen as romances—he often writes in his *Letters* that his works are "heroic-fairy-romance" or "high romance" (149, 247).[36] By considering them as such, we gain the ability to see not the mere back-and-forth between good and evil, but rather what it is to be either one: what actions constitute good, versus what actions constitute evil.

It is apparent, then, that Tolkien's fantasy literature is a part of a long literary transformation of romance. The survival of medieval romances in ballads and chapbooks until the eighteenth century when Romantics took interest in them, transforming them into internalized quests, shows the durability of the form. Despite widespread disdain for the romances—we might remember in *Don Quixote*, the priest and the barber rifle through the knight's library selecting which books were worth saving from the fire that they intended (1.6.47-54)[37]—the stories were passed on to the Romantics, and to the late Victorians George MacDonald and William Morris, both of whom were tremendous influences on Tolkien's writing. In MacDonald and Morris, the blending of fairy-tales and romance implies a continuing influence by Romanticism as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre go so far as to suggest that Romanticism itself is still vibrantly alive at the end of the twentieth century, and the number of critics who link Romanticism with quest romance implies that the medieval form has survived as fantasy in fantasy literature. Harold Bloom puts it quite justly: "what is good in fantasy *is* romance, just as anything good in verse *is* poetry" (201; original emphasis). According to Bruffee's account of the transformation of medieval quest romance into the modern form of elegiac romance,

> In the first phase of the quest romance tradition, [. . .] the knight alone undergoes the pain of change brought on by the rigours of the quest. In the second phase, the relationship between Cervantean knight and his squire is reciprocal, so that they undergo development together in the course of the story. In the third phase, the internalized Romantic quest, the knight plays no active role and the change occurs only in the squire. In the fourth phase, the phase of elegiac romance, the knight again becomes conspicuous, but still undergoes no change. Or rather, he undergoes only one all-important change: at the end of the narrator's tale he dies. He does not mellow. He experiences no enlightenment or, at best, very little. His character remains constant. The squire-narrator is the true center of attention, because it is his character that develops. As in the third, the Romantic, phase of the tradition, the squire-narrator's quest is still a quest for independence. (40)

In applying these phases of romance to Tolkien, we should note the simultaneous internalized quest of the squire-narrator running in tandem with the external quest of the knight, which remains the action of the tale. In a letter dated 24 December 1944, Tolkien confesses of *Lord of the Rings*: "Sam is the most closely drawn character, the successor to Bilbo of the first book, the genuine hobbit. Frodo is not so interesting, because he has to be highminded [sic], and has (as it were) a vocation" (*Letters* 105). Somewhat comparable to a noble knight errant espousing ideals of chivalry, then, Frodo completes the quest and leaves Middle-earth forever, while his companion Sam gains wisdom and courage, and becomes a narrator by completing *The Red Book of Westmarch* following Frodo's departure.[38] It is Sam who develops most, while, relatively speaking, Frodo endures the quest, and then, in a manner of speaking, passes away. Tolkien himself tells us that despite going to the Undying Lands, the Ring-bearers would eventually succumb to their mortality.

Fundamentally, an elegiac romance is one in which the hero is dead at the end, or even before the end, of his or her story. For Frye, the genre primarily involves recognition of time's power over the mortal world:[39]

> The hero's death or isolation thus has the effect of a spirit passing out of nature, and evokes a mood best described as elegiac. The elegiac presents a heroism unspoiled by irony. The inevitability in the death of Beowulf, the treachery in the death of Roland, the malignancy that compasses the death of the martyred saint, are of much greater emotional importance than any ironic complications of hybris [sic] and hamartia that may be involved. Hence the elegiac is often accompanied by a diffused, resigned, melancholy sense of the passing of time, of the old order changing and yielding to a new one: one thinks of Beowulf looking, while he is dying, at the great stone monuments of the eras of history that vanished before him. In a very late "sentimental" form the same mood is caught in Tennyson's *Passing of Arthur*. (*Anatomy of Criticism* 36-7)

The story of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* comes at the very end of the time surveyed in his vast mythology *The Silmarillion*, and shows not only the ending of the Third Age and beginning of the Fourth, but heralds also the end of an era. From the beginning of *The*

Silmarillion, we are presented with a continuous down-going, a slow slide from the ideal enchanted world to a world increasingly inhabited by nightmare and pain, in which the Elves themselves are cursed by the Valar and doomed to wane, and the lives of Men are dominated by Sauron before his destruction. At the "Council of Elrond" Gandalf reports the words of Saruman, who says: "'the Elder days are gone. The Middle Days are passing. The Younger Days are beginning. The time of the Elves is over, but our time is at hand: the world of Men [. . .]. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.252-3). At the time the story is recorded, there are still Elves, wizards, and the hobbit Ring-bearers in the world, but they are departing for the Undying Lands. The world of Tolkien's fictive historians, Bilbo, Frodo, and Sam, anticipates a time soon to be at hand when it shall possess neither such beings nor magic. And of course this nostalgia for a time of enchantment is much heightened from the standpoint of Tolkien's readers.

It is the feeling of loss that the Romantics respond to, according to Löwy and Sayre; the feeling that enchantment is missing prompts many Romantics to pursue "magic, the esoteric arts, sorcery, alchemy, and astrology; they rediscovered Christian and pagan myths, legends, fairy tales, Gothic narratives; they explored the hidden realms of dreams and the fantastic" (30-1). Tolkien's lifelong project of completing and refining his own mythology, and his study of the mythologies of various cultures, such as the Finnish *Kalevala*, the Austrian *Nibelungenleid* and the Norse *Volsungasaga* and *Eddas*, shows particular accordance with the neo-Romantic movement of the twentieth century that Löwy and Sayre describe:

> Among the Romantics' strategies for re-enchanting the world, the recourse to myth holds a special place. At the magic intersection between religion, history, poetry, language, and philosophy, it offers an inexhaustible reservoir of symbols and allegories, phantasms and demons, gods and vipers. There are several ways to delve into this dangerous treasure: poetic or literary reference to ancient, Oriental, or popular myths; the scholarly [. . .] study of mythology; and attempts to create new myths. In all three cases, the loss of the religious substance of myth—the result of modern

> secularization—makes it a secular figure of enchantment or, rather, a nonreligious way to rediscover the sacred. (32)

Tolkien, as we know, attempted to remove all references to Catholicism, Christianity, or any extant religion from his fiction, although he still considered it "fundamentally religious and Catholic" (*Letters* 172). The most prominent hints of religion remain in *The Silmarillion*, such as the initial creation of the universe by Ilúvatar parallel to Genesis, but this text, presented both as a history of the Elves and as mythology rather than as a holy text, is a secular scripture.

Tolkien's attempt to reconcile the mortal with the immortal through the blending of Elvish and Human blood in the Half-elven, the transformation of Frodo into a more spiritual being, and especially Tolkien's desire to present death as a positive moral good, all suggest he seeks to prompt his readers to "rediscover the sacred." With Aragorn's death and Arwen's sorrowful wasting away, the world of Men is being deprived of enchantment, save that which is found in histories such as *The Red Book of Westmarch*. We might also compare Frye's view that "the inevitability in the death of Beowulf" is of "greater emotional importance" than "hamartia," with Tolkien's opposition to claims that "Doom is [. . .] less literary than *αμαρτια*" (i.e., hamartia, or tragic flaw). Tolkien's effort to portray the force of doom and heroic resistance to inevitable defeat accords with elegiac romance, and he thus endeavours to offer "Recovery" as he describes it—that is, reenchantment.[40]

In observing that the elegiac romances written by Joseph Conrad, Ford Maddox Ford, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Penn Warren, Thomas Mann, and Vladimir Nabokov depend upon the death of the knight-hero prior to the narrator's commencement of his tale, Bruffee identifies a second chief element of elegiac romance (16). In *The Heart of Darkness*, it is more than a year after Kurtz's death that Marlow speaks to Kurtz's Intended, and longer before he tells his shipmates the tale while harboured in London. As Bruffee stipulates, "the *necessary* conditions" for elegiac romance "are the narrator's protracted hero worship of his friend, and his friend's death before the narrator begins to tell the tale." While the "*ostensible purpose* of his tale is to memorialize his lost hero," the "*real purpose* of his tale is to recover the coherence of his own interior world, lost when he lost the screen [. . .] upon which he projected his fantasies. [. . .] The *occasion*

of the narrator's tale is his irretrievable loss of his hero" (51; original emphasis). Even though Frodo does not die, but passes into the Undying lands, and his departure comes at the end, rather than at the beginning, Tolkien provides us with these necessary conditions of elegiac romance, for in the "Prologue" he tells us that the entire story is a translation from an ancient book, *The Red Book of Westmarch*, the authors of which are long dead. Sam's words, recorded in the *Red Book* alongside those of Bilbo, Frodo, Merry and Pippin, do indeed follow Frodo's "death," not to mention his own; the narrator, invisible for most of the story, brings us the echoes of Bilbo, Frodo, and Sam, who recorded their own tales.[41] More to the point, we see the story of *The Hobbit* being written by Bilbo in *Lord of the Rings*, so that we are given the impression that the earlier book is also the work of the translator, and that the battle against the Goblin horde in which Thorin is mortally wounded is written about long after the fact. In *The Hobbit* proper, Thorin's death is elegiac in tone, for Bilbo bids the dwarf king farewell, saying "'this is a bitter adventure, if it must end so'" (18.270), and at the end considers writing out his story. In *Lord of the Rings*, the translator's voice, following the prologue, briefly becomes the voice of the narrator from *The Hobbit* before it disappears altogether, but in that short time we are made to understand that the remainder of the tale belongs to the past. It is possibly for this reason that *Lord of the Rings* is often used to analyze Tolkien's life and thoughts, or is read allegorically as a commentary on his own world—it is Tolkien's voice we hear elegizing the heroes, rather than one of the hobbits'. The fictitious translator/narrator attempts to recover the coherence of his world by telling the story of these long-lost heroes of his.[42]

Tolkien's primary literary concern, as we find in examining his aesthetic, is to present us with a romance modified by the elegiac tone he identifies in *Beowulf*. As in the Anglo-Saxon ethos where winning glory in song by doomed resistance is thought particularly poetic, we find the Elf Lord Fëanor reply to the "Doom of the Noldor," "the deeds that we shall do shall be the matter of song until the last days of Arda" (*Silmarillion* 3.9.99). In Tolkien's world, the glory of the "undefeated will" in fighting "the long defeat" is possibly a moral good in and of itself.[43] The mightiest heroes of Middle-earth have the same fates: to fight, to die, and be remembered by others in song as are Beren, Túor, and Eärendil throughout *Lord of the Rings*. It is an expression of the relatively

recent elegiac development of "quest romance" because, as Bruffee says of elegiac romance, which subsumes antecedents of romantic questing, "the narrator's hero [. . .] is involved in a quest on the grand scale" as well as an "inner or metaphorical quest of his own" (48). Bruffee also states that, in such texts, the quest of both the narrator and the narrator's hero is elegiacally generated "by a sense of loss" and a complementary sense of the burden of time: the hero "futilely rejects the past, overvalues it, or finds it an intolerable burden—or all of these at once" (Bruffee 48). The quest on a grand scale is Frodo's, to free the world from Sauron's influence by destroying his Ring. Samwise, meanwhile, develops as a character whereas Frodo is much more static. This naturally arises from Tolkien's interest in depicting Sam more closely than Frodo; in the final chapter of book four, *The Two Towers*, "The Choices of Master Samwise," we at last see Sam cut loose from being Frodo's squire and take up his master's quest on his own, with the seemingly vain wish to return to Frodo once the Ring has been destroyed. Sam remains entrapped by Frodo's quest. Furthermore, we find that the quest to destroy the Ring is one that is laden with its own history, and Frodo seeks to destroy what Isildur and Gollum could not abandon, and finds it literally "an intolerable burden": he has enormous difficulty in carrying the Ring into Mordor, for it seems to become heavier with every step. Frodo is trapped by the past, and the history of Middle-earth determines his future.

Since fantasy literature is based upon the expression of desire, that is, both the actualization and evacuation of desire, Tolkien's Secondary World, I have argued, is replete with instances of his aesthetic beliefs come alive in his various types of characters. His own critical theories of what constitutes good literature examined in chapter 1—the literary feeling of antiquity, the pleasing effect of distance, and the poetic mode of apprehension that McFarland has termed *essentia* in relation to the Romantics, all of which contribute to Tolkien's perceived virtues of fantasy literature—became the generative ideas of his art, and strongly propelled him towards the writing of elegiac romance. He uses these principles in his construction of his own particular fictive "inner consistency of reality," and the most potent of Tolkien's effects is that of fictional history used to create the appearance of depth.

The first of the two primary desires he identifies in "Fairy-Stories," contact with other non-human beings, does not become eroticized as we might expect of a fantasy

writer, but rather offers the possibility of linguistic communication, just as this writer of fantasy was so profoundly excited by languages themselves. Furthermore, the interactions between the different breeds of hominids (dwarves, Elves, Ents, Men, and of course hobbits, who are counted among Men) show various qualities of humanity in an exaggerated manner—almost as "characters"—in order to illustrate what Tolkien considers some of the best human virtues. Dwarves are hearty and delight in mining and metalworking, whereas Elves are artisans and lovers of nature, music, and language, and possess living memories of history. Linking humans and the natural world, Ents show the human capacities for long, deep contemplation on the origins of things, patience, gentleness, and peacefulness—though they are not without the capacity for force—while hobbits are simple people, representatives of human adolescence and mirth, who live in a pastoral world and are mistrustful of machines.

The second desire, and the greatest in Tolkien's view, is the avoidance of death, which he concludes cannot be realized, and the effort to reach the goal exacts a price heavy indeed. Attempting to escape from death entails greed and possessiveness, and he calls even those Elves who seek to preserve their forest homes "embalmers." His general conclusion that death is a gift to Men rather than a curse strongly invites and repays consideration of his works as elegiac romances. Various distinctive features of elegiac romance are evident in Tolkien's fictions, such as the death of the hero, the development of the squire, and the effect of the hero's death on his society and on the narrator/squire. As Tolkien himself says, rather than the themes of "Power or Domination" on which his critics often focus, the prevalence of death as an organizing theme indicates that his works function as an elegy for a world and time that are dead to us, insofar as they conclude that death is both positive and necessary. He desires that his Secondary World be remembered.

The feelings of nostalgia and mourning that pervade Tolkien's fictions—even the story of *The Hobbit*, though tempered for his younger intended audience, possesses some of these qualities in Thorin's death and Bilbo's retrospective writing of the tale—indicate that Tolkien's particular rethinking of Romantic and medievalist aesthetics brings him to a meditation on death itself. Through the prevalence of history and meditation on the loss of memory and knowledge in his fictions, Tolkien pays homage to the ancestors of the

English for whom he writes by creating stories based on the nobility of doomed heroism typified by *Beowulf*.

Notes for Chapter 2

[1] "His heart was sad, restless and ready for death: the fate that must approach the elderly extremely near, searching for his soul to split life apart from body; not much longer was the prince's life enveloped in flesh" (translation mine).

[2] Consider Max Lüthi's introduction to *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*, in which he says: "fairytales have been told time and again not because they are so easy to tell, but because they have provided pleasure. An esthetics of the fairytale must be concerned with reasons why these narratives have been and still are a source of pleasure. But literature is more than just pleasing form. It presents scenes and suggests with them a particular way of looking at the world and at human existence" (ix).

[3] The idea of being able to "wander" in a fictional world is frequently alluded to by the Romantics as well as by Tolkien and later Fantasy writers. Coleridge conceived of this imaginative engagement as the "willing suspension of disbelief" (*Biographia Literaria* 2: 6), while Keats, as Patricia Parker notes, "himself spoke of his 'Poetic Romance,' *Endymion*, as 'a little Region to wander in'[. . .]" (*Inescapable Romance* 177). Tolkien's conception of a Secondary World is likely the most explicit statement of the kind.

[4] Sam tells Gollum a rhyme of the Shire, about a supposedly fictional creature called an oliphaunt. Sam desperately desires to see oliphaunts, while Gollum does not even want to think of the possibility of their existence: "He does not want them to be" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.3.633). Little more than a chapter later, the gigantic "Mûmak of Harad" appears during the battle between Faramir's men and the Southrons, to Sam's "astonishment and terror, and lasting delight" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.4.646). Sam's desire is granted: "'An Oliphaunt it was!' he said. 'So there are Oliphaunts, and I have seen one. What a life!'" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.4.647).

[5] Later identifiable by the reader as Ents, the hobbits of the Shire only hear of "Tree-men [. . .] as big as an elm-tree, and walking" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.43). Many of the marvels that are found later in the book are initially introduced in the Shire as mere legend, usually under scorn from more *sensible* hobbits who no longer believe such things to be true.

