STYLE AND STRUCTURE

OF

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ONE

INTRODUCTION

I

> All art constantly aspires toward the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject namely, its given incidents of situation ... should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling; that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.[1]

These are the words of Walter Pater, unwitting founder of the notorious movement designated by the term "art for art's sake". Unity of form and matter was essential to Pater's aesthetic; indeed, whenever he contemplated a true work of art, be it the Mona Lisa or Michelangelo's David, he saw in it the unification of essentially different, even opposing principles. The result was not discord but harmony, an aesthetically pleasing whole.

In literature the confluence of form and matter is manifested in many interesting ways. The rise and fall of dramatic tension in the narrative of Moby Dick, for example, clearly imitates the physical setting of the novel itself. The intricate web of the narrative in Bleak House reflects the web of responsibilities and relationships in

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[1] The Renaissance (New York: New American Library, 1959), p. 95.

the world in which it moves. And few would deny that Milton's "grand style" is eminently suited to the grand subject of Paradise Lost. These few examples should suffice to illustrate the general validity of Pater's remarks.

Thus in relation to a true work of art at least, the study of style is simply another method of studying matter. Conversely, an awareness of the matter of the work is often of value in the study of style. While some literary analysts will contend that the careful examination of a work purely from the point of view of its style will lead to an understanding of its subject, and that any prior consideration of themes will only cloud one's understanding of the work as a whole, the practical application of this ideal is difficult while the results are often uncertain at best and at the very worst quite misleading (though undoubtedly the same may be said in relation to any analytical method). Thus what follows is not, purely speaking, an analysis of style, but more generally an attempt to understand the methods used to achieve a particular goal with at least some *a priori* knowledge of that goal constantly before us, however impure such methodology may be. It is with this plan in mind that the following outline of the intellectual background to The Lord of the Rings is offered.

II

Those who are old enough to recall the 1930's probably remember the era as a period of hardship and poverty. Yet Tolkien's admirers will also remember that decade as the time when The Hobbit first appeared and its sequel was beginning to take shape. While the horrors of

depression and war were causing other writers to turn to existentialism and despair, and to unflinching realism of style, Tolkien was recreating the Third Age of Middle-Earth, a Faerie-story setting for an epic-fantasy. He would produce no Grapes of Wrath and no For Whom the Bell Tolls, but rather a wonderful tale of heroic adventure, the widely acclaimed Lord of the Rings.

One might well ask how Tolkien remained so aloof.[2] Many readers decry such insularity as a characteristic unwelcome or even dangerous in modern fiction.[3] Yet Tolkien may not have been as uninfluenced, or as aloof from reality as one is often led to believe; for on examination of some of the leading intellectual treatises of the 1930's, one soon discovers patterns which shed a great deal of light on the manner and style of Tolkien's writing. For despite the predominance of the existentialists and the realists in the philosophy and literature of the period, there was an alternative movement with which Tolkien was quite clearly sympathetic. This movement sought to counter contemporary thought and language with a thought and language of its own, and two of its leading exponents, both of whom were influential if controversial figures in their respective fields, were the philosopher Kenneth Burke and the linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf.

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[2] Some readers have claimed to see much of World War Two in the trilogy, but Tolkien denies this influence in his Foreword to the 1966 and subsequent editions.

[3] For Tolkien's own answer to this objection, one need only turn to the essay "On Fairy-stories" published in the volume Tree and Leaf (London: Unwin Books, 1964). It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to include it here.

Burke's Permanence and Change[4] first appeared in 1935 at about the time when The Hobbit was being prepared for publication and the shape of The Lord of the Rings was beginning to emerge in the mind of its author. If Burke did not influence Tolkien, then by coincidence the two had amazingly similar points of view, for Burke's analysis of his contemporary world is clearly reflected in Tolkien's portrayal of Middle-Earth. Indeed many of Tolkien's apparent idiosyncrasies can be explained in relation to Burke's treatise. Without any attempt to summarize fully Burke's arguments in Permanence and Change, here are some of the most relevant points:

(i) the basis of culture is criticism, or interpretation of one's surroundings; eventually a critical point of view becomes standardized, just as laws and customs are codified; however, difficulties arise because of the constant change in the world: the standard becomes outdated, isolated from the exigencies of new situations; it becomes in Veblen's terms a "trained incapacity";

(ii) modern man's standard of criticism is technological, scientific, totally "objective"; within the perspective of this "technological psychosis", art, language, persuasion, suggestion, and rhetoric decline in value because they are by definition subjective, connotative; within the technological psychosis things are labelled, not responded to; language is neutralized;

(iii) as language (label) is neutralized, the things labelled are neutralized as well; thus language, or the orientation (standard of criticism, legal system, dogmatized religion) which language expresses becomes a shaper of subsequent orientations; this is the situation of modern man; he begins to see things as "created" or "objectified" rather than "creating", in a state of flux, of becoming; thus he moves from the poetic, biological, natural view of man in relation to the universe, to the mechanistic view: the universe becomes a set of wheels in preordained

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[4] (2nd. ed.; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1965).

motion, with man as audience, not as playwright or player; where man is superior, separate, dominant; competition for dominance becomes central;

(iv) modern society is based increasingly on abstractions, a product of the neutralizing trend in language and scientific thought; examples: profit and loss, production units, supply and demand curves, even paper money and the stock market [a most poignant example in 1935 of the negative effect of abstractions];

(v) what is required to counter this trend is a "corrective rationalization", which "must certainly move in the direction of the anthropomorphic or humanistic or poetic, since this is the aspect of culture which the scientific criteria, with the emphasis upon dominance rather than upon inducement, have tended to eliminate or minimize."[5]

(vi) furthermore, such biological perspectivism is the most natural approach, since language, art and institutions, indeed all human activity, are externalizations of internal, biological functions or causes; thus a biological orientation would seem the most appropriate for mankind;

(vii) within the biological perspective, language which has been neutralized or objectified becomes poeticized, and reacquires its subjective, persuasive, emotive qualities; such a perspective on language is also more appropriate, since language is naturally partisan and moral, even magical; whereas the language of technology is totally definitive and shuns tonality, pliancy, suggestiveness, these are the very qualities which poetry thrives on, and these are reflections of the dynamic qualities of life itself; if we lose our ability to respond to this biologically founded linguistic pliancy, we literally become technology, as neutral technological language is sufficient for machinery, and has no basis in fundamental biological reality;

(viii) the essence of language being communication, and of communication co-operation, it is essential that language be suggestive, persuasive; even as Darwin recognized the importance of co-operation as well as conflict in survival, a biologically oriented language, as expressed through the suggestive or poetic metaphor, stresses persuasion and participation rather than competition, co-operation rather than conflict;

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[5] p. 65.

(ix) as art based on life exhibits the subjective qualities of communicativeness, sympathy, emotion, pliancy, etc., the art of living ought also to exhibit such qualities; pure objectivism or utilitarianism is a quality only of mechanism;

(x) "The ultimate metaphor for discussing the universe and man's relations to it must be the poetic or dramatic metaphor;"[6] within the bounds of the poetic metaphor existence becomes an unfolding drama; of this drama is essentially tragic, then at least we have the benefit of the cathartic reaction which the witnessing of tragedy can bring.

Let us now turn without comment to Whorf who, in a different field, has arrived at some strikingly similar conclusions. Whorf's major contributions to the study of linguistics were made mainly during the same magical decade of the 1930's. Again, without any attempt to summarize completely Whorf's opinions, here are some of the more relevant points, as gleaned from the collection Language, Thought and Reality[7]:

(i) While language may have originated as an expression of our perceptions or attitudes, it has since assumed a more primary function; that is to say, as a tool by which mankind has been able to explore and expand the boundaries of knowledge, language has actually come to shape and control our perceptions of things; that is, our knowledge of a phenomenon is limited or shaped by the words and word-constructs we use to describe it; in fact, this situation is true to the extent that a society's world view is clearly reflected in or controlled by the grammar of the language in which it is expressed;

(ii) the best example of the tyranny of words is our concept of time, which we divide into linear, homogeneous units roughly falling into the categories of past, present and

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[6] p. 263.

[7] Posthumously collected and edited by John B. Carroll (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1967).

future; our language is similarly divided into tenses; in the Hopi language, concepts of time and space and Newtonian physics are replaced by what we would call animistic, mystic, vitalistic or intuitive modes of perception; our three tenses are replaced by two 'modes', expective and inceptive; that is, phenomena which may be, and phenomena which are (in the dynamic sense of the word) [this argument has since been vigorously attacked by modern linguists; the validity of the claim, however, is not nearly as important as the manner of perception which lies behind it];

(iii) because the language of the Hopi has different limits from our own, the overall view of existence expressed therein is also different; all time and space is divided into the objective plane and the subjective plane, the former being all those phenomena which are manifest, including the past, which is indistinguishable from the present, and the latter being those phenomena which are not yet manifest, but may be; this latter group includes all thought and the potential of all things to be made manifest, as well as the dynamic spirit which is behind the manifesting force;

(iv) thus durational verbs do not imply motion (as in English 'time passes') but manifesting (i.e., each moment is simply a manifestation of time generally; there is no suggestion of moments being arranged along a line in space, as is usually the case in English); even spatial verbs signifying movement do not imply motion, but are seen as reflections of manifestation;

(v) on the pragmatic level, the Hopi language very accurately (indeed far more accurately than western Indo-European) describes natural phenomena within its experience group; for example, when we see a flash of lightning we say 'lightning flashed', thus dividing the subject 'lightning' from the predicate 'flashed', even though the event, split into two by the demands of English grammar, is actually a single phenomenon; in the Hopi language, the mode of expression is 'flash' with the subject and predicate required in English both present in the single word; similarly, in English we often invent abstract subjects such as the 'it' in 'it rained'; in Hopi the practice is limited, and when used the abstraction is clearly marked as such;

(vi) similarly, Hopi mythology, while taken very seriously, is recognized to be a part not of the objective realm, but of the subjective realm; that is, the mythological structure exists, but not as a thing manifest; thus they

had no need to construct a cosmos, as did the early Christians, in which to fit a heaven and hell; heaven is a subjective reality, as is thought, and the manifesting spirit in all things; but because mythology is a part of the manifesting force, it is a shaping force in Hopi society;

(vii) the implications of the study of Hopi language are vast; for one thing it reveals the abstract nature of English; indeed there is an often dangerous lack of connection between language (and the society shaped by it) and natural phenomena; our notion of time and space creates our own need for records, diaries, bookkeeping, accounting, our interest in exact sequences, dating, calendars, clocks, time wages, graphs, annals, histories, etc.; we project the future in the same way (budgets, schedules, etc.) because we assume time to be homogeneous because of our way of describing it; such abstractions lead to routines which we use as a crutch or buffer from the demands of dynamic manifestation or continual change; such a notion leads to carelessness and isolation which would have destroyed Hopi society; it is thus that western culture, through its peculiar language development, has assumed a provisional view of the universe which requires correctives; our segmented view of nature is an aspect of grammar; "We cut up and organize the spread and flow as we do largely because, through our mother tongue, we are parties to an agreement to do so, not because nature is segmented in that way for all to see. Languages differ not only in how they build their sentences but also in how they break down nature to secure the elements to put in those sentences."[8]

(ix) Western Indo-European language is the most developed and most stubborn in terms of its projecting its language patterns onto the cosmos, of weaving a web of illusion based on itself; "The commitment to illusion has been sealed in western Indo-European language, and the road out of illusion for the West lies through a wider understanding of language than western Indo-European alone can give;"[9]

(x) "What is significant ... is that language, through lexation, has made the speaker more acutely conscious of certain dim psychic sensations; it has actually produced awareness on lower planes than its own; a power of the

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[8] p. 240.

[9] p. 263.

> nature of magic. There is a yogic mastery in the power of language to remain independent of lower-psyche facts, to override them, now point them up, now toss them out of the picture, to mold the nuances of words to its own rule ..."[10]

Clearly, many correspondences can (and often will) be drawn between the ideas of these two men and Tolkien's works. The most striking example of commonality is revealed in each man's attitude toward language. We have just read Whorf's statement about the power of language, "a power of the nature of magic." In Permanence and Change Burke makes a similar claim for all art including literature: "any work of art is nothing but homeopathic magic."[11] The Lord of the Rings is filled with magic, or at least with superhuman phenomena, and the tale itself seems endowed with some sort of magical attraction for its many admirers. But in "On Fairy-stories", Tolkien is more specific:

> ... language cannot ... be dismissed. The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our world co-eval. The human mind, endowed with the powers of generalization and abstraction, sees not only green-grass, discriminating it from other things (and finding it fair to look upon), but sees that it is green as well as being grass. But how powerful, how stimulating to the very faculty that produced it, was the invention of the adjective: no spell or incantation in Faerie is more potent. And that is not surprising: such incantations might indeed be said to be only another view of adjectives, a part of speech in a mythical grammar. The mind that thought of light, heavy, grey, yellow, still, swift, also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water. If it could do the one, it could do the other; it inevitably did both. When we can take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanter's power -- upon one plane; and the desire to wield that power in the world external to our minds awakes. It

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[10] p. 267.

[11] p. 216.

> does not follow that we shall use that power well upon any plane. We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause the woods to spring with silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the belly of the cold worm. But in such 'fantasy', as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes sub-creator.[12]

The war of the Ring is largely a battle of magic. If language is magic, then the War of the Ring may be, on a very serious level, a war of words. Is this the battle to be waged in order to correct the abuse of language and the technological psychosis of modern man?

> Before we reach such states [silliness and delirium, the logical conclusion of the present directions in art and culture] we need recovery ... Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining -- regaining of a clear view. I do not say 'seeing things as they are' and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say 'seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them' -- as things apart from ourselves. We need, in any case, to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity -- from possessiveness.[13]

Both Burke and Whorf have recognized the need for the counter-spell, the "corrective rationalization". Tolkien has found it in the magic of language, particularly in the magical language of the Fairy-story.

III

The main purpose of the following analysis, then, will be to examine in some detail the narrative art of The Lord of the Rings in order to understand to a small degree Tolkien's manipulation of the magic of language. Yet at all times we must remain fully aware of Tolkien's

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[12] Tree and Leaf, p. 25.

[13] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

overall orientation, and the manner in which he successfully transfers that sense of orientation to his reader. This transferring action is the equivalent of Burke's "persuasion" or "suggestion", characteristic of the biologically founded poetic metaphor. In fact, in The Lord of the Rings Tolkien may well be assuming the role of a modern scop, the shaper not only of poetry, but of society and its perspectives. For while Tolkien has maintained that his purpose in writing was only to create "a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them",[14] he has also said (in the essay "On Fairy-stories") that a really good tale is a functional tale, and it is good precisely because it functions in a manner which brings about Recovery, Escape, and Consolation in the mind of the reader. Yet these qualities are essentially those which Burke and Whorf required for the proper shaping of modern society. It can be no accident that Tolkien, writing as a contemporary, should provide a work so representative of their point of view. It may even be claimed that, in his attempt to bring about the three proper effects of a good tale, Tolkien was actually promoting the ideals of Burke and Whorf, whether he did so voluntarily or not. Therefore, keeping in mind the combined perspectives of these three men, let us now examine the style and structure of Tolkien's magical war against the Sauron of modern man.

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[14] The Lord of the Rings, p. 6.

TWO

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST -- CONVENTION, ARCHETYPE, ALLUSION AND THE QUESTION OF GENRE

I

It is an interesting paradox that those writers whom we consider most creative or original often rely most heavily on second-hand materials as the basis for their work. We know, for example, that Beowulf is an 'Englished' version of several earlier tales, and that Shakespeare was a veritable pirate when searching for plots which he could turn into successful drama. Much the same use is made of traditional forms of writing style. The sonnets of Shakespeare and Donne are no less innovative for their use of a conventional form so popular during the English Renaissance, and the great epics of Milton and Spenser clearly depend on many standard and well-known devices for much of their effect. Thus literary originality appears to lie not in the invention of new material, but in the innovative arrangement of the materials at hand.

Tolkien's own theory of artistic creation, or "Sub-creation"[1] as he more appropriately labelled his work, seems to encompass this notion of derivative originality. He tells us that man reaches the level of sub-creator by taking the most common things in his experience and reshaping them through the power of art into new forms. A good example of Tolkien's own sub-creation is the hobbit, who is largely a collection of basically

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[1] "On Fairy-stories", Tree and Leaf, p. 25.

human characteristics exhibited in a new form, itself seemingly constructed of various animal and human traits. Thus even the highly imaginative world of fantasy is derived mainly from common experience.

The same is true of the modes of expression in fantasy. Tolkien is greatly indebted to many sources for the materials of his craft, drawing a fantastic world out of the now-decayed bricks and mortar of earlier foundations. Interestingly enough, Tolkien describes this very situation in Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics[2], in the allegory of the stone tower, which he uses to describe the state of Beowulf criticism:

> I would express the whole industry in yet another allegory. A man inherited a field in which was an accumulation of old stone, part of an older hall. Of the old stone some had already been used in building the house in which he actually lived, not far from the old house of his fathers. Of the rest he took some and built a tower. But his friends coming perceived at once (without troubling to climb the steps) that these stones had formerly belonged to a more ancient building. So they pushed the tower over, with no little labour, in order to look for hidden carvings and inscriptions, or to discover whence the man's distant forefathers had obtained their building material. Some suspecting a deposit of coal under the soil began to dig for it, and forgot even the stones. They all said: 'This tower is most interesting.' But they also said (after pushing it over): 'What a muddle it is in!' And even the man's own descendents, who might have been expected to consider what he had been about, were heard to murmur: 'He is such an odd fellow! Imagine his using these old stones just to build a nonsensical tower! Why did not he restore the old house? He had no sense of proportion.' But from the top of the tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea.[3]

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[2] (Oxford University Press, 1960), delivered as the Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, British Academy, 1936. The Hobbit was at this time being prepared for publication and The Lord of the Rings was just begun. It is therefore quite probable that Tolkien's studies in Beowulf were a major influence on his own writing.

[3] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

The stones of tradition, of convention, allusion and archetype, are the stones out of which Tolkien composed Minas Tirith and all that it represents; they form the foundations of his artistic achievement.

II

At the heart of The Lord of the Rings lies Frodo's journey to destroy the One Ring. This is a quest of epic proportions, and the use of such a motif bespeaks a classical source for much of Tolkien's material. From the classics Tolkien borrows not only the epic form, but many other motifs as well. These elements deserve notice not so much because they are important in themselves, but because collectively they show the overall range and importance of Tolkien's debt to the past.

Although in the strictest sense of the word Tolkien's tale is not an epic, he has remained fairly faithful to the epic form throughout. As already mentioned, Frodo's quest lies at the heart of the book (though it is the subject of approximately only half of the narrative). The battles are also modelled on the epic; the descriptions of armour, the masses of warriors, individual combats, the triumphs and defeats, are all generally recognized epic conventions. There are even examples of "flyting", the hurling of insults and the threats of vengeance as a prelude to battle; the verbal altercation at the gates of the Morannon (III, 164-7) is an example of this tradition. There are monsters, evil spirits, and other more subtle dangers. All of these are basically epic elements.

It is interesting that the hero of the quest, Frodo Baggins, is seldom directly involved in a battle of any sort. Though Frodo does possess the courage necessary to qualify as an epic hero, he seldom has

an overt opportunity to demonstrate it, and he never demonstrates any real skill in battle. Thus in this way Frodo is not a traditional epic hero, for whom ability in the martial arts was of the greatest importance.

Frodo plays only a secondary role in another epic convention, the council. In the classical epic tradition it was just as important for the hero to show skill with words in debate as to show skill in battle. Frodo makes only a small contribution to the Great Council, and has no part in the decision to destroy the Ring. He merely accepts the quest once the discussion is over and the decision made. As with the epic virtue of skill in battle, the ability with words is delegated largely to someone else, in this case Gandalf. Some of the reasons for this move on Tolkien's part will be dealt with later. For the present let it be noted only that here is an indication of how Tolkien is at once dependent on and independent from the traditional sources for his material.

Additional conventions include the use of retrospection in various forms. For one thing, a great deal of time is spent in the tracing of lineages, both on a serious level, as by Aragorn, and comically, as with the hobbits. There are as well many references to events in the past, such as the history of Numenor, the Silmaril, and others. Thirdly, there are many examples of the recounting of the hero's adventures, though this convention is also often relegated to other characters in the tale. Each of these devices in its own way lends stature and broadens the work without unduly increasing its length. Each also fills in details outside of but related to the tale, and gives an idea of the vast complexity of the events which lie beyond the focus of the narrative but have nonetheless

contributed to the overall situation. Finally, each implies an historical perspective, an issue which will be dealt with at the conclusion of this chapter.

Tolkien's indebtedness also extends beyond these basic conventions to a number of other familiar classical and epic motifs. As M.Z. Bradley points out,[4] the rivalry between Aragorn and Boromir is a reflection of the Achilles-Agamemnon rivalry in the Iliad. The love and loyalty between Sam and Frodo parallels a number of similar relationships, such as that between David and Jonathan, Achilles and Patroclus, and others. More importantly, Sam serves as a kind of Sancho Panza figure who brings common sense and comic relief to a highly fanciful but very serious tale. There is also the important theme of undesirable immortality, as bestowed by the Ring, that echoes a number of tales from the classical canon.

Finally, there are two very important motifs which serve to illustrate well Tolkien's manipulation of traditional lore. The first of these is the often referred to flooding of Numenor. Within the Christian tradition the most obvious parallel is Noah's flood. Yet this motif also has classical roots, for it was highly significant to the Greeks, who also believed that mankind was once to be destroyed by flood but that a man (or race of men) escaped by building an ark.[5] The use of

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[4] "Men, Halflings and Hero Worship", in N.D. Isaacs and R.A. Zimbardo, ed., Tolkien and the Critics (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 109-127.

