Doctoral Dissertations   Graduate School

12-2007

The *Roots* of Middle-Earth: William Morris's Influence upon J. R. R. Tolkien

Kelvin Lee Massey
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Recommended Citation

Massey, Kelvin Lee, "The *Roots* of Middle-Earth: William Morris's Influence upon J. R. R. Tolkien. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2007.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/238

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kelvin Lee Massey entitled "The *Roots* of Middle-Earth: William Morris's Influence upon J. R. R. Tolkien." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

David F. Goslee, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas Heffernan, Michael Lofaro, Robert Bast

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kelvin Lee Massey entitled "The *Roots* of Middle-earth: William Morris's Influence upon J. R. R. Tolkien." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

_____
David F. Goslee, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas Heffernan

_____

Michael Lofaro

_____

Robert Bast

_____

                               Accepted for the Council:

                               _____
                               Carolyn R. Hodges, Vice Provost
                               and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

THE *ROOTS* OF MIDDLE-EARTH:
WILLIAM MORRIS'S INFLUENCE UPON J. R. R. TOLKIEN

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kelvin Lee Massey
December 2007

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents,
Charles Marion and Irene Cook Massey

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. David Goslee, Dr. Thomas Heffernan, and Dr. Michael Lofaro for all their years of support and encouragement. Without them this dissertation would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Robert Bast for serving on my committee.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of William Morris (1834-1896) upon J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973). It concentrates specifically upon the impact of Morris's romance, *The Roots of the Mountains,* upon Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. After surveying the scholarly literature pertaining to this topic, it proceeds to discuss their work within the context of the nineteenth-century revival of interest in the medieval period and in folkloric and mythological narratives. It then analyzes numerous parallels between the two works in characterization; plot motifs; archaic diction, syntax, and semantics; and topographical description and reanimation are then analyzed. These parallels demonstrate that Morris's work had a profound influence upon *The Lord of the Rings*. Significant differences that do occur between the two texts are evaluated within the context of the Romantic tradition and the divergent ways the two authors interpret the paradigm of the Fall. The study concludes that, while Tolkien's work surpasses Morris's in many respects, its achievements would not have been possible without the example of *The Roots of the Mountains* to build upon. It closes with possibilities for future directions of research pertaining to this topic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On the face of it, a study of literary influence such as this would almost certainly meet with the disapproval of J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Toward the end of his life he wrote:

> I fear you may be right that the search for the sources of *The Lord of the Rings* is going to occupy academics for a generation or two. I wish this need not be so. To my mind it is the particular use in a particular situation of any motive, whether invented, deliberately borrowed, or unconsciously remembered that is the most interesting thing to consider. (*Letters* 418)

Tolkien feared that searching for the sources of a work oftentimes can cause one to lose sight of its meaning and significance. He therefore thought that folkloristic studies of fairy tales frequently miss the mark. In his essay "On Fairy-Stories," he approvingly quotes George W. Dasent and then elaborates:

> 'We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled'. . . . By 'the soup' I mean the story as it is served up by its author or teller, and by 'the bones' its sources or material. (19-20)

Although here Tolkien is discussing fairy stories, the same sentiment could apply to his own writings, which are fairy stories of epic proportions.

To a reader seeking help with an academic analysis of his writings, Tolkien once replied in a letter with a proverbial quote from Gandalf: "He that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (*Letters* 424)[1]. His warning certainly resonates with truth. The violent image of an object being smashed serves as a warning that overanalyses of works are fraught with danger—the last century of *Formgeschichte* in biblical criticism possibly provides a relevant example. So the question remains, how can one justify a source study such as this in the face of such reasonable objections from an author?

In response, one may argue that Tolkien himself implies such studies are legitimate, as long as one is not hampered by "ignorance and forgetfulness of the nature of a story" ("On Fairy-Stories" 18). He also confesses to feeling "the fascination of the desire to unravel the intricately knotted and ramified history of the branches on the Tree of Tales" (19). A similar desire to unravel the history of one of the branches on Tolkien's own Tree of Tales has led this author to this study.

The influence of William Morris (1834-1896) upon Tolkien has long been noted, although no comprehensive survey heretofore has been undertaken. In many ways it is not surprising that Tolkien would have found Morris interesting, given the similarities in their interests as well as the fact that Tolkien attended the same college at Oxford, Exeter, as Morris had more than fifty years earlier. The differences between the two authors and the greater resonance of Tolkien's world, Middle-earth, for modern readers ultimately derive from and reflect their divergent life experiences, intellectual interests, and

---

[1]The original is found on p. 259 of *The Lord of the Rings*.

attitudes toward religion. Surprisingly, however, Tolkien's letters reveal an aversion toward mechanization, industrialism, and capitalism that runs at least as deep as Morris's. Both authors felt a need to express this antipathy by creating fictionalized settings that both suggest the shortcomings they perceived within their contemporary societies and point to the possibility of alternatives.

In creating an alternative vision in his romances, Morris turns to narratives from the past. He utilizes elements from mythology, folklore, and medieval literature to deepen the veracity of his fiction, which contains characters who use proverbs, ballads, and legends in much the same way as people have actually traditionally used them: as means of interpreting truth and meaning in their daily lives. In his romances at least the possibility of the supernatural is also realized, quite surprisingly for an author with Marxist sympathies. Tolkien, inspired by Morris's example, uses these techniques in his fiction, modeling them in some cases quite closely upon Morris. In particular, Tolkien's fiction contains numerous echoes of Morris's *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890) in form, characterizations, names, topography, literary motifs, and diction, but he often uses them in innovative ways, reinventing them in the process. He takes and transmogrifies elements from *Roots* that he finds relevant to his life experience and which reflect his Catholic faith and Christian worldview, even as he rejects those that seem irrelevant from his perspective. Some important elements that he uses include an implacable enemy that must be destroyed without pity, fighting female warriors, and noncoercive councils of deliberation. All these derive, either wholly or in part, from *Roots*, a fact which other scholars have failed to recognize. My study will focus upon this particular work and

examine why it influenced Tolkien, how echoes of it permeate the latter's fiction, most importantly in *The Lord of the Rings*, and how Tolkien ultimately differentiates himself from Morris.