[6] As one hobbit, Ted Sandyman, remarks, "there's only one Dragon in Bywater, and that's Green" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.43), a pun on the name of the inn, "The Green Dragon."

[7] Science Fiction provides the opportunity to see the universe from a different perspective on a regular basis, as did the travel narratives of the middle ages; Sir John Mandeville, Marco Polo, and others frequently depicted intelligent nonhumans, different languages, and lands with strange customs in the accounts of their travels to the Orient. As A.B. Taylor remarks in *An Introduction to Medieval Romance*, "from the twelfth century on not only were Eastern stories made the subjects of romance, but Eastern legends and customs became the chief basis of the marvellous and sensational elements in general. [. . .] It added a fresh stimulus to their efforts to make the world of romance a fantastic realm of magic and mystery" (214).

[8] Edgar Allan Poe's "Man of the Crowd," "The Purloined Letter," and "William Wilson" are standard examples of the doppelgänger in fantastic literature. For further interpretations of such doubles,

see Freud's "The Uncanny"; Todorov's *The Fantastic*; Jackson's *Fantasy*; and Nöel Carrol's *Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*.

[9] Here, I refer to a story in *The Silmarillion* in which Aluë creates the Dwarves out of a perceived absence of others in the world: it is before Elves and Men have awakened. The Vala explains his creation to Ilúvatar by saying: I desired things other than I am, [. . .] for it seemed to me that there is great room in Arda for many things that might rejoice in it, yet it is for the most part empty still, and dumb" (*Silmarillion* 3.2.40-1). Aluë realizes that he has overstepped his authority and apologizes to Ilúvatar, offering to destroy the Dwarves. Ilúvatar allows the Dwarves to live, but puts them to sleep until after the Elves, the "Firstborn," have awoken in Middle-earth. See *The Silmarillion* (3.2.40-1). Note that Tolkien uses "Vala" as the singular form of Valar when referring to one of the gods (see the entry for "Valar" in the index of *The Slmarillion*).

[10] Particularly misleading is Jared Lobdell's argument in *England and Always*, where he says that "'the whole of Middle Earth [sic] is poised on the brink of the fall. It is angelic presences that have fallen, and some of mankind with them' (60-1)" (cit. Douglas Anderson, "Re: Pre-Edenic Middle-earth," E-mail to the author, 11 August 2003). Lobdell relates Tolkien's Men to Adam, and the One Ring to the apple of knowledge. It is plainly stated in *The Silmarillion* that the first Men whom the Elves encountered (it was Felagund who found them) were glad to enter Beleriand, for they "believed that they had escaped from all perils and had come at last to a land without fear" (3.17.167-8), and that "a darkness lay upon the hearts of Men (as the shadow of the Kinslaying and the Doom of Mandos lay upon the Noldor)" (3.17.169). For this darkness to have already taken residence in humanity's heart implies that Tolkien's Men had already, in effect, been banished from Paradise, although he is careful not to say as much. Rather, Felagund is told that "the fathers of [Bëor's] people had told few tales about their past and a silence had fallen upon their memory," and much of their past is unknown to them; the leader of Men named Bëor says that "'a darkness lies behind us'" (*Silmarillion* 3.17.169). Tolkien himself says "the Fall of Man is in the past and off stage; the Redemption of Man is in the far future" (*Letters* 387). It is implicit that the awakening of Men in a paradisiacal realm such as Cuiviénan of the Elves happened long ago, and that the true story of their fall and exile was lost in a failure of the oral tradition. To compare *Lord of the Rings* to Genesis in this manner obscures the fact that Tolkien conceived of his story to follow the Fall, not to be an equivalent.

[11] I am using the word "super-natural" here as belonging to the natural world in greater measure, as opposed to the common usage of "supernatural," to connote the marvellous and unnatural.

[12] The three unifications of Elves and Men, being those of Beren and Lúthien, Tuor and Idril, and finally Aragorn and Arwen, might be considered more significant for their transcendent love. The three couples are prominent figures in Tolkien's mythology: Beren cuts the Silmaril from Morgoth's crown; Tuor and Idril beget Eärendil the Mariner, who voyages to Valinor to procure the aid of the Valar against Morgoth and becomes a star; and Aragorn and Arwen unite the Half-elven line and rule Gondor following Sauron's defeat. See *Lord of the Rings*, "Appendices," where Tolkien writes: "There were three unions of the Eldar and the Edain: Lúthien and Beren; Idril and Tuor; Arwen and Aragorn. By the last the long-

sundered branches of the Half-elven were reunited and their line was restored" ("Appendix A: I. The Númenorean Kings: (i) Númenor" *Lord of the Rings* 1010).

[13] There may be some contention as to the usage of the term "races," for it is as yet undecided whether humans and Elves in Tolkien's conception are in fact "genetically" different. As Tolkien writes in *Letters*, "Elves and Men are evidently in biological terms one race, or they could not breed and produce fertile offspring [. . .]. This is a biological dictum in my imaginary world" (189). In order for the Half-elven to be reproductively viable, they would have to belong to the same species at the very least. In "A Long Day's Dying: The Elves of J.R.R. Tolkien and Sylvia Townsend Warner," Robert Crossley proposes that Elves are "the lost children of Adam and Lilith, born before the fall in Eden and therefore exempt from the punishment of death, but born as well outside the framework of redemption and therefore also disenfranchised from a promise of a life at the end of the world" (Yoke and Hassler: 57).

[14] There have been numerous studies on Tolkien's Christianity as it is reflected in his works. Tolkien himself claims to have consciously removed all references to his religion through the editing process, yet critics continue to find allusions. The belief in the immortality of the human soul, for example, has long been held in conjunction with that of a paradisiacal afterlife. Tolkien, however, makes sure never to indicate his own beliefs outright, but comes close in "Leaf by Niggle," in which he (allegorically) speaks of the afterlife as a journey with an unspecified destination; Niggle's Parish is merely the place where souls can rest before they move on.

[15] This quotation from the "*Beowulf*" essay is actually from the Anglo-Saxon poem *Widsith*, lines 141b-142a. Tolkien frequently writes Anglo-Saxon phrases in his letters to his son Christopher, and is credited with creating the first known poem using the Gothic language in *Songs for Philologists*. He felt that there was a continuity of worldview throughout the Anglo-Saxon literary world, so that the *ubi sunt* phrasing of one poem might be equally applicable to the next. As an example, the two poems "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" are typically considered in relation to one another.

[16] The third group, the Teleri, is so named because "they tarried on the road" (*Silmarillion* 3.3.54), and is finally brought to the Bay of Eldamar near the Blessed Lands, where they dwell upon Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Isle. They remain separated from the Vanyar and Noldor, and their language becomes sundered (*Silmarillion* 3.5.62-3).

[17] Following the creation of the cosmos by Eru / Ilúvatar and the Ainur through their singing, in which Melkor rebelled and attempted to wrest control of the song away from Ilúvatar, the Ainur descend to Arda (the earth) and become the Valar, the lesser gods of the earth (roughly correspondent to those of classical Greek mythology). They possess power over the natural world, and are able to move islands across the sea (*Silmarillion*), create mountains, and light the world first with the Lamps of the Valar, then with the Trees of the Valar, and at last with the sun and moon. The next class of spirits below the Valar are the Maiar, to whom Gandalf, Saruman, and Sauron belong, who are comparable to the Norse gods in that they appear as humans and have limited power. While they can work more powerful magic than Men or Elves, they are nowhere nearly as powerful as the Valar, and are subordinate to them. Marjorie Burns

convincingly compares Gandalf to Odin in their similar appearance, and Tolkien himself envisions the wizard as an "Odinic wanderer" (*Letters* 119). See Marjorie Burns, "Gandalf and Odin," *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth*, eds. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2000) 219-31.

[18] I here refer to the Elves, sometimes thought to be the most wonderful aspect of Tolkien's creation. However, the blessedness of the Elves is contestable, for although the Elves are immortal, it is revealed that a mortal death is "the Doom of Men, that [. . .] was at first a gift of Ilúvatar" (*Silmarillion* 4.327). The weariness that we are told the Elves will face near the end of the world would seem to indicate that Men are in fact the most blessed of the Children of Ilvatar.

[19] Melkor, the evil Vala, is envious of the other Valar's works and constantly tries to destroy them. He succeeds twice by destroying the Lamps of the World, then the Two Trees. Also, when the Elves first awake, there is no light in the world except starlight, and in the darkness Melkor hunts and captures Elves. He twists these captured Elves into Orcs, in mockery and defilement of Ilúvatar's creation. He is renamed Morgoth after he steals the Silmarils and kills Finwë, Fëanor's father. For the full story of Melkor/Morgoth, see the second and third books, "Valequenta" and "Quenta Silmarillion," of *The Silmarillion*.

[20] In the second section of *The Silmarillion*, "Quenta Silmarillion: The History of the Silmarils," Fëanor, greatest of the Elven craftsmen and son of Finwë, high king of the Noldor, crafts three jewels using the light of the two Trees of the Valar, Telperion and Laurelin. These Trees light the world after the felling of the Lamps of the World, Illuin and Ormal, by the evil Valar Melkor, later to be named "*Morgoth*, the Black Foe of the World" (3.9.88), the master of Sauron. Melkor, with the aid of Shelob's ancestral mother Ungoliant, destroys the Trees and steals the Silmarils, plunging the world into an endless night, killing Finwë who tries to stop him. When the Valar plead with Fëanor to use the Silmarils to restore the Trees, he refuses to let his creations be unmade, and curses the Valar for the death of his father, setting in motion the events to come. In the aftermath of Morgoth's attack, Fëanor takes the Noldor to the shores of Arda, where they take by force the ships of the Teleri, the "Sea-Elves" (3.3.54).

[21] The Halls of Mandos are where Elves' bodiless spirits dwell between incarnations. See the entry for "Mandos" in the index of *The Silmarillion*, page 423.

[22] In many tales, a fairy-mistress comes to take a particular prince or warrior back to her home where time does not matter. However, especially in the Irish tradition, the fairy realm of *Tir na nOg* "Land of Youth" bestows a type of immortality on the warrior, but when he inevitably returns to his homeland desiring to see it again, he finds that a hundred years or more have passed since he left. His transgression of some ban, most often touching his foot to the soil, restores those years to him and leaves him old and alone, and always unable to return to the fairy realm.

[23] As Tolkien goes on to write, "fairy-stories are made by men not by fairies. The human stories of the elves are doubtless full of the Escape from Deathlessness. [. . .] 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 specially apt to teach such things" ("Fairy-Stories" 68). As we see, Tolkien conjectures that were fairies to write tales of humans, they would instead manifest their desire to escape from immortality.

[24] Eärendil the Mariner is the hero of Tolkien's mythology who sails to Valinor to plead with the Valar for aid in resisting the evil of Morgoth. The Valar grant his request and banish Morgoth forever from the world, and they set Eärendil in the sky, bearing the silmaril that Beren wrested from Morgoth's crown, to become the evening star. It is the light of Eärendil's star that Galadriel puts into the phial that she gives to Frodo, which saves the two hobbits from Shelob, and Sam remarks that they are participating in the same story as Eärendil and Beren. See, e.g., *Lord of the Rings* "Appendix A" (1010), and *The Silmarillion* "Of the Voyage of Eärendil and the War of Wrath" (3.24.304-16).

[25] The "vicarious" experience of a reader is now more often referred to as "simulation theory." It is debatable as to whether a reader can actually claim to "experience" something fictional, since the reader is fully aware that the portrayed events cannot affect her. And yet, she is capable of having quasi-emotional responses to the fictional events—that is to say, the reader does not experience the emotion as a direct response to the fictional event but rather "empathizes" with the character, who becomes, in a sense, a fictional avatar of the reader's self—which indicates that there may indeed be some truth to Tolkien's claim that a "Secondary World" comes into existence. While we continue to live in our Primary World, we imagine a Secondary World in which fictional events can be thought of as "true" in that world, and we come to identify with those fictional characters in whom we see traits that we admire, desire, or perceive within ourselves. For further readings, see: Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* or *Paradoxes of the Heart*, (New York: Routledge, 1990); Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990), and "Visual Imagery as the Simulation of Vision," *Mind and Language* 10 (1995): 25-44; Ian Ravenscroft, "What is it Like to be Someone Else?: Simulation and Empathy," *Ratio* 11 (1998): 170-85; Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990), and "Spelunking, Simulation, and Slime: On Being Moved by Fiction," in *Emotion and the Arts,* eds. Mette Hjort, Sue Laver, (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 37-49.

[26] Consider Tolkien's estimation of the *Beowulf* dragon, whose "conception [. . .] approaches *draconitas* rather than *draco*: a personification of malice, greed, destruction (the evil side of heroic life), and of the undiscriminating cruelty of fortune that distinguishes not good or bad (the evil aspect of all life)" ("Monsters" 21). If the *Beowulf* dragon is of the same kith and kin as Fafnir in *Volsungasaga*, it might be that he too was once human and transformed into the dragon as a result of his greed—see *Saga of the Volsungs*, page 59—in which case the Númenóreans become dragon-like in their final days.

[27] Faramir tells Frodo and Sam of the Nazgûl: "It is said" in Gondor that they "were men of Númenor who had fallen into dark wickedness; to them the Enemy had given rings of power, and he had devoured them: living ghosts they were become, terrible and evil" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.6.677).

[28] After Frodo has been stabbed by the Nazgúl on Weathertop, when he meets the Elf Glorfindel he sees that "a white light was shining through the form and raiment of the rider, as if through a thin veil"

(*Lord of the Rings* 1.12.204). Because Frodo is undergoing the "fading" caused by the wound of the Morgul-knife, he is more aware of and able to see the spirit world. He tells Gandalf that he "'saw a white figure that shone and did not grow dim like the others,'" and the wizard replies that Frodo "'saw him [Glorfindel] for a moment as he is *on the other side*: one of the mighty of the Firstborn'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.1.217; emphasis mine). The "other side," it seems, is the spiritual world in which the Ringwraiths exist and Frodo sees while wearing the Ring (*Lord of the Rings* 2.1.216).

[29] In *Sir Orfeo,* for example, the castle of the fairy king is filled with dead people who have been brought there by the king so that they may continue to "live," some despite decapitation and mortal wounds (lines 387-408). In *Tales of the Elders of Ireland (Acallam na Senórach)*, the three sons of Lugaid receive gifts from the *Túatha Dé Danann*, afterwards rule their kingdom for one hundred and fifty years, and finally return to the fairy world (13-16). Mortals who have dealings with the fairy world often live longer than the usual span of years.

[30] We might here consider the heralds' cries heard during the tournament in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe: A Romance*: "between every pause was heard the voice of the heralds, exclaiming, 'Fight on, brave knights! Man dies, but glory lives! Fight on; death is better than defeat! Fight on, brave knights! for bright eyes behold your deeds!'" (Scott 135).

[31] The appendices list the chronology: "2931: Aragorn son of Arathorn II born March 1st," in 2941 when Aragorn is ten Bilbo finds the One Ring, and in 2951 he learns his true name and lineage ("Appendix B" *Lord of the Rings* 1063-4).

[32] Fowler points out that one of the foremost modulations of nineteenth-century literature is "the elegiac" (206):

> We are more familiar with the idea of lyric as the dominant mode of nineteenth-century literature. Almost every genre, we know, became lyric then—in the sense that its conventions were modulated expressively, or that shaping matched form with content, or that (if nothing else) the style at least was stylish. So we speak of a novelistic genre that grew out of this tradition as "the lyric novel." But we are not so accustomed to think of this lyric tendency as elegiac. Newer groupings of genres shut off that insight. Nevertheless, the term 'lyric' itself recalls an elegiac modulation: namely, that of ode, a dominant form in the neoclassical period. In the nineteenth century, "lyric," by then a vogue word, acquired the elegiac sense "expressive," so that Ruskin could define lyric poetry as "the expression by the poet of his own feelings." Abbie Potts hardly exaggerates when she writes of "the elegiac century." [. . .] And the elegiac repertoire has shown continuity, as well as change." (206)

[33] Fowler writes on the preservation of genres: "in literature there is no creation *ex nihilo*. On the basis of known examples, at least, all postmedieval genres have been have used older genres as components, and our knowledge allows us to say the same about medieval genres" (156).

[34] Specifically, Tolkien tells us that hobbits' heights are "variable, ranging between two and four feet of our measure" ("Prologue: I. Concerning Hobbits" *Lord of the Rings* 1).

[35] It is also said that long ago hobbits battled the Old Forest, chopping down trees and burning them in an attempt to keep them away from "the Hedge" that protects the Shire: "after that the trees gave up the attack," Meriadoc Brandybuck tells the others, "but they became very unfriendly" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.6.108). The hobbits are themselves guilty of the same behaviour that Treebeard associates with Sauruman's Orcs. While some critics label this an inconsistency or contradiction on Tolkien's part, I would instead suggest that Tolkien meant to imply that the lines between good and evil are often blurred, although the hobbits were justified in defending themselves from an attack by the trees.