[5] See the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, 2nd. ed. (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1973), pp. 93-94.

this motif implies a combination of pagan and Christian elements which is one of the central issues in the work. Yet Tolkien again exercises his independence by using the tradition in a new way, for the flood does not cover the whole world, only the land of the sinful Numenoreans. Thus while he relies on classical models, he is not tied to them and is able to use them creatively.

The second of these motifs is revealed in the descent of Gandalf. Usually this device is ascribed to the Orpheus legend, though in classical poetry it assumes a more significant role as an initiation rite and a test of heroic virtue. Hercules, Theseus, Ulysses, and Aeneas all visit the underworld. The motif is also a Christian favourite: Christ is supposed to have descended to Hell following his burial. Yet Teutonic legends tell of a number of similar descents into the underworld;[6] thus another perspective, that of the northern Germanic tribes, is added to the already complex Classical-Christian combination.

III

Whereas Tolkien relies principally on classical sources for the form of his tale, much of the matter is culled from an equally impressive list of Teutonic myths. The work is filled with archetypes and standard motifs. Again, a few only will be mentioned so as to illustrate the range of Tolkien's indebtedness.

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[6] For example Hermod, who went to Hel to seek the restoration of Balder, who was slain by the treachery of Loki.

The figures of the elves, dwarves[7], trolls and others are perhaps the most obvious examples of Tolkien's use of Teutonic sources. Traditional elves, as Tolkien points out in "On Fairy-stories",[8] are not the diminutive creatures we have come to know through later "fairy-tales", but were originally spirits of the forest, only slightly smaller than men. At first they were considered capricious entities, being friendly or hostile according to their whim. Gradually they acquired the qualities of wisdom and benevolence which we see in The Lord of the Rings, and were known for their brightness and their ability to see into the future. Generally, they were believed to be handsomer and better made than men, and they lived in organized societies lead by kings. They were also believed to fear the sun and the eyes of men and thus were seldom seen except by the light of the moon and stars. Man's fear of them continued in spite of their improved reputation and Tolkien exploits this situation to show the dangers of the hostility and suspicion between man and elf in the face of a common enemy. Elves were usually pictured as fond of dancing and laughter, and to these qualities Tolkien adds the all-important skill with words. They are the masters of language and art in Middle Earth, and the teachers of truth.

The dwarves which appear in the tale are similarly traditional in character. According to the Northern Teutonic legends dwarves were fashioned out of the grubs which formed in the body of Ymir, the slain

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[7] Note: Tolkien's use of this form of the plural for "dwarf" is adopted herein.

[8] Tree and Leaf, pp. 12-15.

giant whose bones and flesh became the rocks and soil of the earth. Because of their earthly origin they were dwellers in caves, miners, and shapers of metal. Their skill was so great that Odin's spear, Gungnir, and Thor's hammer, Mjolnir, both of which were endowed with magical power, were fashioned by them. In the Teutonic legends the dwarves were all male. When they died they returned to the earth and stone from which they were made, and the race was replenished by the continual work of the gods. Here, as elsewhere, Tolkien alters the tradition. The dwarvish race did indeed have a female sex, but he ascribes the small number of children and the dwindling numbers of dwarves to an overbearing pride, because of which the males often did not marry.

Of wizards, few are mentioned in the old tales. Wizards such as Merlin in the English tradition are scarcely the equivalents of Gandalf and Saruman in importance and power. Thus Tolkien has taken great liberties in making them representatives of the Valar, the somewhat obscure pantheon of Middle-earth, and in giving them vast power and knowledge far beyond any earthly magician. Because they are based on the familiar, but are revealed to hold much higher powers, they are in a sense an emblem of the work itself which, while largely traditional, is something far greater than a simple fairy-tale.

Also based on Teutonic myth are the Beornings, and Tom Bombadil, both of whom play a significant role in The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. Many of the Teutonic gods and heroes were believed to have been descended from bears and other animals, or from natural forms. The Scefing dynasty, for example, is thought to have been derived from a fertility symbol represented by a sheaf of grain. Beowulf, the Anglo-

Saxon deseendant of many older Germanic tales, was himself connected with bears. In the Norse tale Bjárkarimer, which is one of the most likely sources of the Beowulf tale, the hero's father was named Bjorn, or literally "Bear", and Beowulf's own race, the Geats, numbered among its ancestors Beow and Beaw, names which also may refer to bears. Thus the bear-man creatures which the Beornings represent have a strong link with the Germanic tradition. There are as well several examples of a forest-man who is usually portrayed as having strange powers over men and nature. That Bombadil is a part of this tradition is not unlikely, though Tolkien also personifies in him many aspects of Burke's biological and poetic orientation.

The Norse legends also speak of giants, or in the Scandinavian tongue, "trolls". These creatures were descendants of the race of giants which the Norse gods defeated in order to become supreme rulers. They were considered generally malicious, and were associated with violent storms and other such phenomena. Eventually they accumulated secondary characteristics, such as their inability to bear sunlight.[9] Tolkien departs from tradition by attributing their origins to Morgoth, who created them in mockery and imitation of ents. He ascribes to them all manner of perversions, and great strength. Originally they were stupid creatures, but Sauron is supposed to have increased their perverted intelligence and as a result they became proportionally more dangerous.

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[9] The device which Gandalf uses to destroy the trolls in The Hobbit is itself of Scandinavian folk-tale origin, for it is modelled on the popular tale of the Brave Little Tailor, who defeats his enemies by inducing them to fight among themselves.

Tolkien's source for the ents is somewhat more complex, but again reveals the range of his borrowings. The Teutons had an odd and little known tradition of creatures which according to the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology[10] appeared to be "hairy and seemed to be covered with moss; their faces were wrinkled and gnarled as the bark of trees ... They knew the secret virtues of herbs." Though again Tolkien alters these creatures considerably for his own purposes, they are enough alike to be considered a related form.

There is, however, something special about the leader, Fangorn, whose name in the Westron language is "Tree-beard". In the Slavonic tradition there appears an odd creature named "Leshy", who was believed to be a keeper of the forests, a function which Tolkien ascribes to the ents. While he looked somewhat like a man, he was considerably larger, and was distinguished by a long green beard, perhaps the same mark which gives Tree-beard his name. Thus out of an amalgam of Teutonic and Slavonic mythologies, Tolkien seems to have "sub-created" the new form of Fangorn and his race.

One of the most significant exceptions to Tolkien's drawing on Teutonic myths for characters is the orc race, which, as T.J. Ganque points out,[11] seems to have been derived from Orcus, the Italic god of death, and source of the French word "ogre" or medieval "wild-man". If such is the source for these creatures which Tolkien says were

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[10] p. 279.

[11] "Tolkien: The Monsters and the Critters", in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 151-163.

created in mockery of elves, then it adds yet another dimension to the complex workings of derivative originality.

Many of Tolkien's characters seem to be modelled on the Teutonic pantheon. The characters of Denethor, Boromir, and perhaps Theoden, share characteristics of the god Thor, the Norse war-deity, who was highly respected and very noble, but who was occasionally somewhat rude and often duped by crafty opponents.[12] Sauron appears to be an interesting combination of Loki, the Norse god of fire, and Satan. Loki, a capricious self-server who was given to evil ways, was disloyal to his race, and ultimately would betray the gods and cause the destruction of the universe. Satan is also associated with disloyalty, with fire and with destruction. Sauron, as far as one can tell, seems to have been one of the Valar who turned to evil, and was a prime cause in the fall of Numenor, inducing its leaders to seek to capture the Undying Lands.[13] In The Lord of the Rings Sauron, like his Norse counterpart, causes the passing of the Third Age and the fading of the High Elven race.

The god Balder seems to have been one of the sources for Gandalf. As the god of light and wisdom, he literally radiated brightness wherever he went, and brought comfort and counsel in times of need. In many ways he and Gandalf are also counterparts of the Greek god

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[12] Tolkien discusses Thor in "On Fairy-stories", Tree and Leaf pp. 27-28.

[13] Sauron was a servant of Morgoth in the rebellion of the first age. As Morgoth was one of the Valar, it is likely that Sauron was some sort of lesser immortal, corresponding to a figure like Beelzebub or Mammon, both of whom fell with their leader Lucifer before the creation of man, according to the Christian tradition.

Hermes or Mercury. In fact the staff which Gandalf and the other wizards carry as a symbol and instrument of their power can be traced to Caduceus, the staff which Mercury carried. There seems to be a Biblical counterpart as well, for Moses carried a similar staff, endowed with supernatural powers, and a symbol of his special status as a messenger of God, a position similar to that of both Mercury and Gandalf.

On a more mundane level, the Norse god Tiw also carried a spear which, though seldom used in battle, was a symbol of another kind of power. The stewards of Gondor carried a rod or staff which symbolized their position as rulers in the absence of a king. Theoden's sword serves a similar purpose. When he grasps it his strength is renewed. Like Tiw's spear these staffs and weapons are not endowed with the power of magic, but with the power of meaning; they are a tangible image of rank and authority, and strength of body and mind.

There are also a number of other Teutonic folk motifs which reappear in The Lord of the Rings. The use of bird messengers is one example. Odin, the chief Norse god, employed birds as bearers of news and gatherers of information. Odin was also the god of runes, which were believed to hold magical powers. This belief reappears in The Lord of the Rings, and is a suggestive image of the power of language so apparent to Tolkien, Whorf and Burke.

More of these common motifs include riding on the backs of eagles or being carried away in their talons, something which appears in Chaucer as well as in The Lord of the Rings, and magic forests full of animated trees, which are a familiar sight even in the fairy-tales of

today. Many Germanic tribes also believed that the abode of souls was in the West, where Tolkien places the Undying Lands.[14] And when Isildur severs Sauron's finger, the two are imitating a number of Teutonic tales. Far more significant, however, is the fact that Tolkien draws on Norse tradition (and more recent manifestations of it, as in Wagner) for three of the central images in his work: Aragorn's sword, the Ring, and trees.

Because the Northern Germanic tribes were a warlike people, swords were of special importance to them, and lack of one meant special hardship. In the legends of these people it was not uncommon for an unarmed hero to find a sword in time of need, as Beowulf does in the cave of Grendel's mother. Frodo finds a sword in the Barrow, and the elven sword which Bilbo gives him later was acquired in a similar manner. The fate which Merry's sword suffers after the defeat of the Nazgul is also shared by Beowulf's sword and by those in other tales. Nor was it uncommon for a hero to have a weapon with a magical name and with magical powers apparently attributed to special runes carved upon it. Such was the case with Odin's spear, which could not be deflected from its mark. In the English tradition we find Arthur's sword Excalibur endowed with a similar kind of magic. Frodo was armed with Sting, an elven blade which glowed in the presence of orcs. But of all the

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[14] For some years Britain was apparently thought to be the site of this last abode, and many Britons for a time escaped paying tribute to their Frankish overlords because they had the task of ferrying the souls of the dead to their land. See the New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, p. 277, for more information.

swords in The Lord of the Rings, Aragorn's is the most significant. Yet it too is drawn directly from a Nordic myth, the Volsung Saga. In this tale Sigurd, the source for Wagner's Siegfried, bears a sword named Gram which was broken and then reforged. Aragorn's own sword, Narsil, suffers a similar fate, and its reforging signals the coming reunion of the kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor and is foretold in many legends. As a symbol of long tradition and the power of the kingdom regained, it is one of the central images in the work, and it is significant that here again Tolkien has simply appropriated it from a traditional source.

Magic rings are also a fairly familiar sight in Teutonic myth. Odin had a magic ring which was called Draupnir and which had the power to bring unlimited wealth to the bearer. But as common as the motif may be, it can be used with great power, as in Wagner's Nibelungenlied. Wagner's Ring shares with Draupnir the ability to bring great wealth, but desire of it causes hardship and destruction because a curse has been placed upon it. In many ways it has much the same effect as Sauron's Ring, inspiring as it does possessiveness and greed, and the desire for domination. Yet Tolkien gives the ring even more significance by making it the key to the survival of earth and all its creatures. Thus it is another central image drawn from the past and used in a new and powerful way.

The last of these three images, the tree, is perhaps the most important of all.[15] In most Northern cosmologies the entire universe

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[15] See also Chapter Three for another look at this image.

was supported by a single, huge ash tree named Yggdrasil (Gandalf's staff is made of ash as well). One of the most popular of Norse architectural devices was to build halls and houses around the trunk of a large tree, in imitation of Yggdrasil and its support of the world.[16] Some versions of the creation claim that the human race sprang from two trees. Thus it is not surprising that trees hold a special place in the hearts of the Norse poets who built the tradition from which Tolkien borrows so much. The importance of trees in this tale is made manifest in the Two Trees of the Valar, the ancestors of the White Trees of Gondor, and in Lorien, Fangorn, the Old Forest, even in the Party Tree of Chapter One. It is not without some significance that Gandalf, the leader of the White Council following Saruman's demise, is identified by Fangorn as "The only wizard that really cares about trees."[17] The tree he cares for is the Tree of Life itself.[18]

Given the presence of so many elements of Teutonic myth, one might expect to find an influence on the tone of the book as well. Indeed, the Norse view of fate or chance which was imported to Britain by the Anglo-Saxons sometime during the fourth century has a demonstrably

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[16] Perhaps this practice was the inspiration for the hall of Galadriel.

[17] II, 69.

[18] The Tree of Life is, of course, a Judeo-Christian tradition as well, but the tree as an image is far more dominant in Teutonic legends, if for no other reason than the mere presence of vast forests in Northern Europe, as opposed to the plains and deserts of the Middle-East. Thus the dominance of the tree image in Tolkien's writing more likely stems from his awareness of Northern mythology than from his Christian background, though here again it is a good example of the complexity of mythological sources in general and of Tolkien's mythology in particular.

strong influence on The Lord of the Rings. As evidenced by the legend of the Gotterdammerung or Twilight of the Gods (which was actually a prophecy, not a legend of past events), the Norsemen generally believed that everything which happened was fated to happen, and that the world would ultimately end in ruin. Nonetheless it was the duty of the warrior hero to face up to his doom and to do all in his power to aid in the struggle against the demons of chaos and destruction. This attitude colours Beowulf's adventure with the dragon. He goes to meet his doom courageously, even though it is evident beforehand that he will not return.

That fate is a controlling force in The Lord of the Rings is evident in many of the songs which are sung in the prophecies of old. Such is the song of Boromir's dream:

> Seek for the sword that was broken:
> In Imladris it dwells;
> There shall be councils taken
> Stronger than Morgul spells.
> There shall be shown a token
> That Doom is near at hand,
> For Isildur's Bane shall waken,
> And the Halfling forth shall stand.[19]

In the face of this Doom Frodo accepts the quest of his own free will, demonstrating courage despite the apparent hopelessness of his mission and the poor chance for survival. That he does so willingly is his salvation, for the forces of fate will be satisfied, voluntarily or not. Those who stand in the way of fate, like Gollum, are destroyed. Yet, even if the quest is successfully fulfilled, the passing of the Third

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[19] I, 259.

Age and fading of the Eldar will leave the world irrevocably altered, and bereft of much of the glory of old. Behind this sad truth lies the knowledge that all things must pass away, as the old myths so poignantly remind us.

Such is the view that permeates the very fibre of the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf. Yet in his famous lecture on that work, Tolkien praises another quality of the poem, the Christian perspective which he believes gives the work its special significance:

> ... in England this imagination [pagan English and Norse] was brought into touch with Christendom, and with the Scriptures. The process of 'conversion' was a long one, but some of its effects were doubtless immediate; an alchemy of change (producing ultimately the mediaeval) was at once at work. One does not have to wait until all the native traditions of the older world have been replaced or forgotten; for the minds which still retain them are changed, and the memories viewed in a different perspective ... It is through such a blending that there was available to a poet who set out to write a poem -- and in the case of Beowulf we may probably use this very word -- on a scale and plan unlike a minstrel's lay, both new faith and new learning (or education), and also a body of native tradition (itself requiring to be learned) for the changed mind to contemplate together.[20]

By his blending of these old and new traditions, the Beowulf poet had captured a moment of broadened perspective, enriched by the elements of both paganism and Christianity. In his own use of the pagan Teutonic and classical traditions for much of the substance of a modern, basically Christian work, Tolkien too is trying to capture this fleeting moment of broadened perspective. While the world of Middle-Earth is

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[20] Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics, p. 21.

faced with the inevitable passing and fading of things once bright and full of wonder, there is nonetheless a hint of Christian salvation for those who deserve it. And like his Anglo-Saxon predecessor, Tolkien has realized the value of using old stones to build new towers.

IV

Although the Classical and Teutonic traditions are probably the most significant for the purposes of this discussion, it might be of value to have a brief look at some possible sources of a slightly more modern nature, for it is likely that, given his predisposition towards artistic derivation, Tolkien did not cease to look for material once the wealth of these two basic sources had been effectively tapped.

The use of pagan material in a Christian perspective identified by Tolkien in Beowulf seems to have become an essential element of later English poetry. Such is the case with Gawain, for example; his origins can be traced to pre-Christian Celtic fertility rituals, though his story is largely Christian in nature. Tolkien's debt to Gawain is neither great nor profound. The scene in which Gawain takes on the quest when no one else except the King will reply to the Green Knight's challenge does resemble to some degree Frodo's own acceptance, which comes only after he realizes that no one else is going to volunteer except Bilbo, who is too old to go. But beyond such small details, we see in Gawain a new influence, that of the courtly love tradition. For the first time in a principally English work beautiful women have a part to play. The reverence in which the poet holds the beauty of Guinivere echoes the feelings of the Fellowship toward

Galadriel:

> Fairest of form was this queen,
> Glinting and grey of eye;
> No man could say he had seen,
> A lovelier, but with a lie.[21]

Gimli is ready to lay his life on the line to maintain a similar opinion of the Lady of Lorien.[22] It is quite likely that this same tradition influences Spenser in The Faerie Queene, which also had a profound effect on Tolkien. But as Arthur was often considered to be a Faerie knight, and his court is the setting of Gawain's tale, and because the Faerie element is central to the Gawain legend, the work deserves notice as one of the more significant links in the development of the fairy-story genre which reappears in The Lord of the Rings.

There is an interesting connection between Gawain and The Lord of the Rings which comes to us via Shakespeare's Macbeth, and that is in the use of a moving forest during the destruction of Isengard. The moving forest motif which Shakespeare employs in the Macbeth tale relates to the walking bush which traditionally appeared at Mayday celebrations, and to the Green Knight himself. In each case this highly unnatural movement effected the purgation of evil and the regeneration of life in the spring. Thus Fangorn's army of Huorn's is following yet another tradition, that of the ancient Celts, who predate both the Anglo-Saxons and the Christians.

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[21] Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, translated by Brian Stone (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 26.

[22] The courtly love tradition has clearly been an influence in the scene between Galadriel and Gimli, I, 392.

One of the most significant examples of the development of the fairy-legend-epic is, of course, the Faerie Queene, and there are many parallels between this work and The Lord of the Rings. Guyon, for example, is an elf, as are all of the true inhabitants of Gloriana's realm. The land itself is the land of Faerie, the world in which all tales, including The Lord of the Rings, properly take place. There are also many similar situations and events. All of the central characters except Calidore have a loyal companion and assistant. Guyon is accompanied by a palmer, who keeps him on the straight and narrow path as much as possible. This palmer carries a staff which, like Gandalf's wand, is related to Mercury's Caduceus, and is a symbol of wisdom. Arthur is accompanied by his squire Timias. When the great knight falls during his battle with Maleger he is rescued by this faithful friend. Sam fulfils similar roles during Frodo's journey. He carries Frodo and leads him in the Land of Mordor as the Palmer leads Guyon through Acrasia's realm, and he rescues Frodo from Shelob and the orcs in Cirith Ungol. At times he even saves Frodo from the clutches of despair, as Una saves Redcrosse in Book One. In each case he imitates a counterpart in the Faerie Queene.

The previously mentioned Maleger, who is based on Antaeus of the Hercules legend, also has a counterpart in The Lord of the Rings. Maleger was a form without substance, as the Nazgul and Sauron are, and he rode on a swift-running tiger, just as the Nazgul ride their black horses. Also like the Nazgul and Sauron, Maleger was very difficult to vanquish. Each time he fell he gathered renewed strength, and returned again until Arthur realised the key to his destruction.

This situation closely parallels the problem which the people of middle-earth have with Sauron and his servants, who are finally overcome only when the One Ring on which their power is dependent is destroyed.

There are many more parallels between The Faerie Queene and The Lord of the Rings but only a few need be mentioned briefly here. There is, for example, Guyon's descent in Book Two. Gandalf's many appearances throughout Tolkien's tale echo the movements of Arthur in the several adventures of the Faerie Queene. As in The Lord of the Rings, Memory and History play a significant role, and even appear as real people (F.Q. II, ix). Much in the manner of Saruman, the evil magician Archimago attempts to set the good knights against each other. There is one incident, however, which deserves a closer look as a clear and significant parallel.

In Book II Guyon meets a figure known as Genius. This character is a figure of false wisdom, and thus corresponds to Saruman. In his hand he holds a staff or wand, just as Saruman does. He seeks to subdue unwary individuals by means of false reasoning and wise-seeming words. Guyon overthrows Genius and breaks his staff, much in the same manner as Gandalf, who casts Saruman down from his high position and by breaking his wizard's wand breaks his power as well.

An even more likely model for Saruman is Satan in Paradise Lost, which also appears to have been a major influence on Tolkien. Like Satan, Saruman falls from pride and ambition. Just as Satan was the bearer of light before his fall, Saruman, as leader of the Council of Wizards, was named Saruman the White. Like Satan, Saruman's seductive

powers stem from his charming voice which hypnotizes its audience (a very snake-like attribute). Also like Satan, Saruman seeks to spread discord and strife among the enemies of evil, to divide and weaken his opponents by false counsels.