MORRIS'S INFLUENCE

The fact that Tolkien was drawn to Morris, in retrospect, seems logical, given that during the middle and late portions of the Victorian era Morris was one of the most popular authors in Great Britain. Through his poetic works, prose romances, and saga translations, he attempted to popularize the literary tradition of the North. One observer has had this to say about him:

> [N]o other English poet has felt so keenly the power of Norse myth; none has done so much to restore its terrible beauty, its heroism, its earth-shaking humour, and its heights of tragic passion and pathos, to a place in our memories, and a home in our hearts. (Herford 1)

Morris's fascination with Icelandic literature began in earnest in 1868, when he met a native Icelander, Eiríkr Magnússon, who was living in England at the time. Morris began studying the Icelandic language, and his enthusiasm led to a collaboration between the two men that produced several translations of the sagas. The story that Morris became most attracted to was that of Sigurd and Brynhild, as told in the *Völsunga saga*. He and Magnússon published a translation of this saga in 1870.[2] Later, after two visits to Iceland

---

[2] Its complete title in volume 7 of *The Collected Works of William Morris* is *Völsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs, with Certain Songs from the Elder Edda.*

in 1871 and 1873, Morris began working on a poetic retelling of this story that he would

come to regard as the greatest literary achievement of his life. It was published in 1877 as

The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs.[3]

Tolkien's biographer Humphrey Carpenter notes that of all the stories Tolkien

read as a small child,

> [M]ost of all he found delight in the Fairy Books of Andrew Lang,
>
> especially the *Red Fairy Book*, for tucked away in its closing pages was
>
> the best story he had ever read. This was the tale of Sigurd who slew the
>
> dragon Fafnir: a strange and powerful tale set in the nameless North.
>
> Whenever he read it Ronald found it absorbing. (*J. R. R. Tolkien* 30)

Although Carpenter does not mention it, the preface to the *Red Fairy Book* reveals that

"the story of 'Sigurd' is condensed by the Editor from Mr. William Morris's prose

version of the 'Volsunga Saga.'" This was very likely Tolkien's first encounter with

Morris's name.

In 1900, at the age of eight, Tolkien began attending King Edward's School in

Birmingham. Sometime later, his form-master, George Brewerton, sparked an interest in

medieval literature and Old English. He lent Tolkien an Anglo-Saxon primer, which he

used to learn Old English quickly. He read *Beowulf*, first in a translation and then in the

original language (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 42). The translation quite possibly was that

of Morris and A. J. Wyatt (1895).[4] Tolkien then turned to a study of Old Norse, "reading

---

[3]This comprises volume 12 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

[4]Entitled *The Tale of Beowulf Sometime King of the Folk of the Weder Geats*, it is found in volume 10 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

line by line in the original words the story of Sigurd and the dragon Fafnir that had

fascinated him in Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book* when he was a small child" (Carpenter,

J. R. R. Tolkien 43).

Tolkien apparently had acquired quite an interest in the Icelandic sagas by his

senior year. On February 17 of that year, 1911, he read a paper upon the "Norse Sagas"

to the Literary Society at King Edward's. Tolkien's enthusiasm for the topic shows in the

report that was published in the *King Edward's School Chronicle* for March, 1911:

> One of the best (and indeed it is distinct from all the rest) is the Völsunga
>
> Saga–a strange and glorious tale. It tells of the oldest of treasure hunts: the
>
> quest of the red gold of Andvari, the dwarf. It tells of the brave Sigurd
>
> Fafnirsbane, who was cursed by the possession of this gold, who, in spite
>
> of his greatness, had no happiness from his love for Brynhild. The Saga
>
> tells of this and many another strange and thrilling thing. It shows us the
>
> highest epic genius struggling out of savagery into complete and
>
> conscious humanity. Though inferior to Homer in most respects, though as
>
> a whole the Northern epic has not the charm and delight of the Southern,
>
> yet in a certain bare veracity it excels it and also in the story of the
>
> Völsunga in the handling of the love interest. There is no scene in Homer
>
> like the final tragedy of Sigurd and Brynhild. The Völsunga Saga is but
>
> one of many: for instance, the story of Burnt Njal, the longest of them all
>
> and one of the very best; and "Howard the Halt," the best of the shorter
>
> ones. (*The Annotated Hobbit* 3)

Tolkien's evaluation of the *Völsunga saga*, as reported in the *Chronicle*, seems to echo

comments made in the translator's preface to Morris and Magnússon's 1870 translation:

> As to the literary quality of this work . . . we may well trust the reader of
>
> poetic insight to break through whatever entanglement of strange manners
>
> . . . may at first trouble him, and to meet the nature and beauty with which
>
> it is filled: we cannot doubt that such a reader will be intensely touched by
>
> finding, amidst all its wildness, such startling realism, such subtilty, such
>
> close sympathy with all the passions that may move himself to-day. . . .
>
> For this is the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race
>
> what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks. . . . (*Collected Works* 7: 285-86)

Tolkien's phrase "bare veracity" seems to echo Morris's "startling realism," "strange and

thrilling" seems to echo "strange manners," and "the love interest" resembles "sympathy

with all the passions." In addition, both the preface and Tolkien's youthful paper have a

comparison to Homer. These parallels strongly suggest that Tolkien consulted Morris's

translation before or during his preparation for this paper, and his mention of *Howard the

Halt*, the title of Morris and Magnússon's translation of the *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*,

suggests Tolkien was familiar with that translation as well.[5]

King Edward's School had an indirect connection with Morris through the fact

that his friend Edward Burne-Jones had attended the school. Indeed, Tolkien would

compare the club of his friends at the school, the TCBS (Tea Club and Barrovian

Society), "to the Pre-Raphaelites, probably in response to the Brotherhood's

---

[5]*The Story of Howard the Halt,* published in volume one of *The Saga Library* (1891).

preoccupation with restoring medieval values in art" (Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* 14).

In October of 1911 Tolkien entered Oxford, where he had been awarded a scholarship. Garth suggests that

> [a]n antecedent may be observed in another schoolboy who had arrived at Exeter College from King Edward's School, Birmingham, six decades earlier, and in the friend he made here. Edward Burne-Jones had matriculated alongside William Morris in 1852 and vowed with him to forge an artistic brotherhood for a "crusade and Holy Warfare against the age, 'the heartless coldness of the times.'" . . . Tolkien once compared his informal King Edward's School club, the T.C.B.S., to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood which Burne-Jones joined; and when he arrived at Exeter he was probably already interested in the precedent set by him and Morris. (Garth, "Tolkien, Exeter College and the Great War")

The shadow of Morris loomed large at Oxford. In discussing the influence of Morris upon C. S. Lewis, Robert Boenig writes:

> For years the dons' houses in north Oxford sported Morris-designed wallpapers and textiles, and their furniture was often purchased from Morris and Company. . . .[6] Morris's decorations for the Oxford Union . . .

---

[6]For this information, Boenig cites Fiona MacCarthy's recent biography of Morris. MacCarthy writes: "North Oxford of the 1880s was all Morris. Morris's *Daily Telegraph* obituary recorded: 'when married tutors dawned upon the academic world, all their wives religiously clothed their walls in Norham-gardens and Bradmore Road with Morrisian designs of clustering pomegranates'" (413).

could still be seen in Lewis's Oxford (as it can yet today).[7] The famous

tapestry, *The Adoration of the Magi*, designed by Burne-Jones, Morris,

and J. H. Dearle, still hangs in the chapel of Exeter College,

Oxford–Lewis's friend Tolkien's college. Christ Church Cathedral,

Oxford is graced by a number of windows produced by Morris and

Company after cartoons by Burne-Jones. (75)

Tolkien would have certainly felt this lingering presence as well.

