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**Lies Breathed Through Silver
Mythological Constructs in Tolkien's Works**


Joshua McCrowell


Senior Honors Project

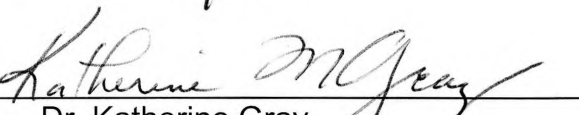
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It's not hard to imagine the English air being warm the night John Ronald Reuel Tolkien brought Clive Staples Lewis hard won into Christianity. The image of their lengthy midnight talk has since become almost mythic to those who study those two authors because of the impact that Christianity (and the other) had on each other's lives. Lewis' most famous works – everything from Narnia to his Space Trilogy to his apologetics - all are based on and inspired by his faith. Similarly, Tolkien once said that “*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work” (Rutledge 6). But what did he mean by that? To understand that question, it is important to look at what Tolkien said to Lewis that night beside the River Cherwell.

Lewis had, by this point in history, denied the truth of the Christian story with rugged intellectualism despite being attracted by it (Carpenter, *The Inklings* 41). In so much, Lewis could accept the idea of a single deity (even one with the omni-benevolence and omniscience, as prescribed by Christianity) but not the idea that the person of Jesus was born of a virgin, rose from the dead, etc. Lewis and Tolkien already agreed on the fact that myth, as Carpenter put it in his biography of the Inklings, “has a central place in the whole of language and literature” (41). However, Lewis once said that myths were “lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver” (Carpenter 43). That is, Lewis said that no matter how nice a story sounded, it was never more than a story. Tolkien disagreed. Tolkien believed that humankind was made in the image of God and therefore it derives its ultimate ideals (from the simplest emotion to the complexities of

moral thought) from Him. Our capabilities of story telling also flowed from the divine. Through language, he postulated, we take part in what he called 'mythopoeia' – the creation of myth and, in so doing, reflect its truth of God's initial creation through words (Gen. 1:9, "Fairy-Stories" 121). The events of that night, which Lewis credited as being influential in his conversation, are important for our purposes only in so much as they begin to clarify what Tolkien means by truth and fantasy and myth; it is on these subjects that this essay will speak.

Tolkien says in his essay "On Fairy-Stories," that "...in such 'fantasy', as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator" (122). What he was referring to was a process by which humans may take the God's creation and work with it in the same manner that God did during the genesis of time. In the same essay, he says that this is done with "a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image" (139). By participating in the "creative spirit," which Tolkien saw as coming from and being a part of the spirit of God, we are able to create something of our own – a thing pointing back to the ultimate origins of truth. Explaining Tolkien's thoughts, Carpenter writes, "Pagan myths are...never just 'lies': there is always something of the truth in them" (43). Story, then, is humankind's desperate and intuitive grasp at understanding our reality and our place in it. For Tolkien, however, the most real form of literary expression is that of fantasy ("On Fairy Stories," 139). It was fantasy that, above all other forms of art, held the quality of "arresting strangeness" (Tolkien "On Fairy Stories, 139). Fantasy juxtaposes the imaginary with the real and the truths of reality become clearer by contrast. Perhaps it is something of this sentiment wrapped in

the dialogue of *The Two Towers* that reads: “‘Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?’ ‘A man may do both,’ said Aragorn’” (Tolkien 43).

From a simple, traditional perspective, the idea that mythology acts as a story to explain the human condition may be taken as an obvious fact. But for Tolkien it is more than just that. He explains, with typical philologist fashion in “On Fairy-Stories,” that when talking about mythology some clarification of the term may be in order. When the word “myth” is used, he says, it may refer to the nature-myth, which personifies natural phenomenon, the heroic saga, which localized and humanized the latter with the semblance of history, and the fairy-story, which is the historically younger dwindling down of the earlier tales (123). The many elements of myth may be used, or not, by the person participating in mythopoeia. However, for Tolkien, only one type of myth was important – the heroic saga. Annoyed with the childish, dwindled “fairy tale” and bored with the allegorical nature story, Tolkien was undeniably most interested in and fascinated by the epic heroic legends. Throughout his life he read them – *Beowulf*, the *Kalevala*, etc. – and, becoming convinced of their worth, wished to write one for England. He wrote, once, in a letter, “I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands” (Tolkien *Letters* 144). And so, on one hand, Tolkien’s works encompass the author’s desire – by his own admission - to create a set of epic legends (set in a mythological context) for England. His collected stories are referred to, by those who have a need to do such a thing, as his *legendarium*; a collection of legends set in his fictional universe of Eä.