The overall position of Satan in Paradise Lost is clearly echoed by Sauron's situation in The Lord of the Rings. Because of the totally evil cast of mind which controls his thought, Satan is blind to the irony of his situation. He will never understand that all of his actions will in the end be turned against him and that he will ultimately destroy himself. Sauron, though he is "very wise and weighs all things to a nicety in the scales of his malice," is similarly blind, for "the only measure that he knows is desire for power; and so he judges all hearts. Into his heart the thought will not enter that any will refuse it, that having the Ring we may seek to destroy it. If we seek this, we shall put him out of reckoning."[23]

Perhaps the most significant of the Miltonic derivations is Tolkien's use of the inverted hierarchy or perverted mirror-image. Satan's hierarchy in Hell is a perfect inversion of the hierarchy in Heaven. His speeches are perverse imitations of God and Christ, and his logic is a perversion of Heavenly reasoning. So, too, are the structures of evil imitations of the good in The Lord of the Rings. Each of the representatives of the Elder Days, the elves, the ents, the Numenorean Kings, has its perverse counterpart in orcs, trolls, and the

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[23] I, 282-3.

Nazgul. The logic of Boromir's speech as he attempts to acquire the ring from Frodo is the false logic of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Boromir even echoes Elrond's speech at the Council: "What shall we do with the Ring, the least of Rings, the trifle that Sauron fancies?"[24] Boromir restates: "The Ring! Is it not a strange fate that we should suffer so much fear and doubt for so small a thing? So small a thing!"[25] Tolkien goes to great lengths to expand upon this parallel, particularly in his use of contrasting images, such as the Two Towers which dominate Part Two. Thus in Tolkien's debt to Milton is revealed further the complex development of his use of source material.

As a final example of Tolkien's derivative originality, let us examine Haldir's speech on p. 366 of Part One:

> In this high place you may see the two powers that are opposed to one another; and ever they strive now in thought, but whereas the light perceives the very heart of the darkness, its own secret has not been discovered.

Haldir's use of the phrase "heart of the darkness" is almost surely a reference to Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, and in many ways Frodo's journey is an expansion of this Conradian image. Yet there is another, equally interesting parallel to this quotation, this one taken from the Gospel according to St. John, I:5:

> And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

Exhibited here is the fundamental principle of Tolkien's use of

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[24] I, 255.

[25] I, 414.

earlier architecture. Ancient and modern combine to produce new forms that are the same yet different. Even if some of the examples given herein do not prove specific indebtedness, they do demonstrate that what he shows us we have seen many times before; but now we view it with a new perspective which in turn brings new insight, a clarity of vision in which "things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity."[26]

V

While the preceding list of conventions, archetypes and allusions may appear unnecessarily long, it is in many ways too short, for it merely scratches the surface of a veritable gold mine of possible sources and analogues. One question remains to be answered, however, and that is why Tolkien should fill his work with second-hand materials, when he demonstrates such inventiveness. Why should he not create a world totally in isolation from the past, based entirely on his own creative capacity?

To some degree, the question answers itself. If, as most analysts agree, literature works by triggering a Proustian reaction through the power of suggestion,[27] then writer and reader must share to some extent a common group of experiences. What better experience-group is there to draw from than life itself, and what is history but an

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[26] Tree and Leaf, p. 52.

[27] See for example Burke, Permanence and Change, pp. 216-7, or Vernon Lee, The Handling of Words (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp. 54 et al.

accumulation of data concerning the life experience? Thus if a literary work is to achieve any degree of communication it must be firmly based in history, no matter how rearranged that history becomes in the literary form. No work of literature will communicate in isolation from the past.

On a different level, literary technique itself cannot function in isolation from the past if it is to communicate to any degree. To paraphrase Pater, the technical part of a work of art must be appropriate to the intellectual part; that is, form and matter must work in unison. Thus Tolkien's heavy dependence on past tradition is not the sign of an inferior writer. Rather, it points to what may best be described as an historical perspective, a realization or recognition that the present is unalterably shaped by the past, and that man not only cannot but should not attempt to live in isolation from tradition. The second chapter of The Lord of the Rings is called "The Shadow of the Past" and is described as "crucial" by Tolkien in the preface to the 1966 edition. Time and time again we are given examples of how the past shapes the present. The events of the First Age, the Fall of Numenor, and the rebellion of Morgoth, have all had their effect on the shape of things in the Third Age. Thus the cultivation of an historical perspective is essential to the understanding of even one's own environment. And the use of traditional techniques is the stylistic complement to this thematic point of view.

Tolkien's concern for the cultivation of an historical perspective was shared by others. It is undoubtedly one of the contributing factors in Eliot's highly allusive The Waste Land, which literally

demands that one search for the meaning of its many references. Kenneth Burke recognized the need for an historical perspective to free man from his present misunderstanding of the universe. He argued that modern man, because of his blind faith in technology, believes he is superior to and separate from his past. This is a serious misconception which leads to total isolation from natural laws and will ultimately bring destruction.[28] Whorf, too, recognized this problem. Like Tolkien, he turned to the past, to the ancient languages of early America, to find new solutions in old truths. He discovered that the Hopi, for example, clearly recognized the past as an inherent part of the present, and that their language did not separate the two, as ours does. Because of their perspective the Hopi people were able to live in a kind of harmony not only with the past, but with nature and with each other as well. It is therefore important to recognize that Tolkien's own stylistic traditionalism goes hand in hand with an intellectual pose to provide a fine example of the unity of form and matter.[29]

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[28] Burke calls this phenomenon symbolic patricide and believes it is embodied in the Oedipus legend. Oedipus did not fall because of his incestuous relationship with his mother, but because in his pride he felt himself superior to history and the role he had been given in it. The murder of his father is the unwitting fruit of his belief that he was separate from and therefore free of the influence of the past. His demise is representative of the fate of anyone who refuses to recognize the inevitable bond between past and present and the lessons which history has to teach. Modern man must similarly recognize his relationship with the past or run the risk of self-annihilation.

[29] One may yet question how looking backward will aid us in coping with the future. Burke draws an analogy with psychoanalysis, which also seeks the answer to present problems in the mysteries of the past.

This historical perspectivism is reinforced by Tolkien's own pose as the simple translator of real historical material. Such pseudo-historicality is not a mere narrative trick but also goes hand in hand with his intellectual position. In his analysis of Beowulf, Tolkien recognized this quality as an important part of the power of the poem:

> It is indeed a curious fact that it is one of the peculiar poetic virtues of Beowulf that has contributed to its own critical misfortunes. 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.[30]

The poetical object is to shape those Proustian reactions into the desired perspective: that is, the historical perspective.

The next step is to understand how Tolkien's use of stylistic devices and his pseudo-historical pose shape our reactions in the desired way. For one thing, the epic poets recognized that the use of references to past heroes and accomplishments, as contained in epic lists, allusions and digressions, lent stature to their own hero and his adventures by means of association. The comparisons which surfaced between Abraham Lincoln and the late John Kennedy after the latter's assassination might be seen as a modern manifestation of this ancient practice. The mere mention of an earlier event of some significance calls up whole worlds of accumulated meaning far beyond the power of the words themselves. In the same way the use of epic

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[30] Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics, pp. 5-6.

conventions gives stylistic power and stature which has been proven through the ages, a power and stature which much of our modern literature lacks because the contemporary attitude is largely concerned with a rejection of tradition. Even pseudo-historical references such as those which abound in The Lord of the Rings serve through the power of pure suggestion to open up limitless horizons and unexplored vistas. Thus the contention of many modern writers that tradition and historicity tend to suppress the freedom of movement of the imagination is unsound. For as we have seen Tolkien has intentionally cultivated the historical perspective precisely in order to expand our understanding, to reveal the limitless number of perspectives outside of our own. Modern technological perspectivism is far too narrow and is growing narrower, and requires strong doses of the historical attitude to reawaken it to the complexities of life through an understanding of the past.

Finally, we must ask why Tolkien used the tradition of Faerie as a vehicle for his art. First of all, we have his own testimony in the foreword to the trilogy, in which he states his cordial dislike of allegory and his preference for history "true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers." From this statement it would seem that history is anything which is applicable to human thought and experience, and need not be objectively true. Such an attitude to legend or myth Whorf found among the Hopi who, because of their perspective and the nature of their language, did not separate the past from the present or myth from memory. For them the past was physically

present[31] because it had shaped the objective reality of the present. Memory, on the other hand, belonged to the subjective realm of thought, and therefore assumed a co-equal place alongside myth or legend, which is also a part of this realm. Thus the Hopi would have understood without question the applicability of 'feigned' history: myth and memory, and all thought, are simply the subjective manifestations of a deeper, all-pervading spirit which abides in the objective world as well. And more important, the Hopi realized that subjective or not, myth had a shaping influence on the actions of the tribe. Like that which we mistakenly call real history, legend is an interpretation of life experience and is therefore just as applicable as the 'true' story.[32]

The Anglo-Saxons also recognized the strong influence of myth and legend. Their word scop meant not only the maker or shaper of words but also the shaper of society and its attitudes. In his poetry the Anglo-Saxon scop made no attempt to separate myth from fact, and freely used both in the construction of new forms.[33] Like the Hopi,

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31 As it is, for example, in the light in the Phial of Galadriel, or in Lorien itself.

32 Tolkien himself makes a similar statement in "On Fairy-stories", Tree and Leaf, p. 31. Later in the essay he calls the reality of fairy-stories the "Inner consistence of reality", and it is the recognition of this essential reality in true fairy-stories which brings about the joy that ought to be felt by the reader. See the epilogue to the essay, pp. 63-66.

33 This quality Tolkien clearly identified in Beowulf. John Gardner also recognizes and makes a great deal of this fact of Anglo-Saxon art in a recent work of fiction called Grendel (New York) Ballantine Books, 1973).

the Anglo-Saxons recognized the applicability of pseudo-history. That it was not objectively true did not bother them in the least.

That Tolkien shares this attitude is apparent in a number of statements made by characters in the work itself. Ted Sandyman, for example, whose own perspective is decidely modern (that is, cynical), scoffs at the strange tales reaching Hobbiton from 'outside':

> 'I can hear fireside-tales and children's stories at home if I want to.'
> 'No doubt you can,' retorted Sam, 'and I daresay there's more truth in some of them than you reckon.'[34]

The truth Sam refers to is not the objective truth to which Sandyman limits himself, but the truth of subjective reality, the truth that dragons and elves do exist in the subjective realm, which is not less real because it is a product of the mind. Words are a product of the mind, and the source of the magic that created elves and dragons; do we yet deny the existence of language?

Later Eomer attempts to draw a similar distinction:

> 'Halfling! But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?'
> 'A man may do both,' said Aragorn. 'For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time. The green earth say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day!'[35]

Real or imaginary, Frodo, Eomer and Aragorn will all become part of the great subjective realm of legend, as did the Geats, Hengest, and

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[34] I, p. 53.

[35] II, p. 321.

Arthur.

Thus the genre of The Lord of the Rings belongs to a realm which lies beyond the narrow horizons of the modern insistence on "realism" and "truth". Tolkien has recognized, probably as a result of the historical perspective acquired through scholarly pursuit, that there are other ways of viewing the universe, other perspectives besides the pure technological objectivism which threatens to strangle modern society: that in fact objectivism itself is merely another form of subjective interpretation. The use of such a genre as the Faerie story, totally subjective and based on traditions which we have generally rejected as inappropriate, ought to have spelled literary suicide. Instead, it has aroused the subjective heart-strings of a growing number of people, and reawakened them to the possibility of new visions and new achievements.

On a more purely artistic level, Tolkien's use of the fairy-story tradition is equally justifiable. R.J. Reilly points out that a story which deals with an imaginary world may actually be superior to one which merely imitates life.[37] As we have seen, the genre of fantasy is just as valid a means of interpretation as the genre of realism: but fantasy has the added advantage of being imaginatively freer, of being intrinsically more suited to the creation of new forms out of the matter of common experience. Furthermore, because fantasy can be seen as a valid method of life-interpretation, it can escape the stigma of being a retreat from reality. Rather, it

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[37] "Tolkien and the Fairy-Story", in Tolkien and the Critics, p. 144.

provides a new perspective for viewing reality in ways which we could not have comprehended within the objectivist view.

Given the point of view of the author and the nature of the material which he wished to present, the choice of the fairy-story as the vehicle for his art is all but inevitable. For the world of art, like the world of Faerie, is a land of enchantment. In the tradition not only of Spenser and of Gawain, but of Homer and of Virgil as well, Tolkien has realized the fundamental truths of the mythological, Faerie perspective; and the realm of the mythical Faerie story is the logical form for the restatement of such truths.

THREE

METAPHOR

I

"A world without metaphor," says Kenneth Burke, "would be a world without meaning."[1] In its broadest sense, metaphor is anything which by association with something else brings new perspective, new meaning. Thus imagery, symbolism and even the lowly simile are forms of metaphor, and as such are tools of understanding, keys to meaning. If a literary artist seeks to promote meaning, he relies to a large extent on these various forms of this basic literary device.

Furthermore, one can argue, metaphor is not only desirable but also natural to a work of art, since language itself is merely a symbol of something else: an inner state, a desire, a concept, or a physical object. To say that literature employs metaphor is to express a tautology of sorts. Writers who deny that their writing is symbolic simply do not understand the nature of that which they do. Modern man, desiring technical objectivism in communication, makes the mistaken assumption that language ought not to be metaphoric because metaphor communicates by connotation and suggestion. Modern language has become increasingly definitive, and the use of metaphor has declined. A modern author who consciously employs metaphor is clearly attempting to restore to his language some of the tonality, the

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[1] Permanence and Change, p. 194.

suggestiveness which is natural to language itself. Tolkien is one such writer. His work abounds with images and symbols rich with connotation and filled with suggested meaning.

What follows is an outline of some of the more significant images and symbols in The Lord of the Rings. The list is by no means complete. Nor are the interpretations given intended to be definitive, since it would be counter to the idea of image and symbol as tools of expansiveness and suggestion to limit their meaning by too restrictive an analysis. Rather, the whole is designed to reveal to a limited degree Tolkien's manner of employing these variations on the metaphorical theme not only to enrich the tale, but to re-enrich the very language in which it is written.

II

As already mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Tree is perhaps the single most important image in the book. In fact, it is a central image in much of Tolkien's writing. The volume Tree and Leaf, for example, takes its title from the image of the "Tree of Tales" in "On Fairy-stories" and from the tree which dominates the story "Leaf by Niggle". It was inspired, we are told, by "A great-limbed poplar tree that I could see even lying in bed. It was suddenly lopped and mutilated by its owner, I do not know why. It is cut down now, a less barbarous punishment for any crimes it may have been accused of, such as being large and alive. I do not think it had

any friends, or any mourners, except myself and a pair of owls."[2] Is it mere coincidence that Treebeard says of Gandalf that he was "The only wizard that really cares about trees"?

Perhaps a brief quotation from the essay will suffice to give a general impression of what Tolkien intended when he placed the tree at the centre of The Lord of the Rings:

> The study i.e., [the analytical study of fairy-stories] may indeed become depressing. It is easy for the student to feel that with all his labour he is collecting only a few leaves, many of them now torn or decayed, from the countless foliage of the Tree of Tales, with which the Forest of Days is carpeted. It seems vain to add to the litter. Who can design a new leaf? The patterns from bud to unfolding, and the colours from spring to autumn were all discovered by men long ago. But that is not true. The seed of the tree can be replanted on almost any soil, even in one so smoke ridden (as Lang said) as that of England. Spring is, of course, not really less beautiful because we have seen or heard of other like events: like events, never from world's beginning to world's end the same event. Each leaf, of oak or ash and thorn, is a unique embodiment of the pattern, and for some this very year may be the embodiment, the first ever seen and recognized, though oaks have put forth .. leaves for countless generations of men.[3]

Thus when Tolkien refers to a tree, he refers not only to a particular organic object, but to something as common and yet mysterious and profound as life itself. In the image is embodied the regeneration of all living things, including man; also embodied is the renewal of wonder that accompanies the seasons of each new year; finally, it

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[2] Tree and Leaf, p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. 51.

signifies the renewal of art which mysteriously springs forth, like the Tree of Gondor, from the ancient Tree of Tales.

The tree image is also one of the major structural devices which holds the tale together (as do the characters and the quest itself). The Party Tree at the very beginning is the first manifestation. The Old Forest with all its mysteries is another, as is the Forest of Fangorn, the strange land of the ents. Finally, there is Lorien, where the beautiful mallorn trees grow. These golden trees are descendants of the trees of Eldamar, home of the Eldar, a people whose emblem was Galathilion, the white tree. From the many references to legend in the tale and its appendices we learn also of the Two Trees of Valinor, from which Galathilion sprang. The light which emanated from these Two Trees passed by way of the silmaril to the phial which Galadriel gave to Frodo. Also descended from these trees through Galathilion was Nimloth, a sapling of which became the White Tree of Gondor. During the abscence of the Kings of Gondor the kingdom declined and the White Tree died, but with the coming of Aragorn, whose emblem is a white tree on a sable background and whose name means "royal tree", a living tree is planted to symbolize the re-establishment of the united kingdoms under the heirs of Isildur. To round things out, Sam replaces the dead Party Tree with a mallorn given him by Galadriel. Clearly then, Tolkien has constructed his tale around an organic image in which he has embodied tradition, art, and life.

Through this image Tolkien also manages to construct a yardstick by means of which one can measure character. All of the evil characters of this tale are guilty of the wanton destruction of trees. Gandalf, on the

other hand, cared for trees. That the most powerful of the wizards should feel such sentiment is an indication of its importance. The respect for trees among the Eldar and the Numenorean kings is evident in the prominent position they have given to trees as their emblems. In Lorien, which is perhaps the most enchanted of all this enchanted world, trees are the abode of the noble inhabitants, and the Galadrim's relationship with the forest is a form of high communion with nature. Legolas' race dwells in communion with the forest of Northern Mirkwood. Even the lowly hobbits, who are given more to tilling the soil than to ranging the forests, have respect for trees. Sam is horrified to see in a vision the destruction of trees in the Shire. At every level of society in Middle-earth then, one can find evidence of the biological perspective which lies behind Tolkien's use of the tree as a central image. Only the dwarves, dwellers underground, and the Riders of Rohan, inhabitants of the plains, do not share this love for their leafy neighbours. Unlike the evil races, however, they are not prone to indiscriminate axemanship.

Because the tree image is an embodiment of life and as such must be true to life, not all trees and forests in Middle-earth are good trees. In fact the second tree of any importance that we meet in the tale is Old Willow, whom Bombadil tells us is rotten at heart, and who very nearly finishes the quest by imprisoning Merry and Pippin and trying to drown Frodo. Similarly, the forest of Southern Mirkwood, which has fallen under the spell of Sauron, is filled with evil and, as Bilbo discovered, is very dangerous to enter. Trees, like men, and forests, like the earth, have the potential for good or evil, depending on their

circumstances and their own nature.

The endowment of trees and forests with qualities of spirit and action, while normally defined as personification or animism, is in a sense another branch of metaphor, as it operates by placing side by side two objects or qualities not normally associated in order to provide new insight. Such an approach has its source in earlier traditions in legends and fairy-tales, and is a reflection of early man's biologically oriented perspective. More modern societies have scorned this notion of animism as they have simultaneously deprived language of much of its power. By re-establishing animism as a device Tolkien is promoting the attitude which shaped it. He extends the quality of animism to mountains (e.g., the Cradhras incident) as well as trees, and by means of the constant use of proper names such as Weathertop, The Downs, and Entwash; and by giving these places distinct 'characters', he suggests that in a sense all of Middle-earth partakes of the animistic spirit.

Such an outlook is significant, for it reflects Whorf's contemporary analysis of the Hopi world view, which also incorporated a living spirit into all things. Thus one who was sufficiently attuned to the workings of this manifesting spirit (of which thought was also a product) could exert power over other things, plant and animal. Such power could be used for good and for evil. If one were to think evil of a rosebush, one might retard its growth, or even kill it. On the other hand, if one thought well of it, it would flourish. It is perhaps for this reason that Old Willow was able to control much of the Old Forest by the power of his evil will, and that Bombadil was in turn capable of negating Willow's influence. On the other hand, Gandalf and Aragorn were able to exert their

influence for good, and ultimately, with the power of Sauron broken, they were triumphant.

The presence of this all-pervading spirit is signified by, but not embodied in, three major images: the Ring, Galadriel's mirror, and the palantiri. The importance of the ring is obvious. It is the medium through which Sauron 'tunes in' to the other level (which Frodo enters when he dons the ring at Weathertop and at Amon Hen) and through which he is able to exert his powerful will on others. The Palantiri, while not created for evil, can be used for similar purposes, for they too are agents of communication between what Whorf would call the objective and subjective realms.[4] It is in the latter realm that Aragorn strives with Sauron when he looks into the Palantir at Helm's Deep.

The third image, Galadriel's mirror, is probably the most interesting of the three, though in respect to its role in the actual narrative it is perhaps least significant. Like the Palantiri, it is a medium through which one can tap the resources of the subjective realm. Galadriel explains that the mirror shows things that have been, things that are, and things that yet may be. In other words, it may show all things, and also the potential for things. It is the kind of vision which Whorf attributed to the Hopi, a vision of the all-pervading manifesting force

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[4] Tolkien distinguishes these two levels as our world and the "wraith-world" (I, 234) in which the Nazgul exist. The elves could see both worlds at once, for they were a race of immortal spirits and earthly flesh and blood combined in one form (it is true that elves could die in battle or by some other stroke of fate, but they were not subject to the same law of mortality as were men and halflings).

which is composed of all things which have been made manifest and also the potential for all things to be made manifest. The Mirror provides a new perspective, for it is not bound by our notions of linear time and space. It enriches the mind by providing not only knowledge, but a novel way of perceiving that knowledge. In a similar manner, Tolkien's art itself, by transcending the objectivist view, can also provide new knowledge and new modes of perception.[5]

There is an interesting connection here with a fourth image only indirectly related to the three already mentioned, and that is the all-important practice of smoking "pipe-weed". Whorf claims that North American Indians employed the pipe as a means of concentrating thought and thus elevating the mind to the subjective level of being. Similarly Aragorn and Gandalf, as well as the hobbits, enjoy the practice immensely during periods of rest and reflection. Perhaps the prominence of pipes and smoking in The Lord of the Rings is itself an intentionally devised image which once again relates to the overall perspective of the work. That the hobbits are the originators of the practice may be a subtle hint as to their mental resilience and hidden virtues, which are so important to the outcome of the quest. That Saruman and his lackeys also use pipe-weed simply points out once again the potential for all good things (including language and thought) to be used for evil.