His early years at Oxford coincided with what John Garth calls a "changeful,

dark, and reflective period" in his life as he found himself upon "the threshold of

adulthood" (*Tolkien and the Great War* 29). Sometime during this period Tolkien made a

drawing entitled *End of the World* (Hammond and Scull, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 38-40), a title

that bears a tantalizing resemblance to that of Morris's romance *The Well at the World's

End*.

Tolkien unenthusiastically pursued his classical studies at Oxford. His

performance on the Honour Moderations (the "Greats") examinations in the Classics left

him disappointed, but he did exceedingly well on the paper he wrote for Comparative

Philology. The head of Exeter College therefore suggested that he switch to the English

School, which he did during the summer of 1913. This allowed him to study philology in

association with Old and Middle English and Old Norse language and literature, a field

of studies he found much more interesting than the Classics (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*

70-72). That summer,

---

[7]And by extension, Tolkien's Oxford as well.

[g]iving a paper on the Norse sagas to Exeter College's Essay Club, he

characteristically thought himself into the part and adopted what a fellow

undergraduate described as 'a somewhat unconventional turn of phrase,

suiting admirably with his subject'. (We may guess that he used a pseudo-

medieval idiom, as William Morris had done in his translations from

Icelandic, and as Tolkien would do in many of his own writings.) (Garth,

Tolkien and the Great War 34 and 321n).

This "somewhat unconventional turn of phrase" would carry over into another type of

writing as well. Garth observes that "William Morris's use of verse in his pseudo-

medieval romances was also to leave its mark on Tolkien's own early poetry" (*Tolkien*

and the Great War 14). A poem, "From the many willow'd margin of the immemorial

Thames," published in December of that year (1913) in the *Stapledon Magazine*,

contained "a long line probably inspired by William Morris" (*Tolkien and the Great War*

5).

In 1914, at the age of 22, Tolkien was awarded the Skeat Prize for English by

Exeter College. Tolkien used "the five pounds of prize money" to buy three of Morris's

works: *The House of the Wolfings*, *The Life and Death of Jason*, and Morris's translation

of the *Völsunga saga.* According to Carpenter, Tolkien probably had become interested

in Morris because the latter had himself attended Exeter College, but more importantly

because "Morris's view of literature coincided with his own." In *The House of the*

Wolfings, "Morris had tried to recreate the excitement he himself had found in the pages

of early English and Icelandic narratives," an excitement Tolkien apparently had found

lacking in his previous encounters with "post-Chaucerian writers" (*J. R. R. Tolkien* 77).

Carpenter also observes that

> Many elements in the story seem to have impressed Tolkien. Its style is
> highly idiosyncratic, heavily laden with archaisms and poetic inversions in
> an attempt to recreate the aura of ancient legend. Clearly Tolkien took
> note of this, and it would seem that he also appreciated another facet of the
> writing: Morris's aptitude, despite the vagueness of time and place in
> which the story is set, for describing with great precision the details of his
> imagined landscape. Tolkien himself was to follow Morris's example in
> later years. (*J. R. R. Tolkien* 78)

In 1912 or 1913 he had begun working on the "Story of Kullervo," a short story

based upon the *Kalevala* (*Letters* 214-15). Although it was never finished, he described it

in 1914 as being "somewhat on the lines of Morris's romances with chunks of poetry in

between" (*Letters* 7). Carpenter characterizes the story thus: "though it was little more

than a pastiche of Morris it was his first essay in the writing of a legend in verse and

prose. He left it unfinished" (*J. R. R. Tolkien* 81). However, as Carpenter points out, it

"proved to be the germ of the story of Túrin Turambar in *The Silmarillion*" (*Letters*

434n1.7).

In *Tolkien and the Great War*, John Garth notes that a friend presented Tolkien

with a volume of *The Earthly Paradise* when he was in France during the Grear War

(185). Paul Fussell mentions the popularity of Morris's works among English soldiers

during that war and observes that "the Great War took place in what was, compared with

ours, a static world, where the values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable" (21). He also comments that

> The experiences of a man going up the line to his destiny cannot help seeming to him like those of a hero of medieval romance if his imagination has been steeped in actual literary romances or their equivalent. For most who fought in the Great War, one highly popular equivalent was Victorian pseudo-medieval romance, like the versified redactions of Mallory by Tennyson and the prose romances of William Morris. Morris's most popular romance was *The Well at the World's End*, published in 1896. There was hardly a literate man who fought between 1914 and 1918 who hadn't read it and been powerfully excited by it in his youth. . . . [F]or a generation to whom terms like *heroism* and *decency* and *nobility* conveyed meanings that were entirely secure, it was a heady read and an unforgettable source of images.

Fussell also remarks that readers of the time were so familiar with Morris's language that newspaper captions concerning the war resembled chapter titles in *The Well at the World's End*, and that a young C. S. Lewis first read the chapter titles when he discovered this work before buying a copy the next day (135-36). One can only guess at how this popular attention to the romance affected Tolkien at the time. Although he does not mention reading this work in any of his published letters, observers have found convincing evidence that he did read and was strongly influenced by it.

In 1917, after his return from France, Tolkien began working on stories from his

created mythology that were posthumously published as *The Silmarillion*. In explaining

the origin of the framework of this "mythological cycle," Carpenter argues that

"[c]ertainly the device that linked the stories in the first draft of the book (it was later

abandoned) owes something to William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, for, as in that

story, a sea-voyager arrives at an unknown land where he is to hear a succession of tales"

(*J. R. R. Tolkien* 98). Carpenter furthermore observes that the first tale of this cycle that

Tolkien wrote, "The Fall of Gondolin," was done in a style that "suggests that Tolkien

was influenced by William Morris" (*J. R. R. Tolkien* 100). Tolkien read this story to the

Exeter College Essay Club on March 10, 1920.[8] The club's minute book records that

> [a]s a discovery of a new mythological background Mr Tolkien's matter
>
> was exceedingly illuminating and marked him as a staunch follower of
>
> tradition, a treatment indeed in the manner of such typical romantics as
>
> William Morris, George Macdonald [sic], de la Motte Fouqué etc. . . .
>
> (*Letters* 445n163.5)

It is noteworthy that a resemblance between Tolkien's and Morris's writing is mentioned,

even though the latter is not singled out from the other "romantics."

Tolkien became a professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in 1925. The following

year he met an Oxford tutor, C. S. Lewis, who would become a close friend. Lewis,

Tolkien, Charles Williams and several friends met regularly during the 1930s and 40s

and read to each other from their works in progress in a group known as the Inklings.