So, Tolkien's works are more than just stories. That is not to say they are stories about other, broader concepts, as fables are. For Tolkien, it does not lessen the impact of a story if it is categorically untrue – such as the case with an obviously invented narrative set in a land named Middle-earth. Indeed, in Tolkien's mind, this might make the story more true. *The Lord of the Rings* was “religious and Catholic” not because it was a Christian allegory. To the contrary, Tolkien wrote, “I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence.” Rather, *The Lord of the Rings* and the legendarium are religious because they participate in mythopoeia. It is a sub-creation by Tolkien that speaks to the deeper realities of our existence by fantastic means.

It is not just that the legendarium uses mythological archetypes. Indeed, it is much more than that. Tolkien wrote in a “mythological” framework because he believed it had the capacity to be more real than other genres. Mythology was a term he used with conjunction to its sense of the fairy tale and further extrapolated out into fantasy. “Fantasy,” Tolkien said, “starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness” (“On Fairy Stories” 139). This he clarifies with a brief discourse on imagination, the point of which is that we, as humans, can imagine those things which do not exist in our world. He goes on to say that, “That the images are of things not in the primary world (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue not a vice. Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) is most potent (“On Fairy Stories” 139). Much to this end he said, “I much prefer history, true or

feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author" (forward to 2nd edition book – cite later) Invention does not preclude the story from being true after a fashion. That is, Tolkien believed (and conveyed this belief beautifully within his texts) that his stories told of higher purposes, virtues, ethics, and metaphysics because of what they were and not because he, as an author, intended them to.

Perhaps it is best summed up in the words of Lewis, who with the other Inklings provided Tolkien the encouragement and inspiration needed to finish *The Lord of the Rings*. Lewis wrote in a letter to Tolkien: "The two things that come out clearly [in Tolkien's works] are the sense of reality in the background and the mythical value: the essence of myth being that it should have no taint of allegory to the maker and yet should suggest incipient allegories to the reader" (Carpenter 30).

This essay seeks to look at Tolkien's ideas of fantasy and how his universe differs from ours (both in a literal and literary sense). With the fantasy brought to the foreground, we can explicate how it functions in the text. Specifically, this essay looks at the function and use of magic within the legendarium, as it is one of the clearest points of divergence from the realistic to the fantastic. Moreover, although magic clearly distinguishes the universe of Eä from our own, magic is not clearly addressed within the text of *The Lord of the Rings*. Only by looking at the whole of the legendarium, not just *The Lord of the Rings*, are we able to gain a clear understanding of this textual phenomenon.

Interestingly enough, Tolkien borrows his own term ‘sub-creation’ when he writes about magic. Or, rather and more specifically, he uses the term when talking about “true” magic. This specification must exist because of Tolkien’s admitted inconsistent use of the word (Tolkien *Letters* 199). The text of *The Lord of the Rings* is written from a specific perspective – it is, within the legendarium, supposed to be written by hobbits – and so more knowing persons within the text show criticism of “the ‘mortal’ use of the word” (Tolkien *Letters* 198). Examining what magic is and how it works is a question one might easily ask about the legendarium. However, the answer may not come as readily as may be expected. Magic, in the texts, is often as elusive, frightening, and distant as it is within our real world.

Upon receiving cloaks from the Galadrim, Pippin wonders aloud, “Are these magic cloaks?” to which he received this answer: “I do not know what you mean by that...They are fair garments, and the web is good, for it was made of this land. They are elvish robes, certainly, if that’s what you mean” (*Fellowship* 437). Earlier, Galadriel makes the statement “For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem also to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy. But this, if you will, is the magic of Galadriel. Did you not say that you wished to see Elf-magic?” (*Fellowship* 427). The words of the Elves here offer a sense of depth about Middle-earth that is at once frustrating and yet fulfilling. They say that we, and the hobbit narrators, do not fully understand the workings of the mystics (and perhaps justifiably so, given the nature of mysticism). Galadriel seems to make a

distinction between her breed of magic and the magical effects used by Sauron, though she does not elaborate on them. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien never goes into any depth about the use of magic. However, we may extrapolate a working picture by looking at the legendarium as a whole.