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[5] Again, it must be stressed that to the author's knowledge there is no evidence that Tolkien knew of Whorf's studies, though as both were linguists in the 1930's the connection is not unlikely. The comparison is made only to point out that during these years others beside Tolkien were thinking in these terms, and to suggest that Tolkien's use of such an image, and the prominent place it and the others hold in the work, is not pure whimsey, but is intellectually founded and highly intentional.

The image of time which is suggested by the visions in Galadriel's mirror is itself of significance within the framework of the tale as a whole. Whereas technology measures time into equal units plotted linearly, and allows for no fluctuation, the mirror transforms time into a three-dimensional panorama in which it is fluid and can be metaphorically rearranged so that what once appeared to be isolated events can be seen as relative and meaningful, without the events themselves being changed in any way. Thus while time does flow inevitably onward, its movement is not incapable of being altered.

The hobbit's experiences in the Old Forest, Rivendell, and Lorien provide alternate examples of this view of time. During their stay with Bombadil, the four adventurers lose track of the hours, expecially as they listen to Bombadil's speech, after which Frodo wonders "Whether the morning and evening of one day or of many days had passed."[6] At Rivendell, Bilbo tells Frodo that "Time doesn't seem to pass here: it just is."[7] Similarly, their stay at Lorien causes some confusion as to the passage of time. Sam clearly remembers the phase of the moon before he entered the realm of Galadriel, but on his departure it appears to be out of phase and a discussion ensues:

> 'Well, I can remember three nights there for certain, and I seem to remember several more, but I would take my oath it was never a whole month. Anyone would think that time did not count in there!'
>
> 'And perhaps that was the way of it,' said Frodo. 'In that land, maybe, we were in a time that has elsewhere long gone by. It was not, I think, until

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[6] I, 142.

[7] I, 243.

> Silverlode bore us back to Anduin that we returned to the time that flows through mortal lands to the Great Sea. And I don't remember any moon, either new or old, in Caras Galadon: only stars by night and sun by day.'
>
> Legolas stirred in his boat. 'Nay, time does not tarry ever,' he said; 'but change and growth are not the same in all things and places alike. For the Elves the world moves, and it moves both very swift and very slow. Swift because they themselves change little, and all else fleets by: it is a grief to them. Slow, because they do not count the running years, not for themselves. The passing seasons are but ripples ever repeated in the long stream. Yet beneath the sun all things must wear to an end at last.'
>
> 'But the wearing is slow in Lorien,' said Frodo. The power of the Lady is on it. Rich are the hours, though short they seem, in Caras Galadon, where Galadriel wields the Elven-ring.'[8]

This expanded notion of time, and the richness it implies, is far beyond the comprehension of the technological psychosis. Rather, it is an image designed to broaden and enrich our understanding beyond the limitations of the objective, scientific perspective.

The natural counterpart to this magical image is the Great River itself, and all of its metaphorical tributaries which are ever-present in the work. Like the image of time which Legolas describes, the rivers run both swiftly and slowly, and they bring both life and death. The hobbits are afraid of water, as they are afraid of 'adventures', and very early in Part One we are told that Frodo's parents were drowned in the Brandywine river. The Dead Marshes, an image of stagnancy and despair, are also a part of the Anduin's watershed; yet the river itself signifies movement, and movement or flow is essential to survival (in medieval terms, active virtue is superior to passive

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[8] I, pp. 404-5.

virtue). When Bilbo leaves the confines of the Shire, he says "I am being swept off my feet at last."[9] He is being caught up in the flow of grand events which happen in the larger world. By allowing himself to be thus swept away, Bilbo, and Frodo after him, will find new knowledge and new understanding.

Tolkien's use of the river/time image is scarcely original, but it is important from the biological point of view, and it is rich with connotation at all levels, from the death of Frodo's parents in the Brandywine to his own departure over the sea. Like the tree, it is a complex image, and Tolkien is careful to develop its complexities to the best advantage. In fact by its very complexity and the manner in which it is developed, the image itself is a significant medium through which to glimpse the overall point of view which shapes the tale as a whole.

The rivers are not the only settings of importance in The Lord of the Rings. Indeed, wherever the adventurers journey, they set their feet on symbolic ground of one sort or another. Of course the Shire, with its smugness, its bigotries and fears, is representative of a common phenomenon within most human communities, where people construct artificial barriers to keep the outside world from disturbing a somewhat fragile social balance. "Bounders" are employed by the hobbits to maintain the barriers and strangers are only tolerated with suspicion.[10] Even the Shire maps, which show little beyond the borders

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[9] I, p. 44.

[10] The Bucklanders maintained a hedge as a protection from the Old Forest. The Brandybucks, however, had a door in the hedge and

of the hobbits' own lands, reflect the narrowness of the Shire's outlook. Thus Bilbo's and Frodo's adventures are in a sense symbolic actions designed to broaden their knowledge and break down the barriers. In fact the success of the quest depends to a large extent on the breaking down of the artificial barriers between elf and dwarf, and between elf and man. Even Gandalf is all but shut out from the societies of men until experience proves the necessity and desirability of co-operation and communication. The presentation of the Shire is Tolkien's way of introducing us to the issue of humanity divided through lack of communication and co-operation, and the resulting lack of understanding between people and between nations.

From the Shire we move to the Old Forest, where we are initiated into Tolkien's world of natural supernaturalism. Again the setting is largely a microcosmic image, for the Forest contains both evil and good; in other words it illustrates the true natural state of life on earth. It is at once vibrant and alive, and yet capable of malice and revenge, and envy of creatures not rooted to the earth. By thus characterizing the Old Forest, Tolkien provides a metaphorical perspective on human characteristics; but he is also attempting to re-create a feeling for the vitality of the forest itself, a kinship between man and

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were given to frequent wanderings on the forest edge. They, at least, were not as narrowminded as the majority of hobbits. The Brandybucks are, of course, the family to which Merry belongs, and Frodo is related to them through his mother. Peregrin was of the Tooks, who were also given to having adventures. Both Frodo and Bilbo were related to this family too, and were probably destined through heredity to have adventures of their own.

the rest of the natural world. The Old Forest image thus serves the double function of a thematic and an artistic device, and also fulfils the combined requirements of the biological and poetical aspects of the Burkean orientation. This economy of style -- something one might overlook in a work of such magnitude -- is but one example of the level of Tolkien's artistic achievement.

The Barrow-downs, Bree, and Weathertop, and all of the areas between in their own way exhibit certain qualities of metaphorical significance, especially in the characters and events along the way; but these settings are essentially of secondary importance to the narrative and to the overall metaphorical structure of the work. The next setting of major significance is undoubtedly Rivendell, the home of Elrond the Half-Elven. Whereas the Old Forest incidents emphasized the natural elements, Rivendell brings to the fore the intellectual, since Elrond's court was renowned as a place of great wisdom and knowledge of ancient lore. Like all Elves Elrond retained in his memory all things past, and there can be little doubt that memory played a prominent role in the shaping of all his counsels.[11] His court is the site of the Great Council, where the decision to destroy the Ring is made with aid of memory, reason, knowledge and foresight, the highest faculties of the intellect.

If Rivendell represents that which is intellectual, as the preeminence there of lore and learning suggests, then Lorien must

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[11] Thus he exhibits what is called in Chapter II 'the historical perspective', a quality which is intrinsic to the general orientation of the tale itself.

represent the artistic aspects of man. That it is called the "heart of elvendom"[12] suggests immediately that it is the centre of feeling as distinct from thought. In Rivendell Frodo heard counsels; in Lorien he sees visions. Rivendell is governed by a man of great age and wisdom, hardy and yet wise; Lorien is governed by a woman whose voice is "clear and musical"[13], who is called by Gimli a jewel fair above all others, whose glance pierces to the very heart. The land itself exists as if held by a magical spell, a spell which Tolkien's own art has created. It is a land of music and light, full of fair words and fairer inhabitants. The final meeting between the high elves and the members of the fellowship suggests nothing so much as a ballet and an opera combined in a swan-ship and a beautiful song. During the feast Frodo describes Galadriel as a "living vision of that which has already been left far behind by the flowing streams of Time." So too does true art recreate in the living present that which is a part of the past, though in time art also will fade.[14]

The lands of the enemy are, of course, equally metaphoric in character. Southern Mirkwood is an example of nature under the spell of evil. Isengard, formerly beautiful and pleasant, becomes a symbol of

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[12] I, 367, my emphasis.

[13] I, 370.

[14] I, 389. When Frodo first enters Lorien he is struck with wonder at the freshness and poignancy, the clearness of what he sees (I, 365). This state of wonder resembles that state called Recovery which Tolkien believes can be achieved by true fairy-stories. Thus the Lorien/art connection refers not only to art generally, but to Tolkien's own art and that which he hopes it will accomplish.

perversion and degradation. Its once-lovely courtyard is filled with hideous pits belching forth smoke and fumes and it has become a marshalling ground for Saruman's degenerate hordes. The most powerful symbol of all, however, is Mordor, which is by far the best example of the sterility and perversity of those forces which run counter to the poetically and biologically oriented powers. Black smoke hangs everywhere; everything is lifeless, except for the miserable orc warriors and a few wretched thorns. The landscape is blasted and burnt.

Such is the effect of mindless technology on man and earth: mindless because it does not take into account the relationship of all living things but seeks only to dominate and destroy. To give the realm a contemporary cast Tolkien characterizes the enemy with the 'name-and-number syndrome'[15] which has since come to dominate our world of social security numbers and identification cards and our computerized lives. This is a world of technology without restraint, without the corrective rationalization which Burke foresaw would be necessary. It is a world in which living things do not grow, where beauty and wisdom have long since passed away.

By arranging these two groups of images opposite one another, Tolkien achieves two things. First of all he has created the dramatic poles between which conflict, necessary to any work of narrative fiction, can be engaged in and a resolution achieved. Secondly, the images have been used on a thematic level to support the author's point of view. Together they provide another example of how a single device can serve

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[15] See, for example, III, 203, 208.

in both stylistic and thematic capacities.

One of the ways in which Tolkien invites comparison between these two groups of images is through the use of a common image, the tower. Tolkien's use of the stone tower allegory in the essay on Beowulf has already been quoted in Chapter Two. The builder of that tower erected it in order that he might have a view of the sea. Sometime during the First or Second Age of Middle Earth the Elves built three towers, known as the White Towers, on the Tower Hills at the western boundary of the Shire. From the tallest of these one could also see the Sea. Early in Part One Frodo has a dream of a tall white tower, and has a strong desire to climb it in order to look at the Sea. Clearly the tower image reflects man's attempts, and his achievements, in raising his consciousness in order to see beyond the limits of his earthly abode. The towers are constructed so that other worlds may be seen, and that broader knowledge and understanding may be acquired.

Thus it is not surprising that the Numenorean Kings of Gondor also built towers such as Minas Tirith and Osgiliath, or that the abode of Galadriel and Celeborn high in a mallorn tree is itself a kind of natural tower. Counter to these 'White' towers are the towers of Dol Goldur, Minas Morgul, the Teeth of Mordor and Barad-dur, at the very heart of Sauron's realm. Isengard, too, has the tower of Orthanc. The frightening thing about this latter group is that with the exception of Barad-dur itself, these towers were built by men, but were turned to evil by Sauron and Saruman. They demonstrate the danger inherent in the abuse of the power of the mind in overstepping its bounds. Both Saruman and Denethor, in their quest for knowledge and power, spend

too much time in their towers and are ultimately destroyed as a result of their over-reaching. At the conclusion of the War of the Ring these towers are returned to the rule of men, though no one can guarantee that some other evil power will not use them against their masters at a later date.

Another way in which the contrast between the two sides is drawn is the already mentioned device, perhaps borrowed from Milton, of creating an inverse hierarchy of evil characters modelled on good ones. The separation of sides is maintained, however, by the use of light and dark as images of good and evil. An author's creation of evil characters that fear the light (as Gollum and the orcs do) opposed to those who love the light is a common enough piece of imagery. Yet here as with so much of Tolkien's other 'borrowed' material, the light/dark image is developed beyond the common and takes a place beside trees, towers and rivers as one of the most important in the book.

As with so many characters of evil, Sauron works in darkness, and through darkness inflicts fear and heaviness which breed despair in the minds of his opponents. His battle plan is to cover the field with a dark cloud which will weaken the hearts of his intended victims and strengthen his own hordes. Yet this darkness also works against him, for it often conceals the movements of his enemies. In true Biblical form, Tolkien has turned the devil's arts against him.

Opposed to the darkness is light, but it is not necessarily sunlight which battles the clouds of despair. In fact the most significant source of illumination, with the possible exception of Gandalf, is starlight. In Lorien the night sky seems to have no moon,

but is filled with stars. When Sam and Frodo come perilously close to despair in their journey to Orodruin, Sam's heart is strengthened anew by the sight of a lone star shining in the darkness:

> Far above the Ephel Duath in the West the night-sky was still dim and pale. There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the foresaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.[16]

The star is a perfect symbol of the light of hope which shines in the midst of overwhelming darkness. It is also a symbol of beauty and order in the midst of chaos. Used in this way, the light is not simply an obvious device to separate good from evil, but like the tree and the river it is a natural image of more than common significance, for in it both the artistic and thematic implications are fully realized.

As we read through the work and piece together the pseudo-historical background on which it is based, we slowly come to realize these implications. When Galadriel reveals to Frodo the ring which maintains the spell over Lorien, Sam sees only a star shining through her finger.[17] Through this somewhat subtle image, Tolkien brings together almost all of the light images in the tale, for the light that envelops Lorien and shines in the eyes of the elves is sustained by the magic of Galadriel's ring. The source of this light can be

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[16] III, 199.

[17] I, 382.

traced to Earendil (who was placed in the heavens as a star by the Valar) and the Silmaril he carried; the light from this gem was itself derived from the light of the Two Trees of Valinor, the central symbols of light and life in the entire mythological structure of Middle Earth. The phial which Galadriel gives to Frodo also contains some of this light. It is a gift beyond measure.

Thus light takes a prominent place beside the tree (and indeed is combined with it in the image of the Two Trees) as an all-pervasive image in both a stylistic and a thematic sense, for it serves to illuminate the unbroken thread of connectedness between past and present, as well as the complex web of relationships woven by history and shaping the actions and the fate of people in the historical present. On another level it comes very close to embodying the spirit which sustains and connects all living things. Finally, it is a good example of how the author is able to capture stylistic continuity and thematic significance in a single, central image.

III

As everything else in The Lord of the Rings seems to have some metaphorical reality lurking behind its narrative appearance, it is not surprising that the characters themselves often play a metaphorical role. The most obvious, and perhaps most important of these is the collective character of the Fellowship which gives to Part One its name. This fellowship is carefully chosen, not only by Elrond, but by Tolkien, for it plays a significant part in suggesting the point of view on which the tale is based.

The importance of co-operation, an essential element of Burke's "corrective rationalization", is stressed again and again in The Lord of the Rings. Thus the fellowship serves as a thematic image of co-operation among all races against a common enemy. Elrond is careful to choose the members so that all of the noble peoples of Middle-earth are represented. At the end of Part One, the fellowship is dissolved, but it is dissolved like the milkweed pod in order that the seeds of co-operation might be planted in the realms of Gondor and Rohan. Even Nature, in the form of the Ents and Huorns, becomes involved in this larger fellowship of action. During the War itself all of the noble races take part in the battle against Sauron and his hordes.

In this light the fellowship becomes something of a microcosmic image of the world at large, for even within its ranks there is discord and mistrust as well as companionship. Yet by co-operative action the traditional rivalries, as between elf and dwarf, are transformed into lasting friendships, and in the end all act together to aid in the defeat of the enemy, though they are widely scattered throughout Middle-earth.

In the chapter on conventions it was mentioned that Frodo is not a traditional epic hero, even though he bears the burden of the quest and is the central character. The likely reason for this shift is that co-operation (as embodied in the fellowship image) and not individual victory is meant to be the prominent feature of the tale. A brief examination of the characters and their roles within the fellowship, now extended to include all of the allies in the war against darkness, will reveal how Tolkien has structured the work to

emphasize this point.[18]

The leader of the fellowship is Gandalf, and to him is given the power of mind which was so important to the epic hero and the success of his quest. It is Gandalf, and not Frodo, who dominates the Great Council, and it is he who is most learned in lore. To him also is given the conventional descent into the underworld. Though he wears a sword and knows well how to defend himself, his battles are largely battles of the mind, confrontations of will and of wisdom, rather than of physical strength and martial ability.

Because Aragorn inherits the task of leadership after Gandalf's apparent demise, to him power of mind is also given. At Helm's Deep he takes up the palantir and is able by means of this power to wrest it from Sauron's will. Yet he also bears the sword Narsil, the symbol of his kingship, and to him is assigned the role of the leader of men and the master of arms. Wisest of men, he yet defers to the wisdom of Gandalf. He demonstrates instead the virtues of courage and strength of arms and of will, and the leadership qualities of the epic hero.

To Boromir and to his father, Denethor, Tolkien gives similar virtues of strength and courage, but these two lack the wisdom and knowledge which Aragorn has gained through years of suffering and experience. Courage and strength ungoverned by reason are nearly as much to be feared as weakness and cowardice. Since the Fellowship image

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[18] For additional information on the symbolic aspects of each of these characters see Rose Zimbardo's essay, "Moral Vision in The Lord of the Rings" in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 100-108.

seems to suggest an extended hero, and since an epic hero generally has some weakness or guilt which must be expiated, Boromir apparently represents that particular aspect of the epic heroic convention.

Because the elves are principally given to merrymaking, and because they are of slighter build than men, they have not the strength of Aragorn. And though they are masters of learning and of speech, they too defer to Gandalf, who is, after all, a representative of the Valar. To them, however, is given the skill with words to make wonderful songs, and because of the relationship between language and magic, to them are given all manner of special powers such as virtual immortality, far sight and keen eyes, an ability to fashion special gear, ornaments, and spells, and a special understanding of memory and time. As Lorien embodies the qualities of art, the elves embody the abilities of the artist.

Gimli's relationship with Legolas is itself an image in miniature of complementary action. Whereas elves are airy artisans, the Dwarves are delvers in the earth and shapers of metals. Divided, the two races are out of balance, and mutual suspicion causes difficulties. Together they are more complete, and are stronger. In battle their complementary skills of archery and axemanship prove to be a formidable combination.

Last, but not least, are Frodo and the other hobbits. Their most important characteristic is their obvious similarity to common, everyday people. Sometimes this similarity is satiric in intent, for the hobbits are often the butt of some not-so-gentle sarcasm, but generally they are the most approachable of the lot. Hobbits are not above our likes and dislikes, as Sam says of the elves, nor are they proud and strange like

Gimli. Yet as Gandalf realizes, hobbits are made of sterner stuff than one might think. Though of doubtful value in battle, their courage often proves greater than their stature would suggest. They frequently demonstrate fierce loyalty, a virtue which is of great importance not only in the war itself, but in any social structure sustained by fellowship rather than fear. And, as Sam and Frodo prove amply, they are often as not governed by love and pity, and these two qualities are their salvation. Without pity on their part Gollum would not have lived to play his role in the fate of the Ring. Because of these virtues, and because of his unambitious nature, Frodo is able to bear the ring as long as he does. In the end these 'homely' values of love, mercy, and humility, the prime characteristics of the lowly hobbits, carry the day and ensure the final victory.

Together these characters and the races they represent make up the complete hero. Not only does the combined fellowship fulfil the various roles of the traditional hero, but it goes beyond to assume the qualities of the Christian hero as well. As the material out of which these characters are constructed is both pagan and Christian, so too the hero and his value system are a blend of these two basic traditions. Isolation and domination, lust for power and lack of wisdom breed darkness and destruction. Only through unity, fellowship, and the balance of all the powers of body and mind can Middle-earth survive.

Given the nature of the 'good' characters, it is to be expected that the evil ones, the enemy, will be characterized by disloyalty, ambition, selfishness, cruelty, treachery and all the other evil characteristics which Sauron and his followers exhibit. In fact Sauron

is so consumed by ambition that he is represented only as an eye, his body having been long ago destroyed by his mind's overwhelming desire for power. His Nazgul chieftains, once kings of men, have been similarly consumed. Had Frodo kept the Ring for very much longer, the same might have happened to him. The irony of the situation is that these are the very qualities which in the end seal the fate of Sauron. It is his unbridled ambition that makes Sauron blind to the possibility that the others might seek to destroy the Ring rather than use it. The pride of the Nazgul chief makes him vulnerable to the sword of Merry and Eowyn, for he knows no sword of man can harm him, and mistakenly believes himself invulnerable. And it is the treachery and greediness of the orcs that allows Merry and Pippin to get free of their captors and Sam and Frodo to escape from Cirith Ungol. In characterization as with imagery, Tolkien is careful to develop fully the implications of the simple devices which he employs.

There are a number of secondary images which, while they serve to strengthen the characterization (in a stylistic sense), also serve to strengthen the thematic content. For example, the images most commonly associated with the evil characters are snakes and worms. When the evil Grima, whose nickname "Wormtongue" places him squarely within the worm-serpent-dragon tradition of medieval England, speaks evil of Lorien and its queen, Gandalf replies:

> The wise speak only of what they know, Grima son of Galmod. A witless worm you have become. Therefore be silent, and keep your forked tongue behind your teeth.[19]

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[19] II, 118, emphasis mine.