---

[8]At this time Tolkien was not yet a professor but was working at his first academic job, being an assistant lexicographer on the staff of the *New English Dictionary* (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 106).

Humphrey Carpenter in *The Inklings* (1978), a study of this famous literary circle, makes

a few fleeting comments about Morris. Carpenter writes, "Like Lewis, he [Tolkien] fell

under the spell of William Morris" (29). When Tolkien began reading parts of *The*

Silmarillion to Lewis, the latter "was delighted, for Tolkien's poems and prose tales

reminded him in many ways of the romantic writings of Malory and William Morris"

(31-32). Carpenter also lists Morris along with several other authors as being one of those

who "made their mark" on Tolkien (157-58).

Much more evidence for Morris's influence, both direct and indirect, can be

found in the writings of Lewis, who mentions Morris frequently in his surviving letters.

Reading Morris seems to have had a profound effect upon Lewis in his youth. In an entry

to his diary written in 1926, the year he became friends with Tolkien, he recounts

spending

> the afternoon and evening . . . beginning to re-read *The Well at the*
>
> *World's End*. I was anxious to see whether the old spell still worked. It
>
> does–rather too well. This going back to books read at that age is
>
> humiliating: one keeps on tracing what are now quite big things in one's
>
> mental outfit to curiously small sources. I wondered how much even of
>
> my feeling for external nature comes out of the brief, convincing little
>
> descriptions of mountains and woods in this book. (*All My Road before*
>
> *Me* 421)

Lewis thus confesses to being influenced by Morris to an almost astonishing degree.

Many years later, in 1944, he would admit in a letter to Charles A. Brady that the latter's

identification of Morris's influence upon his own writing was correct (*Collected Letters* 2: 629-30).

Tolkien was instrumental in Lewis's conversion to Christianity in September of 1931. Somewhat surprisingly, his conversion coincided with his renewed interest in Morris, as he shortly before (June 1930) had purchased a set of Morris's *Collected Works* (*Collected Letters* 1: 910). The profound effect this had upon him can be seen by his remark in an August 13, 1930 letter to Arthur Greeves that "what with Morris & other things I really seem to have had youth given back to me lately" (*Collected Letters* 1: 921). Jonathan Himes has observed that "Morris's influence in his life is so pervasive that Lewis later [in *Surprised by Joy*] describes his spiritual rejuvenation in terms of *The Well at the World's End* and its Thirsty Desert of the Dry Tree. . ." (307). Ironically, Lewis seems to have found his spiritual renewal bolstered by reading Morris, who himself had rejected Christianity.

Lewis mentions in a December 6, 1931 letter to Greeves that he has been reading *A Dream of John Ball* and *The Wood beyond the World* (*Collected Letters* 2:24). Upon finishing the latter, he has this to say about his regard for Morris:

> [T]his leaves me no more Wm Morris prose romances to read (except *Child Christopher* wh. is an adaptation of a mediaeval poem already known to me and therefore hardly counts). I wish he had written a hundred of them! I should like to have the knowledge of a new romance always waiting for me the next time I am sick or sorry and want a new treat. (*Collected Letters* 2: 40)

And in a letter to Greeves dated March 25, 1933, C. S. Lewis writes that

> I was talking . . . to Tolkien who, you know, grew up on Morris and
>
> Macdonald [sic] and shares my taste in literature to a fault. We remarked
>
> how odd it was that the word *romance* should be used to cover things so
>
> different as Morris on the one hand and Dumas or Rafael Sabatini on the
>
> other–things not only different but so different that it is hard to imagine
>
> the same person liking both. We agreed that for what *we* meant by
>
> romance there must be at least the hint of another world–one must 'hear
>
> the horns of elfland'. (*Collected Letters* 2: 303)

In fact, Lewis's renewed interest in the "pagan" Morris is not surprising, as his later essay "William Morris" reveals: by facing the inevitability of death for mankind and emphasizing the tension within humans' longing for immortality, Morris "thus becomes one of the greatest Pagan witnesses–a prophet as unconscious, and therefore as far beyond suspicion, as Balaam's ass" ("William Morris" 230). Because of the closeness of Lewis to Tolkien during this time period, as well as the literary taste shared "to a fault," one may reasonably surmise that Tolkien had a similar view of Morris as well. The importance of this view to Tolkien is certainly evidenced later in a letter of his written in 1957, where he tells a correspondent that *The Lord of the Rings* "is not really about Power and Dominion: that only sets the wheels going; it is about Death and the desire for deathlessness" (*Letters* 262).

Lewis's interest seemed to reach another peak in 1937, which was the year that saw first publication of *The Hobbit*. Discussing Morris in a letter to Owen Barfield dated

September 2, 1937, he remarks that

> [D]iscomfort is the main theme of all his best work . . . . In fact he is the
> final statement of *good* Paganism: a faithful account of what things are
> and always must be to the *natural* man . . . . But the Earthly Paradise after
> that first story is inferior work. Try Jason, House of the Wolfings, Roots
> of the Mts, Well at the World's End. (*Collected Letters* 2: 217-18)

In November of that year Lewis read "William Morris" to the Martlet Society at
Oxford (*Literary Essays* xix). In this essay Lewis, writing of Morris's "persistent
admirers," mentions

> They are few . . . and they read humbly for the sake of pleasure, a pleasure
> so inexhaustible that after twenty or fifty years of reading they find it
> worked so deeply into all their emotions as to defy analysis. I knew one
> who could come no nearer to an explanation of Morris's charm than to
> repeat 'It's the Northernness—the Northernness. . . .' (219)

It is tempting to identify this unnamed person with Tolkien, who was attracted to
"Northernness." This temptation is strengthened by the fact that, in the same letter that
Lewis congratulates Tolkien upon his completion of *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis refers
to "all your Northernness" (*Collected Letters* 2: 991). In his essay "On Fairy-Stories"
Tolkien reminisces that as a child his favorite story locale was "the nameless North of
Sigurd of the Volsungs" (135). And in "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," he
writes that *Beowulf* was "made in this land [England], and moves in our northern world
beneath our northern sky" (33-34).

Warren ("Warnie") Lewis, C. S.'s brother, was often present at meetings of the

Inklings. He has this to say in a July 18, 1947 entry to his diary:

> After supper I began [Morris's] the *Glittering Plain*; it is really unfair to
>
> both to compare Tollers [Tolkien] and Morris, as the Inklings so often do.
>
> The resemblance is quite superficial. Morris has his feet much more firmly
>
> planted on the earth than Tollers . . . . On the other hand there are whole
>
> chapters of the new Hobbit [*The Lord of the Rings*] in which Morris is
>
> beaten on his own ground–especially the journeys: and indeed the whole
>
> concept of that world is far beyond Morris's powers. (Warren Hamilton
>
> Lewis 206)

C. S. Lewis echoes Warnie's opinion in an October 27, 1949 letter to Tolkien,

where he praises him for the artistic success he has achieved with *The Lord of the Rings*.