[36] See Derek S. Brewer, "*The Lord of the Rings* as Romance," in *J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Storyteller: Essays in Memoriam*, eds. Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (Ithaca: Cornell, 1979) 249-64.

[37] Among the books that the priest and barber save from the fire in *Don Quixote* are Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso, Amadis de Gaul, in four parts* by Saragossa, *The Araucana* of Don Alonso de Ercilla, *The Austriada* of John Rufo, and *The Monserrate* of Christoval of Viruses. The priest saves *The History of the renowned knight Tirante the White* by Johannot Martorell despite telling the barber that the author should be "sent to the galleys" for having written "so many foolish things seriously" (1.6.51). Also spared is the first part of Miguel de Cervantes's own *Galatea*, but only because the priest wanted to read the second part before he decided whether to pardon the entire work or not. Those burned include *Amadis of Greece*, *The Knight Platir*, *The Knight of the Cross*, *The Mirror of Chivalry*, *The Treasure of Divers Poems*, and countless unnamed volumes that the priest and barber do not bother to sort through.

[38] See, e.g., George Clark, "Tolkien and the True Hero," in Clark and Timmons: 39-51.

[39] Consider what Tolkien says of the effect that fairy-stories can have upon us: "the beauty and horror of The Juniper Tree (*Von dem Machandelboom*), with its exquisite and tragic beginning, [. . .] has remained with me since childhood; and yet always the chief flavour of that tale lingering in the memory was not of beauty or horror, but distance and a great abyss of time, not measurable even by *twe tusend Johr*. [. . .] I do not think I was harmed by the horror in the fairy-tale setting, out of whatever dark beliefs and practices of the past it may have come. Such stories have now a mythical or total (unanalysable) effect, [. . .] they open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, maybe" ("Fairy-Stories" 31-32).

[40] On "Enchantment," Tolkien says in "Fairy-Stories": "Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose. [. . .] To the elvish craft, Enchantment, Fantasy aspires, and when it is successful of all forms of human art most nearly approaches. At the heart of many man-made stories of the elves lies [. . .] the desire for a living, realised sub-creative art [. . .]" (53).

[41] We might also note that the frequent references made by Sam and Frodo to older tales, as shall be analyzed in the next chapter, suggest an almost Chaucerian awareness of their textuality; the hobbits refer to themselves as participants in the same story as Beren and Eärendil (*Lord of the Rings* 4.8.696), two of Tolkien's mythological heroes of *The Silmarillion*. In *Lord of the Rings*, we catch glimpses of a history

unknown to us through the characters recounted by the narrator—the characters tell one another stories—a layering of narrative found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and as early as in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

[42] For further explanation of the fictitious translator/narrator, whom I term the "redactor," see chapter 3.

[43] Consider Tolkien's words: "if it has passed from the high and beautiful to darkness and ruin, that was of the old fate of Arda Marred [. . .]" (*Silmarillion* 3.24.316). His mythology does not anticipate Redemption.

Chapter 3: "An Echo of an Echo": Tolkien's Historicity

> Middle-earth is just archaic English for *ηοικονμενη*, the inhabited world of men. It lay then as it does. In fact just as it does, round and inescapable. That is partly the point. The new situation, established at the beginning of the Third Age, leads on eventually and inevitably to ordinary History, and we here see the process culminating. If you or I or any of the mortal men (or hobbits) of Frodo's day had set out over the sea, west, we should, as now, eventually have come back (as now) to our starting point. Gone was the "mythological" time when Valinor (or Valimar), the Land of the Valar (gods if you will) existed physically in the Uttermost West [. . .]. After the Downfall of Númenor, and its destruction, all this was removed from the "physical" world, and not reachable by material means. Only the Eldar (or High-Elves) could still sail thither, forsaking time and mortality, but never returning.
>
> —Tolkien, 18 September 1954, *Letters* 186

As we have found with the Romantics, there is and always has been a tendency to sentimentalize or idealize the past. History becomes invested with a poetic power, an *essentia*, which through the recognition of its downfall or passing from the world gives it its elegiac tone, and makes the reader yearn for a time lost in antiquity. Tolkien consciously makes his Secondary World unfamiliar in an attempt to present his fictional-historical world as eminently desirable, yet entirely inaccessible. Its removal into the fairy-story realm of "long-ago" but not "far away"—the world of Middle-earth is our world—reflects Tolkien's sense that temporal distance, more than spatial distance, is the determining factor in creating longing, and by extension belief, that such a world may have existed.

He believes wholeheartedly that Fantasy, unlike any other form of literature, is most able to move people towards a discovery of morality and a rejection of the world's corruption through its powers of Recovery, Escape, and Consolation. However, as we saw in considering poetic *essentia* in chapter 1, the corruption of the human condition means that realizing a reconciliation with God such as Tolkien desired, or even a recourse to some nostalgically imagined former time such as a golden age, must remain a desire, a yearning, for it cannot be made a reality in this life. So too must antiquity remain at a distance: any desired past must be held at arm's length, lest it lose its appeal by becoming, unlike the ideal forest in Niggle's Parish, "mere surroundings" (Tolkien "Niggle" 110). Tolkien's love of antiquity, and his desire to present Middle-earth as an ancient world, means that in writing *Lord of the Rings* as well as *The Hobbit*, he retains that particular quality he identifies in *Beowulf*, "the echo of an ancient dirge, far-off and

hopeless, it is to us as a memory brought over the hills, an echo of an echo" ("Monsters" 41). He infuses those works with a fictional history and mythology referred to as legend and memory, which belong to his long unpublished volumes of tales—now posthumously published— known as *The Silmarillion* (as well as *The Unfinished Tales* and the twelve-volume *History of Middle-earth*). Tolkien lessens the contrast between the deathlessness of the elves and the mortality of men by representing all things as decaying and passing from the world; mortality is made more bearable when it is viewed as an escape from the world-weariness that will fall upon the Elves in the eons to come. Death is an escape from "endless serial living."

Tolkien's use of this effect of elegiac romance is ultimately a moral instruction to let go of the past and accept one's mortality despite the difficulty involved in doing so. He concludes that death, and the transience of the world, must not only be tolerated, but embraced as a moral good. The most heroic fight, as Tolkien conceives it, is that of "doomed resistance" ("Monsters" 28), where the only consolation is remembrance. He presents us with a world—recovered by a fictitious *translator*, as it were, in our own age—in which all deeds of worth are remembered, and myths and legends are themselves proven true.

Tolkien's creation of a fictional history and his narrative pose of recounting a history, his texts' powerful manifestation of historicity,[1] and his emphasis upon loss of memory, evinced in the departure of his characters who experienced history first-hand, are means of attempting to recreate the elegiac feeling that he experienced in reading *Beowulf*: the perception of a story, already ancient in its telling, remembering even more distant times all but forgotten to us. Through Tolkien's constant allusions to the past, we are given the impression that the events of the present are weighted with significance, and that any and all deeds worthy of note are remembered. Tolkien's is a world in which memory and history are vibrantly alive in the present. He seeks to frame his fictions as vehicles for escaping time for a while, so that, while recognizing the transience of the mortal world, his readers can nonetheless entertain thoughts of immortality and yet find comfort, paradoxically, in their inability to obtain it. The Secondary World is where desires can be imaginatively acted out without having necessary real consequences whether good or bad, and Tolkien, having shown us the ends of those desires, guides us

back to our own lives with a "recovered" view of the world and new appreciation for our mortality.

The Mortal Moment: Fabricating Time

In chapter 1 we saw that Tolkien is highly concerned with creating both the "inner consistency of reality" and the effect of "history, true or feigned." I argued there that the effect of history, or as Tolkien calls it, the "illusion of historical truth," is an aid for Secondary Belief. That is, the locus of the story in the past allows the reader to believe that it may have happened in the Secondary World, if not in our own Primary World. Now we find that Tolkien not only attempts to give the illusion of historicity by pretending to be the modern redactor for an ancient story,[2] but also attempts to portray his story's internal time in a realistic fashion.

There are countless instances of historic depth in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, both of which were written long after many of the stories that were to become *The Silmarillion* had already been written. As a result, in the apparent attempt to tell two stories at once, particularly evident in *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien creates a binary narrative. On one level we read in that text about the heroes of the War of the Ring during the single year of action between Frodo's departure from the Shire and his return. On another level, Tolkien tells us more about the peoples and places that preceded that story. For clarity, I shall borrow some of Tolkien's own terminology with which he explained the difference between our belief in the real or primary world and our belief in the fictional or secondary world. I shall refer to the narrative present—the events comprising the actions of the principal characters—as "secondary" time, and our own time as "primary."[3] In *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, characters such as Bilbo, the dwarves, Frodo, and Sam belong to the secondary narrative. Events said to have occurred prior to the stories of these books exist in a "tertiary" time that is remembered and recollected by characters of the secondary time. Gil-galad, Beren, Elendil, and Isildur thus belong to tertiary time. This categorization is mainly applicable to the fictions told from the point of view of the naïve hobbit-narrators, for they are our eyes and ears through which Middle-earth is revealed.[4] (Of course, within a work such as *The Silmarillion*, which comprises most of the tertiary time from the standpoint of the other

two works, references to Gil-galad, Beren, and the others occur in secondary time, for they are not being recalled by others but rather are depicted in their own present time.)

Let us first consider Tolkien's fictional stance in *Lord of the Rings* as a modern day or "primary time" redactor or translator of an ancient text called *The Red Book of Westmarch*.[5] In the "Prologue," Tolkien takes on the guise of redactor by saying that the previously published *Hobbit* is an extract from the larger work called *The Red Book*, and that it provides readers with additional knowledge of hobbits. He also delves into a description of pipe-weed, which he says he quotes from the book *Herblore of the Shire*, written by Meriadoc Brandybuck. But most interesting for our purposes, perhaps, is the "Note on the Shire Records." It is here that Tolkien's authorial voice turns to a truly marvellous topic: the creation and preservation of the fictional *Red Book* manuscript. He explains that at the end of the events depicted in *Lord of the Rings*, the crowning of Aragorn and the fighting within the Shire, there awakens among the hobbits "a more widespread interest in their own history," which means that "many of their traditions, up to that time still mainly oral," are "collected and written down" (13). This tradition becomes a more outward-looking interest as well, for the narrator explains that "the greater families were also concerned with events in the Kingdom at large, and many of their members studied its ancient histories and legends. By the end of the first century of the Fourth Age there were already to be found in the Shire several libraries that contained many historical books and records" (*Lord of the Rings* 13-4). The hobbits, then, come to supplement the former historians of Middle-earth, preserving their own traditions in writing, as well as the histories and legends of other peoples. Examples of the memories preserved by hobbits are the stories of Númenor, which they learn in Gondor, and the stories of the Elves contained in Bilbo's *Translations from the Elvish*, which he presents to Frodo upon the latter's return to Rivendell from Gondor at the end of *Lord of the Rings*. The diary that Bilbo is writing at Rivendell is to become the beginning of *The Red Book*, and as the redactor says, it is the most complete and accurate account of the War of the Ring, from which "this account of the end of the Third Age is [mainly] drawn" (*Lord of the Rings* 14). Thus Tolkien would have us believe that his fiction is a documented history, and once the reader has been filled in on events leading up to the beginning of the

story, in the fourth section of the Prologue "Of the Finding of the Ring" he says "at this point this History begins" (13).

On the history of the manuscript itself, we are told that "the original Red Book[6] has not been preserved" but that "many copies were made," and that one copy in particular, copied by Findegil in Gondor, preserved "much that was later omitted or lost" ("Prologue" *Lord of the Rings* 14), thus providing the modern redactor with a more complete understanding of events. Specifically, in addition to *The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen*, which is found in part in the appendices of *Lord of the Rings*, Findegil's copy also contained Bilbo's *Translations from the Elvish*, which are primarily "concerned with the Elder Days" and likely comprise Tolkien's own then-unpublished *Silmarillion*, also known as *The History of the Elves*. Tolkien's fictive redactor or general narrative factotum alludes to this *Red Book of Westmarch* manuscript on a number of occasions, the most important being at Rivendell, during "The Council of Elrond."

With the free peoples of Middle-earth gathered, Elrond begins the council by telling them of the history that precipitated the present crisis, "the Tale of the Ring" as he calls it (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.236). As he recounts the events stemming from the Second Age with the deception by Sauron and the forging of the Rings of Power, Tolkien's redactor interrupts, saying: "since that history is elsewhere recounted, even as Elrond himself set it down in his books of lore, it is not here recalled," for "it is a long tale" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.236). This note implies, in a scholarly manner not unlike a footnote, that if we are interested in the tale, we should attempt to find the full version of the story. Much of this history is explained in the appendices of *Lord of the Rings*, which are abbreviated excerpts from the author's yet-to-be-published *Silmarillion*. It is apparent that this history being recalled by Elrond is actually a part of *The Silmarillion* itself, known to the redactor only because it was written down by Elrond, translated by Bilbo and preserved in the *Red Book of Westmarch* from which both *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* also fictionally derive.

The *Red Book* manuscript reappears more explicitly following the battle within the Shire itself. In "The Scouring of the Shire," when the hobbits led by Frodo, Sam, Peregrin, and Meriadoc ambush an army of "ruffians," a fight ensues. At its conclusion, we are provided with the redactor's retrospective evaluation: "so ended the Battle of

Bywater, 1419, the last battle fought in the Shire, and the only battle since the Greenfields, 1147, away up in the Northfarthing. In consequence, though it happily cost very few lives, it has a chapter in the Red Book, and the names of all those who took part were made into a Roll, and learned by heart by Shire-historians" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.8.992). Tolkien occasionally provides us with such notes, conveying the process of transformation of events into a written form. The *textualization* of the story is important to the redactor, and by extension Tolkien himself, for we are made aware of how the history provided in *The Red Book of Westmarch* was recorded and preserved. In the very last chapter of *Lord of the Rings*, as Frodo hands over his worldly possessions to Sam, he includes in them Bilbo's old diary, "a big book with plain red leather covers" (6.9.1003), and inside it has numerous titles in Bilbo's handwriting, including "There and Back Again," which is the alternative title for *The Hobbit*, and finally in Frodo's script: "The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King, [. . .] Together with extracts from Books of Lore translated by Bilbo in Rivendell" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.9.1004).[7] There is a constant process at work in Tolkien's writing that eventually appears to draw all memories and actions from some prior authorial figure, particularly from the hobbits. This is a necessary condition for Tolkien to pretend to recount an ancient tale found in an ancient and obscure manuscript, for his fictive stance as a redactor depends upon the records of that age being written and preserved until today.[8]

By this same process, Tolkien's fiction meets the last condition for elegiac romance: it is a foregone conclusion that anyone involved in the story being told is long dead; otherwise the story would be known outside of the *Red Book*, and would not need retelling. It is the character of Tolkien's redactor himself that engages in a type of hero-worship, looking back to ancient and more desperate days, finding in them a nobility and praiseworthy deeds worth recovering in a modern age. In this sense, he is not unlike the *Beowulf* poet that Tolkien imagines, calling up ages long forgotten to add a depth and meaning to his newer creation.

Tolkien's presentation of narrative time heightens the impression that we are reading an ancient work. His story is far from being a straightforward series of events, and instead moves backwards and forwards in time as he shifts perspective between Frodo and Sam, and the remainder of the Fellowship; since it is a story that happened

long ago, it need not be constrained to a linear telling. Furthermore, within the narrative present, we find countless allusions to past ages and events, and especially heroes, suggesting that Tolkien seeks to create the illusion that we are reading about a real world that possesses its own history, and that all events of the fictive present are thus naturally arising out of the past in a realistic manner. Every action in the past of Tolkien's world appears to have affected in some manner its narrative present. Moreover, Gandalf frequently finds himself working against time, and Aragorn is hard-pressed to arrive at Gondor in time to defend the city from Mordor's armies. The resultant effect is that time appears to move realistically rather than as it would be expected to move in the fairy realm, so that Tolkien's mortal heroes of ancient Middle-earth can live only for later times through memory and myth. In the present world of Tolkien's narration in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, the Third Age, time is mimetic in nature. Unlike the First Age, when there was neither Sun nor Moon and the world was lit first by magical lanterns, then mere starlight, then the Two Trees, the Second and Third Ages count time as we do, by days. This, too, arises with the introduction of Men into the mythology.[9]

Tolkien occasionally focuses his desired fictional effect of historic depth in characters described as the embodiment of this aesthetic principle. Called "the eldest and chief of the Ents, [. . .] oldest of all living things" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.8.545), Treebeard possesses a memory that perhaps exceeds even those of the Elves, a quality which affects his appearance. Pippin's description of Treebeard's eyes is particularly suggestive, for he explains that "'one felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory, and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present'" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.4.452). Tolkien likewise creates the impression of tremendous historical depth while narrating the events of his fictional present. In *Lord of the Rings*, he establishes a sense of continuity in time in this manner; we feel that the events of the present are more important because of their origins in legendary history. Tolkien's fictions are thus "sparkling with the present," that is, in events that occur in the secondary time depicted, and appear "filled with ages of memory" because of the songs and tales of older times integrated into the present action.