The image is furthered in the phrase "In the gloom they heard the hiss of Wormtongue's voice,"[20] and finally when Gandalf casts him down saying: "Down snake ... Down on your belly"[21], echoing the words of God in Genesis 3:14. The association between Wormtongue and Satan is unmistakable.

Another character similarly associated with snakes is, of course, Gollum who, like Grima, constantly hisses and spits. When Sam and Frodo see a creature following them at Emyn Muil, Frodo asks what it is. Sam replies:

> Ssss! ... That's what it is. It's that Gollum!
> Snakes and adders! ... Like a nasty spider on a wall.[22]

Gollum's looks are "venemous".[23] Along the trail on which he leads them, things "hiss and rattle"[24] and his own speech is full of words like "Snakeses, wormses, things in pools."[25] Similarly Saruman is connected to the 'evil fellowship' by means of this snake image. Beside himself with wrath at his lack of control over Theoden, he leans over the rail of his balcony and "To some suddenly it seemed that they saw a snake coiling itself to strike."[26] His voice also hisses. Furthermore,

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[20] II, 119.

[21] II, 124.

[22] II, 219.

[23] II, 224.

[24] II, 232.

[25] II, 234.

[26] II, 186

the banner of the evil Haradrim is a black serpent upon scarlet. Finally, when the Nazgul approach the company on Weathertop, Frodo hears "a faint hiss as of venomous breath"[27] and when he sees the chief of the Nazgul riding out from Minas Morgul, he feels "like a bird at the approach of a snake."[28] Although individually unrelated, these incidents and their underlying significance are drawn together by means of a single image. Because of its traditional nature, the snake image brings to those connected with it a wealth of Christian and Teutonic meaning, enriching the narrative beyond the mere power of words themselves.

Sam's description of Gollum above introduces a similar image, the spider. The image is most appropriate here because Gollum plans to lead the two hobbits to the giant spider Shelob, whose assistance he hopes to enlist in his attempt to retrieve the ring. Gandalf uses the image in reference to his imprisonment by Saruman. Interestingly enough, Denethor is also described as "spiderlike".[29] Somewhat later he is again compared to "an old and patient spider"[30] by Pippin, who knows nothing of Denethor's impending treachery or of Frodo's battle with Shelob. Here the image serves as a connective, though it may lack to some degree the allusive quality of the snake.[31] However, by

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[27] I, 207.

[28] II, 315.

[29] II, 324.

[30] III, 79.

[31] Shelob is connected, of course, with the great spiders

association with Shelob, the Denethor/spider combination takes on a foreshadowing function, preparing us for the Steward's actions during the siege of Gondor.

In a different manner the hand image also serves to connect three important characters: Frodo, Saruman, and Sauron. Saruman and Sauron share the emblem of the hand, the differences being that Saruman's emblem is white, Sauron's black, and that Sauron's emblem has only four fingers, Isildur having severed Sauron's fifth finger to remove the Ring. The source of the hand image itself is obscure, though it may be connected to the Faustian 'over-reacher' figure. Such a view is suggested by a Biblical reference in Genesis 3:22:

> And the Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...

Both Sauron and Saruman, having perhaps more than their share of knowledge (from which their great power is derived, no doubt), have literally put forth their hand toward the Tree of Life (another image which suggests the importance of the connection). The Ring they seek does bring immortality of a sort, and that was what God feared would come to man before he was properly prepared for it. Frodo, on the other hand, having fulfilled his quest, is taken to the Undying Lands

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encountered by Bilbo and the Dwarves in Mirkwood, so the image is still to some degree allusive, though mainly to The Hobbit. There is also the possibility that Shelob is related to a similar creature in Caludian's Rape of Prosepine and its English descendent in the Faerie Queene, Bk. II. The spider is also a popular biblical image of evil, as in Proverbs, 30:28 "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces."

by the elves. The suggestion is, of course, that having suffered and succeeded, Frodo deserves a place in these lands. His fourfingered hand is a symbolic wound, a reminder of his weakness and of his brief kinship with Sauron, with whom he shares his ninefingered status.

Yet another body image which seems to share a biblical significance is the eye, which medieval tradition held to be the gateway to the soul. Conversely, Tolkien uses the eyes to reveal inner states, such as the glow of memory which envelops Aragorn at Lorien and is revealed by the light in his eyes. Similarly Sam is characterized by his eyes; in Moria during the battle with the orcs we are told:

> A fire was smouldering in his brown eyes that would have made Ted Sandyman step backwards, if he had seen it.[32]

The light in the eyes of the elves is perhaps the most significant of their characteristics, for it connects them with the light/essence image which is so prominent in the work. Again there are strong Biblical ties. Matthew 6:22, 23, reads:

> The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.
> But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

The latter verse would be a perfect description of Sauron, whose eye (all that we see of him) is evil, and whose body, and the extension of it throughout his realm, is full of darkness. Since Gollum is often detected only by the appearance of his eyes, and lives in darkness, he too is connected through the eye image to Sauron. The eye image, like the tree, river, tower, and other images, has its light and its dark

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[32] I, 339.

meanings.[33]

In the Bible the eye is used in yet another way. It is often a symbol of a higher vision. In this connection the importance of the eye image to the elves, to Aragorn, and Gandalf suggests that they, too, have a higher vision. At Rivendell Tolkien demonstrates this double faculty of the eye through Gandalf:

> ... to the wizard's eye there was a faint change, just a hint of transparency, about him, and especially about the left hand that lay outside the coverlet ... 'He may become like a glass filled with a clear light for eyes to see that can.'[34]

Gandalf's statement clearly echoes Matthew Chapter 13, which deals with the higher faculty not only of eyesight, but of hearing as well:

> 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given ... 13 Therefore speak I unto them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things

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[33] The eye is also capable of lust, and the cause of desire in Biblical imagery. See for example, Ezekiel 24:16, 25, or I John, 2:16.

[34] I, 235.

which ye hear, and have not heard them.[35]

As Frodo progresses on his journey his eyesight becomes sharper. He, like the elf Legolas (whose own ability to see extraordinarily well is also significant) begins to perceive things which even the noble Aragorn can not see.

Not only physical characteristics but also actions are important images in the book. The numerous signs of affection demonstrated between members of the fellowship, and particularly between Frodo and Sam, are, of course, examples of character, as are the many rebellions and internal battles among the servants of Mordor, who serve out of fear and self-interest rather than love and selflessness. Another significant action is the heavy dependence on intuition demonstrated by such characters as Aragorn and Glorfindel, both members of the highest levels of the social and intellectual hierarchy. Intuition can be explained in terms of the Hopi understanding of the universe as knowledge engendered by the manifesting spirit through the subjective processes of thought. This 'sixth sense' is a result, in Aragorn's case, of a kinship with the earth (as at I, 224) and in the case of Glorfindel is due to his natural intellectual superiority. Because of their special capacities for understanding they are more attuned to the subjective realm and their instincts are thus stronger and more accurate than, for example, that of Sauron or Denethor, who totally misjudge their situations. At any rate this intuitive faculty demonstrates an

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[35] In this passage one might find also a justification for Tolkien's writing of fairy-stories rather than pure philosophical tracts, if one were needed.

expansion of the mind beyond the limits of the purely objective, empirical method which strangles modern man's understanding. As Burke suggests, the intuitive faculty was given for man's survival. It plays as important a role in man's life as it does in Frodo's quest. If we lose or ignore this all-important ability, all will be lost to the sterility of total technology.

Similarly, dreams and visions demonstrate the possibilities of the expanded faculties of mind. When Frodo dreams, or looks into Galadriel's mirror, he sees places and events of which he could not possibly have known anything except through the expansion of the mind into the subjective realm and the manifesting spirit which is in all things and actions whether of past, present, or future, in Lorien, in Mordor, or in Numenor of old. Frodo's first dream apparently concerns the ancient towers of the elves on the borders of the Shire. His later dreams deal with contemporary events (e.g., Gandalf's escape from Orthanc and the attack at Buckland) and yet others with future events (pursuers with dark wings). The dream which Faramir and Boromir share also demonstrates that dreams partake of this subjective realm, for it is prophetic, and brings to their minds a poem which they have never before heard, but which was written long ago. It was the manifesting spirit (or fate) which inspired the prophecy then, and the same spirit brought the dream to the sons of Denethor.

That Faramir's dream comes in the form of a poem is itself significant, for poetry plays an essential role in the work. Poetry has long been held in high regard. Odin, who we will remember was the god of magical runes, regularly expressed himself in verse. Early priests

in most societies were singers or poets. The words they used to cast and break spells were expressed in short poems or incantations. Poetry seems to have held a special place in the ancient traditions, and Tolkien has recognized and made use of it for a particular reason.

Just as the Anglo-Saxons recognized the value of poetry and song in maintaining their perspective on life, so too the heroes of Tolkien's work rely on song to lift them out of darkness and despair. In the tower of Cirith Ungol, Sam very nearly gives up the desparate attempt to rescue his master, but is saved by an unexplained urge to sing:

> At last, weary and feeling finally defeated, he sat on a step below the level of the passage-floor and bowed his head into his hands. It was quiet, horribly quiet. The torch, that was already burning when he arrived, sputtered and went out; and he felt the darkness cover him like a tide. And then softly, to his own surprise, there at the vain end of his long journey and his grief, moved by what thought in his heart he could not tell, Sam began to sing.
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> His voice sounded thin and quavering in the cold dark tower: the voice of a forlorn and weary hobbit that no listening orc could possibly mistake for the clear song of an Elven-lord. He murmured old childish tunes out of the Shire, and snatches of Mr. Bilbo's rhymes that came into his home. And then suddenly new strength arose in him, and his voice rang out, while words of his own came unbidden to fit the simple tune.[36]

At this point Sam hears, or believes he hears, a faint voice answer his song, though he is not certain. Later we find that this same song which has renewed his strength has been the salvation of his master as well, for Frodo had indeed answered the song from his tower prison. Magical or not, Sam's song was the thin, quavering thread that carried him over the abyss and on to the completion of the quest.

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[36] III, 184-185.

The nature of poetry and song is revealed by broad hints that it, like Galadriel's mirror and the Palantiri, is a medium of communication between the objective and subjective realms. The elves, who live in both realms, are the most ardent practicers of poetry. When Frodo hears their song at Rivendell he is transported into unknown worlds, though he understands little of what he hears:

> At first the beauty of the melodies and of the interwoven words in elven-tongues, even though he understood them little, held him in a spell, as soon as he began to attend to them. Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the firelit hall became like a golden mist above seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the world. Then the enchantment became more and more dream-like, until he felt that an endless river of swelling gold and silver was flowing over him, too multitudinous for its pattern to be comprehended; it became part of the throbbing air about him, and it drenched and drowned him. Swiftly he sank under its shining weight into a deep realm of sleep.[37]

It is because language itself is magic, and because poetry concentrates this magic into its most potent form, that the elven song can have such an effect. When Sam comes to sing his own song in Cirith Ungol, he too has learned to tap the resources of the realm which the elves partake of at will.

That song is the most natural thing in the world is demonstrated by Bombadil, the mysterious nature-man of the Old Forest, who spends most of his time singing, even when speaking in prose.[38] Goldberry, too, is a fine singer. That modern man has lost some of this spontaneity,

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[37] I, 246.

[38] See the chapter on language below.

this skill with words and music, is a result of the mechanization of language and the resultant loss of those very qualities of language (i.e., suggestion, connotation, metaphor) which give it its strength. Man's earliest linguistic arts come down to us in the forms of poetry and song. Tolkien is clearly trying to re-establish this ancient attitude, this respect for the beauty and power of language at its best. By the end of the work even the lowly hobbits, our thinly disguised counterparts in the world of Middle-earth, have demonstrated renewed ability to use and understand the magic of poetry. Having recognized this magic himself, Tolkien has liberally sprinkled his own work with examples of the poetic art.[39]

* * *

From these few examples it has become evident that Tolkien's characters and methods of characterization have significance beyond the mere relation of the narrative. In each case the character, his actions, and his physical attributes serve to describe and promote the thematic aspects of the work while amply fulfilling their roles as narrative and artistic devices. As with trees, towers and rings, they perform a dual function: they are the servants of both form and matter.

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[39] For a more complete analysis of the poetry, see Mary Quella Kelly's "The Poetry of Fantasy: Verse in The Lord of the Rings", in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 170-200.

IV

Unity of form and matter, according to Pater, is essentially what art is all about, and Tolkien was apparently well aware of what he was about, for unity in all its aspects is one of the more prevalent images in the book. Everywhere one looks, one finds secondary examples of this central image. When Sam first sees elves he finds in their faces both joy and sadness, youth and age. Aragorn's emblem is white on black, a combination of opposites; laughter is often mixed with tears. But before we develop this point further let us examine the specific purpose of the imagery in this work.

The large number of images in various forms bespeaks Tolkien's dependence on them as an artistic device. Images are, after all, one of the basic ways of sparking those Proustian reactions in the mind of the reader, of tapping, if you will, the subjective realm of memory and tradition. Furthermore, imagery that is skilfully used will help to shape those reactions into the desired perspective, in this case the unified, biological, poetic, expanded perspective required to balance out the technological psychosis of modern man. As these various images accumulate in our minds, we begin to see the dim outlines of the author's point of view, so that our awareness of them and their significance becomes the key to our understanding of the work itself. Such is their thematic or material significance.

From the point of view of form, a heavy reliance on imagery is as suitable to the point of view as was the pseudo-historical fairy-tale style. Imagery is suggestive, connotative, intentionally subjective. The snake and spider images are meant to trigger negative reactions,

the light and dark images to play on our own inborn pleasures and fears. The realist tries to strip his language of all connotation and suggestiveness, in order to get at objective truths, unobscured by the trappings of dogma and myth. Tolkien, on the other hand, has intentionally moved in the opposite direction in order to re-acquaint our minds with the possibility of a broader perspective not limited to objective reality. Thus he has deliberately employed at every opportunity those devices which the realist rejects, in order that he might tease our intellects away from the narrowness of the modern outlook and back into an expanded state of understanding.

Ultimately, of course, the magic of language would be nothing without imagery or metaphor. Just as the images of song and dream serve to transport characters from the objective to the subjective realms, so imagery transports us from our world to the world of the tale. In other words, imagery <u>is</u> the magic of language, the power by which all literary art is sub-created. Without connotation and suggestion, language is narrowed rather than expanded, mechanical rather than dynamic. Therefore a book which is essentially about the power of language would be curiously anemic if it did not demonstrate in its own language some of the magic which it ascribes to language as a whole.

The real beauty of Tolkien's use of imagery, however, is the way in which he combines thematic and formalistic functions within a single device. As we have often seen, images such as trees, which are important to the theme of the biological perspective and man's relationship to nature, also serve as a means of characterization (one's attitude to trees betraying one's attitude to life), a method of

portraying various aspects of life in new and meaningful ways (as in the characterization of the Old Forest and of Fangorn) and as a unifying device which reappears in various forms throughout the tale (trees in all their manifestations). Thus it begins to be apparent that imagery is central to the work, a pivot-point around which all the other devices rotate. It is the medium in which form and matter coalesce, the point where literature becomes as music, a unified whole.

It is therefore no surprise that unity itself is an important image. The mixture of joy and sadness and of youth and age, the tears and laughter which mark the fulfillment of the quest, the sword reforged and the kingdoms re-united, parallel the union of Christian and pagan, of materials old and new, of the real and ideal which characterize the story itself. The marriage of all of these things is finally symbolized in the marriages of Aragorn and Arwen, Faramir and Eowyn, and even of Sam and Rosie. Here, as elsewhere in the work, we are witness to an excellent example of the union of form and matter.

FOUR

THE NARRATIVE

I

Ultimately, the various elements of form, imagery and characterization are all but meaningless if left in a jumble for the reader to sort out for himself (unless, of course, the author has a specific artistic reason for requiring the reader to do so -- one should not be overly dogmatic in these matters). It is therefore essential that an author arrange his material in such a way as to maintain the reader's interest and induce in him the desired reactions while upholding the artistic integrity of the work by using the style most suited to the matter with which he is working. In a book which aspires to the loftiest of moral ideals, the author's task is further compounded by the necessity of shaping the reader's perspective in order that he will be receptive to whatever message the author seeks to communicate. Of all the author's tasks, the overall mode of presentation is perhaps foremost in terms of difficulty and importance.

Such methods we shall file under the general heading of narrative arts, and these include not only the manner in which the various elements are described and the order in which they are presented, but the character of the narrator himself and the relationship between author, narrator and audience. If we are to gain a broader understanding of The Lord of the Rings, we must examine these facets of the novel in order to perceive just how Tolkien has manipulated the narrative and,

by extension, the mind of his reader.

II

Perhaps the first question we must ask concerns the narrator and his conduct in presenting the various adventures which comprise the tale. A quick survey of the methods employed by authors since the novel first gained a measure of acceptance will reveal a wide range of possibilities. The omniscient narrator in Tom Jones is undeniably well suited to relate the adventures of the hero and the other characters in the tale. He is friendly, discursive, condescending, ingratiating, and well aware of his role as self-appointed chronicler and commentator. Defoe, on the other hand allows the central character of Moll Flanders to relate (or confess to) her own adventures to the best of her limited ability (i.e., according to the limits of her in media res point of view and her own character). In Bleak House Dickens employs both types of narrator, dividing the relation of events between two speakers, one omniscient, the other in the midst of these many affairs. The result is a somewhat disconcerting but very effective enlargement on the singular point of view.

More recent authors like Jean-Paul Sartre have attacked authorial or narrative presence of any kind, preferring instead to construct 'objective correlatives' or situations and events which will adequately 'show' and eliminate the need to 'tell'. Yet the most objective of authors (if such a creature exists) is still present in his work, if only in his selection of materials and in his allegedly objective manner. What really counts is whether or not a work gives the illusion

of objectivity (i.e., appears to be free of authorial interference with our interpretation of events).

The key word here is 'illusion', for it is precisely this quality which dictates to the author his choice of narrative styles. Preferring to deal with the emotions of love and passion subjectively, Fielding chooses a subjective narrator as a vehicle for his narrative. Sartre is more concerned with objective analysis, and attempts to refine away as much of himself from the narrative as possible. Each employs the style that is most suited to his purpose, which is to create an atmosphere (illusion) in which his objectives may best be achieved.

In this case Tolkien has a difficult task, especially given the predominantly objective outlook of the present, in choosing a narrative style most suited to his subject matter. He must lead a modern reader whose intellect is all but saturated with objective technological perspectives into a strange world of alien creatures and values, and then return him to more familiar surroundings. The problem is compounded by the fact that while Tolkien's subject matter is basically ancient and subjective in content, the modern trend in life and art runs counter to the traditional subjective methods of earlier writers.

In a rather interesting compromise -- or is it really a coup de grace? -- Tolkien overcomes the problem of narrative by combining styles, by showing and telling, so to speak. The initial task of gaining reader interest is achieved by the use of an engaging narrator, a person who uses his superior (though not necessarily omniscient) position to describe and occasionally explain the events of the earlier sections of the tale. While such engagement may not be necessary and is in fact

quite undesirable in a work which attempts to portray modern life as objectively as possible within the limits of artistic form, it is necessary in this case in order that the reader be gradually drawn into the highly unusual setting of The Lord of the Rings. The narrator of the first few chapters of the novel (like his counterpart in The Hobbit, which may be considered as an introduction to the larger work, and corresponds to these early chapters in narrative style) presents himself as a friend and companion, a guide who is familiar with the world of the tale, who will lead the reader into the realm of Middle-earth and explain it to him. His attitude is decidedly subjective, for he is fond of hobbits, though he is careful to present a reasonably balanced view of their character by revealing their weaknesses as well as their strengths. He has a jovial and benevolent manner, but he is not above interpreting for us events which we might not have fully understood because we are strangers in a strange land.

Once his initial objective is achieved, however, and sufficient information has been exposed to set the plot in motion, the narrator gradually withdraws, or more accurately speaking, becomes the dispassionate observer and historian who allows characters and events to speak largely for themselves with a minimum of interpretation and virtually no direct authorial interjection. Although the author is never 'absent' from the work (i.e., never totally objectified out of the flow of events) his presence becomes less and less overt until by the time Frodo's journey has begun the narrator has undergone a considerable change in character and only occasionally returns to his original manner. He has allowed the narrative to assume at least to a

limited degree the illusion of objective history, perhaps in an attempt to balance the essentially subjective character of the material.[1]

Whether or not this change of character occurred by accident because the author grew tired of his assumed role, or whether it was planned from the beginning, it is a brilliant stroke -- of luck or of skill -- for its suitability to the tale is enhanced by its imitation of the materials which it presents. Just as Tolkien combines ancient and modern elements to sub-create the matter of his tale, so too he has combined old and new narrative methods to achieve what a single-minded narrator might have failed to do. It is in this ability to choose devices which are not only adequate to perform the job at hand but so eminently suited in every respect to both thematic and artistic functions that Tolkien truly excels.[2]

Another characteristic of Tolkien's narrator is that his absolute trustworthiness is apparent from the beginning. He is more than engaging, for one can sense that he is also sincere, and in fact is being as honest as he can about his material. Because honesty is one of

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[1] Tolkien's narrator does break out of his assumed role from time to time, as at I, 97, where he steps in to reveal Sam's misgivings at missing an opportunity to visit The Golden Perch. The action and the language of the episode fail to do so, and the need is not great enough to require the construction of an 'objective correlative'. A similar example occurs at II, 300. Perhaps these interjections are to be taken as brief reminders of the author's presence and the fact that we are, after all, only reading an account, and that any illusion of objectivity or reality must not be allowed to get out of hand.