He writes, "all the long years you have spent on it are justified. Morris and Eddison, in so

far as they are comparable, are now mere 'precursors' (*Collected Letters* 2: 990-91).

Lewis also would repeat this theme when he later reviewed *The Fellowship of the Ring* in

a 1954 review entitled "The Gods Return to Earth." There he remarks that one of

"Professor Tolkien's greatest achievements" in that volume is its "diuturnity" and finds

this lacking in works such as Morris's *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, where the reader

senses that the invented world was not

> there at all before the curtain rose. But in the Tolkinian [sic] world you
>
> can hardly put your foot down anywhere from Esgaroth to Forlindon or
>
> between Ered Mithrin and Khand, without stirring the dust of history. Our

own world, except at certain rare moments, hardly seems so heavy with its

past. (1083)

In the meantime, besides his interaction with the Inklings, Tolkien had found

himself engaged with the ideas of Morris in several other ways while at Oxford.

According to Hammond and Scull's *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*, Tolkien

and C. L. Wrenn examined a student, A. M. Morton of St Hugh's College, on her B.Litt.

Thesis, *William Morris's Treatment of His Icelandic Sources*, on September 17, 1935 (1:

178). Years later, on June 20, 1952, at an English Faculty Board Meeting, it was recorded

that the Applications Committee had "appointed Tolkien supervisor of the B.Litt. Thesis

of J. C. Haworth of St Hilda's College, *The Icelandic Episode in the Life and Work of*

William Morris" (1: 385). Hammond and Scull also note that one of Tolkien's scheduled

lectures for the Michaelmas Full Term in 1941 was "William Morris: *The Story of Sigurd*

and the Fall of the Nibelungs on Tuesdays at 11.00 a.m." (1: 249).

However, Tolkien's changing attitude toward Morris reveals itself in his scholarly

work on *Beowulf*. *Beowulf and the Critics* is a recently published work by Tolkien that

was probably written during the 1933-35 period, according to its editor Michael D. C.

Drout (xix). Tolkien possibly gave this as a series of lectures at Oxford or intended to do

so (4). In this work Tolkien refers to Morris several times. The first occurs in the A

version (which is shorter and earlier than the B draft), where Tolkien characterizes

Archibald Strong's 1925 translation as

on the whole the best modern English translation of <u>Beowulf</u> that I know,

though it is rather a transformation, since. . . I remain of opinion that he

selected the metré (that of Morris' <u>Sigurd</u>) which is the most foreign in

mood and style to the original of almost all the available metrés. (34n3)

This mention is significant not only because it reveals that Tolkien was familiar enough

with *Sigurd the Volsung* to recognize and discuss its metrical pattern, but also because of

the negative nature of his remark. This negativity is intensified in the B version, where

Tolkien changes his footnote to add that the meter of *Sigurd* is "not in itself a good

meter" (82n2).[9]

    Later, in another mention, Tolkien reflects that

> <u>Beowulf</u> . . . in all its modern wanderings has seldom met the poets. Its
>
> meeting with William Morris was not under the happiest auspices; but in
>
> any case Morris was not a learned or scholarly poet. He was too fond of
>
> employing a living crib or interpreter. In his dealings with <u>Beowulf</u> he was
>
> perhaps not so fortunate in his crib as in his (still somewhat casual)
>
> dealing with Icelandic through Magnússon. But Morris had a wild and
>
> willful way even with his cribs, and these cannot take the blame of his
>
> transgressions. The 'Morris and Wyatt' translation of <u>Beowulf</u> remains an
>
> oddity—quite outside the main line of development [of *Beowulf* criticism].
>
> (97)

Tolkien's remarks here are significant because they evince a keen interest in Morris's

technique of translation. His intensely negative tone is surprising, however, and his

---

[9]This echoes a comment by C. S. Lewis in *Surprised by Joy*, who was somewhat
disappointed with *Sigurd the Volsung* because "the metre does not satisfy my ear" (qtd. in Boenig
62).

negative remarks perhaps reveal that he was becoming resentful of constantly being

compared to Morris, as his friends were doing. Tolkien's B manuscript, however,

underwent significant revision as it eventually became transformed into his now-famous

essay, "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" (first read in 1936), which does not

mention Morris by name.

Nevertheless, he does mention him in the preface to a new edition of the John R.

Clark Hall translation of *Beowulf* that was published in 1940. After warning that

"colloquialism and false modernity" are not appropriate for a "literary and traditional

work" such as *Beowulf*, Tolkien turns his criticism to those who are guilty of "the

opposite fault" and whose use of archaisms require a gloss.

> [A] translation of *Beowulf* [is not] a fitting occasion for the exhumation of
>
> dead words from Saxon or Norse graves. Antiquarian sentiment and
>
> philological knowingness are wholly out of place. To render *leode*
>
> 'freemen, people' by *leeds* (favoured by William Morris) fails both to
>
> translate the Old English and to recall *leeds* to life. The words used by the
>
> Old English poets . . . were emphatically those which had survived, not
>
> those which might have survived, or in antiquarian sentiment ought to
>
> have survived ("On Translating Beowulf" 52-54).

This remark is surprising and puzzling for several reasons. It implies that Tolkien

is familiar with Morris and A. J. Wyatt's 1895 translation of *Beowulf* but that he

criticizes it for using archaic language in an artificial sense to try to revive "dead words."

However, this author's examination of the translation (in volume 10 of Morris's

Collected Works) shows that in none of the 55 cases where *leode*, including all its

inflected forms, appears in the *Beowulf* manuscript (*Beowulf: An Edition* 275) was it

translated as *leeds*. Instead, the word almost always is rendered as either *people* or *folk*.

And although Morris and Wyatt's edition does have a short glossary of 78 entries, *leeds*

is not listed. It seems likely that Tolkien is confusing Morris's translation with that of

someone else, a mistake quite uncharacteristic of him. His error suggests that by 1940

Tolkien had come to the conclusion that Morris's diction was too archaic, but had

actually not looked at Morris's edition for some time before he prepared this preface.[10]

Nonetheless, Morris's continuing influence was still present during the time when

Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, as he admits in a 1960 letter that some of its

landscapes "owe more [than Tolkien's experiences in the Great War] to William Morris

and his Huns and Romans, as in *The House of the Wolfings* or *The Roots of the*

Mountains" (*Letters* 303). This remark not only reveals his consciousness of the affinity

between Morris's geography and that of Middle-earth, but also shows that Morris's

topographical descriptions made an impression upon him, as an author at least, even

greater than landscapes of his own experience.