Aragorn is twice described as a character in whom Tolkien's aesthetic sense of time is embodied. As the ancient crown is placed on his head at his coronation, following

the destruction of the One Ring and the obliteration of Sauron and the Nazgûl, we are told that Aragorn "was revealed to them for the first time," for "ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.5.947).[10] The second time he is thought to be both young and old comes at the time of his death, which Aragorn chooses like the first Númenórean kings. In "A Part of the Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" in the appendices of *Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn says that he is "the last of the Númenóreans and the latest King of the Elder Days," and that he was given "not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, but also the grace to go at [his] will, and give back the gift" (1037). We are told that rather than a grievous death, as the fallen Númenóreans experienced, "he fell into sleep." "Then a great beauty was revealed in him, so that all who after came there looked on him in wonder; for they saw that the grace of his youth, and the valour of his manhood, and the wisdom and majesty of his age were blended together. And long there he lay, an image of the splendour of the Kings of Men in glory undimmed before the breaking of the world" (*Lord of the Rings* 1038).

The beauty with which Tolkien endues these characters suggests that this particular quality of antiquity-within-youth, and vice versa, is one of his foremost aesthetic goals; he works towards creating in his fictions as a whole the same fundamental attributes he gives to Treebeard and Aragorn, and also to the Elves, whose immortality makes them the very embodiment of this concept.[11] Sam has an epiphany early in the quest, one that catches Frodo by surprise for its insight, when he says that the Elves "'are quite different from what [he] expected—so old and young, and so gay and sad, as it were'" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.4.85). Their eternal youth is paradoxical, for they suffer the fate of the elderly in seeing all that they love in nature and in Men die by time's hand while they are spared. Everything and everyone in Middle-earth seemingly has a dual nature; Tolkien attempts to present a fourth dimension—time itself—in a manner which we can perceive.[12] Tolkien's is a fictional world in which memory and history are continuously reaffirmed.

One of the most ready examples of this temporal layering in *The Hobbit* comes with the dwarves' encounter with the Wood-elves of Mirkwood.[13] Thorin is captured by the Elves and taken to the halls of the Elvenking. The narrator interjects at this point an

explanation of the Wood-elves, differentiating them from Elves such as Galadriel and Celeborn of *Lord of the Rings*:

> [Wood-elves] differed from the High Elves of the West, and were more dangerous and less wise. For most of them (together with their scattered relations in the hills and mountains) were descended from the ancient tribes that never went to Faerie in the West. There the Light-elves and the Deep-elves and the Sea-elves went and lived for ages, and grew fairer and wiser and more learned, and invented their magic and their cunning craft in the making of beautiful and marvellous things, before some came back into the Wide World. (*The Hobbit* 8.162)

Summarized in these few lines, delivered by a matter-of-fact narrator, are well over a hundred pages of *The Silmarillion* explaining the differences between the various types of Elves. In *The Annotated Hobbit*, Douglas A. Anderson identifies the proper names of these tribes as they are found elsewhere in Tolkien's writings; "The Light-elves, Deep-elves, and Sea-elves," he notes, "refer to the Three Kindred of High Elves" named "the Vanyar, the Noldor, and the Teleri" (n. 218). Throughout his writing career, Tolkien never gave up hope that one day his *Silmarillion* would be published, and here we find an early reference to it. Hoping that one day people would be able to read its mythological tales as well, Tolkien makes a glancing reference to the First Age that saw the awakening of the Elves and their sundering on the journey to Valinor. The malice of Melkor/Morgoth, who destroyed the Two Trees (the Wood-elves never saw these, which is why they are also called Dark Elves), and his theft of the Silmaril jewels that brought the exiled Noldor back to Middle-earth are left implicit. There can only be a contrast between the Wood-elves and the other Elves in *The Hobbit* because the Noldor are present; had there been no exile from Valinor, there would only be Wood-elves in the world without a point for comparison.

The richness of detail in the temporal layering of Tolkien's works further appears when we find episodes that seemed minor have a wider historical significance. Upon the hobbits' escape from the Old Forest that lies just outside the Shire in *Lord of the Rings*, they are captured by a barrow-wight, a ghost that has taken up his revenant-residence within the tomb of an ancient king of Westernesse, a descendent of Númenor. Upon their

rescue by Tom Bombadil, Merry wakes from a dream and remembers events from a distant and forgotten past as though he had lived them: "'the men of Carn Dûm came on us at night, and we were worsted,'" he cries, and suddenly shouts "'Ah! the spear in my heart!'" before he realizes it was a dream of a tertiary time (*Lord of the Rings* 1.8.140).[14] Later encounters further illuminate this particle of history, as when Denethor looks at the blade of the barrow-downs that Pippin still carries and sees it is an ancient blade of Westernesse, the Northern kindred of the Gondorians.[15] The barrow-downs' proximity to the Shire, being the burial place for the kings and queens of that ancient kingdom, suggests that the home of the hobbits was once a part of the lands of the Númenóreans: the Elf Gildor, whom Frodo and Sam meet in the Shire, tells them that "others dwelt here before hobbits were; and others will dwell here after hobbits are no more" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.3.82).[16] As they say, nothing lasts forever, and even the rescue of the Shire from Saruman and his ruffians cannot ensure its safety from the slow march of years.

While this elaborateness of historical detail is an attempt to foster Secondary Belief, as explained in chapter 1, Tolkien finds a similar historical flavour in *Beowulf* without wondering if the story was trying to make the poem appear more "real." He refers to the effect of that heroic-elegiac poem as "an echo of an echo" because in his view, its author uses materials of a past age as means to create the feeling of antiquity and regret rather than reality. *Beowulf*, Tolkien says, "was not designed to [. . .] write the history of the Geatish kingdom and its downfall. But it used knowledge of these things for its own purpose—to give that sense of perspective, of antiquity with a greater and yet darker antiquity behind. These things are mainly on the outer edges or in the background because they belong there, if they are to function in this way" ("Monsters" 38). In *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien establishes a sense of continuity in time in this manner, so that the events of the past explain those of the present—tertiary time causes secondary time. While speaking with the wizard Mithrandir (who is better known to us as Gandalf), Elrond realizes that "'in the hour that Isildur took the Ring and would not surrender it, this doom was wrought, that Sauron should return'" (*The Silmarillion* 5.373). Additionally, as Sam exclaims, he and Frodo are "'in the same tale'" as the mythological heroes Beren and Eärendil (*Lord of the Rings* 4.8.697). Through the constant allusions to the past we are given the impression that the events of the fictional present are weighted

with significance, as well as the impression that any and all deeds worthy of note are remembered, thus fulfilling the Anglo-Saxon desire for glory that is recognized at Beowulf's funeral: *lofgeornost,* he is called, "most eager for fame" (*Beowulf* line 3182b).[17] Tolkien's "tertiary" heroes, though they die, are forever remembered by his "secondary" heroes.

The creation of the illusion of depth in a fictional world relates Tolkien's aesthetics most to those of the *Beowulf* poet, at least as Tolkien conceived him. Where Tolkien says "the illusion of historical truth and perspective, that has made *Beowulf* seem such an attractive quarry, is largely a product of art" ("Monsters" 10-11), we can aptly substitute *Lord of the Rings* for *Beowulf.* This is one of the characteristic features of his works that creates the impression they have parallels to medieval literature. In another passage on *Beowulf* that implicitly relates also to Tolkien's own artistic objectives, he says: "the whole must have succeeded admirably in creating [. . .] the illusion of surveying a past, pagan but noble and fraught with a deep significance—a past that itself had depth and reached backward into a dark antiquity of sorrow. This impression of depth is an effect and a justification of the use of episodes and allusions to old tales, mostly darker, more pagan, and desperate than the foreground" (34). Tolkien characterizes the *Beowulf* poet as an artist attempting to create a relatively new story out of older material, having as his grounding the desire to show that "doom," the acceptance of *wyrd,* is *more* "literary than *αμαρτια* [hamartia: tragic flaw]" ("Monsters" 19). The layering of narrative, for example the scop's singing of Sigemund's killing of the dragon, which belongs in tertiary time before *Beowulf*'s main action, illustrates that all of the best and brightest heroes must eventually die. Having already written the bulk of the history of Middle-earth in *The Silmarillion,* Tolkien gives us a strong impression in his other works of "surveying a past," illusory as it is, in a similar manner.

Tolkien breaks all repetitive cycles in his works to create the elegiac feeling: all that is familiar and predictable in the world is lost. We witness the end of the Third Age, the last of the Noldor return to the Undying Lands, the destruction of the One Ring whose evil influence dominates its wearer, and the fading of mythological time itself. Tolkien represents the fading of all peoples, even Men whose Númenórean blood is failing, as a loss to those who will come after; ours is an impoverished world devoid of enchantment

and memory.[18] Tolkien tells us of the "Fading Years" of Middle-earth most fully in *The Silmarillion*. Before the One Ring was destroyed and the other Rings of Power belonging to dwarves and Men with it, and the Three Rings of the Elves had passed into the Undying Lands, the Elves had already begun to withdraw, but were still known to Men. Tolkien here paints a picture of the enchanted world of Middle-earth between the wars against Sauron:

> In that time the Noldor walked still in the Hither Lands, mightiest and fairest of the children of the world, and their tongues were still heard by mortal ears. Many things of beauty and wonder remained on earth in that time, and many things also of evil and dread: Orcs there were and trolls and dragons and fell beasts, and strange creatures old and wise in the woods whose names are forgotten; Dwarves [sic] still laboured in the hills and wrought with patient craft works of metal and stone that none now can rival. But the Dominion of Men was preparing and all things were changing, until at last the Dark Lord arose in Mirkwood again. (5.371)

The world that is lost is one in which desire is fulfilled: despite the potential dangers, Tolkien confesses that he has always "desired dragons with a profound desire," but thinks himself too cowardly to want them in the Primary World ("On Fairy-Stories" 41). The absolute desirability of the enchantment of the world before the Fourth Age makes the loss of it harder to accept, and simultaneously distances it from our mundane world. Antiquity becomes more remote, more distant, as Tolkien might say—an effect that itself has an appeal most notably dealt with in "Leaf by Niggle"—through the loss of those who lived it. The inescapability of mortality, meaning the death of the heroes and any of their own time who remember them, means that a transformation is necessary: written history is the substitute for memory.

As I said at the end of chapter 2, Frodo's quest to destroy the One Ring is a burden that falls to him because of events in the past. Because the unmaking of the Ruling Ring will end the powers of Elves to preserve nature in Middle-earth, it simultaneously implies a loss of the living memories of the Elves and Wizards to the world of Men.[19] Frodo's quest can be taken quite literally as divestment of the past as well, an attempt to break the cycle of greed, violence, and desire for domination

embodied by the similarly circular Ring. Each test that a person of power must endure because of Frodo's reluctance to carry the Ring illustrates the sameness that temptation by the Ring causes. Gandalf knows that his powers would be corrupted and he would become evil, for he is a Maiar like Sauron and Saruman, and would be no different from the others: "with that power I should have power too great and terrible," he says, "and over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly. [. . .] I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.60). Galadriel also sees herself becoming a terrible and beautiful queen who would rule Middle-earth mercilessly, saying: "I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! [. . .] All shall love me and despair!" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.7.356). Isildur was corrupted by the Ring but had only begun that transformation before he was killed. Boromir reveals the same thoughts of domination and power in his desire to wield the Ring by claiming it as his birthright, as Frodo does at the edge of Mount Doom where he claims the Ring for his own (*Lord of the Rings* 2.10.390; 6.4.924). All those who succumb to the Ring would become an image of Sauron in their own way, and their effect on the world would vary only in the amount of power their different natures would enable them to wield. Frodo must be taken into the Undying Lands to be given the time with which to heal his spirit, having nearly become the evil "Lord of the Ring" himself.[20]

The apparently cyclical time experienced by the Elves and the Fellowship of the Ring in Lothlórien, consisting of the passing of days without any clear delineation between one and the next, is ended by Frodo's quest, and the domination of linear time, associated with mortality, sweeps the Elves away into legend and myth. Galadriel's ring of power, Nenya, had sustained Lothlórien's relatively changeless realm. It had long been known by Elves that should the Ruling Ring be destroyed, "the powers of the Three must then fail and all things maintained by them must fade, and so the Elves should pass into the twilight and the Dominion of Men begin" (*The Silmarillion* 5.371). The attempts of the Elves to preserve the natural world, being the means by which Sauron deceived them into crafting the Rings of Power, are undone, and time will again affect their realms so that even the mallorn trees of Lothlórien will eventually die. Rendered powerless with the destruction of the Ruling Ring, the lesser rings can no longer maintain the bulwarks against time's relentless assault upon their realms.[21]

Living Memory and Collective Recollections

That Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* present us a world on the cusp of a new Age creates a unique situation: the coming of the Fourth Age, the Age of Men, means that the Elves and enchantment of the world will forever pass away. Unlike the patchwork history of our modern world , in Middle-earth most history has been preserved up to this point not in books, but in *memory* itself, by the immortal Elves and long-lived Ents, as well as the Wizards who have lived in the likeness of Men for two millennia. As the *Silmarillion* tends towards romance as mortality is introduced, so too does memory slowly become history by the writing down of events. To produce his characteristic illusion of historicity, Tolkien makes memory and history immanent in *The Lord of the Rings*, so that the past is always readily available to lend meaning and scope to the present.

Like the *Beowulf* poet, Tolkien is always conscious of the impending loss of memories to the passing of time, and creates in *Lord of the Rings* the exact condition that gives us the most compelling vision of this gradual process of forgetting. The story of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* comes at the very end of his vast mythology, and not only shows the ending of the Third Age and beginning of the Fourth, but heralds the end of an era. At the Council of Elrond Gandalf reports the words of Saruman, who says: "'the Elder days are gone. The Middle Days are passing. The Younger Days are beginning. The time of the Elves is over, but our time is at hand: the world of Men [. . .]. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.252-3). Although expressed by a villain here, the sense that the world of Middle-earth as it is known is passing away cannot be made clearer. For Tolkien, the enchantment of the temporally distant past is of primary importance to his artistic and aesthetic endeavour. However, he is cautious of being too overt with this aesthetic principle in his works, for he also believes that the power of myth "is at its best when it is presented by a poet who feels rather than makes explicit what his theme portends: who presents it incarnate in the world of history and geography" ("Monsters" 19). Tolkien does precisely this in his representation of Middle-earth throughout his works. His aesthetic love of a distant past becomes "incarnate" in his descriptions of the history and geography, and especially in

the mythologies and songs of his imaginary world. The recollection of the past by characters in the present is the means by which the hobbits learn the histories and preserve them, and gives Tolkien's works their characteristic illusion of historicity.

Depicted as the most beautiful and wise of all beings in Middle-earth, the Elves possess the longest memories of the past save perhaps the Ents, who have even less interaction with Men and hobbits than do Elves. This makes the loss of them more heartbreaking: before the end of the Third Age, we find in the Elves what would certainly be one of the most alluring aspects of immortality from Tolkien's viewpoint, the memory of all things that had gone before.[22] For the Elves there is no time for which no histories exist; all events concerning the Elves did not need to be recorded, but are forever remembered by the participants. Gandalf says the archives of Gondor, which contain countless histories and chronicles since the fall of Númenor, are little-used, and the language in which they are written is no longer understood in Middle-earth except by Wizards. The histories of the Third Age, as recorded by the hobbits, produce a singular effect: it is at this precise moment that living memories of the past and oral traditions are being freshly written down before they vanish forever from the world, and Tolkien's stand-in redactor purports to have recovered those memories in their written forms.[23] The *Red Book of Westmarch* is, he implies, the sole surviving manuscript of Middle-earth that retains the memories of the Elves. We find in *Lord of the Rings*, and to a lesser extent in *The Hobbit*, particular emphasis placed on the communication of living memories, either as narrative or as songs. In the passing of the Third Age, the loss of such memories as are held by the Elves becomes a much more fitting subject for lamentation.