[2] Here again Tolkien may have used classical authors as a model for his narrative. Virgil announces himself at the beginning of the Aeneid with the famous line "Arms and the man I sing" (Dryden), but once the invocation is over tends to submerge himself in the narrative, though he continues to interpret and assert himself from time to time.

the moral virtues within the work, the narrator himself is bound to be completely forthright. The balanced characterization of the hobbits, despite the narrator's obvious fondness for them, demonstrates his fairness. In an age when the untrustworthy and morally unsound narrator seems to be a popular type, such a persona is an anachronism. For some the quality is undesirable, perhaps embarrassing. Yet if we are to accept the illusion of the tale as a whole, if we are to enter into the spirit of the thing, then we must believe the narrator and accept him as being basically honest and fair-minded. He provides the solid footing for the imaginative journey into Faerie.[3]

Such idealism is perhaps the common quality shared by the author, the narrator and the receptive reader, for although the character of the narrator is obviously a persona which was adopted by the author for the purposes of the narrative, yet the uncompromising truthfulness of the narrator suggests a similar attitude on the part of the author. Were the narrator devious, the relationship between the author and narrator would also be suspect, as is the case with a novel like Mailer's Why Are We In Viet Nam?. Because the narrator is not devious we might be safe to assume, indeed must assume, that the author shares the narrator's desire for honesty. Similarly this quality is undoubtedly designed to appeal to those readers who also desire simple honesty in a world characterized by sham and falsehood.

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[3] This old-fashioned quality is undoubtedly one reason why the work is unpopular among some modern intellectuals, who feel that the moral tone of the novel is overly simplistic and unworthy of a modern work of art. On the other hand unnecessary sophistication may be seen as the symptom of a decadent culture, and honest simplicity a virtue to be esteemed above intellectual complexities.

In any work of art there must be common ground if a link is to be established between creator and beholder. In Tolkien's case the link is mutual honesty and idealism. Given the outlook of the work as a whole, the relationship could be established on no other foundation.

III

The bridge of understanding between author and reader (an essential element of artistic creation, despite modern claims to the contrary) must be carefully cultivated if it is to grow. Thus Tolkien does not leave the narrator to survive on his own but rather supplies assistance in many forms. He provides, for example, a geography which, if not absolutely recognizable, is at least very much like our own. While Tolkien's settings have many qualities with which we are not familiar, they are nonetheless sufficiently based in reality so as to induce some degree of recognition on the part of the reader. Similarly, he fills the land with creatures which are half-mythical -- the oliphaunt is one example -- and many which aren't mythical at all, such as horses and men. He puts in the mouths of the hobbits songs which are based on modern-day nursery rhymes. Take away the fairy element, and what you have is a basically human story with an earthly setting.[4]

To further assist us in familiarizing ourselves with Middle-earth, Tolkien supplements the narrative with a number of alternative sources of information, specifically the Prologue, the maps, and the Appendices.

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[4] See Kocher's Master of Middle Earth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), pp. 6-8.

While these devices are not, technically speaking, part of the narrative, they are nonetheless of the utmost importance to it, and so are mentioned here. The purpose of the Prologue is to acclimatize us to the world of the hobbits, their history and habits. As we will see below, this understanding of the hobbits, who are in a sense our hosts and guides in a strange land, is essential to the success of the narrative itself. In another sense the prologue serves as a stepping stone; it quite literally introduces us to the implied author, who in turn introduces us to the universe of the history he is about to tell. Basically, it prepares us to accept this universe with a certain amount of credulity, without hiding it behind a dream or hallucination framework such as that which characterizes Chaucer's House of Fame and Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.[5]

The maps, like the prologue and the lengthy descriptions within the narrative, are intended to assist the process of familiarization. The reader will often find reference to the maps necessary in order to follow the progress of the journey or to visualize more adequately the relative positions of the settings of the various narrative strands. Orientation, a key word in this discussion, is as important to Tolkien as it is to Burke, and the maps are a visual expression of that particular need.

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[5] Tolkien felt that a dream-frame was an abdication of the responsibility of the author to create a convincing and self-sufficient universe (See "On Fairy-stories", p. 17-22), yet it appears he has more or less replaced that device with another, the pseudo-historical framework which he takes great pains to cultivate, particularly in the prologue, maps and appendices.

The appendices, too, are an expression of the need for a proper orientation, not only on a narrative level, but in connection with theme as well. Far from being mere excessive outpourings of an over-excited imagination or evidence of Tolkien's strange idiosyncrasies, they are yet another example of the lengths to which Tolkien will go in order to ensure that the reader of The Lord of the Rings will acquire a better understanding of the multitude of elements historical, linguistic, and technical which make up his recreated world.

While Tolkien goes to such lengths to provide us with the tools for understanding, he avoids as much as possible actual interpretation of this world. While the maps are in a sense a visual manifestation of the need for orientation, or an understanding of the exigencies of Middle-earth's geography, the lack of any additional illustrations (such as those which accompany most 'fairy-tales' today) is itself an illustration of the avoidance of any unnecessary visual interpretation. Tolkien is known to have made drawings of characters and events in his stories, but he never actually included them in the published editions of this particular work. Thus the reader's mind is left free to interpret and recreate, with the help of verbal description which is always detailed but more suggestive than limitative, the scenes and inhabitants of Middle-earth itself. By inference, the meaning of the book, like the appearance of Tolkien's world, is suggested rather than stated.[6]

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[6] This is undoubtedly the reason why Tolkien calenders and prints which attempt to portray actual characters and events in the works, are generally disappointing, no matter how finely executed. They are inadequate to our own imaginative response to the descriptions.

To return to the business of bridges, however, there is one which has yet to be discussed, and that is the relationship which Tolkien takes great pains to establish between the reader and the hobbits. He gives them a history similar to the history of our Indo-European ancestors (the wandering days, the three different tribes or races, and a similar language development). He makes them as much like us in character as possible. They are sociable by nature, resistant to change, and suspicious of strangers. They are often petty and selfish, inclined toward self-indulgence, and given over to the pursuit of pleasure. Yet underneath they are resilient, resourceful creatures capable of demonstrating virtue and great courage, and they can be genial and endearing whatever their faults. Tolkien even suggests that hobbits might be relatives of ours.[7] Despite their unusual form, they represent Tolkien's view of humanity, and therein lies the book's weakness as well as its strength. Those who disapprove of The Lord of the Rings often do so because they dislike the comparison, or are not sufficiently hobbit-like to appreciate Tolkien's fondness for them. Yet for some the device is successful, and through it they are able to understand and appreciate more fully Tolkien's attitudes and perspectives.

Once the reader-hobbit relationship has been established and we have become familiar with the hobbit world, the reader is prepared to move with the hobbit heroes and experience with them the more fantastic elements of the tale. In this respect the characters of Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin are especially important, for each plays a significant

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[7] See the Prologue, I, 11.

role in engaging reader sympathy. Frodo is not an average hobbit, but is portrayed as a romantic, slightly unusual character, though he remains simple and honest. His special qualities rank him among the other orders of characters in the work, the elves and men and dwarves with whom he deals. Sam ranks somewhat lower on the scale, for he lacks Frodo's higher intelligence. Nonetheless, he is an especially 'good' hobbit, for the most part free of real hobbit weaknesses, with an enquiring mind and a loving heart. He is also a comic figure, a character designed specifically to draw us to him and his kind. Merry and Pippin have characters similar to Sam's, and serve in similar ways to increase the reader's fondness, and his understanding of hobbit-kind. The entire narrative, with the exception of a few early passages, is presented from the point of view of one of these characters, or while at least one of the four is present to be our witness to the event. Their reportage we can accept as reasonably trustworthy, for they are all but guileless, and their accounts are untainted by learning or experience.[8] At the end of the tale, Sam (and by inference the reader) is returned to the ordinary world from which he came, but because of his experiences he will see the world through new eyes, a condition which Tolkien desires his audience to share.

IV

The actual narrative of The Lord of the Rings is as complex a piece of prose as ever reached the printed page. Yet in one sense at least it is simpler than many of its models, for it is intentionally not allegorical. Unlike the Faerie Queene, it does not attempt to

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[8] See Raffel's "The Lord of the Rings as Literature" in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 263-4.

incorporate the four levels of meaning common to allegorical works, for allegory, Tolkien says, is the result of "the purposed domination of the author." Just as persuasion, and not domination, is the keynote of Gandalf's mission in Middle-earth, it is also essential to Burke's biological perspective, and it lies behind Tolkien's choice of the non-allegorical mode.

On the other hand, if Tolkien's work is to be 'applicable', that is to say representative of life, then it cannot be simplistic, for it would then present a false view and its applicability would be nullified. To avoid over-simplified story-telling the narrative has been divided into several segments, each dealing with the different adventures of the four hobbit-characters, as mentioned above. We are thus presented with not one window on the world, as is the case with Moll Flanders, nor two as in Bleak House, but with four different groups of experiences as seen through the eyes of four different characters whose own responses shape our reactions to them.

In addition to these major divisions, Tolkien liberally salts his narrative with inner narratives, tales of events that happened long ago or to some members of the company while the others were not present. This use of 'retrospective action', as the device is sometimes called in dramatic circles, serves to make the narrative more complex in a number of ways. First of all it reverses the normal perspectives of life by forcing the reader to look to the past and to see events arranged in a more significant order than present-tense events would have suggested. Also, because these inner narratives, as the name implies, are recounted by characters within the tale, and use

actual dialogue, such devices remove for a while the burden of the narrative to voices other than that of the regular narrator, thus providing variety in the modes employed to present the tale. The result is a change in tone and interpretation resulting from the influence of the inner narrator's character traits, his perspectives and his preferences. In addition, direct dialogue, retrospective or otherwise, is not limited to the hobbit characters, and thus is a felicitous medium for the presentation of the additional levels of perspective and interpretation needed to complement those of the narrator and his four hobbit friends.[9]

These narratives work hand in hand with such other devices as digression, dream, poetry and song to provide the widest possible variety of narrative approaches.[10] Each of these devices alters the flow of the narrative, digression by filling in background or by hinting at themes or future events, dreams by foreshadowing or by adding perspective through extraordinary visions, and poetry and song by providing a break from the prose tone of the narrator and by expanding his language beyond its prose limits into a new realm of

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[9] See, for example, the discussion on the passage of time in Lorien, I, 404-5, where dialogue is used to expand the reader's understanding beyond the limits of the hobbit's perceptions.

[10] The term 'digression' is here only partially satisfactory. In a true work of art, nothing is unessential, and what may appear to be irrelevant to the narrative may well be essential to the theme or patterns of imagery. See Mary Quella Kelly's analysis of Aragorn's song on Weathertop in "The Poetry of Fantasy: Verse in The Lord of the Rings", in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 185-88, for an illustration of the importance of digressions.

artistic opportunity. In a work of such length variety of tone is important. Yet other very long works have survived with a single narrative voice. The deciding reason, then, for the use of multiple narratives and other expansive techniques is the feeling of complexity which these devices generate. Tolkien's subject is life, and life is a complicated affair. Thus the complex interweaving of narratives is an important artistic device which is essential to the portrayal of the complex dynamic qualities of the subject matter. One might refer again to the image of the Tree of Tales, and suggest that Tolkien's narrative is itself much like a great tree with many deep roots and broad boughs reaching toward the heavens. Yet above all there remains, like God in heaven, the principal narrator, who provides a central unity even while portraying vast complexities. The effect is to create a work in which past, present and future, people and things all melt together to create a unified, complex understanding of time, life and the state of experience, where everything is at once individual and part of the whole, and combines to achieve an accumulative effect greater than the sum of the parts.

Another important aspect of any narrative is its ability to maintain dramatic interest over an extended period without a surfeit of emotion on the part of the reader. Tolkien has tackled this problem by providing a strong sense of urgency through foreshadowing in dreams and ominous words, and through the continual pursuit of Frodo by the Nazgul, Gollum, and the orcs. As well, he constantly reminds us (as Milton did) of the struggle of opposing forces through parallel images like the towers which symbolize the centres of power battling for control. Yet

very few writers are capable of sustaining dramatic tension at any great length and in this case Tolkien has more or less followed his classical and traditional models by providing alternate episodes of high and low tension which balance out the work. The periods of danger such as occur on the Barrow Downs, during the Flight to the Ford, and in Moria are balanced by periods of relaxation and recovery at Bombadil's house, Rivendell, and Lorien. Later, when dangers on the quest become too great for respite, the reader is shifted from one scene to another to provide contrast and variety. The resultant rise and fall in dramatic tension is characteristic of many great works, particularly those whether in verse or in prose, which lay claim to epic qualities. Perhaps more important to Tolkien's purpose is the similarity between the rise and fall of narrative tension and the parallel movement of events in real life. Like Melville, whose narrative in Moby Dick is characterized by this undulating, wave-like motion, Tolkien has found a narrative style which illustrates very well the ever-moving, ever-changing pulse of existence, and still satisfies the requirements of its narrative function.

V

If Tolkien's work teaches nothing else, it ought to teach us that no single impression will ever reveal to us absolute truth or total knowledge, and that no single approach to a problem will ever solve the problem in its entirety. Clearly, the view of life presented in The Lord of the Rings is complex and difficult to comprehend completely. There is an inner truth to the work, an inner reality (or as Tolkien

called it, 'applicability') which resides in the very fibre of this non-realistic work, and those who enjoy the work recognize this fact, whether they are conscious of it or not. No single event, character, speech or action proves that this inner reality exists, but the accumulative effect of hundreds of individual perceptions tells us it is there. A grand view of life, revealed in a multitude of minor ways, is the substance of The Lord of the Rings.

This kind of grand generalization would not be necessary in a study of style and structure if it did not suggest how integrated Tolkien's stylistic universe really is. The complexities of theme, the multitude of outlooks, the myriad of characters, places and ideas presented, is a reflection of the complexity of life, of the need for broader vision, knowledge, and understanding. As we have seen, the narrative itself is complex; its actions and events may appear to be individually small, but they are collectively significant. Yet Tolkien has gone even further to emphasize stylistically the thematic aspects, in a number of narrative techniques which are discussed below.

The connective devices, the geography, the half-mythical creatures, and the hobbit-human relationship, all give the work a foothold in reality, a starting point for an unusual, imaginative journey. So, too, do Tolkien's numerous descriptive passages, which provide the materials from which our own imaginations shape mental images. They are the basis in reality, the starting point for our own imaginative journey. No description of these passages would illustrate their careful execution better than an actual example; therefore the following passages are offered, the first taken from the visit to

Lorien (I, 368-9):

> There was a road paved with white stone running on the outer brink of the fosse. Along this they went westward, with the city ever climbing up like a green cloud upon their left; and as the night deepened more lights sprang forth, until all the hill seemed afire with stars. They came at last to a white bridge, and crossing found the great gates of the city: they faced south-west, set between the ends of the encircling wall that here overlapped, and they were tall and strong, and hung with many lamps.
>
> Haldir knocked and spoke, and the gates opened soundlessly; but of guards Frodo could see no sign. The travellers passed within, and the gates shut behind them. They were in a deep lane between the ends of the wall, and passing quickly through it they entered the City of Trees. No folk could they see, nor hear any feet upon the paths; but there were many voices, about them, and in the air above. Far away upon the hill they could hear the sound of singing falling from on high like soft rain upon leaves.
>
> They went along many paths and climbed many stairs, until they came to the high places and saw before them amid a wide lawn a fountain shimmering. It was lit by silver lamps that swung from the boughs of trees, and it fell into a basin of silver, from which a white stream spilled. Upon the south side of the lawn there stood the mightiest of all the trees; its great smooth bole gleamed like grey silk, and up it towered, until its first branches, far above, opened their huge limbs under shadowy clouds of leaves. Beside it a broad white ladder stood, and at its foot three Elves were seated. They sprang up as the travellers approached, and Frodo saw that they were tall and clad in grey mail, and from their shoulders hung long white cloaks...
>
> As he climbed slowly up Frodo passed many flets: some on one side, some on another, and some set about the bole of the tree, so that the ladder passed through them. At great height above the ground he came to a wide talan, like the deck of a great ship. On it was built a house, so large that almost it would have served for a hall of Men upon the earth. He entered behind Haldir, and found that he was in a chamber of oval shape, in the midst of which grew the trunk of the great mallorn, now tapering towards its crown, and yet making still a pillar of wide girth.
>
> The chamber was filled with a soft light; its walls were green and silver and its roof of gold. Many Elves were seated there. On two chairs beneath the bole of

> the tree and canopied by a living bough there sat, side by side, Celeborn and Galadriel. They stood up to greet their guests, after the manner of Elves, even those who were accounted mighty kings. Very tall they were, and the Lady no less tall than the Lord; and they were grave and beautiful. They were clad wholly in white; and the hair of the Lady was of deep gold, and the hair of the Lord Celeborn was of silver long and bright; but no sign of age was upon them, unless it were in the depths of their eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight, and yet profound, the wells of deep memory.

The second passage is taken from Sam's and Frodo's journey across the Land of Shadow (III, 200):

> After much wandering and search they found a way that they could climb, and with a last hundred feet of clawing scramble they were up. They came to a cleft between two dark crags, and passing through found themselves on the very edge of the last fence of Mordor. Below them at the bottom of a fall of some fifteen hundred feet, lay the inner plain stretching away into a formless gloom beyond their sight. The wind of the world blew now from the West, and the great clouds were lifted high, floating away eastward; but still only a grey light came to the dreary fields of Gorgoroth. There smokes trailed on the ground and lurked in hollows, and fumes leaked from fissures in the earth.
>
> Still far away, forty miles at least, they saw Mount Doom, its feet founded in ashen ruin, its huge cone rising to a great height, where its reeking head was swathed in cloud. Its fires were now dimmed, and it stood in smouldering slumber, as threatening and dangerous as a sleeping beast. Behind it there hung a vast shadow, ominous as a thunder-cloud, the veil of Barad-dur that was reared far away upon a long spur of the Ashen Mountains thrust down from the North. The Dark Power was deep in thought, and the Eye turned inward, pondering tidings of doubt and danger: a bright sword, and a stern and kingly face it saw, and for a while it gave little thought to other things; and all its great stronghold, gate on gate, and tower on tower, was wrapped in a brooding gloom.
>
> Frodo gazed out in mingled loathing and wonder on this hateful land. Between them and the smoking mountain, and about it north and south, all seemed ruinous and dead, a desert burned and choked. They wondered how the Lord of this realm maintained and fed his slaves and his armies. Yet armies he had. As far as their eyes could reach, along

> the skirts of the Morgai and away southward, there were camps, some of tents, some ordered like small towns. One of the largest of these was right below them. Barely a mile out into the plain it clustered like some huge nest of insects, with straight dreary streets of huts and long low drab buildings. About it the ground was busy with folk going to and fro; a wide road ran from it south-east to join the Morgul-way, and along it many lines of small black shapes were hurrying.

The descriptive powers displayed here are rather formidable. Note for example, the care taken in ensuring a sense of orientation: "Along this they went westward ... a green cloud upon their left ... they faced south-west". Note also how each sense is appealed to: "Haldir knocked and spoke, and the gates opened soundlessly ... No folk they could see, nor hear any feet ... but there were many voices ... Far away they could hear the sound of singing". Colours, sounds, smells, sizes, shapes, positions and actions are all thorougnly described: "clawing scramble ... dark crags ... at the bottom of a fall of some fifteen hundred feet ... formless gloom ... great clouds were lifted high ... grey light ... dreary fields ... smokes trailed on the ground and lurked in hollows, and fumes leaked from fissures in the earth", and (from the description of Celeborn and Galadriel): "Very tall they were, and the Lady no less tall than the Lord; and they were grave and beautiful. They were clad wholly in white; and the hair of the Lady was of deep gold, and the hair of the Lord Celeborn was of silver long and bright ..." Colour is obviously very important; in fact it is a symbolic key to the moral qualities of the person or setting. Sound, too, is of great significance. The view of Lorien is accompanied by singing, while Mordor is as silent as it is sterile and forbidding.

Yet as each setting, person or object is encountered it is

described with just enough detail to suggest without putting unnecessary limitations on the view which, in a sense, we ourselves are induced to create: the city "ever climbing up like a green cloud" and "Mount Doom, its feet founded in ashen ruin, its huge cone rising to a great height, where its reeking head was swathed in cloud. Its fires were now dimmed, and it stood in smouldering slumber, as threatening and dangerous as a sleeping beast." While on the one hand the description is detailed, presenting as it does in each of these passages a complete picture, the detail is of an open-ended sort; that is, it serves only to suggest what we ourselves must imagine. In their contrast with the minute and imposing descriptions employed by most realistic writers, these passages demonstrate the qualities which Burke believed intrinsic to language: qualities of connotation and suggestion rather than the domination of perspectives inherent in so-called 'empirical' observations.

The result is that the images which are conjured up are vivid and effective, partly because the picture is so overwhelming and partly because Tolkien stops short of the minute and trivial, preferring instead to suggest an overall picture which the reader can complete in his own imagination. That is the process which Tolkien desires to take place in the reader's mind, not only in terms of descriptive art, but in terms of the overall effect of the work. That these passages remain in the mind long after the reader has moved on is a tribute to Tolkien's success in the area.

As effective as the preceding passages are, they would mean little outside of the larger context of the complete work. In other words, it

is the cumulative effect of these descriptions which is most important in the longer view. Similarly, Tolkien's general technique seems to be to provide individual situations and events which are apparently of little importance in the short run but which assume greater stature when seen from the point of view of their contribution to the overall effect. The imagery, as we have noted, also works in this way. No tree in the tale is absolutely central, but after we have seen the image a few times we begin to recognize its significance to the work as a whole. Each time the image is introduced, it is to achieve a different effect, or to reveal a different aspect of the central tree image. Only when the work is complete do we have any notion of its true importance: no single situation could have convinced us of it.

Tolkien's protrayal of various characters in the work also follows this basic pattern. The Nazgul, for example, are introduced as strange tall men with dark hoods who seem to be seeking Frodo. Only gradually, through a number of different incidents, do we become aware of who they are, the circumstances of their condition, and their full potential for evil. Even as we are learning this information, a second mysterious pursuer, Gollum, is also introduced, but not identified. Yet a third tracker appears, first as a large, dark shape passing over the gate at Bree, then as a mysterious stranger at the inn. We learn that he is Strider, and later that he is Aragorn. Then we learn he is a Ranger, a Dunadan, and finally that he is a King. Only with perseverence and attention do we gather the circumstances of the life and loves and the fate of this mysterious man who is introduced in much the same ominous manner as the Black Riders. Such a slow and often devious revelation

of character is important for the maintenance of suspense, and indicates as well the kind of care which Tolkien takes in developing his characters and his point of view.