Although Tolkien only mentions Morris in two of his published letters, in several

others he uses the phrase "earthly paradise," more than likely as an allusion to Morris's

work of the same name. For instance, in a 1954 letter in which Tolkien gives a

---

[10]The translation that uses *Leeds* is that of John Earle (1892), who had been the Rawlinsonian Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford. Chauncey Brewster Tinker in his 1903 bibliography of *Beowulf* translations criticizes Earle for using archaic language and specifically mentions *Leeds* (94-95). Tinker also criticizes Morris's translation for being "unreadable" and "an avalanche of archaisms" (108). Tolkien probably looked at Tinker's work as he was preparing his preface and his memory conflated the two translators.

correspondent some background information on the downfall of Númenor, he explains

that "before the Downfall there lay beyond the sea and the west-shores of Middle-earth

an *earthly* Elvish paradise Eressëa" (*Letters* 198). Again, in a letter probably written in

1956 in regard to his mythology, Tolkien explains that "there was at first an actual

Earthly Paradise [note the capital letters], home and realm of the Valar, as a physical part

of the earth" (*Letters* 237). In 1963 he discusses why Bilbo crosses over the sea at the end

of *The Lord of the Rings*: "His companionship was really necessary for Frodo's sake–it is

difficult to imagine a hobbit . . . being really happy even in an earthly paradise without a

companion of his own kind. . ." (*Letters* 328). And in 1972, concerning the fate of the

Ents, he tells a correspondent that "it is plain there would be for Ents no re-union in

'history'–but Ents and their wives being rational creatures would find some 'earthly

paradise'[note the apostrophes] until the end of this world. . ." (*Letters* 419). The concept

of an earthly paradise has important ramifications for understanding the similarities and

differences between Morris's and Tolkien's work and is discussed further in chapter five.

　　More recent evidence of Tolkien's fascination with Morris comes from Richard

Mathews, who mentions that

> Christopher Tolkien recently recalled that his father owned nearly all of
>
> Morris's works and said that he has a distant but clear recollection of
>
> having been read *The House of the Wolfings* by his father. In a subsequent
>
> letter, he listed 11 titles of Morris's books of poems, translations, and
>
> fantasies that his father bequeathed to him, including *The House of the*
>
> *Wolfings*, *The Roots of the Mountains*, and *The Sundering Flood*, plus J.

W. Mackail's two-volume *Life of William Morris* and A. Clutton-Brock's

William Morris: His Work and Influence. Tolkien had begun collecting

and reading Morris–even reading Morris aloud to his son–at a time when

his popularity and critical reputation were at an all-time low and his work

had been eclipsed by World War I and the onward rush of technology and

current events. (*Fantasy* 87)

Referring to this citation by Mathews, Hammond and Scull add that

[o]ther works known to be in Tolkien's library by the mid-1920s are *The*

Earthly Paradise, *The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems*, *The Story*

of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Nibelungs, Morris's translation

of *Beowulf* . . . , his translation with Eiríkr Magnússon of *Grettis Saga*,

and *Three Northern Love Stories and Other Tales*. . . (*The J. R. R. Tolkien*

Companion and Guide 2: 600-1).

It seems certain, therefore, that Tolkien's fascination with Morris was genuine, ongoing,

and not subject to fashion. It furthermore manifested itself in a desire to read Morris's

works to his own son and familiarize himself with his life.

In summary, Tolkien's own writings clearly reveal that he was familar with three

works by Morris: *The House of the Wolfings*, *The Roots of the Mountains*, and *Sigurd the*

Volsung. Biographical evidence reveals that he was also familiar with *The Life and Death*

of Jason, *The Earthly Paradise*, and his translation of the *Völsunga saga.* Additional

evidence from Christopher Tolkien indicates his father was familiar with other works by

Morris, including *The Sundering Flood*. And Hammond and Scull mention, in addition to

some of these, four other titles in Tolkien's library: *The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems*, and Morris's co-translations of *Beowulf*, *Grettis Saga*, and the short pieces published as *Three Northern Love Stories and Other Tales* (2: 600-1). Thus, evidence exists that he was familiar with at least eleven specific works by Morris.[11]

SCHOLARLY INTEREST IN MORRIS'S INFLUENCE

Resemblances between the work of the two men have long been commented upon. When *The Hobbit* first appeared (in 1937 in England and 1938 in the United States), a few reviewers noted parallels between that work and Morris's. Perhaps the most notable was Anne C. Eaton, who described it in *The New York Times Book Review*[12] as

> one of the most freshly original and delightfully imaginative books for
>
> children that have appeared in many a long day. . . . [There are] forests
>
> that suggest those of William Morris's prose romances. Like Morris's
>
> countries, Wilderland is Faerie, yet it has an earthly quality, the scent of
>
> trees, drenching rains and the smell of woodfires. . . . (qtd. in *The*
>
> *Annotated Hobbit* 20)

That same year, in the *Horn Book*, she called the setting of *The Hobbit* "one of those magical countries which, like the lands of William Morris's prose romances, are

---

[11]As Hammond and Scull also observe (2: 818), one of the characters in *The Notion Club Papers*, a story Tolkien began and abandoned during the 1940s, refers to *News from Nowhere* (*Sauron Defeated* 172). This brief mention of the title does not clearly indicate how familiar Tolkien was with that work.

[12]A revised version appears in her 1952 book *Reading with Children* (19-22).

unmistakably a part of England and of Faeryland at the same time" ("New Books" 96).[13]

And two years later, praising Morris's romances, she wrote that they

> supply men and women to walk these highways [of imagination] with joy
>
> and vigor and laughter, and a love for field, forest, and river. Not many
>
> boys and girls, probably, will discover "The Well at the World's End,"
>
> "The Sundering Flood" or "The Wood Beyond the World," though some
>
> few may do so and be infinitely delighted by a poet's picture of a
>
> medieval world. Younger readers will find something of the same
>
> combination of English countryside and magic in J. R. R. Tolkien's "The
>
> Hobbit," a book which young and old read with delight. ("The Classic
>
> Tales of Childhood" 20)

Her comments in this article are noteworthy because she not only suggests a link

between Morris's and Tolkien's created landscapes but also declares that *The Hobbit* has

become a classic work of literature (only three years after its publication) by classifying it

with works by Morris as well as *Don Quixote*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Gulliver's Travels*,

and *Robinson Crusoe* (1). Another 1938 reviewer, Anne Carroll Moore, also places *The*

Hobbit within the tradition of classic literature by noting that the book "is firmly rooted

in *Beowulf* and authentic Saxon lore, and while appealing to younger children has

something in common . . . with certain tales by William Morris" (92).[14]

As the popularity of *The Lord of the Rings* mushroomed during the 1960s,

---

[13]Also qtd. in *The Annotated Hobbit* 20.