One of the eldest major characters throughout Tolkien's works is Elrond Half-elven, son of Eärendil the Mariner and brother to Elros, first king of Númenor.[24] While he is not one of the original High Elves who saw the Two Trees in the First Age before they were destroyed, he was born near the end of the First Age of the Sun, after the Eldar and Edain, the exiled Noldor Elves and Men from the Northlands respectively, joined forces against Morgoth. While the course of action in dealing with the One Ring is being decided at the Council of Elrond in *Lord of the Rings*, he reveals his age and the scope of his knowledge, both of which are merely hinted at in *The Hobbit*. There, it is said only that he is a lore-master, that he "knew all about runes of every kind," and particularly that

he has knowledge of the Elven kingdom of Gondolin, which was destroyed by Morgoth in the First Age (*The Hobbit* 3.59). Yet when discussing the "Last Alliance between Elves and Men, and the hosts of Gil-galad and Elendil [. . .] in Arnor" at the Council, Elrond says, "'I remember well the splendour of their banners [. . .]. It recalled to me the Elder Days and the hosts of Beleriand, so many great princes and captains were assembled. And yet not so many, nor so fair, as when Thangorodrim was broken, and the Elves deemed that evil was ended forever, and it was not so'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.236-7). Frodo is incredulous that anyone could claim to have been present at the battle where Isildur, Aragorn's ancestor, had taken the Ring from Sauron, let alone claim to remember Thangorodrim at the breaking of Angbad by the Valar and the exile of Morgoth in the First Age. Were it not for the hobbit's astonished reply to this, "'I thought that the fall of Gil-galad was a long age ago'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.237), we would not be aware of the true measure of time that lies behind Elrond. What is to Frodo the most remote past is for Elrond actual memory rather than learning: "'I have seen three ages in the West of the world,'" he says to Frodo, and he tells of "'the last combat on the slopes of Orodruin, where Gil-Galad died, and Elendil fell,'" and Isildur took the Ring for his own as "'weregild'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.237). Elrond's departure means that his memories will become mere history, set down in writing as *The Silmarillion*, the historical backcloth to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.[25]

The name Gil-galad, for example, is completely unknown to Merry, as though he were an insignificant historical figure. When Strider brings the hobbits to the ruins upon Weathertop, he tells them that where they stand was once the watchtower of Amon Sûl where "'Elendil stood [. . .] watching for the coming of Gil-galad out of the West, in the days of the Last Alliance'" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.181). The elegiac remembrance of Gil-galad's deeds in the text makes the reader consider him as if he belongs to the secondary time, in effect, because he is one of its definitive historical shapers; his fatal fight against Sauron has immediate relevance to the impending attack of the Nazgûl. His death and failure to destroy the Dark Maiar completely, for the Ring itself survived, means that the Nine Riders still exist in the world and remain a threat to the Quest of the Ringbearer. It is Sam who, having learned the song from Bilbo, begins to sing the tale that we feel the

others *ought* to know, effectively bringing the fallen hero from the tertiary time into the secondary time through an act of elegiac remembrance:

> Gil-galad was an Elven-king.
> Of him the harpers sadly sing:
> the last whose realm was fair and free
> between the Mountains and the Sea.
> [. . . . . .]
> But long ago he rode away,
> and where he dwelleth none can say;
> for into darkness fell his star,
> in Mordor where the shadows are. (1.9.181)

Sam thinks that Bilbo had composed the song, but Aragorn tells him that it was only translated by Bilbo, and that the verses that Sam recited are only "part of the lay that is called *The Fall of Gil-galad*, which is in an ancient tongue" (1.9.181-2). As we learn from the Appendices and *The Silmarillion*, the name belongs to a great Elven king, the last High King of the Elves after the destruction of Gondolin by Morgoth's forces and the death of Turgon. Gil-galad assembled an army of Elves and Men, the Last Alliance, with which he and the men of Westernesse defeated Sauron's forces, but he died on the field. Elrond, we learn, was his herald. Sam's incomplete knowledge of the lay, for he did not want to learn the parts about Mordor that scared him, shows that the conversion from memory to learned history is problematic; the loss of memory is something to be elegized in itself.

One of the earliest chapters of *Lord of the Rings* to introduce historicity is "The Shadow of the Past," in which many legends remembered only vaguely in the Shire are confirmed as truths. This is done in no subtle way, for Tolkien desires to make his point explicit: the hobbits of the Shire have forgotten much of the history of the world, even that which should still concern them, namely Sauron himself and the shadow of Mordor.[26] In the years leading up to Frodo's departure from the Shire, dwarves seeking refuge in the West bring rumours to the Shire of the return of "the Enemy" to the "Land of Mordor," of which the narrator tells us: "That name the hobbits only knew in legends of the dark past, like a shadow in the background of their memories; but it was ominous and disquieting.

It seemed that the evil power in Mirkwood had been driven out by the White Council only to reappear in the dark strongholds of Mordor. The Dark Tower had been rebuilt [. . .]" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.42-3). "The evil power in Mirkwood," we are to learn, was Sauron "taking shape and power again" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.244), who had been assaulted and seemingly defeated by the Wizards at the same time as Bilbo and the dwarves were making their way to the Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*. The fact that those names are mere legend for the hobbits, while for Men and dwarves and Elves, the name of Mordor expresses evil incarnate, illustrates the insularity of hobbit society; Strider must tell the hobbits not to speak the name "Mordor" aloud, for it is dangerous to do so. In the Shire, hobbits guffaw at Sam when he claims that his cousin saw one of the "Tree-men" that was "as big as an elm-tree, and walking—walking seven yards to the stride" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.2.43). As Merry and Pippin are the first to learn, Sam's Tree-man is an Ent, and the mythical oliphaunt that Sam sings about is also called a Mûmak of Harad, a giant elephant used in the Southern lands for warfare.

Throughout Tolkien's works, we find that the most important knowledge is that which has been lost to us. This loss comes as a result of mortality in the case of Men, and sometimes even in the case of Elves, for as the Doom of the Noldor says, they too can be slain and depart Middle-earth in this way. This is made most explicit in *Lord of the Rings* when, approximately seventeen years after Bilbo's disappearance from his own "eleventy-first birthday" party (*Lord of the Rings* 1.1.21), Gandalf tells Frodo the origin of Bilbo's Ring and summarizes the chain of events leading up to Frodo's possession of it. As the wizard says, echoing the Anglo-Saxon ethos Tolkien so loved in *Beowulf*, "that is a chapter of ancient history that it might be good to recall, for there was sorrow then too, and gathering dark, but great valour, and great deeds that were not wholly vain" (1.2.51). He speaks briefly of Gil-galad and Elendil, and their defeat of Sauron, and suggests that Frodo will later hear the tale "told in full from one who knows it best," whom we discover to be Elrond (1.2.51). Following Sauron's disappearance and Isildur's death, Gandalf says, "'the Ring was lost. [. . .] There in the dark pools amid the Gladden Fields, [. . .] the Ring passed out of knowledge and legend; and even so much of its history is known now only to a few, and the Council of the Wise could discover no more'" (1.2.51). By questioning Gollum, Gandalf learns how it was that the creature who

was once of hobbit-kind took the One Ring deep into the Misty Mountains and kept it hidden there for so long, far out of the knowledge of Men and Sauron himself. Saruman's reassurance of the White Council, "that the One would never again be found in Middle-earth" having "'rolled down the River to the Sea'" (2.2.244), is proven false. This also shows that the single most important weapon of the entire history of the War of the Ring, the One Ring itself, was too long, and nearly disastrously, ignored and forgotten.

The knowledge that the grey wizard shares with the hobbit burdens Frodo with the entire history of the War of the Ring, and with the future of Middle-earth and its peoples. The immediacy of the danger, however, is interestingly contrasted with the antiquity of the tale: nothing that Gandalf tells Frodo is particularly *new* information, but is rather so old that its importance and urgency have been neglected and forgotten. As he points out, the name "Mordor" is a name that hobbits have heard of, even if only as "'a shadow on the borders of old stories'" (1.2.50). Gandalf has merely pieced together the innumerable strands of legend and myth similarly known to the hobbits, but which have unfortunately been disregarded far too long, so that the reemergence of an evil from the past is almost mistaken by the hobbits for a recent turn of events. Such is not the case, Gandalf and others tell Frodo, but instead this is merely the most recent development of a story that stretches as far back into time as the Second Age when Sauron deceived the Elves into making Rings of Power while secretly forging the One Ring to rule them. But this forgetfulness is not limited to hobbits; rather it is rampant throughout the mortal world.

As Gandalf recounts at Rivendell, the Steward Denethor frowned upon his visit to the library at Gondor, telling Gandalf: "'you will find naught that is not well known to me, who am master of the lore of this City'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.2.246). The Steward has apparently forgotten that Isildur had written a scroll after the battle on Orodruin before he perished in the Anduin near the Gladden Fields. It is in Gandalf's reading of that scroll, written in a "script and tongue" that has become "dark to later men," even to lore-masters, that he finds the proof that Frodo's ring is the Ruling Ring of Sauron (2.2.246). The wizard quotes from Isildur's hand, "'records" of the Great Ring "shall be left in Gondor, where also dwell the heirs of Elendil, *lest a time come when the memory of these matters shall grow dim*'" (2.2.246; emphasis mine). The attempt to preserve memory against forgetfulness by writing it down might here be seen to fail, for Gandalf

alone knows how to read the forgotten language. And yet, while not readily accessible, the ancient scroll nevertheless provides the necessary information at the necessary time.[27] The histories written by the hobbits are not made in vain; their attempts to preserve the memories of the Third Age and of the earlier ages from the tales of the Elves may be fated to disappear and be forgotten for ages afterwards, and yet the fact that Tolkien's fictive redactor has found and translated them means that they succeeded in their purpose: they bring to the present age memories of a time long since past in which great heroes fought and died to ensure the survival of goodness and beauty in the world. It should also be noted that the same darkness that is the metaphorical representation of Morgoth's, Sauron's, Ungoliant's, and Shelob's evil is used as a metaphor for ignorance and forgetfulness; memory becomes "dark" and "dim" as it fades. Gandalf's resurrection in white instead of grey is synonymous with the restoration of his full memory—he had difficulty deciphering the door to Moria, and became lost in its tunnels, but after his return appears to be nearly infallible. Remembering the past opposes such a darkening of the world.

Myths and Legends are not, strictly speaking, history, and yet they too are dependent upon the passing of time. Like numerous other writers and critics, Tolkien perceives that history and myth are interconnected; they are "of the same stuff." Tellingly, at one point Aragorn observes that fables are "made as true knowledge fades" (*Lord of the Rings* 3.2.431). In our modern world fables are more distorted than in Middle-earth because of the greater span of intervening years; the remembrance of true knowledge over time has caused many truths to flow together into a "soup" by the act of transmitting the tale from one teller to another. However, Tolkien's mythological *Silmarillion*, unlike the fragmentary stories of the Primary World, is mostly complete, for it is written by the Elves who did not learn their history from others but instead lived it. It is presented not as a fiction, open to interpretation or exegesis by the Elves, but rather as the memories of an immortal race. Galadriel, who is named as one of the original leaders of the Noldor during the war against the dark Vala Morgoth, is encountered in the narrative "present," thus confirming (like so many other legends of Middle-earth) the truth of the myth.[28] What differentiates the mythological quality of Tolkien's *Silmarillion* from the more realistic representation of time in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* is

mortality. Tolkien says of *The Silmarillion* that with the introduction of Men into the latter half of the story, it edges away from mythology and becomes more like a "heroic-fairy-romance" (*Letters* 149), suggesting that the introduction of mortality and the possibility of death are what makes it a romance rather than myth.[29] The elegiac tone of sadness in *Lord of the Rings*, which produces much of its poetic strength, comes not from a tragic death from hubris such as we find in Denethor, but instead from the resigned acknowledgment that the Elves, the heroes, the Ringbearers and all enchantment are departing from the world. The departure of living memories from Middle-earth means that only written records, such as those that the mortal Men of Gondor keep, and those that the hobbits begin to write, will preserve an impoverished echo of their experiences.

Living in Memory: Making Time Stand Still

Aside from Tolkien's characters that we follow in the narrative present, or secondary time in *Lord of the Rings*, many exist in tertiary time whose most significant actions are recalled by secondary-time characters, hence giving the former a kind of pseudo-presence in the text. In the textualization of action and memory, which takes place even as all those depart whose memories have until now served as a history, it is precisely this quality of *absent presence*, which we find in the stories of Beren and Lúthien, Gil-galad, Eärendil, and Elendil, that Tolkien seeks to give to the entire world of Middle-earth. The tertiary time and people are only remembered in these histories, recovered after long ages of obscurity. As Tolkien says in "Monsters," "the author of Beowulf showed forth the permanent value of that pietas which treasures the memory of man's struggles in the dark past, man fallen and not yet saved, disgraced but not dethroned" (28). Like the *Beowulf* poet, Tolkien accords each character the same reverence and remembrance which they in turn bestow upon the pseudo-characters of his text's tertiary time. The work in its entirety functions as a prolonged elegy for lost heroes of a pre-Christian world.

The most common means of communicating memories in Middle-earth is the oral tradition of telling stories and singing songs; Elrond Half-elven is unique to immortals in his writing of their histories, possibly because of some instinct from his half-mortal heritage, and the archives of Gondor have fallen into disuse and obscurity, having become

indecipherable to all but a few masters of lore—they are thought to possess no practicality. Tolkien's characters constantly tell stories to entertain themselves and one another throughout their travels. Interestingly, these tales and songs are often about historic events which serve to link the singer with the subject.[30] The Elves are primarily associated with singing heroic-elegiac lays, such as the lament for Gandalf sung in Lothlórien (*Lord of the Rings* 2.7.350), or Legolas's singing in Cormallen after he hears the cry of the sea-birds: "I will leave the woods that bore me; / For our days are ending and our years are failing" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.4.935).[31] The hobbits of the Shire at first tend towards happier tunes, such as Bilbo's song "The Road Goes Ever On," or the occasional drinking-song, such as the song that Frodo sings at "The Prancing Pony" in Bree, which is apparently the ancient ancestor to the well-known children's song "Hey-diddle-diddle" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.155-6). However, as the quest takes them towards Mordor, the hobbits' songs change radically. Frodo's singing of Bilbo's song "The Road Goes Ever On" is more tragic and ballad-like: "eager feet" becomes "weary feet" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.1.35; 1.3.72). The third and final time it is sung in the book, Bilbo alters it significantly, ending with "evening rest and sleep to meet" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.6.965). Experience and age, it would seem, bring an unconscious transition from mirth to sorrow; the hobbits' maturation through their trials and tribulations leads them also to consider the possibility of their own deaths, and gives rise to the desire to become a subject of elegy as well. Significantly, Samwise Gamgee, the hobbit who undergoes the greatest character development while fulfilling something of the role of squire to Frodo's knight, among other capacities, is much more interested in learning and singing heroic-elegiac lays throughout *Lord of the Rings* than many others, and begins to consider his own quest in the context of the greater heroes of song and legend. It is frequently through him that we learn of the old tales of heroes, as his and Frodo's tale is destined to become.

Upon the stairs of Cirith Ungol, Sam and Frodo discuss the creation of heroic-elegiac stories from the events of real life. The gardener displays an uncanny sense that he and Frodo are participating in a story, and his meditation on heroic action has particular resonance with his manifestation in Tolkien's fiction. He notes primarily the requirement of the hero to persevere in the face of danger and obstacles, such as the ones that he and Frodo face:

> "The brave things in old tales and songs, [. . .] adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them [. . .]. I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because *they'd have been forgotten. We hear about the ones as just went on—and not all to a good end, mind you*; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end." (*Lord of the Rings* 4.8.696; emphasis mine)

However, the ending that Sam refers to, and is yet afraid to recognize, is the death of the hero. Note that those "outside" the story, meaning *us*, might think that death is a good end for a hero, for it is more poetically forceful than the happy ending; elegiac romance makes for a better story, Sam seems to imply. Also, as Sam confessed about his ignorance of the remainder of "The Fall of Gil-galad," it was due to a reluctance to hear of the horror and tragedy of the battle in Mordor rather than a lack of interest, and he did learn the part in which the king dies.[32] But the conversation continues, and Frodo is the one who finally suggests that mortality plays a part in such tales. Sam says:

> "[. . .] Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course, and goes past the happiness and into grief and beyond it—and the Silmaril went on and came to Eärendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got—you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?"
>
> "No, they never end as tales," said Frodo. "But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended. Our part will end later—or sooner." (4.8.696-7)

Sam at this point wonders aloud whether he and Frodo "'shall ever be put into songs or tales'" that will be "'told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards'" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.8.697). Ironically, as readers of this so-called excerpt from *The Red Book of Westmarch*, we indeed know that

this will happen for the same reason that the heroes Sam mentions were preserved in his time; Sam and Frodo are already dead when we read their tale, and yet for their sacrifice and suffering their memory lives on in written form. After the destruction of the One Ring, Sam imagines a minstrel singing their tale, "'*the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom*,'" and thinks of people listening intently as they did in Rivendell when told "the tale of Beren One-hand and the Great Jewel'" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.4.929; original emphasis). When they are rescued and awake days later, a minstrel has indeed written their song, which bears Sam's imagined title. A character who memorializes all of his fallen heroes epitomizes the central values of elegiac romance; Sam incarnates the narrative voice within the genre.