Elvish magic may be delineated for purposes of discussion as “enchantment,” for it is this word that is primarily used by the author when speaking of the powers exercised by the Elves of the First Age. Conversely, “sorcery” is most often used when speaking of the magic use of Sauron and his servants. The Ring Wraiths, prior to their enslavement under the One Ring, were described as “kings and sorcerers.” Minas Morgul, one of the two towers, is literally translated from the Elvish as “Tower of Black Spirits,” although it is typically better translated “Tower of Sorcery” (Foster 336). Sorcery, then, deals with “black spirits.”

To this subject, Tolkien writes this in a draft of a correspondence: “I do not intend to involve myself in any debate whether ‘magic’ in any sense is real or really possible in the world. But I suppose that, for the purposes of the tale, some would say that there is a latent distinction such as once was called the distinction between *magia* and *goeteia*” (Tolkien *Letters* 199). He goes on to say that *magia* is primarily the magical form of Elves, whereas *goeteia* is used primarily by the Enemy (Tolkien *Letters* 199). Tolkien in this letter borrows two words with which we are no longer familiar to make a specific connotative point. Carpenter, citing the Oxford English Dictionary, links the latter “*goeteia*” with the summoning of evil spirits, i.e. necromancy (*Letters* 445). The

connotation we are given, then, is that magia, or enchantment, is a process by which the user's will is directly experienced on the world, reshaping it to his desires. Goeteia, or sorcery, consists of conjuring "phantoms and shadows" (literally, "black spirits") for a more illusionary form of magic. Although Galadriel makes the point that these two types of magic are separate and each individually suits the purposes of the "good" and "evil" forces within the War of the Ring, Tolkien points out that neither types of magic are exclusive to these moral forces (Tolkien *Letters* 199). Rather, and whether or not Galadriel realizes this or simply does not say, both the Elves and the Enemy use the other side's magical form when necessary. The difference in use for either is intent. For example, Elven minstrels "can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those who listen" (Tolkien, *The Return of the King* 382). This illusionary magic is based in the Elven desire for song and beauty; its purpose was artistic. The Enemy, on the other hand, would use the power for befuddling or bewitching Men (Tolkien *Letters* 199). The coercive nature of this use of power is primary when considering Tolkien's morality, which is discussed in depth below.

What does this all say about true magic? First, true magic is separate from any special knowledge about reality or any use of an artifact. In this same vein, true magic is only attainable to those with an inborn capacity for its use (Tolkien *Letters* 199). The forward to *The Fellowship of the Ring* tells us that hobbits never studied magic of any kind; the use of the One Ring, bewitched cufflinks, or the like by the small folk does not contradict this statement. Also, lore or cunning may seem magical (e.g. Theoden being exceptionally insightful, Aragorn having healing abilities, etc.) and, in a base and

“hobbitish’ way it may be considered as such, but is not truly so. Lore, in this vein, may indeed extend towards specific spells – command words, invocations of the Valar, prayers and the like. Consider these distinctions made by Gandalf. He says, while flustered outside of the gates of Moria, “...I will seek the opening words. I once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs, that was ever for such a purpose” (*Fellowship* 366). Here, Gandalf uses the term spell to denote passwords. They do not seem particularly ‘magical,’ in and of themselves. It is conceivable that a Hobbit might also memorize these passwords without violating anything in the text that disallows them from studying magic. However, not all words Gandalf speaks carry this innocuous quality – obviously, sometimes he says the “magic words.” Consider another passage from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, where Gandalf says:

I could think of nothing to do but try and put a shutting-spell on the door. I know many; but to do things of that kind rightly requires time, and even then the door may be broken by strength...The counter-spell was terrible. It nearly broke me. For an instant the door left my control and began to open! I had to speak a word of Command. (388)

Here, Gandalf says something similar to the passage before: he knows appropriate words for opening and closing doors. When that failed (when the Balrog knew the opposing word) Gandalf’s words suggest that he switched gears and left off spell words. The capitalization of “word of Command” gives it an added level of importance – a step up from the method before. Words of Command fall into the same family as Runes and Songs of Power that are spattered in the *Silmarillion*; they are acts of true magic.