[14]Also qtd. in *The Annotated Hobbit* 21.

observers once again began drawing parallels between Tolkien and Morris. One of the first was science fiction and fantasy author Lin Carter, who is also notable for being the consulting editor for Ballantine Books' Adult Fantasy Series, which printed paperback editions of several of Morris's romances during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Carter's own *Tolkien: A Look Behind* The Lord of the Rings (1969), while containing some mistakes that have caused it to be maligned by certain critics, is a groundbreaking study of Tolkien and his place in literary tradition. Carter quite favorably mentions Morris, his originality and importance, recognizing that "he had invented *the heroic fantasy novel*" and that "[h]e was not in the tradition of English prose fiction at all, but founded a tradition of his own" (137). Of Morris's romances he writes, "Epic in scope and concept, written with richness and dignity, they are tales of heroic adventure and mighty deeds which bear a distinct resemblance to Tolkien's trilogy" (139).

Carter was also one of the first, if not *the* first, commentators to point out the fact that Mirkwood, a forest important in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, also appears in Morris's *The House of the Wolfings* (Carter also correctly identifies its original source as the *Elder Edda*) and that Gandalf's name resembles that of Gandolf, a character in *The Well at the World's End* (169-70). More importantly, Carter places Tolkien's work within "the tradition of the epic, heroic fantasy romance–the precise tradition to which *The Lord of the Rings* belongs in every way" (151). Likewise including Lord Dunsany and Eric Rücker Eddison, the latter also influenced by Morris, Carter refers to this tradition as the "Morris-Dunsany-Eddison-Tolkien tradition" (185, 201). Carter, however, does not proceed to discuss the question of influence more specifically.

Since the appearance of Carter's work, a substantial amount of material by and about Tolkien has been published that demonstrates the strong connections between the two authors. Perhaps the most important has been Humphrey Carpenter's 1977 biography of Tolkien. Having been written with the cooperation of the Tolkien family, his book remains the standard source for information about the author's life.[15] Carpenter's work has often been the source of observations and postulations that subsequent authors have made about Morris's influence upon Tolkien's life and work. Carpenter's own comments about this topic have been discussed above.

Three other scholars have made important and distinctive observations about this topic, although, because they do not limit themselves to a focus upon particular works by Morris, their work is difficult to categorize in this discussion. Two of those are the scholarly husband-and-wife team of Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull, who have written *J. R. R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator* (1995), a volume that concerns itself with Tolkien's artistic work and which is profusely illustrated with his paintings, drawings, and maps. Hammond and Scull make the fascinating observation that Tolkien's own artwork was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement as well as art nouveau, the origins of both being associated with Morris. After mentioning several specific examples, including his "Trees of Amalion" drawing, Hammond and Scull argue that "[i]t seems clear . . . that he [Tolkien] agreed with the underlying philosophy of Morris and his followers, which looked back to a much earlier time: that the 'lesser' arts of handicraft

---

[15] Carpenter makes important observations about Morris's influence in this biography as well as in *The Inklings* (1978) and *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981), which he edited.

embodied truth and beauty no less than the 'fine' arts of painting and sculpture."

Hammond and Scull see this displayed in Tolkien's "wealth of references to crafts" and

his meticulous descriptions of architectural decorations and artwork in his fiction (9-10).

They also comment that Tolkien's drawing *The Wood at the World's End*, "an evident

precursor of his dust-jacket art for *The Hobbit*," has a title "commingling" those of

Morris's romances *The Wood beyond the World* and *The Well at the World's End* (63-

64). While Hammond and Scull do not pursue this line of thought further, their

discussion importantly points to the broader artistic dimensions of Morris's influence

upon Tolkien's work.[16]

The other scholar, who has long pointed out parallels in general between the work

of Morris and Tolkien, is Richard Mathews. In *Lightning from a Clear Sky* (1978), he

finds many similarities between the two authors, noting, for example, that Morris's

impact upon the "Lost Tales" is evident" (7). Just as Morris's heroes are concerned with

commonwealth, Tolkien's are allied into a fellowship (the terms are synonymous,

according to Mathews). Both writers also create objects of the natural world as "things

anew" (44). However, Mathews also emphasizes Tolkien's originality, arguing that he

"begins with many of the formal and rhetorical precedents suggested by Morris, and

contributes significant innovations of his own" (59). He notices differences in their

characterizations of heroes: Tolkien's hobbits "are much more ordinary" than Morris's

"fairly traditional heroic type" (8). They also differ in the types of societies they favor:

---

[16]Hammond and Scull also have written *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion*
(2005), which is discussed below. Their two-volume *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*
(2006) contains important new information about Tolkien's interest in Morris that has been
mentioned above.

Tolkien's "utopian conclusion [in *The Lord of the Rings*] presents a thoroughly

unrevolutionary patriarchal monarchy" that is "thoroughly Catholic" in contrast to

Morris's "communist society" (42). Their divergent views about society reflect

differences in philosophy between Morris's materialism and Tolkien's spiritualism,

which place "Tolkien at nearly an opposite pole from the radical Morris" (60).

In *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (1997), Mathews develops his

comparisons further. He observes that Morris "was among the first to stake out the special

role of setting and geography that has been amplified and developed" by later writers

including Tolkien (39). He also claims that some of the "patterns" found in Tolkien's

famous essay "On Fairy-Stories" echo ideas expressed in Morris's lectures such as "The

Gothic Revival" (42, 157n7). He furthermore observes that Tolkien, like Morris, "wrote

from a personal background of displacement and loss" (55) and that "Tolkien found in

Morris something of a kindred spirit or inspiration; the spark or connection helped advance

a new fantasy tradition" (87). However, again, he sees a profound difference between the

two men's depiction of heroes. Borrowing terms from Northrop Frye, Mathews sees the

"Morrisian hero" as a horizontal hero closely tied to other humans, despite his godlike

characteristics, filled with the necessity to realize his inner potential. Tolkien's hero, in

contrast, is a vertical one who is "dislocated in a fallen world," who must remain apart

from others, "a religious hero" who hopes to find spiritual peace and perhaps immortality

"with the gods" (94-95). Mathews thus again emphasizes the difference in worldviews of

the two authors, one so profound that he declares "Morris and Tolkien have provided the

horizontal and vertical axes on which the modern fantasy hero can be plotted" (95).

The following discussion encompasses other important observations and themes about Morris's influence upon Tolkien that have emerged in scholarship, organized by specific works by Morris. Most of the earlier scholars who wrote on this topic focused upon Morris's *The Well at the World's End* (1896). This may be due to the fact that it was more widely known than other works by Morris or perhaps because it resembles the form of the contemporary fantasy novel more closely than his other romances. Coming to a total of around 228,000 words, this work in all likelihood was the longest fantasy novel before *The Lord of the Rings* appeared, according to Carter (Introd. to *The Well at the World's End* xi).