When the hobbits encounter "Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant,"[33] who has come to reside in a cave at the top of Cirith Ungol on the edge of Mordor, one of these mythological heroes is mentioned again, and yet with powerful current relevance (*Lord of the Rings* 4.9.707). Holding aloft the star-glass in which Galadriel had captured some of the light from Eärendil's star, the guiding star and hope for Men, Frodo speaks the Mariner's name in some other voice, seemingly from out of the past, and the phial blazes to life:

> For a moment it glimmered, faint as a rising star struggling in heavy earthward mists, and then as its power waxed, and hope grew in Frodo's mind, it began to burn, and kindled to a silver flame, a minute heart of dazzling light, *as though Eärendil had himself come down from the high sunset paths with the last Silmaril upon his brow*. [. . .]
>
> [. . .] *Aiya Eärendil Elenion Ancalima!* [Frodo] cried, and knew not what he had spoken; for it seemed that another voice spoke through his, clear, untroubled by the foul air of the pit. (*Lord of the Rings* 4.9.704; emphasis mine)

Shelob is not cowed by these words, for she had heard the Elves cry that ages ago, but the fact that it is Frodo who speaks this, not being familiar with the words, suggests that he comes under the influence of the heroic spirit of the Mariner himself. Eärendil's self-sacrificing voyage to Valinor in the First Age is echoed here in Frodo; the hobbit, braving danger, journeys into a forbidden land bearing a token of power to liberate Middle-earth

from a dark lord. Through Sam's recollection of the song sung by Bilbo in Rivendell, and his speculation that they are a part of the same tale, Tolkien implies that the heroes of history are effectively present in the narrative, if only in spirit. Upon being remembered by Sam, Beren and Eärendil can aid the hobbits' quest by giving them spiritual guidance through former exemplary heroic action; Sam remembers their deeds at the precise point when they are most needed.[34]

Similarly, Aragorn and Arwen become inspirationally connected with their ancestors Beren and Lúthien through Aragorn's singing of the latter's tale. The rarity of a human-elf union, previously seen only in the stories of Beren and Lúthien, and Eärendil and Elwing, means that the love between Aragorn and Arwen cannot but be compared to those few predecessors. Yet it is well before the reader has been familiarized with the myths and histories of Tolkien's world that Aragorn sings of Beren and Lúthien; his is the first song to mention these mythic heroes. The hobbits, similarly naïve and unlearned in ancient lore, request of Aragorn "'a tale about the Elves before the fading time,'" that is, before Elves had begun to diminish in power and grow weary of Middle-earth, and return to the Undying Lands (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.187). Aragorn, at that point known to the hobbits only as Strider, says that he will sing "'the tale of Tinúviel,'" telling them that "'it is sad, as are all the tales of Middle-earth, and yet it may lift up [their] hearts'" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.187). He then recounts the meeting of Beren and Lúthien Tinúviel, and the sealing of their fates:

> One moment stood she, and a spell
> His voice laid on her: Beren came,
> And doom fell on Tinúviel
> That in his arms lay glistening.
> [. . . . . .]
> Long was the way that fate them bore,
> O'er stony mountains cold and grey,
> Through halls of iron and darkling door,
> And woods of nightshade morrowless.
> The Sundering Seas between them lay,
> And yet at last they met once more,

And long ago they passed away

In the forest singing sorrowless. (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.188-9)

As Strider implies before beginning the song, and as Sam later reflects, their tale goes "past the happiness and into grief and beyond it." It is elegiac in the sense that although both find happiness for a time following Beren's death and reincarnation, they withdraw from their peoples, and pass away in obscurity; Lúthien's beauty is forever lost to the Elves, the first of their kind never to be seen again in the world or after it, for her death is a mortal one, and she does not go to the Halls of Mandos to be reborn.[35]

As the depiction of these ancient lovers' deed grows in the narrative of *Lord of the Rings*, we as readers become increasingly aware that Aragorn's comparison of himself and Arwen to Beren and Lúthien is appropriate. In "The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen," upon their first meeting, Aragorn mistakes Arwen for Lúthien reborn. He calls her by the name Tinúviel (1033), and later realizes that in pursuing an elf-maiden who is forbidden to him by her father he has made the same choice as his ancestor Beren. Arwen tells the young Aragorn that she is not Lúthien, although "maybe [her] doom will be not unlike hers (i.e., Lúthien's)" (*Lord of the Rings* 1033). Arwen's choice to become mortal means eternal separation from Elrond, her father, which causes them a grief similar to that of Lúthien and her parents Thingol and Melian;[36] it would "endure beyond the ends of the world" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.6.956). In the appendices, it is said that because Elrond's Half-elven children were given the choice of mortality or immortality, for him "all chances of the War of the Ring were fraught with sorrow" (1011). By following in the footsteps of the tertiary characters Beren and Tinúviel, the secondary characters Aragorn and Arwen are seen to participate in the most moving and tragic part of Tolkien's mythology, the acceptance of mortality by an Elf for the love of a human. It is death, and the elegizing of the dead, through which Tolkien expresses the most potent emotions in his works.

To create the effect of "an echo of an echo" such as he saw in the *Beowulf* poem, Tolkien fabricates a historical document called *The Red Book of Westmarch* which he pretends to be the source for all of his texts, thereby giving his fictional world the illusion of historicity. There is a richness and a depth of time in the narrative that Tolkien creates: he tells us far more about each action and event than the mere details of its present

occurrence, because he indicates also how it is relevant to past events and enhances its significance in this way. We find that many places visited are former sites of a battle, of a fallen city or society, or the deathplace of a hero, all resulting from the conflict between the Free Peoples of Middle-earth and the evil lords Morgoth and Sauron. The struggle of the hobbits to cross the "Dead Marshes" where so many Men, Elves, and Orcs fought and died in the battle of The Last Alliance (4.2.614), gives their trial a larger significance; to survive where others perished may be thought heroic, especially since the spirits in the marshes are still present, and can kill the unwary. The layering of time in Tolkien's narrative, so that the past (tertiary) can still affect the present (secondary) and remains manifest within it, implies a cyclical time in the world that ends with Frodo's completion of the Quest, which ushers in a new age with a different temporal structure. Characters such as Treebeard, Aragorn, and the Elves, who are described as both ancient and youthful, embody the distinctive ethos of the time that is passing. Tolkien revivifies the Old English ethos of heroic death and provides the corresponding consolation: the undying remembrance of valorous deeds and sacrifice.

While it is the doom of Tolkien's characters to be nothing more than memories one day, it is also their salvation; being immortalized by song and legend exempts them from the damnation of seeking to lengthen their presence in Middle-earth unnaturally. The tragedy of death is pervasive, and yet as a poetic subject it preserves the deceased as memories within the narrative; this is the central quality that his fiction attains as elegiac romance. The unremitting elegiac treatment of dead heroes, forgotten knowledge, and the passage of time shows us a paradoxical reluctance to abandon the past; Tolkien himself suggests that we should not desire immortality. However, the impetus to escape the past and the desire to preserve it are not at odds. Tolkien does not counsel us to desire an immortality that, like the Elves or Númenóreans, would enable us to accumulate experience and memory for centuries or eons, and thus disrespect the value of the limited lives we have, but would rather have us enrich each moment of our lives so that we stretch out the natural span of life in perception only. The enchantment of Secondary Belief makes time pass differently while we are inside, just as time is seen to pass differently while the Fellowship is in Lothlórien. Tolkien's fictions themselves constitute such enrichment.

Notes for Chapter 3

[1] The *OED* defines "historicity" as: "Historic quality or character (opposed to legendary or fictitious)." It is the effect, or the appearance, of historicity that I am considering. By adopting the stance of redactor of the *Red Book of Westmarch* in the Prologue, and giving allusions to other, more ancient stories throughout the work, Tolkien makes *Lord of the Rings seem* to be a true history. In a sense, the feeling of depth in the story, manifest through the layering of the narrative present over the events of the past, transcends fictionality and instead becomes a Secondary reality, one that we can believe. The effect of historicity in Tolkien arises from the perception that time passes realistically in his world, an impression given by the emphasis on mortality.

[2] The word "redactor" refers to the fictitious academic who finds, translates, compiles, and narrates *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, both of which are episodes from the fictitious manuscript called *The Red Book of Westmarch*. The redactor is never named, although we might think that it is Tolkien who tells the story. This is not the case, for it is made very clear that these are indeed *real* histories to the redactor, and so he must exist in a Secondary World. An analogue to this layered narrative is Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in which the author Geoffrey Chaucer creates a fictional narrator also named Geoffrey Chaucer, who meets all of the pilgrims and listens to their tales first-hand.

[3] Although my terminology here is inspired by Tolkien's "Fairy-Stories" essay, the idea comes from Paul Ricoeur's conceptualization of different layers of narrative time in *Time in Narrative*. While his exploration of Saint Augustine's concept of time and his definition of historical characters mentioned or remembered in a narrative as "quasi-characters" are particularly insightful, I am more concerned with the manner in which such quasi-characters are presented within three distinct time-frames: their own present, the narrative past, and the modern recovery of that narrative. Similarly, Eärendil or Lúthien cannot really be called "quasi-characters" in my discussion, as I must also consider them as true characters because they are presented in *The Silmarillion* and the appendices to *Lord of the Rings*. For this reason I have differentiated between quasi-characters of tertiary time, and quasi-characters of secondary time, which Ricoeur lumps together as "quasi-time" (230). In chapter 2, Ricoeur argues that the impression of past, present, and future invoked by Aristotle's *Poetics* is mimetic in purpose; I argue the same for Tolkien's usage of historicity.

[4] The hobbits are Tolkien's preferred characters, because they see Middle-earth for the first time, whereas characters such as Aragorn, Legolas, Gandalf, and Gimli are familiar with the world. Tolkien gives Middle-earth what A.B. Taylor calls "romantic glamour" by writing from their point of view. By presenting "ordinary mortals living in new and strange surroundings," the author preserves the magic of the story and sustains "the spirit of mystery and romance" (216).

[5] See, e.g., Charles E. Noad, who writes in "On the Construction of *The Silmarillion*": "since the material was mythical and legendary, it had to be presented in something like the form that such material usually takes; and Tolkien was by now familiar with such things" as the *Kalevala*, the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Pearl*, and *the Völsungasaga*. Noad says that

these texts "have survived more or less intact from antiquity or else incorporate ancient material, even if only relatively recently compiled." Tolkien's mythology, he concludes, "had to reflect the form of ancient epic transmitted through time by being repeatedly copied; and it was as such a text or texts that Tolkien wanted to present his mythology" *The Silmarillion* (37).

[6] Tolkien did not italicize the title "The Red Book of Westmarch."

[7] We see that the title of the book that we hold while reading *Lord of the Rings* was not written by the redactor, but instead was thought of by Frodo himself. We might also note that all three of the book titles that Tolkien had planned, being *The Hobbit: or There and Back Again*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, "preserved," as it were, in Bilbo's "Translations from the Elvish," are present in the original *Red Book* handed to Sam. This may be Tolkien's redactor's way of suggesting his absolute impartiality and fealty to the original text: he has changed nothing, not even the titles intended by the original authors.

[8] As Anderson notes in "Tolkien After All These Years," Tolkien's original concept for his works began with "The Book of Lost Tales," now printed in the first volume of *The History of Middle-earth*, in which a man finds a cottage of Elves who tell him the histories of their people, and upon his return to his own land, writes down these stories as best he remembers them (143). The man, a mariner named Eriol, whose name recurs in many of Tolkien's fictions including "The Lost Road" and "The Notion Club Papers," is "an Anglo-Saxon mariner," indicating that his writing of the Elves' tales would have been in Old English, and that Tolkien would have been the modern-day "translator" of the text (143). This idea was preserved in his writing of *Lord of the Rings*, for Tolkien pretends to be a modern redactor, translating and compiling the fragments of a fictitious ancient manuscript into a single coherent work.

[9] Erich Auerbach touches on this subject in his comparison between Homeric and Old Testament heroes. He considers the latter to be more complex in its "picture of human beings," due to the "'multilayeredness' of the individual character" which is "hardly to be met with in Homer" (*Mimesis* 13). This greater complexity of characters is, he feels, partially dependent upon the effect that time has upon Old Testament heroes in granting them age and wisdom. Auerbach writes: "the old man, of whom we know how he has become what he is, is more of an individual than the young man; for it is only during the course of an eventful life that men are differentiated into full individuality; and it is this history of a personality which the Old Testament presents to us as the formation undergone by those whom God has chosen to be examples" (18):

> Time can touch the [Homeric heroes] only outwardly, and even that change is brought to our observation as little as possible; whereas the stern hand of God is ever upon the Old Testament figures; he has not only made them once and for all and chosen them, but he continues to work upon them, bends them and kneads them, and, without destroying them in essence, produces from them forms which their youth gave no grounds for anticipating. [. . .] And how much wider is the pendulum swing of their lives than that of the Homeric heroes! For they are bearers of the divine will, and yet they are fallible, subject to misfortune and humiliation—and in the midst of misfortune and in their humiliation their acts and words reveal the transcendent majesty of God. [.

> . .] The reader clearly feels how the extent of the pendulum's swing is connected with the intensity of the personal history—precisely the most extreme circumstances, in which we are immeasurably *forsaken and in despair*, or immeasurably *joyous and exalted*, give us, if we survive them, a personal stamp which is recognized as the product of a rich existence, a rich development. And very often, indeed generally, *this element of development* gives the Old Testament stories a *historical character, even when the subject is purely legendary and traditional*. (18; emphasis mine)

As was said earlier on *eucatastrophe*, the joy and celebration is made more compelling by the ever-present potential for *dyscatastrophe*. We might also note that the weaknesses and fallibility of the Old Testament characters are stressed, for Tolkien himself unequivocally states that "Frodo 'failed'" (*Letters* 252). It is the struggle of individual characters against overwhelming odds that provides us with the greatest celebration of spirit, and simultaneously produces a "historical character," or, as the *OED* defines it, "historicity" which extends even to those subjects legendary in origin.

[10] Tolkien suggests that we "compare the death of Aragorn with a Ringwriath" to see the polarity of consciously abandoning life when the time is right, versus clinging to an endless serial living (*Letters* 267).

[11] Faramir, in conversation with Frodo, describes his love of the city of Minas Tirith, giving us another idea of Tolkien's aesthetic: the captain values most highly the city's "'memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom'" (*Lord of the Rings* 4.5.656). The emphasis on age and experience as something to be loved and honoured implies that the loss of these things is tragic.

[12] Consider the manner in which Frodo appears to perceive the difference between cyclical time and mimetic time as he leaves Lórien. See chapter 1, pages 19-20.

[13] It should be noted that many of Tolkien's mythologies were altered by the writing of *The Hobbit*, especially in the case of Elrond and his Half-elven brethren: when Tolkien said that Elrond had blood of Elves and Heroes of the North in his veins, he inadvertently sparked a whole new development in his myths in which a Half-elf, Eärendil, sues for clemency of the Valar on behalf of both his lineages. See Anderson's *Annotated Hobbit*, page 94, and note 21 below. There is some difficulty in identifying which parts of *The Hobbit* were written first: whether the mythologies influenced the story, or vice versa. Either way, it still holds true that such examples that refer to past ages and people in *The Hobbit* are an attempt at crafting the illusion of historicity.

[14] See, e.g., Verlyn Flieger and John D. Rateliff, who deal with Tolkien's conveyance of memory through dreams at length, especially as it pertains to Tolkien's legendarium, in which the incomplete stories "The Lost Road" and "The Notion Club Papers" are found; both are Tolkien's attempt at creating a time-travel story, as agreed upon with fellow Inkling member C.S. Lewis, who wrote his space-travel trilogy to fulfill his part of the deal. Flieger deals with Merry's dream in the barrow-downs as well as others throughout *Lord of the Rings* in *A Question of Time: J.R.R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie*, (Kent, Ohio: Kent

State UP), 1997. See also John D. Rateliff, "*The Lost Road, The Dark Tower*, and *The Notion Club Papers*: Tolkien and Lewis's Time Travel Triad" (Flieger and Hostetter 199-218).

[15] The blade is used by Merry to stab the Black Rider that kills Théoden. Afterwards, the narrator says that the blade, being of Westernesse, had been wrought with a special enchantment against the Witch-King of Angmar, the wraith that Merry attacks: "No other blade, not though mightier hands had wielded it, would have dealt that foe a wound so bitter, cleaving the undead flesh, breaking the spell that knit his unseen sinews to his will" (*Lord of the Rings* 5.6.826). Tolkien may have borrowed the name Westernesse itself from the Middle English romance "King Horn," in which Horn's love interest is Rymenhild, daughter of the king of Westnesse. See "King Horn" (Treharne 495-25).