True magic operates under the constraints of language (either spoken or sung or written) deliberately for Tolkien. In some more obvious senses, this occurs simply because it is thematically pleasing; wizards say magic words, Elves sing magic songs, etc. In an essay, Tolkien writes, "The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our world coeval...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" (Tolkien "On Fairy Stories" 122). Tolkien is explaining that magic words are such because of what they evoke in our psyche. They are "magic" in the sense that they conjure a sensation which is necessary to believe in them. This concept is employed directly whenever we are given the words of Command textually. Gandalf once "flared with a sudden white radiance like lightning, and his voice rolled like thunder" while saying "*Naur an edraith ammen! Naur dan i naurhoth!*" (Tolkien *Fellowship of the Ring* 311). When translated directly to English, the incantation reads: "[Let there be] fire for saving us! [Let there be] fire against the were-wolf horde!" The poetic nature of the incantation in the 'mystical' Elven language, in addition to its provocative meaning, makes it a perfect example of "good spell language." Also, we may certainly see examples of inventive magic words classically. In his book discussing the play element in culture, J. Huizinga speaks of "archaic man" using knowledge as "magical power." He goes on to say that "Archaic thought, brooding in rapture on the mysteries of Being, is hovering...over the border-line between sacred poetry, profoundest

wisdom, mysticism, and sheer verbal mystification” (107). He is speaking of how, in ancient cultures, the power of clever words (specifically in the form of riddles, which make an appearance in *The Hobbit*) held a sacred and mystical power. In this way, the construction of magic-words fits within our understanding of the mythic tale. It is following in the tradition of the Rig-veda, the Sphinx’s riddle, and the *Alvissmal* (Huizinga 109).

In other ways, however, Tolkien chose his words about words of Command very carefully. They were words that, literally, shaped the world. True magic was Tolkien’s way of incorporating his idea of sub-creation within his legendarium. Magic, particularly enchanting, is literally a reforming of the Creator’s works. The story of the “Ainulindalë,” told in *The Silmarillion*, describes how a heavenly host sings Eä into existence. Eä, in Quenya (one of the languages invented by Tolkien), is the imperative of “to be.” It is interesting to note that Tolkien named his universe a term that is congruent with the word “amen” which has a similar meaning. Creation itself, then, is personified in a magic word: a command from God ordering Creation to exist.

But true magic is not true creation. This distinction remains philosophically fuzzy in *The Lord of the Rings*, in so much as Tolkien does not go into any more detail with it as he does with any other metaphysical commentary. The text of the trilogy is immersed in a world of metaphysics that seem real because they are not explained. Gandalf need only make an offhanded comment about the limits of magic to suggest depth with to Middle-earth. On the peaks of Caradhras, Legolas suggests, “If Gandalf would go before

us with a bright flame, he might melt a path for you” to which Gandalf replies, “If Elves could fly over mountains, they might fetch the Sun to save us...But I must have something to work on. I cannot burn snow” (*Fellowship* 348). This suggests that Gandalf’s fire-magic cannot extend the boundaries of reality, in so much as that he cannot “burn” snow. Moreover, Gandalf might shape wood, grow it exceptionally fast, or set it aflame but cannot conjure it from nothing.