Another character which is very carefully and slowly delineated is that of Sam Gamgee. During Gandalf's long speech in the second chapter of Book One, Sam is outside, tending the garden: "There was another long silence. The sound of Sam Gamgee cutting the lawn came from the garden."(I, 56) Then a few pages later: "The room became dark and silent, though the clack of Sam's shears, now nearer to the windows, could still be heard faintly from the garden."(59) Yet another few pages and we are told again: "A heavy silence fell in the room. Frodo could hear his heart beating. Even outside everything seemed still. No sound of Sam's shears could now be heard."(68) At the end of the chapter, Gandalf suddenly reaches out the window and hauls Sam Gamgee in by the collar; he has been listening all along.

Within the context of the chapter, these brief and apparently offhand remarks seem to be of little moment beside the weighty matters which are being discussed. They appear to provide mere comic relief, and that is a role which Sam will fulfil throughout the work. Yet they are the first indication that Sam is more than a mere buffoon. They indicate in Sam a curiosity about things outside the Shire, a desire to know and understand, a dream of travelling. In later chapters we learn, from episode to episode, of Sam's enormous capacity for love and loyalty, of hidden strength of character, of tremendous courage and resolution, even of skill with words, a quality which the great elves value above all else. These are characteristics one would not

have suspected of the Sam Gamgee of Hobbiton, who appears as a simpleton with no other purpose than simple comic relief. Gandalf's belief in the hidden qualities of Hobbits is thoroughly vindicated in Sam's later performance.

This kind of careful structuring also appears in a number of parallel events throughout the work. The manner of Frodo's leaving, for example, imitates the departure of his uncle some seventeen years before:

> He jumped over a low place in the hedge at the bottom, and took to the meadows, passing into the night like a rustle of wind in the grass.
>
> - I, 44.

> They jumped over the low place in the hedge at the bottom and took to the fields, passing into the darkness like a rustle in the grasses.
>
> - I, 79.

The best known example, however, is the walking song which Bilbo sings on his departure from Bag End:

> The Road goes ever on and on
> Down from the door where it began.
> Now far ahead the Road has gone,
> And I must follow, if I can,
> Pursuing it with eager feet,
> Until it joins some larger way
> Where many paths and errands meet.
> And whither then? I cannot say.

Frodo repeats the song (I, 82-3) with the exception of one altered line:

> The Road goes ever on and on
> Down from the door where it began.
> Now far ahead the Road has gone,
> And I must follow, if I can,
> Pursuing it with <u>weary</u> feet,
> Until it joins some larger way,
> Where many paths and errands meet.
> And whither then? I cannot say.

The change of one word in the song which Frodo sings may seem of small

importance, but it is not, for it represents a tremendous change in attitude on Frodo's part. But more importantly, it is a change in the midst of similarity, a symbol of mutability.

Another kind of parallelism occurs in the four views of Isengard which are presented in the book. The first description of the area covers the period of the early days when Isengard was beautiful. The second contrasts with this the ugliness Isengard has acquired under the ambitious Saruman. The third tells of Isengard's destruction, and the fourth of its reconstruction under the supervision of the ents. What is presented is a saga, the saga of Isengard. But more importantly it is a story of continuity and of change, like the walking song passed from Bilbo to Frodo.[11]

Similar parallel events also occur, usually for reasons of contrast. Some, like the parallel images, have been discussed elsewhere. Others, like the parallel actions of Merry and Pippin in Parts Two and Three, provide for yet another method of character delineation. Still others provide for irony, a quality which is often present in Tolkien's writing. One good example comes at I, 30, where Old Noakes states knowingly:

> It beats me why any Baggins of Hobbiton should go

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[11] The descriptions of Isengard are taken from I, 159-161, and from III, 257. Tolkien's use of songs which are much like modern day nursery rhymes (e.g., Frodo's song at the Prancing Pony, I, 170-2) but which supposedly predate them, is a linguistic example of this continuity and change theme, for it is an attempt to demonstrate the development of the language around a central core of traditional material. The title of Burke's Permanence and Change immediately springs to mind in this connection.

> looking for a wife away there in Buckland, where folks are so queer.

There follows a discussion about how and why these Bucklanders are so queer. Yet when Frodo meets Farmer Maggot of Buckland, he is blessed with this piece of hindsight from the old man:

> You should never have gone mixing yourself up with Hobbiton Folk, Mr. Frodo. Folk are queer up there. (I, 104)

Similarly, Shire Hobbits and Breelanders call each other "outsiders". There is also irony in Frodo's unwitting statement that he is becoming a wraith (I, 196), since that is precisely what will happen if he allows the Ring to gain control. Yet all of these minor examples of irony, however humorous in intent, serve to underline the more serious irony of Sauron's position and perhaps ultimately the irony of man's struggle in a losing battle against time, a feature of Tolkien's Anglo-Saxon models. Thus what appears insignificant or comic at the time, becomes important in the longer view. The accumulation of detail, of information and knowledge, causes a change in outlook, a change which is accomplished only through the structuring of these minor events into significant patterns.

VI

The principal advantage of writing in the fairy-story mode is that it allows one to present familiar things in unfamiliar ways and to provide new insights into every day affairs. What is here suggested is that the fairy-story represents not a flight into fancy so much as a change of perspective on reality. Of course the flexibility of art generally allows for many changes in perspective, but Tolkien has been

especially careful to provide adequate opportunities, no doubt because, as we have seen, perspective is the principal subject of his writing.

One of the ways in which perspective is altered is through the already mentioned technique of animation or personification. By identifying certain aspects of the human experience and recombining them in different ways or by projecting qualities of the human race onto non-human characters and things, Tolkien is able to remove these characteristics from the veil of familiarity and reveal them in a new light. Bombadil's description of the Old Forest and its jealousy of creatures more free is clearly a description of people and their ways. It is a graphic portrayal of a human situation, a situation with which we are all too familiar.

Similarly, Tolkien's deliberate manipulation of time is also often a result of his need to alter our perspective. Dreams often tell of past, present and future events, and provide insights into what has happened, is happening, and has yet to happen. So, too, does Galadriel's mirror freely combine and realign the flow of events, for no other reason than to provide a new perspective on the situation of the present. Yet even while deliberately rearranging time for this purpose, Tolkien constantly reminds us that it moves inexorably onward as well, and that many events are happening at once. He keeps very careful records of the passage of time, and goes to great lengths to connect widely scattered events which, though separated by many miles (and often by many pages of the narrative), have occurred simultaneously. As Frodo and his band approach Weathertop, they see flashes of light which we learn later to have signalled Gandalf's

battle with the Black Riders. Other events are also seen from widely separated quarters. The change of wind that precedes the last battle and gives heart to the allies against Sauron is also seen by Frodo and Sam as they approach Mount Doom. Thus various separate events are connected through single images, and a feeling of simultaneity, itself an important and badly needed perspective, is generated.

Perhaps the best example of perspective is supplied by Gandalf, who teaches the ancient Fangorn a lesson in point of view:

> 'Never is too long a word even for me,' said Treebeard. 'Not while your kingdoms last, you mean; but they will have to last long indeed to seem long to Ents.'
>
> 'The New Age begins,' said Gandalf,' and in this age it may well prove that the kingdoms of Men shall outlast you, Fangorn my friend.'[13]

It seems that even Fangorn, whose perspective is as broad as his age is great, can have yet another level of consciousness brought to his attention. Furthermore, what we have here is a total reversal of our perspective. All along we have been looking back on Middle-earth; this is Middle-earth looking ahead to us. Like Fangorn, we must be reminded that our understanding of the world and time is limited and needs constant expansion; and like Gandalf, Tolkien demands of his reader expanded awareness of life and its mysteries.

In terms of the art of the narrative, however, the most important thing to remember is that all of the devices used in The Lord of the Rings can be related through this concept of perspective. Parallelism, irony, accumulative imagery and characterization, personification,

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[13] III, 258.

multiple narratives, even the aforementioned use of convention and tradition, are all, in a sense, methods of providing perspective through new forms and long range views. The need for perspective is perhaps the major theme of the work, and every aspect of the narrative -- even the authorial interjections -- is designed to supply it. The result is once again a form which is ideally suited to the matter of the tale.

FIVE

LANGUAGE

I

In an otherwise favourable study of The Lord of the Rings, Patricia Meyers Spacks[1] makes a point of criticizing two aspects of Tolkien's style: the accumulation of detail, and the language of the work. As the former subject has already been touched upon, no further comment shall be made here; but in regard to the latter, a great deal needs to be said in favour of Tolkien's use of language both as a method of characterization and as a means of expressing deeper and more subtle concerns.

Spacks charges that Tolkien's language "appeals to the child-side of its readers; it evokes memories of fairy-tales and legends of chivalry ... The simple vocabulary recalls traditional materials of romance: sword-hilts, kingliness, the mists of the sea, shining light, the ancient man of mysterious power."[2] A few lines later, she continues:

> A critic who demands verbal complexity, integrity, richness, subtlety, will find little to attract him in Tolkien's fiction. The language of the books is entirely an instrument of the story. The depth and subtlety of imagination, both fictional and moral, which control the fable find no counterparts in the language of the trilogy, derivative and often impoverished or pretentious.

It is apparent that a closer look at the language of the tale is required,

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[1] "Power and Meaning in The Lord of the Rings" in Tolkien and the Critics, pp. 81-99.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

to see whether or not Spacks' claims are justified, or whether these arguments may actually be used in defense of the trilogy. One might suggest that Tolkien intended to revive some feeling for fairy-tale and legend in the mind of his reader through his obvious reliance on traditional materials and rules, which place him firmly in the tradition of the great mythologizers of the past. The language is 'derivative' for the same reason: it aids in recalling those aspects of other legends which are not common in modern prose. One might also suggest that any language which is not the instrument of the story would run the risk of being sadly at variance with the themes and outlooks which it is attempting to communicate. As to the lack of complexity and subtlety, the following analysis is intended to demonstrate that such claims are without foundation, that in fact Tolkien has exercised a considerable degree of care and consideration in his use of language in The Lord of the Rings.

II

The single most important element of any literary work, whether it be in poetic, dramatic, or prose form is the power of its language to compel the reader's attention and assist in his appreciation of the beauty or truth which the work seeks to represent. We are aware that Tolkien recognized the significance of the powers of language, and we might suspect that, contrary to the views of some critics, it is precisely this power which gives The Lord of the Rings its strength, particularly when we consider that the work's basic outlook and overall style are so much at variance with modern trends in art and life. Thus it is that an investigation of the language of The Lord of the Rings might prove, above

all else, to be the most useful in terms of what it reveals about Tolkien's manners and methods in creating a successful tale.

Perhaps the first step to be taken in this kind of analysis is to consider the manner in which Tolkien's considerable knowledge of linguistic forms is employed within the tale itself: that is, in the language spoken by each of the characters, and in its appropriateness to him and his point of view. This business of matching language and character has implications beyond the purely artistic necessities of style. To some degree at least, Tolkien seems to hold to Whorf's conviction that man's perceptions and his modes of expression are inextricably interwoven, that his language and outlook will share essential qualities. When applied to the narrative such an outlook would suggest that the manner in which a character expresses himself will reveal significant things about his personality. That is obvious. What may not be so obvious is that such revelations are not only to be found in what the character says, but in the very grammar by which he constructs his utterances. So it is that in order to come to some understanding of Tolkien's language as a whole, we might first profit by an analysis of his application of language to the characters themselves.

One of the remarkable things about The Lord of the Rings is, of course, the elaborate construction of various imaginary languages which appear throughout the work. Tolkien's own linguistic background might lead one to suspect that great attention and care have been given to this project, and careful study of the linguistic forms themselves prove this to be the case. Most of the names and other words are founded on 'common' roots, syllables which assume approximately the same meaning wherever

they appear. Thus "Mordor", "Morgul" and "Morannon" mean "Black Land", "Black Magic" and "Black Gate" respectively, while "Dunedain", "Dunland" and "Adunaic" refer to "edain of the West", "land in the West", and "Tongue of the West".[3] Such consistency even seems to play a part in Tolkien's naming of the Hobbits, apparently often with sarcastic intent. The root "loth", meaning "blossom" (Lothiriel, Lothlorien, etc.) also appears in the name Lotho Sackville-Baggins, which when applied to the rather pimply and otherwise unhealthy character who goes by that name, creates a sense of subtle comic contrast. Similarly, the root "mal", meaning "gold", appears in the Sindarin names "Malbeth" and "Malvegil" and also in the Hobbit name "Malva Brandybuck", suggesting that her modern name might have been "Goldie". Perhaps it is this inner consistency which, like the "inner consistency of reality" that sustains any successful fairy-story,[4] gives these names and the languages as a whole their measure of acceptability and their 'ring of truth', an often difficult achievement in imaginative writing of any kind.

Perhaps the most important of these forms is the root "El" which appears to have two meanings. In terms of the imagery of the work, however, these meanings are very closely related, if not the same. One use of this root is in connection with the High elves or Eldar. Thus "Eldamar" means "elven home" and "Eldarin", "language of the elves".

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[3] Most of the translations used are taken from Foster, Robert, A Guide to Middle Earth (New York: Ballantine, 1974); However these meanings could be arrived at through an independent study of the various names and their applications, and from the occasional translations within the text itself.

[4] See "On Fairy-stories", in Tree and Leaf, pp. 43 et al.

Yet the root "El" also means "star" as it appears in "Elanor", "Elbereth" and "Elenya" ("Star-sun", "Star Queen" and "Star-day"). As a result the name "Elendil" could mean "Star-friend" or "Elf-friend", and the word "Eldar" itself, if we can for a moment assume the combinations "da" or "dar" to mean "people" (Dunedain, Edain, Sindar), would translate quite literally as "Star-people". We have already discussed the connection between elves and stars in Chapter Three. What we have here is a significant example of the influence of image patterns on linguistic forms, and of the complex relationship between a race and the language which it speaks.

A somewhat similar example of this kind of relationship appears in other names, one of the more important being Aragorn, whose title means "royal tree". As we have seen earlier, the tree is undoubtedly the central image in the work, and it is fitting that the great King and leader of the reunited kingdoms should have such a name. Here linguistic and symbolic intent have combined to create a suitable name for a central character.

The practice of naming which is demonstrated in the work is, of course, not unlike that in actual use in earlier stages of man's language development. Names such as Regina, Mona, Jennifer (from Italian "Ginevra" meaning "Juniper"), Cooper, Saddler, Wainwright, and countless others have their origin in social roles, occupations and personal characteristics as well as plants and objects. That Tolkien follows this practice shows his understanding of the way in which language develops. Yet it is a common enough situation, and would not deserve much notice did it not parallel his concern for the languages themselves and their suitability

to the peoples who speak them. The carefully constructed relationship between names and characters is but a microcosm of the relationship between language and race.

Thus it is that the language of the High elves is characterized as noble and musical, while the lesser elves speak a similar but lesser tongue. Of the languages of men, the Numenorean tongue was perhaps most noble, and that of Rohan next. Yet these languages were but pale counterparts to the Elvish tongues, just as the Numenoreans were the mannish equivalent, though of lower standing, of the High Elves. The language of the hobbits is yet a weaker derivative of the original Numenorean tongue, and is more useful than beautiful (though it has its own attractive idiosyncrasies). As we descend the ladder of nobility, then, we discover a level of language development (or perhaps regression would be a better word) suited perfectly to that race and its relative position in society.

This parallel is further extended into the darker realms of Sauron's dominion. The Orcs, for example, speak a foul combination of Westron and the Black Speech, and as one descends the ladder of wickedness, the language becomes more purely evil. Generally, the speech of Sauron and his hordes is harsh and ugly. When the Ring's inscription, written in the Black Speech, is read aloud at the Council of Elrond, the very sound of the words causes alarm in Rivendell, and a great change in the countenance of the speaker:

> 'Ash nazg durbatuluk, ash nazg gimbatul, ash nazg thrakatuluk, agh burzum-ishi krimpatul.'
>
> The change in the wizard's voice was astounding. Suddenly it became menacing, powerful, harsh as stone. A shadow seemed to pass over the high sun, and the porch for a moment grew dark. All trembled, and the Elves

stopped their ears.[5]

It was not only the sound of the language which caused this momentary stir, but the implied perspective which lies behind it. A brief look at the structure of the language, compared to the English translation which follows (One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the Darkness bind them) will reveal that the possessive, domineering cast of mind which characterizes those who use the Black speech is inherent in the language itself: the object of each phrase, tuluk and tul (them all, them) has actually been taken possession of by the verb, just as the one Ring is designed to dominate and ultimately possess all the other rings, and by extension all the peoples of Middle-Earth. The immoral outlook of the author of those lines is betrayed in the grammar of his composition.

A similar relationship between language and the outlook expressed therein is demonstrated in the speech of the ents. Because the ents are ancient creatures, and because things pass very slowly relative to their own life span, their perspective is considerably broader than our own and their language has developed in the same slow, broad manner. Much time is required for an ent to express himself, not only because an ent is seldom hasty, but because his language itself rules out haste. Another important aspect of the ent language is that its very development is as organic as the creatures who use it. Fangorn tells Merry and Pippin that his full name would take a long time to repeat, because he is very old, and his name has grown with his increasing age; it has developed and

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[5] I, 267.

changed through the years, like a great tree which has grown from a seed:

> I am not going to tell you my name, not yet at any rate ... For one thing it would take a long while: my name is growing all the time, and I've lived a very long, long time; so my name is like a story. Real names tell you the story of things they belong to in my language ... It is a lovely language, but it takes a very long time to say anything in it, because we do not say anything in it, unless it is worth taking a long time to say, and to listen to.[6]

The relationship between language, identity and outlook which so interested Benjamin Whorf is clearly demonstrated here. Through his own study of language Tolkien seems to have come to a similar understanding, and the creation of these characters and their respective languages is to a major extent an attempt (and a successful one) to express this understanding, in order that the reader may broaden his own outlook by experiencing through their language the outlook of others. That these languages are imaginary in no way detracts from the value of the experience in improving our perspective. What we see is merely a restatement of carefully arrived at conclusions based on a study of real language systems.

Of course language and identity are also well matched in the speech of individuals, as is the case in any properly constructed work. Sam's speech suits his station in society and his role in the narrative. When he speaks, he does so in the following manner: "What's that, Strider? It don't look like a cloud."[7] When he spouts a maxim, it sounds like this:

> ... where there's life there's hope, as my Gaffer used to say; and need of vittles, as he mostways used to add.[8]

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[6] II, 68.

[7] I, 298.

[8] II, 309.

Sam's character is clearly delineated by the homespun quality of his speech and the nature of his concerns. Contrast this with the maxim which appears, suitably altered to fit the speaker and his position, a little later in the narrative:

> Need brooks no delay, yet late is better than never ... And mayhap in this time shall the old saw be proved truer than ever before since men spoke with mouth.[9]

The speaker is the lord Eomer, and the language of his kind is antique and noble, as his speech clearly indicates. Like Sam, Eomer speaks a language which reveals his character and his station in life. Taken in isolation, such a device appears to be a simple method of characterization; but within the context of Tolkien's linguistic intentions, it assumes added importance as another aspect of the language-identity issue.

An even more extreme case of character identified by language is Tom Bombadil. Burke's biological, poetic outlook is personified in Tom and it is thus appropriate that this nature deity first appears singing a song:

> Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo!
> Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!
> Tom Bom, Jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo![10]

Even Tom's prose speech falls into metrical patterns, as at I, 156 (the lines have been arranged to emphasize the metre):

> You must forgive them all; for though their hearts are faithful,
> to face fear of Barrow-wights is not what they were made for.
> See here they come again, bringing all their burdens.

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[9] III, 110.

[10] I, 130.

The ease with which these lines fall into the familiar Anglo-Saxon metrical patterns, and the inclusion of intentional alliterations (forgive, for, faithful, face, fear, for, bringing, burdens), suggest in Tom a highly poetical cast of mind which carries over from his singing into common speech. The importance of the connection exhibited here between poetry and nature cannot be overstressed, for it illustrates in a stylistic way the general thematic outlook of the work as a whole.

The use of language also appears relative to situations. For the everyday business of the Shire the simplified, utilitarian Westron language is sufficient. The gossipy conversations at the Ivy Bush Inn are even lower on the scale of linguistic usage, while formal occasions elicit a more decorous mode. During the ceremonies surrounding the crowning of Aragorn, the language is suitably ennobled.[11] It should be noted however, that the lofty speech used at this point and elsewhere (as at Rivendell, Lorien, etc.) is always mixed with the lower language of lesser individuals (in this case Ioreth, but also of Sam, Merry, and Pippin). Undoubtedly this contrast relieves the reader of the burden of the formalities employed. It also seems to make the formal language even loftier and noble by bringing the reader back to earth and reminding him of his own feet of clay.

A similar contrast occurs during the journey from Gondor to Bree. The return to the 'normal' atmosphere of home in the Shire is accompanied by a return to the earthy language and concerns of the people who live there. Here again Tolkien's choice of language serves not only artistic

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[11] III, 244-6.

needs but also demonstrates another aspect of the complex relationship between language and life.

Such imaginative linguistic constructions are, or course, an effective means of characterization and identification, both for individuals and for races in general. Yet as we have also seen, they provide us with an example, however fanciful, of the implications of language with regard to the perspectives which are therein expressed. Whether or not one can argue, as Whorf did, that language actually controls those perspectives, is not an issue here. The fact remains that language and identity are closely related, in complex and as yet unexplained ways. By creating a new set of languages and cultures, Tolkien has taken the limitations of our own highly developed, and therefore highly intransigent, modes of perception and expression into undreamt of realms of differing perceptions and expressions. As one grows more and more interested in the work, one finds oneself philologizing just as Tolkien must have done in his study of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. Thus the reader is induced to learn, as Tolkien and Whorf have learned, that other languages differ not only in their manner of expression, but in their approach to those perceptions which language is used to express. The result is a new and wider perspective, not only on language, but on life itself, as it becomes apparent that the two are more closely related than we had previously understood. Tolkien was not joking, then, when he described The Lord of the Rings as an exercise in philology: for a study of language is also a study of the people by whom it is employed.