[16] The attention to detail that Tolkien exercised in this attempt to create an historical quality is astounding. In a single paragraph, he reveals an entirely different mythology upon which the Elves' naming of constellations is based. Frodo sits with the Elves, who have saved him from a Ringwraith, to watch the stars come out: "Away high in the East swung Remmirath, the Netted Stars, and slowly above the mists red Borgil rose, glowing like a red jewel of fire. Then by some shift of airs all the mist was drawn away like a veil, and there leaned up, as he climbed over the rim of the world, the Swordsman of the Sky, Menelvagor with his shining belt. The Elves all burst into song" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.3.80). Although I have not deciphered the reference to "the Netted Stars," I can with relative certainty say that "red Borgil" is Mars, and "Menelvagor" appears to be Orion the hunter, whose belt is easily recognizable in the sky; both of our names for these heavenly bodies are of Latin origin. Furthermore, Eärendil the Mariner is one of Tolkien's best-loved characters, existing in the growing mythology in one form or another since 1913 when Tolkien found the Anglo-Saxon word *éarendel*, which he translated as "ray of light" (*Letters* 150), and speculated that the word was originally a "proper name and not a common noun" belonging to "astronomical-myth, and was the name of a star or star-group" (*Letters* 385). Bearing a Silmaril, Eärendil sails the sky in his ship as the star which we recognize as Venus, and gives "a sign of hope to men" (*Letters* 385). Tolkien implies that Elvish society is completely different from ours, because they name the stars after historical and mythological figures that are unknown to us.

[17] Tolkien deals with the concept of *lofgeornost* at length in two previously unpublished manuscripts from which "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" was derived, recently edited and published by Michael Drout as *Beowulf and the Critics*. Tolkien quotes Beowulf's philosophy: "Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan worolde lifes. Wyrce se þe mote domes ær deaþe: þæt bið drihtguman æfter selest" ("Each one of us must live in expectation of the end of this worldly life. Let him who can earn good fame before death; that is the best thing, afterwards"; *Beowulf and the Critics* 131; Tolkien's translation). The praise for seeking glory suggests to Tolkien that *lofgeornost* is a pagan rather than a Christian value. J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf and the Critics*, ed. Michael D.C. Drout, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 248 (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 2002).

[18] In an interview with Tolkien, the B.B.C. radio interviewer Denys Guerrolt says, "there's an autumnal quality throughout *Lord of the Rings*—there's a sense of continual change . . . . Everything's

declining or fading, at least towards the end of the Third Age: every choice tends to the upsetting of some tradition. This seems to me like Tennyson's 'The old order changeth [. . .]'" (J.R.R. Tolkien, Interview with Denys Gueroult, Transcript).

[19] The Elves had long known that should the Ruling Ring be destroyed, "the powers of the Three must then fail and all things maintained by them must fade, and so the Elves should pass into the twilight and the Dominion of Men begin" (*Silmarillion* 5.371).

[20] It should be noted that Pippin mistakenly calls Frodo the Lord of the Ring: "'make way for Frodo, Lord of the Ring!'" he cries, but is quickly chastised by Gandalf, who tells him "'The Lord of the Ring is not Frodo, but the master of the Dark Tower of Mordor'" (*Lord of the Rings* 2.1.220). However, it might be said at the end, following Frodo's "failure," as Tolkien himself calls it, that Frodo comes dreadfully close to inheriting that title. His hand is maimed by Gollum, as is Sauron's by Isildur, who cut off the finger that bore the Ring.

[21] I thus disagree with the critic Margery Hourihan, who labels the destruction of the One Ring as an "unequivocally good" act that aligns "the forces of good [. . .] with the Western powers who dropped the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (53). Her opinion of *Lord of the Rings* is that it possesses an overly simplified vision of a dialectic between good and evil. In his *Letters* Tolkien himself laments the use of airplanes in war altogether. He also writes: "the news today about 'Atomic Bombs' is so horrifying one is stunned. The utter folly of these lunatic physicists to consent to do such work for war purposes: calmly plotting the destruction of the world!" (*Letters* 116). Whereas Hourihan claims that with the Ring's destruction, "evil is banished from the land, and the 'good' can return to their homes in peace," Saruman has wrecked the Shire, Frodo's homecoming is short-lived and he continues to suffer from his wounds, and the Elves have sacrificed their homes in Middle-earth and must depart.

[22] Tolkien, as I noted in chapter 1, was particularly drawn to the "blank spaces" of history, and desired to fill in those gaps of knowledge. Loren Eiseley is quoted by Marilyn Gaull as saying: "'man's oldest records told him nothing of himself. They showed him a picture limited, at best, to a few millennia in which he had warred and suffered, changed kings and customs, marked the face of the landscape with towns and chimneys, but, for all that, he had remained to himself unknown. . . . For a thinking being,' he concludes, 'to be without history is to make himself a fabricator of illusions'" (cit. Gaull 175).

[23] We might again compare the recovery of forgotten history to the Herderian project of recording *Volkslieder* and *Märchen* by scholars such as the Grimm brothers, or particularly Elias Lönnrot, who succeeded in creating a national mythology called the *Kalevala* by writing down the songs of the rune-singers in Karelia, in north-eastern Finland.

[24] Elrond is first identified in *The Hobbit* as having "both elves and heroes of the North for ancestors." As Anderson notes, Tolkien thought this idea to be "a fortunate accident" which arose from the "difficulty of constantly inventing good names for new characters" because of the tremendous repercussions it had on his mythology (Anderson *Annotated* 94; cit. *Letters* 346).

[25] Tolkien makes certain to explain exactly what it is that has been lost to the modern age, so that we become aware of this disparity upon our "return" to the Primary World, thus providing us with Recovery. We are made to share in the lamentation, for in this way Tolkien hopes to teach us to avoid becoming Orcs by enslaving ourselves to machines and worshipping power. Being emotionally "moved" by the losses depicted in the Secondary World means that we will cherish such enchantment and nature as we can still find in our own world, which is the manner in which Tolkien communicates his own particular anti-industrial message.

[26] Much of the peril for the Shire lies in its complacency and insulation from the world, and yet it is paradoxically implied that places of the Shire must be allowed to remain in existence, and must be defended from the corruption of the war-torn age. Also, consider the manner in which the hobbits have forgotten, and been forgotten by, the world outside of the Shire. See chapter 2, page 55.

[27] So, too, might we think of the *Red Book of Westmarch*, which, having lain unnoticed for countless centuries, is now recovered and translated for our age, according to Tolkien's fiction. Tolkien apparently thought it necessary for his story to come to light when it did, possibly in response to the events of the modern day, being the two World Wars, or the gathering speed of industrialization in England.

[28] In his *Letters*, Tolkien writes that, following Morgoth's exile, "the Exiles were allowed to return—save for a few chief actors in the rebellion, of whom at the time of the *L.R.* only *Galadriel* remained," to which he appends a footnote, saying that with Frodo's completion of the quest, Galadriel's "personal ban was lifted, in reward for her services against Sauron, and above all for her rejection of the temptation to take the Ring when offered to her" (386).

[29] Furthermore, in the *Beowulf* essay, Tolkien calls the poem a "heroic-elegiac" work because of Beowulf's death and its doom for the Geats ("Monsters" 38). He also says that the Silmarillion becomes, with the addition of mortal men to its story, a "heroic-fairy-romance": Tolkien evidently felt that the two were closely linked. As I suggest, his works should be considered as a fusion of these ideas, that is, as "heroic-fairy-elegiac-romance," or more simply, as an elegiac romance.

[30] Music itself holds a particularly important place in Tolkien's mythology, as many scholars have noted. Tolkien's creation myth in *The Silmarillion* begins with the "Music of the Ainur," sung at the bidding of Ilúvatar, who is portrayed as an omnipotent conductor of all melodies of the cosmos.

[31] Except, perhaps, in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, in which he portrays the Elves of Rivendell as a much more frivolous people, having them sing songs with phrases such as "Tra-la-la-lally" in them (3.55-6). Tolkien later regretted much of what he had done in *The Hobbit*, saying that the voice of the narrator was far too patronizing, even for a young audience who he evidently thought deserved better (see, e.g., *Letters* 215).

[32] By contrast, at the end of *Lord of the Rings*, Sam is able to face the horrors of Mordor alone, and stoically accepts Frodo's departure to the Undying Lands. He is perhaps the most dynamic character in Tolkien's works.

[33] In *The Silmarillion*, Melkor enlists the help of Ungoliant, an evil and malicious spirit described as a monstrous spider that devours light and weaves darkness, to steal the Silmarilli. As a diversion, Ungoliant kills the Two Trees of the Valar, Telperion and Laurelin, by drinking their sap. In the ensuing darkness, Melkor slays Finwë, father of Fëanor the creator of the Silmarils, and steals the three jewels. Ungoliant, however, grown powerful from having consumed the light of the trees, also desires the Silmarilli and attacks Melkor, who refuses to surrender the gems. An army of Balrogs come to Melkor's aid and drive Ungoliant away, and she vanishes from history.

[34] As a possible corollary to Sam's recollection of Beren and Eärendil, Paul H. Kocher says in *Master of Middle-earth* that Tolkien "is not content merely to narrate a bare series of events but surrounds each high point of the action in *Lord of the Rings* with convictions and opinions expressed by the participants as to its possible place in some larger plan under execution by greater hands than theirs. [. . .] Virtually without exception the elves, men, hobbits, and their allies of the West come to believe in a moral dynamism in the universe to which each of them freely contributes, without exactly knowing how, and without being at all sure how it will eventually work out in the war against Sauron" (34).

[35] The story of Beren and Lúthien Tinúviel in *The Silmarillion* is tragic and beautiful; to wed her, Beren is given the impossible task of recuperating a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown. Lúthien enchants the dark Valar with her voice while Beren cuts one of the jewels from the crown, but as they flee the wolf Carcharoth attacks and bites off Beren's hand bearing the jewel. Carcharoth, maddened by the burning jewel in his gut, ravages the countryside until Beren, Thingol, and the hound Huan confront him. It is then that Beren is mortally wounded. However, he is reincarnated, and Luthien becomes a mortal so that they can live together. See *The Silmarillion*, "Of Beren and Lúthien" (3.19.195-228).

[36] Melian is a Maiar, a spirit of the same kind as Gandalf and Sauron, whom in *The Silmarillion* meets and falls in love with an Elf Lord named Thingol as he and his people voyage towards the sea in response to the summons of the Valar. Thingol is never seen again by his people, the Teleri, but remains in Middle-earth in the Mirkwood as a king, and becomes fairer, more beautiful, and wiser than others of his kind. Lúthien Tinúviel is their daughter, thus Eärendil, Elrond, and the line of Númenreans are descendents of a union between an Elf and a lesser "god," and then another union with a mortal man.

Conclusion

The tragedy of life is what dies inside a man as he lives.
–Albert Einstein

At my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near.
–Andrew Marvell "To His Coy Mistress"

Tolkien was moved by antiquity in literature and fascinated by mortality: the immeasurable distances and depths of time into which so much knowledge has disappeared because of the brevity of human lives held his imagination. *Essentia*, a concept Thomas McFarland developed to clarify Romantic literary aesthetics, is the artistic contemplation of a disparity between our perception of an ideal world and our recognition of the real world. It is central to Tolkien's notion of Fantasy: *essentia* is what creates desire in the first place. By engaging in Fantasy, readers experience the Recovery of a "clear vision" that enhances the effect of *essentia* by showing them the world "as it was meant to be seen," that is, by disclosing ideals in a world of disenchantment. Fantasy as a literature of desire is shaped by our innermost desires, and yet cannot ultimately satisfy them in the Primary World; it can only fulfil them in the Secondary World. Much of Tolkien's literary efficacy springs from his depiction of two strong desires in a state of decline or frustration; he invokes and then revokes the possibilities of communicating with non-humans and of achieving immortality, increasing the reader's yearning for a time even earlier than that depicted in *Lord of the Rings*. That yearning too is whetted without satisfaction, for the earlier time is manifest only through incomplete references to histories from *The Silmarilion*. Despite the promise of Aragorn, we never hear the tales "told in full" (*Lord of the Rings* 1.9.187), but are rather teased with and tantalized by them.

Such frustration of desire is inherent in Tolkien's creation of a mimetic impression of time, as opposed to the timelessness of Fairy, for as in our world, Tolkien's heroes are subject to death. Indeed, to quote Northrop Frye, "there is a feeling, which in Christian tradition can be traced back at least to St. Augustine, that time *begins* with the fall; that the fall from liberty into the natural cycle also started the movement of time as we know it. [. . .] *Nemesis* is deeply involved with the movement of time, whether as the missing

of a tide in the affairs of men, as a recognition that the time is out of joint, as a sense that time is the devourer of life" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 213; original emphasis). A study of Tolkien's works as elegiac romances makes this effect clear. Joint representation of the moral necessitation of death that destroys memory, and its opposing force, the preservation of history, proves to be the most effective vehicle for Tolkien to show that Fantasy is capable of depicting the most serious of literary subjects, such as the tragic nobility of setting aside one's personal desires or sacrificing one's life to oppose unrestrained evil.

As Derek S. Brewer suggests in "*The Lord of the Rings* as Romance," the recognition of the inevitability of death comes with maturity (261). As the hobbits become more aware of themselves and the dangers of the world, they come into contact with death on a personal level. Merry and Pippin see first Boromir's death, then Denethor's and Theoden's deaths. Frodo and Sam traverse the Dead Marshes, and near the top of Cirith Ungol within the borders of Mordor they pass through a fortress filled with Orcs who have slain one another. As the recognition and acceptance of death both come with maturity, so one of Tolkien's purposes in creating an elegiac romance set in the fairy world is to express the genre's maturity and create an exemplar of it that fulfills that potential. In his "Fairy-Stories" essay, he speaks at length about fairy-stories being misconceived as stories especially for children. In *Lord of the Rings*, and to a lesser extent in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien shows that Fantasy is indeed a mature literature, able to explore "serious" issues—such as death, war, greed, despair, *akrasia* (weakness of will), and hubris, as well as life, peace, generosity, hope, determination, and humility—within a fantastic structure that W. P. Ker once referred to, when speaking of *Beowulf*, as "curiously weak," "preposterous," and "simplicity itself" (*The Dark Ages* 164). Tolkien's incorporation of elegiac romance into fantasy has made it a more mature literary genre. Fantasy is now written by and for adults, without any sacrifice of "dignity" for its depiction of monsters or magic, contrary to Ker's denigrations (*The Dark Ages* 164). The "dignity" of elegiac romance is, to appropriate a comment of Ker's on "The Battle of Maldon," "something in the blood" (164). Indeed, Tolkien has made the blood and bones of his heroes out of the myths and legends of the "nameless north" and Germanic tales, and the shedding of that blood does not want for any dignity.

Tolkien himself quotes Ker's evaluation of *Beowulf*: "'yet with this radical defect, a disproportion that puts the irrelevancies [i.e., the monsters and the fantastic aspects of Beowulf himself] in the centre and the serious things on the outer edges, the poem of *Beowulf* is unmistakably heroic and weighty. The thing itself is cheap; the moral and the spirit of it can only be matched among the noblest authors'" (cit. *Beowulf and the Critics* 106; Tolkien's addition). Perceiving such views as a challenge to his aesthetic ideals, Tolkien, I propose, made *Lord of the Rings* a work of quality and "seriousness" with the same moral and spirit that Ker applauds, while thus proving that fantasy and monsters can in fact belong in "serious" literature. He said, we might recall, that he aimed to prove that the Anglo-Saxon sense of doom or *wyrd* could be more poetically emotive than the *hamartia* of Greek tragedy.[1] As I have argued, Tolkien recaptures the heroic ethos of the Old English warriors, as well as the fatalistic Germanic worldview that precedes Christian faith.

Consideration of his works as elegiac romance helps account for a remark made by Tolkien in the "Fairy-Stories" essay, where he speaks briefly about the timeless quality of literature, specifically of fantasy literature's ability to suspend the reader's perception of time. He tells us that fantasy often possesses "arresting strangeness," for which it is depreciated by those who "dislike being 'arrested,'" or "any meddling with the Primary World" (48). Tolkien believes the reading of fantasy and the resultant engagement of the imagination with the Secondary World through Secondary Belief actually have the power to alter our perception of the Primary World, and not just through the aspect of Recovery, which shows us the world as it was meant to be seen, but also through the enchantment of fantasy as an art form. Consider what he says of the effect that fairy-stories have upon us, that they "open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, maybe" ("Fairy-Stories" 31-32). The effect that Tolkien most desires to reproduce in his own works is the appearance that they are ancient stories recounting an even earlier age, "an echo of an echo." It is the timeless quality of *Beowulf* that Tolkien so deeply loves and attempts to reproduce in his fictions, "the illusion of historical truth and perspective" ("Monsters" 10).[2] This effect, he believes, is the greatest and most difficult to achieve for any writer of fantasy literature, and the repeated emphasis on memory and elegizing past heroes indicates that he attempts

to alter our perception of time while we are "inside" his world, so as to "make believe," as it were, that the real world, the Primary World, is in a distant future and has not yet occurred.