This limit on the creative process – the specification of shaping and not creating – limits the greater workers of magic even as it influences the lesser. *The Silmarillion* says:

...that all those of the Quendi (Elves) who came into the hands of Melkor, ere Utumno was broken, were put there in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves...and naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion in the Ainulindalë before the Beginning... (50)

Even the mightiest of the Ainur, Melkor (who is also called Morgoth), could not create life from nothing. This limit of his power, and his repeated attempts to overcome it, is linked to the limits of the sub-creative act outside of the context of magic. The idea of sub-creation as a gesture back towards the Creator would be contradictory philosophically to the idea of individual creation. Explaining this sense, Tolkien wrote in a letter, “...the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation. He will rebel against the laws of the Creator – especially against mortality. Both of these (alone or together) will lead to the desire for Power, for making the will more quickly effective, - and so to the Machine (or Magic)” (Tolkien *Letters* 145). This is not to say that the sub-creative act, itself, is subversive. Rather, sub-creation that rebels against the creator - acts

that gesture towards the sub-creator instead of God – are actions with the wrong intent. This imperfect intention is the key to the abuse of magic and, simultaneously, bad literature.

Tolkien makes it clear that creation is the purview of God alone. God, with a capital G, finds his way into the legendarium in the form of Ilúvatar (a Quenya word meaning ‘All-father’) (Foster 270). Ilúvatar resembles the Christian conception of God in almost all ways: he is a singular, omnipotent, omni-benevolent, omniscient being. However, as set out by *The Silmarillion*, Ilúvatar is surrounded by a pantheon of lesser deities resembling a pagan panoply. These beings, known as the Ainur are like the medieval Christian’s angelic hosts inasmuch as they have several factions and hierarchies. Tolkien considered the Valar as “angelic immortals...regents under God” (Rutledge 179). He clarified that Gandalf and the other Wizards (Istari) are “of the same order but [with] less power and majesty” (Rutledge 179). It is the Ainur who shape the creation of Ilúvatar during the *Ainulindalë* (literally, the Song of the Ainur). Through the magic of song, they participate in a creative act akin to a sculptor using God’s marble. This is in keeping with the idea that sub-creation reflects back on the larger (and truer) design of God, whether it is a magical or literary sub-creative act.

When Morgoth sang the *Ainulindalë*, he delighted in the beauty of the song and so desired to sing of his own design, instead of relying on the pattern of Ilúvatar. During the first two strains of the music, Morgoth sang his own version of the song which, by its very nature violated the tenants of sub-creation, and so conflicted with the song written

by Ilúvatar. The discord in the narrative is a literal illustration of this ideal. The third strain of the music, which was sung by Ilúvatar alone, created the sentient peoples (specifically Elves and Men). Because Morgoth had no part in it (nor any of the other Ainur), he did not fully understand them and was always jealous of them. This is why, in addition to the mockeries he created of Elves and Ents (twisting them into Orcs and trolls, respectively) he took pleasure in tricking the children of Ilúvatar towards his own purposes. However, his attempt to create his own life with Orcs, by subverting the Elves, was counted as “the vilest deed of Melkor, and the most hateful to Ilúvatar” (Tolkien *Silmarillion* 50) This may be seen as such because it so fundamentally violates the principles of sub-creation more so than any other attempt to subvert Ilúvatar’s design.

The reason this is so deals with the ethical system on which Middle-earth depends. One of the great themes within the legendarium is the bondage of will. Indeed, the bondage of will is presented implicitly as the greatest of all evils (Rutledge 141). Again and again through the text, the characters are presented with choices and tests against their will. Frodo’s will is continually tested by the Ring, until he finally submits. The Enemy, as the antagonistic forces are called within the books, repeatedly asserts itself over the free wills of individuals. This can be best illustrated (as with many things) by looking away from the trilogy. In the tale of Túrin Turambar, the dragon Glaurung asserts his will over Túrin’s. The text reads:

And while he was yet held by the eyes of the dragon in torment of mind, and could not stir, the Orcs drove away the herded captives and they passed nigh to Túrin and crossed over the bridge. Among them was Finduilas, and she cried out to Túrin as she went, but not until her cries and the wailing of the captives was

lost upon the northward road did Glaurung release Túrin, and he might not stop his ears against that voice that haunted him after. (Tolkien *The Silmarillion* 214)

Here, the exercise of one stronger, wicked will over the will to do right is perfectly illustrated. The power of domination is shown, by the pathetic appeals in the language, as a terrifying and wicked act.