III

To a large degree we have already investigated the implications of Tolkien's own language in relation to his point of view. The study of images, of conventions and of the narrative all have their foundations in the study of verbal usage. Yet before this analysis of the language of The Lord of the Rings may be concluded, those standards by which we have examined the speech of the characters ought to be applied to the language of the narrative itself.

Our model for this analysis is the landmark study by Vernon Lee called The Handling of Words.[12] In it Lee picks at random passages from several of the more popular writers of her age (Kipling, Stevenson, Hardy, James, etc.) and studies them by counting words and word-groups, analysing tense, and discussing rhythm. The results are fascinating, if not always pleasing, and her methods may prove well suited to a study of The Lord of the Rings.

Following Vernon Lee's method, a five hundred word passage was chosen at random from Part One. Because the selected page contained a break in the narrative, it was arbitrarily decided, but without any particular reason other then convenience, to begin the passage at this point. It begins on page 140, and reads as follows:

> The upper wind settled in the West and deeper and wetter clouds rolled up to spill their laden rain on the bare heads of the Downs. Nothing could be seen all round the house but falling water. Frodo stood near the open door and watched the white chalky path turn into a little river of milk and go bubbling away down into the valley. Tom Bombadil came trotting round the corner of the house,

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[12] (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968).

waving his arms as if he was warding off the rain -- and indeed when he sprang over the threshold he seemed quite dry, except for his boots. These he took off and put in the chimney-corner. Then he sat in the largest chair and called the hobbits to gather round him.

'This is Goldberry's washing day,' he said, 'and her autumn-cleaning. Too wet for hobbit-folk -- let them rest while they are able! It's a good day for long tales, for questions and for answers, so Tom will start the talking.'

He then told them many remarkable stories, some times half as if speaking to himself, sometimes looking at them suddenly with a bright blue eye under his deep brows. Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about. He told them of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, about evil things and good things, things friendly and things unfriendly, cruel things and kind things, and secrets hidden under brambles.

As they listened, they began to understand the lives of the Forest, apart from themselves, indeed to feel themselves as the strangers where all other things were at home. Moving constantly in and out of his talk was Old Man Willow, and Frodo learned now enough to content him, indeed more than enough, for it was not comfortable lore. Tom's words laid bare the hearts of trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers. It was not called the Old Forest without reason, for it was indeed ancient, a survivor of vast forgotten woods; and in it there lived yet, ageing no quicker than the hills, the fathers of the fathers of trees, remembering times when they were lords. The countless years had filled them with pride and rooted wisdom, and with malice. But none were more dangerous than the Great Willow: his heart was rotten but his strength was green; and he was cunning, and a master of winds, and his song and thought ran through the woods on both sides of the river. His grey thirsty spirit drew power out of the earth and spread like fine root-threads in the ground, and invisible twig-fingers in the air, till it had under its dominion nearly all the trees of the Forest from the Hedge to the Downs.

Suddenly Tom's talk left the woods and went leaping up the young ...

Nouns and pronouns: 141; adjectives, adjectival pronouns, participles,

adverbs: 79; verbs: 55.[13]

One of the interesting things about this passage is the ratio of nouns to verbs: 141:55 or 2.56:1. In The Handling of Words, Lee finds the following ratios in the works of other writers: Meredith, 2.84:1; Kipling, 2.66:1; Stevenson, 1.97:1; Hardy, 1.74:1; James, 1.92:1. Tolkien's above average ratio of nouns to verbs suggests a corresponding preponderance of things over action, probably a suitable state of affairs for a passage which is itself basically passive and contemplative in nature. A similar count of nouns and verbs in a five hundred word section taken from the battle at Helm's Deep shows a ratio of 1.88:1, suggesting that Tolkien is capable of writing in styles other than the passive mode illustrated here.

A count of sentences in these two passages will reveal eighteen in the first, with an average length of almost twenty-eight words per sentence, and thirty in the second, with an average of almost seventeen words per sentence. Thus because of longer sentences and fewer verbs the principal passage under discussion displays all the earmarks of a very passive, reflective piece of writing.

Another characteristic of the nouns in this passage is that when they are divided into concretes and abstracts, they fall into significant

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[13] The difficulty in categorizing such constructs as "autumn-cleaning", in which the word contains both a noun and its modifier, may lead to some discrepancies in these figures. In this case "autumn" has been included in the count of adjectives. A similar problem arises when one considers whether auxiliary verbs ought to be separate from or included with the main verbs. Because of these and many other problems, the numbers are only approximate.

patterns. The concretes outnumber the abstracts by approximately sixty to fifty. However, of the first fifty-five nouns, over forty are concrete (or concrete generalizations, such as "hobbit-folk", "bees", "flowers", etc.). In the second group of fifty-five the concrete words number less than half; furthermore, the number of concrete generalizations (references to things which which do exist generally but are not present in the context of the passage) increases proportionally. They comprise thirty per cent of the concrete nouns in the first half, and fifty per cent in the second half. The movement in this passage is clearly from the specific to the general, from the concrete to the abstract.

Such movement, taken in isolation, may not appear to be of any great importance, yet when viewed in relation to the whole of the work it becomes highly significant. The presence of a large number of concrete nouns in the opening lines seems to give the passage a basis in reality, just as Tolkien's use of familiar objects, characteristics, and qualities provides the entire tale with a feeling of tangibility. And just as the Hobbits leave the familiar world of the Shire -- which is, of course, a very human place -- and enter the abstract realms of fantasy, so too does this passage move from the concrete realities of description to the abstract reflections of the mind. It actually represents in miniature one of the major patterns in the work.[14]

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[14] A measure of the sentences also reveals a kind of movement. The average length of the first ten sentences is nineteen words, but for the last nine it is thirty-three. It appears that even as the nouns become more abstract, the sentences become longer and more complex, just as the ideas of the passage move from simple, realistic description to complex, mental contemplation.

One other brief note concerning the nouns: of the 110 nouns, fourteen have the status of proper names, though only four refer to people. The rest refer to places and things. The effect of this manner, particularly with respect to Old Willow, but also to a lesser extent with the Downs, the Hedge, and the rest, is to personify them to some degree. Again, reference to this manner in isolation may seem unnecessary, but in relation to Tolkien's desire to animate his settings, it is surely a contributing factor to the overall sense of dynamism in the work.

Another factor which contributes to the feeling of a living, dynamic universe is the persistent use of present participles such as "falling", "bubbling", "trotting", and many others (there are twenty altogether; the average in those passages dealt with by Vernon Lee is nine). The result is a sense of activity, of being present at the scene of the action, an overall feeling that everything is bubbling and trotting and waving and that one is somehow a part of it all. Together with the personifications mentioned above, use of the present participle is a fairly effective way of achieving the impression of life in motion.

When a comparison is made between this passage and a second chosen at random from the works of Ernest Hemingway, some interesting contrasts become apparent. The passage is from For Whom the Bell Tolls,[15] and begins on page 260:

> Then he had made a pillow of the things he took off and gotten into the robe and then lain and waited, feeling the spring of the boughs under the flannelly, feathered lightness of the robe warmth, watching the mouth of the cave across the snow; feeling his heart beat as he waited.

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[15] (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940).

> The night was clear and his head felt as clear and cold as the air. He smelled the odor of the pine boughs under him, the piney smell of the crushed needles and the sharper odor of the resinous sap from the cut limbs. Pilar, he thought. Pilar and the smell of death. This is the smell I love. This and fresh-cut clover, the crushed sage as you ride after cattle, wood-smoke and the burning leaves of autumn. That must be the odor of nostalgia, the smell of the smoke from the piles of raked leaves burning in the streets in the fall in Missoula. Which would you rather smell? Sweet grass the Indians used in their baskets? Smoked leather? The odor of the ground in the spring after rain? The smell of the seas as you walk through the gorse on a headland in Galicia? Or the wind from the land as you come in toward Cuba in the dark? That was the odor of the cactus flowers, mimosa and the sea-grape shrubs. Or would you rather smell frying bacon in the morning when you are hungry? Or coffee in the morning? Or a Jonathan apple as you bit into it? Or a cider mill in the grinding, or bread fresh from the oven? You must be hungry, he thought, and he lay on his side and watched the entrance of the cave in the light that the stars reflected from the snow.
>
> Some one came out from under the blanket and he could see whoever it was standing by the break in the rock that made the entrance. Then he heard a slithering sound in the snow and then whoever it was ducked down and went back in.
>
> I suppose she won't come until they are all asleep, he thought. It is a waste of time. The night is half gone. Oh, Maria. Come now quickly, Maria, for there is little time. He heard the soft sound of snow falling from a branch onto the snow on the ground. A little wind was rising. He felt it on his face. Suddenly he felt a panic that she might not come. The wind rising now reminded him how soon it would be morning. More snow fell from the branches as he heard the wind now moving the pine tops.
>
> Come now, Maria. Please come here now quickly, he thought. Oh, come here now. Do not wait. There is no importance any more to your waiting until they are asleep.
>
> Then he saw her coming out from under the blanket that covered the cave mouth. She stood there a moment and he knew it ...

A word count produces the following statistics: nouns and pronouns, 139; adjectives and adverbs, 59; verbs, 56; ratio of nouns and pronouns to verbs, 2.5:1.

Because of the high ratio of things to actions, one would have to

categorize this passage from Hemingway as passive and reflective in nature, and indeed it is. Yet when one classifies the nouns according to their tangibility, it will be found that almost ninety per cent are concrete, with even the generalizations being carefully limited and made specific (e.g., "the smell of the smoke from the piles of raked leaves burning in the streets in the fall in Missoula."). The object of Hemingway's reflection seems not to consist of the abstractions of Tolkien's imaginative world, but of empirically identifiable reality. Things dominate, even in this description of the hero's anticipation of a romantic affair. The marked contrast of styles between the realist and the writer of fantasy is fairly evident in the quality of the nouns employed by each.

A quick study of the verbs in both of these passages reveals that a large number of them are of the non-active type (sensory perception, states of being, mental activity, and such non-active conditions as lying, sitting, etc.). As these are both passive, reflective passages to begin with, such a state is scarcely to be wondered at. Yet notice again a slight contrast: both authors have employed almost exactly the same number of verbs (Tolkien, 55; Hemingway, 56), yet only seventeen of Tolkien's verbs are actions which require movement through space (coming, walking, dancing), while twenty-two of Hemingway's do so. Once again the quality of Tolkien's verbs seems to lean more to the mental than do Hemingway's, even though both passages are so passive in nature.

On the other hand, Tolkien's active verbs (i.e., verbs which require movement through space) seem somewhat more active than Hemingway's. Tolkien, for example, employs such verbs as "rolled", "spill", "turning",

"trotting", "waving", "warding", "sprang" and "dance", while Hemingway seems satisfied with "made", "took", "gotten", "beat", "ride", "walk", "come", "ducked", "falling" and "rising". Although Tolkien uses fewer spatially active verbs, those which do appear have considerably more colour and thus seem to be more active. The lack of colour in Hemingway's verbs may actually suggest a slightly jaundiced or weary view of life, even in the face of the apparent enjoyment of those sensual reminiscences in the second paragraph.

This lack of energy in Hemingway's verbs also expresses itself in a lack of variety in the adjectives and adverbs. The selected passage from For Whom the Bell Tolls contains thirty-one adjectives and thirty-five adverbs. Of the adjectives, only twenty-four are originals (i.e., appear once, or the first time for those which are repeated) and the remaining seven are repeats. Similarly, the adverbs show only seventeen originals and eighteen repeats. On the other hand Tolkien employs fifty-one adjectives of which an amazing forty-nine are originals with only two repeats, and thirty-nine adverbs of which thirty-one are originals with eight repeats. Because of Tolkien's imaginative, poetic approach to life, it is not surprising that his style demonstrates such imaginative variation in word use; and the constrast between these two short passages suggests an even greater contrast between the outlooks of the respective authors. For Hemingway the world was not rich and full, but was ultimately a disappointment. For Tolkien, it was ever wonderful and dynamic, full of challenge and of reward for those who are worthy.

Tolkien's heavy reliance on single modifiers parallels his use of modifying phrases and clauses. A count of the nouns and verbs reveals

that fully sixty-five per cent of the former and twenty per cent of the latter are used in subordinate positions (phrases and clauses) within the passage. Such a high percentage of words so used suggests that very careful attention is being paid to modification of the nouns. Vernon Lee puts special emphasis on this aspect of the writer's craft, believing that it is here that a book succeeds or fails. The noun which the author uses to trigger a sympathetic reaction in the mind of the reader will also trigger all kinds of unwanted reactions which reader associates with that noun because of his own experience. For example, when the author writes "sea", the reader may recall a voyage on which he or she was ill, and the word may thus have quite negative connotations for him. If the desire of the author is to make the reader feel ill, then such a reaction would be perfectly satisfactory. If it is not, then the author must modify or limit the noun by means of selective adjectives and phrases which will modify the reader's reaction and elicit the desired response. Tolkien's wide and varied use of adjectives, phrases and clauses would suggest that he, too, recognized the need to control his material carefully in order to achieve the desired end.

As a realist, Hemingway is much less concerned with the careful modification of his noun images. Rather, he tends to allow the structure of his sentences to induce a subconscious frame of mind in which the nouns will take shape according to his desires. Much of his second paragraph, for example, consists of incomplete sentences. This particular style may well be an echo of the feeling of incompletion and emptiness which pervades his writing. The realistic, existential school of writers of which he is a part, tends to deny the presence of any order, or the

possibility of fulfilment in life, and the fact is reflected in this lack of grammatical structure. Tolkien, on the other hand, has only one incomplete sentence, and that in a quotation from Bombadil ("Too wet for Hobbit folk -- let them rest while they are able!"). The order of his sentence structure undoubtedly reflects the order which he sees in the universe and which he is attempting to recreate in his imaginary world.

Both authors' apparent views on order are also echoed in the complexity of the sentences which make up these passages. Hemingway has thirty-one complete sentences with an average length of under thirteen words per sentence. As we have already noted, many of these constructions are not sentences at all, but loosely connected groups of words which take the place of traditional sentence order. There are thirty-nine full stops (periods and question marks), one half-stop (a semi-colon) and eighteen pauses (commas). The large number of short sentences and full stops undoubtedly gives the passage a disconnected look, even though much of the thought runs together in interesting Proustian patterns.

Tolkien's sentences tend to the opposite extreme. There are but nineteen complete sentences in the passage, less than half of Hemingway's total. The average length of the sentences is just under twenty-six words. There are nineteen full stops (as compared to Hemingway's thirty-nine), six half stops, and thirty-nine pauses (compared to Hemingway's eighteen). The result is a more fluid movement of the whole (in terms of style, that is), even though the subjects under consideration are in themselves not obviously related. While in Hemingway's passage a feeling of disconnectedness underlies mentally related images (images connected by the sensual impressions they provoke, coupled with anticipation of a sensual act),

Tolkien has provided the opposite effect by stylistically creating the fluid movement of apparently unrelated matters. In each case, of course, the respective theme or tone of the book has been enhanced by a careful stylistic approach to the subject.

To further the feeling of complexity in the passage, Tolkien has relied heavily on the use of complicated sentence structures. It is clear that Hemingway has intentionally omitted conjunctions and restructured or split up sentences in order to simplify the structure as much as possible without becoming boring and repetitious. Tolkien, on the other hand, has used only eighteen sentences, and only three of these are simple (less than sixteen per cent, compared to Hemingway's twenty simple structures, or fifty-one per cent). Tolkien has eight compound sentences (forty-two per cent), Hemingway three (less than eight per cent). Hemingway uses more complex sentences (twelve, or thirty-one per cent, compared to three, or sixteen per cent, for Tolkien) but far fewer compound-complex sentences (four, or ten per cent) than Tolkien (five, or twenty-six per cent). Even Tolkien's simple, compound, and complex sentences, however, are very complicated. Sentence twelve, for example, is a simple sentence in name only, for it contains two prepositional phrases which share no less than eleven objects and three internal propositional phrases. Sentence eighteen has five independent clauses, one with a compound predicate. Such complex structure literally demands that the reader pay attention to the complex relationships with which the latter part of this passage is dealing. It is in fact one more example of the relationship of subject to style as displayed in this passage and throughout the tale.

The complexity of Tolkien's style as revealed here has similar

implications when viewed within the context of the work as a whole. For not only is the sentence structure carefully composed of complicated elements arranged in intricate patterns; the narrative itself, the image patterns, the conventions and allusions, the whole pseudo-historical background, and ultimately the outlook of the work itself, bespeak the complexity and the web of relationships of which the author believes our world to be composed. Like the characters in the narrative, Tolkien has revealed, through his judicious use of words, his own perspective, not only on language but on life itself.

IV

Even in these few and somewhat superficial examples, Tolkien's grasp of the relationship between language and identity is clearly evident. On one level the author has created a tale in which the similarity of character and speech patterns is emphasized, not only for artistic reasons, but for the purposes of theme as well. On another level, he has provided us with an excellent example of the processes of language and thought in his own mind, through his careful use of words to express his insights and perspectives on life and art. Both levels demonstrate the quality of inseparability that exists between our modes of perception and of expression, and all the implications which this quality has for man and his languages. Ultimately one might even suggest that, if The Lord of the Rings is about anything, it is not concerned so much with righteous action or Christian redemption as it is with this very relationship between language and the creatures who use it; it is, in other words, an exercise in philology, but a most demanding and revealing one.

SIX

CONCLUSION

The concern for unity of form and matter which prompted Pater to pen those famous lines with which this study began has clearly had its influence on Tolkien. We have seen, for example, Whorf's desire for a study of the relationship between man and his languages actualized in fictional form; we have seen an impassioned and moving articulation of Burke's argument for a biologically, poetically oriented "corrective rationalization"; and we have also seen Tolkien's concern for an escape from familiarity, a recovery of clear vision and better understanding realized through the use of imagination and "sub-creation". But in each case these objectives have been achieved not through sermonizing or brow-beating, but by communication and persuasion: in other words by means of a style which is itself a perfect example of the outlook which shaped it and which it in turn is trying to shape in us. The historical modes, the patterns of imagery and narrative methods, and the careful use of language -- in short the style as a whole -- have all been employed not because they are pretty and romantic but because each is a stylistic counterpart of the overall theme of the work. Style and theme are inseparable, as they must be, if the work is to succeed as an objet d'art.

Yet stylistic purity is not an end in itself, at least not within the tradition in which Tolkien is working. In its own way much modern realism achieves a level of artistic purity, as even the short passage from For Whom the Bell Tolls, quoted in Chapter V, amply demonstrates. What

separates Tolkien from his contemporaries is the moral purity with which he also invests his work, the unqualified belief in the value of life and struggle, as opposed to the realist's (or the existentialist's) tendency toward despair and self-annihilation.[1] There is a positive, life-giving purpose in Tolkien's writing, and a firm commitment to the responsibilities of a writer toward his society.

It is interesting that in the essay "On Fairy-stories" Tolkien points out that in its original usage the word "spell" meant both a formula of power over men and a story told. This double definition suggests a certain synonymous relationship between language and the ability to influence society. Tolkien has clearly set out to demonstrate this relationship, and to influence men into recognizing it, and other relationships, which they have begun to forget in their quest for an objectivist's (or fool's) paradise. It is also interesting that in the fairy story Tolkien himself "first divined the potency of words", for it is within the fairy story that words are most powerful, where language can reshape perceptions most freely into new and interesting ways. Tolkien apparently feared, along with Whorf and Burke, that the modern movements in language were self-destructive, that some sense of the old perspectives on life and art must be re-established if man was to survive and that as the most powerful means of doing so, the fairy tale was most suited to the task. To this end he has

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[1] The author is aware, of course, that not all realists and existentialists are suicidal. Neverthless the tendency is there to a degree unmatched in the writings of any other age or style, and the effect of a work like Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms or Sartre's The Wall could scarcely be described as positive or enlivening.

presented language and life in a dynamic way both in terms of its appearance in the tale, and in terms of the style in which the tale itself is written.

The result is a refreshing change from the predominant realism of the decades between the wars and its strangely-shaped offspring, the surrealism of the present. Because of its intrinsic limitations realism has become oppressive, and in a sense so has the absolute objectivism and empiricism of the technologically dominated twentieth century. A new perspective is needed, and The Lord of the Rings is clearly intended as a vehicle for such a change.

In his role as a shaper of perspectives Tolkien has assumed the position of the scop and the poet-priests of ancient times. Like them he is mythologizing, but mythologizing in the sense that he is merely looking at life in a new way by transcending the limits of an earthbound and fallible human being through the powers of language and art. The role of the scop was to impart to his society a continuing sense of the value of their struggle against all odds, of their importance in a mutable but nevertheless dynamic universe: in other words to achieve a 'recovery'. This is clearly Tolkien's purpose in writing The Lord of the Rings.

Such may be the ultimate role of all art, to reveal to man the unlimited possibilities of his own mind, and to reawaken in him a feeling of wonder and beauty. If this is the case, then the fairy-tale, as Tolkien himself suggests, is "indeed the most nearly pure form of art, and so (when achieved) the most potent."[2] But such an achievement is very difficult, for it requires the greatest of care on the part of the author:

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[2] Tree and Leaf, p. 44.

> To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of devilish craft. Few attempt such a difficult task. But when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode.[3]

Tolkien's own understanding of this "devilish craft" is apparent in the style and structure of The Lord of the Rings, a work which is indeed one of those rare achievements in Art.

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[3] Ibid., p. 45.

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