As I mentioned briefly in chapter 3, darkness is a metaphor for both evil and ignorance in Tolkien's work. The Ringwraiths, known as the Black Riders, have forgotten their very humanity; the "Mouth of Sauron," dressed in black, has forgotten his own name (*Lord of the Rings* 5.10.870). The darkness of Mordor and of all evil is a threat to memory—the threat to wipe out all remembrance of glorious deeds with a tide of violence.[3] It is accepted as a fact that should the Ringbearer fail in his task, Sauron will destroy all the peoples of Middle-earth. When Beör tells Finrod Felagund that "'a darkness lies behind us,'" referring to the race of Men, he means that "a silence had fallen upon their memory" due to the absence of storytelling by their ancestors (*Silmarillion* 3.17.169). Those characters connected with light are similarly associated with memory. This is true in *Lord of the Rings*: Frodo sees an Elf, Glorfindel, "as he is upon the other side," that is, radiating a brilliant white light (*Lord of the Rings* 2.1.217). Also, Frodo gains an inner light as he matures and experiences the world, and Gandalf's transformation from grey to white is indicative of the relation between light and knowledge—Frodo increases immeasurably in wisdom and Gandalf is no longer prone to forget his lore and spellcraft as he was in Moria. Remembering the past that is no more and elegizing fallen heroes is an act of defiance against the darkness of evil and ignorance. The elegiac romance paradoxically seeks to immortalize that which it recognizes as already lost.

Tolkien's elaborate construction of Middle-earth on philological principles, and his inspiration from countless literary sources and mythologies, suggests that his fictive redactor's narration of the story of Middle-earth aims to constitute, in some sense, a recovery of the gaps in humanity's collective memory. By "preserving" invented memories that never "truly" existed in a limited sense, Tolkien enhances their perceived veracity and evocative sorrow through elegiac representation, so that he represents them as fading even in their own time, not to speak of their dark obscurity in times down to our own, had they not, at the last minute, been resuscitated through the redactor's publication of parts of *The Red Book of Westmarch*. This elegiac tone of his works creates in readers

a feeling of loss and regret, and so prompts us to desire that time itself could cease its flow, and allow the Elves a little while longer in Middle-earth so that the enchantment they represent would not be lost to Men. As Tolkien tells his son Christopher:

> Longað þonne þy læs þe him con léoþa worn,
> oþþe mid hondum con hearpan grétan;
> hafaþ him his glíwes giefe, þe him God scealde.
> From the Exeter Book. Less doth yearning trouble him who knoweth many songs, or with his hands can touch the harp: his possession is his gift of "glee" (=music and/or verse) which God gave him.
>
> How these old words smite one out of the dark antiquity! "Longað"! All down the ages men (of our kind, most awarely) have felt it: not necessarily caused by sorrow, or the hard world, but sharpened by it. (*Letters* 66)

Yearning, *longað*, is "sharpened" by the horrors and disenchantment of the modern world, and expressed by Tolkien in much the same way as his taste for fairy-stories is, having been "quickened" by "war" ("Fairy-Stories" 42). It should also be noted that when Tolkien says to Christopher that "men of our kind" feel this yearning, he includes C.S. Lewis in this assessment, for he and Lewis were not writing for any mainstream audience but had decided to write for themselves the kind of stories that they both liked (*Letters* 378).[4] It is difficult to imagine a pair less representative of the average taste and education of any population! The intensity of this longing in Tolkien's and Lewis's works has yet to be successfully emulated by modern fantasy writers.

Not an end in and of itself, the elegiac mode is rather applied at a specific moment for a particular purpose. Tolkien does not conclude that mortality is a necessary evil, but he sees it as a necessary good. His characters react to death as would be expected; they are saddened and shocked, and grieve long afterwards for their friends and family. Yet this emotional response is itself portrayed positively, both in the way that grieving affirms a connection with the deceased, and also that such emotions frequently incite virtuous and valorous action, such as in Eomer's fighting after the death of Theoden. It therefore seems anomalous that Tolkien has such tremendous difficulty in *letting go* of his characters and his fiction; critics often complain that too few characters die, though that

complaint seems rather a failure to appreciate the nature of heroic romance, for it could as readily be said of long-established major canonical texts such as Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* or Spencer's *Faerie Queene*.[5] While Tolkien endorses the heroic sacrificial death, he cannot help but dread endings: his own, and those of his fictional works. The hero can on some levels be compared to the scapegoat, for the extremity of the epic hero's actions and character relegate him to the outer edges of society. His death, like that of the scapegoat, is thought to bring peace to society while simultaneously being a subject of lament.[6]

By writing an elegiac romance, Tolkien forces the Fantasy genre to mature, to move beyond childish tales of diminutive pixies and to deal with real-world concerns such as pain, suffering, and death. If such experiences could be obtained and learned from in the Secondary World, he appears to have assumed, readers would be better equipped to respond to them in their real lives. And not only would readers be better able to cope with modern horrors, but also to appreciate enchantments still existing in the world, such as trees and grass, and clear blue skies. By exposing his readers to such a profound sense of yearning, Tolkien teaches them to cherish the present as a future past, for it too will come to merit elegiac celebration in its own way.

The *Lord of the Rings* ends with Frodo's departure from the world, and his last vision of "white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise" (*Lord of the Rings* 6.9.1007), which is the Undying Lands of the Elves where they reside until the end of the earth. The fate of mortals, the "Doom of Men," is less certain. Many years after the Ring was destroyed, Aragorn finally chooses to die, and speaks his final words of comfort to Arwen: "In sorrow we must go" he says, "but not in despair. Behold! we are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory" ("A Part of the Tale of Aragorn and Arwen" 1038). Here we may fruitfully compare a comment of Northrop Frye on tragedy, a genre which in Frye's conception is an elegiac romance spoiled by irony, because the effect of the hero's death is identical regardless of how he dies:

> As a mimesis of ritual, the tragic hero is not really killed or eaten, but the corresponding thing in art still takes place, a vision of death which draws the survivors into a new unity. As a mimesis of dream, the inscrutable

> tragic hero, like the proud and silent swan, becomes articulate at the point of death, and the audience, like the poet in *Kubla Khan*, revives his song within itself. With his fall, a greater world beyond which his gigantic spirit had blocked out becomes for an instant visible, but there is also a sense of the mystery and remoteness of that world. (*Anatomy of Criticism* 215)

In writing an elegiac romance, Tolkien gives us a glimpse of something that lies beyond heroism and tragedy. It is the doorway through which heroes pass while others hesitate, remembering those who have gone before.

Notes for Conclusion

[1] The contrast between *wyrd* and *hamartia* proposed by Tolkien and echoed by Northrop Frye (*Anatomy of Criticism* 36) appears to have originated with William Paton Ker, who writes in *Epic and Romance* that "even the most heroic speech in Homer, even the power of Sarpedon's address to Glaucus in the twelfth book of the *Iliad*, cannot discredit, by comparison, the heroism and the sublimity of the speech of the 'old companion' at the end of *Maldon*" (11). The language and meaning of the Anglo-Saxon poems "states," Ker says, "perhaps more clearly and absolutely than anything in Greek, the Northern principle of resistance to all odds, and defiance of ruin" (12). Tolkien touches on many of Ker's ideas in *Beowulf and the Crtitics*.

[2] Anthropologists' and historians' attempts to understand Anglo-Saxon culture by reading *Beowulf* fail because, as Tolkien tells us, it was a Christian poet that wrote the text using pieces of remembered history and myth to tell about an age already long vanished, and that the poem seemed ancient when it was first composed ("Monsters" 11).

[3] In relation to Tolkien's fiction, it might be said that despite the defeat of Sauron, evil is still present in the modern world, and that men must remain vigilant for its return, since the Elves have departed and can no longer help. Evil has become a human problem: relieved of its cosmic proportions, Tolkien indicates that it is the effort of the smallest and least powerful people who determine the resistance to evil. Because the powerful can be corrupted, the powerless are the measure of our collective moral resistance (they can resist only by will rather than by force). The hobbits represent the modern everyman, while the Men are of the epic-heroic age: society must be able to resist evil for its heroes to succeed.

[4] Rather, it seems to have been the popular taste that adjusted to accept their works. Had this not happened, it is possible that the study of Tolkien's works would be considered a more "academic" pursuit than it presently is. As Putter and Gilbert put it in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, "anything popular is associated with poor quality and inferior art" (New York: Longman, 2000, 17). Much of what I desire to do in this thesis is to defend Tolkien from academic scorn. While this was not my intent when I first envisaged such an undertaking, several academics' comments to me regarding my thesis now stand out in my mind, and deserve a response.

One professor, who shall preserve his anonymity, told me in no uncertain terms to discontinue my planned thesis on Tolkien because it was an "unoriginal," "unacademic [sic]," and "boring" subject. He made a point of saying that the proposal would never be approved. Similarly, a Ph.D. student specializing in Anglo-Saxon literature told me that studying Tolkien is a "black mark" on my record for any future studies or careers. Fortunately, Alastair Fowler provides a ready answer when he says that we must judge a genre using the appropriate criteria of that genre, "so a work may be 'good of its kind.'" "This shibboleth," he continues, "is jeered at by those who are very sure that some kinds are better than others" (*Kinds of Literature* 273). I would refer these academics to T.A. Shippey, Michael Drout, and Andrew Orchard, who, while noted for their excellent work in Old English philology, have also written on Tolkien without having

damaged their careers. Not only have Tolkien studies flourished in the last few years, but many courses on Tolkien's works are now being offered at universities.

Since elegiac romance is a genre which is associated with numerous authors whose works are taught in schools and universities as a part of the academic literary canon— Joseph Conrad, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Herman Melville and Vladimir Nabokov to name a few—having argued that Tolkien is also writing this style of fiction, I contend that his fictions have been wrongly stigmatized as being of poor quality, merely because many people want to read them. But Ariosto's fantastic *Orlando Furioso*, now acclaimed as a canonical classic of Western literature, was a great popular success in the cinquecento while being reviled by many critics. For another more articulate defence of Tolkien from academic snobbery, please see Tom Shippey's "Forward" to *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (vii-xxv).

[5] Derek S. Brewer says in "*The Lord of the Rings* as Romance" that he wonders if "the story has not failed a little in the presentation of death" for this reason (260).

[6] See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* for further information.

Appendix: A Brief Consideration of Recent Tolkien Scholarship

Having spent the better part of two years reading all that I could find in preparation to write this thesis, I believe that many of my ideas here are original insofar as they seek to analyze and explain Tolkien in a way that has not, to my knowledge, been done before. It would have been impractical to attempt to integrate reference to all of the secondary sources that I consulted, and I have instead focused my citations on those studies most immediately relevant to my argument. Alastair Fowler's *Kinds of Literature* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, *Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* and *The Educated Imagination* provided some useful general guidelines for generic and literary criticism, and Kenneth A. Bruffee's *Elegiac Romance: Cultural Change and Loss of the Hero in Modern Fiction* indicated how I might best approach a reconsideration of Tolkien's writings in relation to elegiac romance. Thomas McFarland's *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, with its theories of poetic *essentia* in Romantic poetry, provided important clues as to the relation between Tolkien's literary development and the Romantics. I have, wherever possible, given explanatory and bibliographic notes to provide readers with appropriate secondary sources that offer a broader knowledge of specific arguments and ideas.

It is widely known that Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic, and critics often seek to interpret his works against a Christian backcloth.[1] Although Tolkien omitted any references to systematized religion, and portrayed his characters as agnostics, he nevertheless felt that his works were compatible with his faith. Unlike Gerald Manly Hopkins, who burned his works because he felt a conflict between his artistic creation and his devotion to God, Tolkien writes to his friend Father Robert Murray: "*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like 'religion,' to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism" (*Letters* 172).

Comparative studies offer one of the best approaches to understanding Tolkien, despite the near impossibility of certainly identifying his sources. If nothing else, such studies show that the level of complexity of Tolkien's works perhaps rivals even Geoffrey

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or *Troilus and Criseyde* for integrating narrative strands of other writings into a single text. I am particularly persuaded by the arguments now being made that Tolkien ought to be compared to medieval authors, for his inspiration by ancient epics and sagas is immeasurable. He held the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. The study of Tolkien as a scholar of medieval language, philosophy, and literature is rapidly becoming the dominant theme in his critical assessment as a writer of fiction. One reason for this is the recent tendency of scholars of Old English, Old Norse, Icelandic Sagas, and so on, to contribute to this growing debate.[2] Tom A. Shippey, author of *The Road to Middle-earth* and *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, provides groundbreaking analyses of Tolkien's works from the point of view of philology and medieval philosophy.

Many outstanding publications have addressed the influence of the Middle Ages on Tolkien. The recent *Tolkien the Medievalist*, edited by Jane Chance, is a collection of essays that were presented at the Thirty-Sixth Annual International Congress on Medieval Studies at the University of Western Michigan. The number of Tolkien sessions there has doubled in the last two years: in the "Foreword" Chance observes that Tolkien is finally becoming "the critics' subject" rather than a target of derision (xiii). Chance has also authored *"The Lord of the Rings": The Mythology of Power* and *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*, the latter focusing on "the Old and Middle English literature that Tolkien taught and wrote about" and how it affected his works (vii). However, Chance asserts that *Beowulf* is the "antithesis" of fairy-stories in Tolkien's view, for it "imitates the dyscatastrophic tragedy discussed in 'On Fairy-Stories' and has been termed an elegy by Tolkien," whereas "the fantastic fairy-story ends with the triumph of the mortal over death and the escape into the other world" (*Tolkien's Art* 77). I disagree with this assessment not only because Tolkien thought that death in *Beowulf*, although pre-Christian, should not be feared, but also because Tolkien tells us that Frodo and Bilbo will eventually die: there is no "triumph" over death, only a delay. Tolkien thought that fairy-stories should be a little more dangerous, that is, less certain of a happy ending, and he used much of the mood of *Beowulf* in *Lord of the Rings* precisely for its elegiac value. As Tolkien writes in "On Fairy-Stories," "it is one of the lessons of fairy-stories [. . .] that

on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth peril, sorrow, and the shadow of death can bestow dignity, and even sometimes wisdom" (45).

Another important Tolkien critic is Verlyn Flieger, whose books *Splintered Light: Language and Logos in Tolkien's World* and *A Question of Time: J. R. R. Tolkien's Road to Faërie* provide an outstanding analysis of Tolkien fictions, tying together various themes and motifs that span his works. In chapters 2 and 3 of the former, Flieger provides a detailed reading of Tolkien's "Monsters" essay and contrasts it with his "Fairy-Stories" essay in terms of his theories of *dyscatastrophe* and *eucatastrophe* respectively. The remainder of *Splintered Light* is primarily concerned with interpreting signs and symbols in Tolkien's works.

A Question of Time proved especially helpful for my thesis, for in it Flieger examines Tolkien's unfinished time-travel story "The Lost Road," in which a group of modern scholars learn to travel back through time in their dreams, and reach a place called *Númenor*, an island about to be engulfed by the sea. In later chapters, she examines how Tolkien conveys the past through dreams throughout *Lord of the Rings*. The extensive references in Flieger's book to Tolkien's "Lost Road" and "Notion Club Papers," which was Tolkien's second and final aborted attempt at writing a time-travel story, illustrate the continuities found in Tolkien's *oeuvre*, showing how one idea expressed briefly in one text such as *The Hobbit* or *Lord of the Rings* may have been based on an entire unpublished story or poem. And yet I felt that there was an aspect of this argument that Flieger had left unexplored, specifically Tolkien's *reason* for showing glimpses of the past through dreams. It was my intent in writing this thesis to discover *why* Tolkien had such an affinity for antiquity as he expressed in his various essays, and how this in turn affected his fictions.

Notes for Appendix

[1] For the Christian approach, see Bradley J. Birzer's *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth*, and a serial publication called *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, which printed a J.R.R. Tolkien special for its fifteenth volume in 2002. The issue featured articles such as "The Writer of Our Story: Divine Providence in *The Lord of the Rings*" by David Mills, and "The Lord & Lady of the Rings: The Hidden Presence of Tolkien's Catholicism in *The Lord of the Rings*" by Stratford Caldecot. Several articles are also available online in *Touchstone's* archives. See *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, 15 (2002), 18 Aug. 2003 <http://www.touchstonemag.com>.

[2] An excellent list of such scholars can be found in Jane Chance's "Preface" to *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*, Revised Edition, Lexington: Kentucky UP, 2001, viii-ix. Among the recent contributors is Bruce Mitchell, who co-wrote the book that has become an academic standard for Old English studies, *A Guide to Old English*.

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