When Morgoth created the Orcs, out of mockery of the Elves, he did it in such a way that he infused his evil will into their natures. This is demonstrated with Sauron's fall in the trilogy, which reads, "As when death smites the swollen brooding thing that inhabits their crawling hill and holds them all in sway, ants will wander witless and purposeless and then feebly die, so the creatures of Sauron, orc or troll or beast spell-enslaved, ran hither and thither mindless..." (Tolkien *Return of the King* 252). It follows that Orcs are the most hateful of Melkor's inventions, morally, because he has corrupted the capacity of free will out of sentient beings. By denying living souls the capacity of choice, which Orcs and other creatures of Melkor lack, the primary axioms of morality are violated.

This is an opposing foil to Dwarves. Like Orcs, Dwarves are a race created by one of the Ainur in a method outside of Ilúvatar's "intent." That is, they are not created during the creation-song; rather, they were a remolding of form based on the concepts of Ilúvatar. Because Aulë desired and loved the Free People, and because he was impatient for their arrival into the world, he crafted his own beings: the Dwarves. Because knowledge of the Free Peoples (Elves and Men) was hidden from the Valar – due to their non-involvement – Aulë's design for a living being was "skewed." Dwarves are, in

essence, Men or Elves “flawed” in design. And, although Aule created Dwarves out of love of Men or Elves (to him yet unseen), he could not overcome the limits of magic that inhibited Morgoth from making his own sentient beings. To this end, Tolkien explained,

Then Aulë took up a great hammer to smite the Dwarves; and he wept. But Ilúvatar had compassion upon Aulë and his desire, because of his humility; and the Dwarves shrank from the hammer and were afraid, and they bowed down their heads and begged for mercy. And the voice of Ilúvatar said to Aulë: ...Dost thou not see that these things have now a life of their own, and speak with their own voices? Else they would not have flinched from thy blow, nor from any command of thy will. (Tolkien *The Silmarillion* 43-44)

We see that Aulë could not create beings of their own will, merely constructs of his own.

Unlike Morgoth, Aulë wished for beings of their own will. Morgoth merely wished for creatures of sentience to carry out his own will, without having to direct them in the matter of golems.

The inherent difference between the two races, Orc and Dwarf, lies in the intent of their makers. We see here that there are parallels between the characters of Morgoth and Aulë. They were the only Ainur to shape other sentient races. Both had the wish to create life because they could see that autonomous life was desirable. However, whereas Morgoth desired worship and the pleasure of domination (thus subverting the act of sub-creating), Aulë desired the creative act and the beauty held in free-will. This is why Ilúvatar blessed Aulë's efforts and not Morgoth's. One was an act of true sub-creation and the other an act of ultimate evil.

Furthermore, there are other parallels between these two god-like beings, in so much as one becomes the true foil for the other. The dichotomy is not between Morgoth

and Manwë, as one would expect from the line “Manwë was the brother of Morgoth in the mind of Ilúvatar” (*Silmarillion* 21). That is not to deny basic similarities between these Manwë and the fallen Vala – they oppose each other on the field of battle, one leading the “side of good” while the other leads “the side of evil.” However, the true tension between Morgoth and Aulë becomes evident with a close reading of the text.

We have already shown how they both desired the ability to create life, which is denied them by the metaphysical nature of the story. It is important to note this desire for creation and craft, as it has implications in Middle-earth’s magical nature. First, consider two of *The Lord of the Ring*’s main antagonists: Saruman and Sauron. Both of these characters were originally servants of Aulë. *The Unfinished Tales* shows a jotted half story explaining the origins of the Wizards and references Saruman by the name Curumo, which later evolves to Curunír, as one of the Maia servants of Aulë (406). Sauron, in *The Silmarillion*, also fell under this auspice (32). The fact that two antagonists come from the courts of Aulë is not coincidence. Tolkien explains that Aulë had “lordship...over all the substances of which Arda (Earth) is made...He is a smith and a master of all crafts, and he delights in works of skill, however small, as much as the mighty building of old” (27). His status as the mythical smith-god does not seem out of the ordinary until one considers the essay from which *Morgoth’s Ring* draws its name. Tolkien writes that all of Arda is “Morgoth’s ring,” in the same way that Sauron divested the majority of his power into the One Ring. This would make both Morgoth and Aulë, essentially, gods of the

same domain. However, Aulë represents the saving aspects of materialism, the joy of creation, and the magic inherent in enduring things.

Gold, especially, seems to have the corrupting influence of Morgoth within it. This explains the lust for gold for its own sake that appears within the legendarium. Dragons and Dwarves, for example, both covet gold. The Dwarves lust for riches has again and again been their tragic flaw within the texts, as with the Dwarves of Moria when they woke the Balrog. Conversely, water seems to be completely clear of Morgoth's influence. This can be inferred not only from the essay of "Morgoth's Ring," but from the statement in *The Silmarillion* that "Melkor hated the Sea, for he could not subdue it" (30). This particular parallel also sets Ulmo against the character of Morgoth. In the same way that the "stuff" of Arda (stone, gem, mineral, etc.) carried with it impure connotations, running water is the opposite. Even the Ring Wraiths, the mightiest of Sauron's servants, would not cross water except in great need. This is because their corrupted natures are inimical to the "good" nature of water. The Biblical parallels between Aulë, Ulmo, and Manwë in a trinity set against Morgoth, the god of this world, could be discussed in length. However, as stated, this is not the purpose of this particular essay.

Rutledge, in her book *The Battle for Middle-earth*, points out how evil itself constrains the will, and in some way, magic can (and would) do the same. She writes, "...the condition of slavery is in and of itself pleasing to the evil Power, without regard to its utility...it illustrates how a slaveholder himself is in bondage, driven by the craving

for yet more power” (55). The ‘good’ forces are such because they avoid this use of domination. Take, for instance, the encounter between Frodo and Gandalf early in the story:

“You are wise and powerful. Will you not take the Ring?”

“No!” cried Gandalf, springing to his feet. “With that power I should have power too great and terrible. And over me the Ring would gain a power still greater and more deadly.” His eyes flashed and his face was lit as by a fire within. “Do not tempt me! For I do not wish to become like the Dark Lord himself. Yet the way of the Ring to my heart is by pity, pity for weakness and the desire of strength to do good. Do not tempt me!” (Tolkien *Fellowship* 87-88)

In this passage, Gandalf is given the chance to achieve power; to do good through superior strength. When he claims that he does not “wish to become like the Dark Lord,” he refers to the enslavement of others will to his desire. He might wish for others to act justly. However, he cannot force them to. Such an act would be inimical to the concept of justice, in itself.

When the process of forcing your will upon others begins, it becomes an end to itself. Other magic seems to have this effect as well, because the magician finds his will itself a desirable thing. This is, surely, what Tolkien meant when he said, “Magicians...have become chiefly concerned to use *magia* for their own power, would do so (do do so). The basic motive for *magia* – quite apart from any philosophic consideration of how it would work – is immediacy: speed, reduction of labour, and reduction also to a minimum (or vanishing point) of the gap between the idea or desire and the result or effect” (Tolkien *Letters* 199). When you use magic to execute your will expediently, the power of your action begins to become an end in and of itself. This may

be avoided with the use of magic with correct intent. As Tolkien explains in an essay, “The magic of Faerie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations...” (“On Fairy Stories” 116). Elves, for example, use their magic as a mode of art; they enrich their songs with illusions and their stories with shapes woven of smoke.

As he writes in his essay “On Fairy-Stories,” “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...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.” The parallel here lies in the fact that sub-creating through mythopoeia is already a bit like magic. Participating in the creative, story-telling process is akin to the creative, incanting process that brings fire to the peaks of Caradhras - perhaps they are exactly the same. The suggestive words used in true magic are shadows of the power of the enchantment. In the same way, the suggestive words used in story telling are shadows of their truth. By connecting these concepts, strewn across letters and texts and time, we see Tolkien in a new way. Here, Tolkien takes on the grey mantle of the wizard, weaving fairy-tales that carry the weight of Gospel truth. Fantasy, for Tolkien, provides the correct magic words to enter fully into the suspension of disbelief necessary for good literature. It is a double-parallel. Fantasy is such because it is full of the unreal and magical. The magical within the fantasy, as demonstrated, subtly reflects back the qualities of literature that make it desirable. In

Tolkien's stories, magic might be seen as literature itself, even as Tolkien imagined literature as magical.

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