An early commentator about Morris and Tolkien, Robley Evans, in his 1972 critical study of Tolkien mentions *The Well*. He notes that both Morris's and Tolkien's characters achieve greatness through "a combination of choice and fate" (78). Evans quotes a passage spoken by the Sage concerning the purpose of the quest in Morris's romance and maintains that it exemplifies Tolkien's sentiments concerning "the ethical and social idealism of fantasy" in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" (81). Ralph and Ursula, the two characters who are following the quest, must earn their gift, just as Tolkien's Frodo and Sam earn the fulfillment of their quest in *The Lord of the Rings* (82). And Evans makes an important observation that in both works, "the sea is the place in which individual value and identity will be lost" (82). The happy ending of *The Well* "is expressive of the heavenly Joy Tolkien describes revealed to us, and revealed through the efforts of man" (83). Evans refers here to the Consolation of the Happy Ending, which Tolkien identifies as "the mark of the true fairy-story" that distantly reflects "the

Christian Story" ("On-Fairy Stories" 153, 155). Evans does comment upon one important difference between the two works: a contrast between the sexuality of Morris's romance and the "virtually sexless" *The Lord of the Rings* (79).

In an insightful dissertation published in 1975, Stacey Schlau also discusses *The Well* and notes many parallels between Morris and Tolkien. She remarks upon their similar views about the negative effects of the industrial age (5) and observes that Tolkien's One Ring plays a function similar to that of the Well in *The Well* (30). Moreover, she claims that both Morris's Upmeads of *The Well* and Tolkien's Shire represent England (44) and that both authors use maps as "devices to strengthen credibility" (48). Schlau, however, argues that there are fundamental differences between the work of the two men, to the detriment of Morris. She finds Middle-earth to be more complex and fragmented than Morris's world in *The Well*, which has a more clear-cut distinction between good and evil (30). And in the sense that *The Lord of the Rings* does not have an unambiguously happy ending, "Frodo's quest is the obverse side of Ralph's [the protagonist of *The Well*]" (32). "There is more emphasis placed on the internal struggle of the quest hero in Tolkien than in Morris" (34), she claims. Furthermore, she finds Tolkien's landscapes to be more "convincing" and "interesting" than Morris's (46), maintaining that Morris's "flawed magical worlds . . . do not possess . . . the pictorial power of Tolkien" (52). Although Schlau points out that Morris is a precursor to all the modern romancers, she does not deal with the question of direct influence per se.

Several other writers have discussed Tolkien's work within the context of *The Well*. Fantasy writer L. Sprague de Camp (1976) was possibly the first commentator to

point out the similarities in the name of the protagonist's horse, Silverfax, and Tolkien's

Shadowfax. Marjorie Burns (1991) observes that both *The Lord of the Ring's* Aragorn

and Ralph of *The Well* are "a king-to-be in disguise" ("Echoes of William Morris's

Icelandic Journals in J. R. R. Tolkien" 372n3). John Garth in *Tolkien and the Great War*

(2003) declares that "The Fall of Gondolin" resembles "a mode of romance used by . . .

Morris in books such as *The Well at the World's End*, in which callow youths achieve

moral stature traversing an imaginary topography" (215). And Michael W. Perry (2003)

remarks that the shepherds' folk-mote resembles the Entmoot of *The Lord of the Rings*.

In addition, both works ask the same question: "Is a much-prolonged life a blessing or a

curse?" (Introd. to *The Well at the World's End*). As this discussion demonstrates, the

evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that Tolkien read and was influenced

by *The Well*.

A relationship between Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* and the origins of

Tolkien's created mythology has also increasingly been postulated. It probably was

originally suggested by Humphrey Carter in his biography of Tolkien (98). Since then,

several others have also mentioned it, especially within the context of narrative structure.

For instance, Charles E. Noad (2000) notes "some resemblance" between "[t]he form

chosen for the mythology" of *The Book of Lost Tales* and *The Earthly Paradise* (38).

John Garth (2003) observes that Tolkien's first attempts at creating an epic involved the

device of a Mariner, which probably was due to the influence of Morris's narrative

framework (224). Perry C. Bramlett (2003) also remarks that Tolkien modeled the

structure of *The Book of Lost Tales* upon *The Earthly Paradise*. He points out as well that

Tolkien's early poem "The Shores of Faërie" starts with the line "West of the Moon, East

of the Sun," recalling Morris's story "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon."

And Chester N. Scoville (2005) claims that a declaration by Tolkien in a 1943 letter, "We

were born in a dark age out of due time," echoes a passage from the Apology, "Dreamer

of dreams, born out of my due time" (95).[17] Thus, a strong consensus exists that *The

Earthly Paradise* had a substantial influence upon Tolkien as he began writing his

mythology. Tolkien's proclivity for using the phrase "earthly paradise" has already been

discussed above.

The House of the Wolfings* (1889) and *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890) have

long been seen as a source for Tolkien's work, perhaps because of the letter in which he

mentions their influence. *Roots* was meant to be a sequel to the other work, and

commentators often treat them together. One of the most significant discussions has been

by Tom Shippey, who in a 1982 essay, "Goths and Huns: The Rediscovery of the

Northern Cultures in the Nineteenth Century," emphasizes Tolkien's propensity for

"reconstructed cultures" associated with "reconstructed words." For example, although

the Riders of Rohan in *The Lord of the Rings* have mostly Anglo-Saxon names and

manners, some of their names and customs are apparently derived from "reconstructed"

Gothic cultures and words. He observes that "very close analogues to Tolkien's fictional

practice" are found in *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* (52-

54). Observing that the protagonists in those romances are explicitly or probably meant to

---

[17]However, this phrasing also occurs in the English Bible. In the King James Version, 1 Corinthians 15:8 reads, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." The second part of the verse reads the same in the Douay-Rheims Version.

be Goths, he argues that "[l]ike Tolkien, Morris was prepared to promote the Goths to 'very-much-the-same-as-English' status; certainly he meant his readers to take their side" (56). Morris also evidently takes the words "Mark" and "Mirkwood" (words famous in *The Lord of the Rings*) from the *Poetic Edda* and uses them to reconstruct the world of the Goths in *The House of the Wolfings* (59-60). Although the implications of Shippey's discussion quite clearly point to the strong possibility that Tolkien got his idea of "reconstructing" words and cultures from Morris, Shippey does not explicitly deal with this possibility.

Editions of several of Morris's works, including *Wolfings* and *Roots*, have been published recently (2003) by Inkling Books, which has subtitled each *A Book* (or *Two Books*) *That Inspired J. R. R. Tolkien.* In the forewords and introductions to these books, the publisher, Michael W. Perry, comments upon some specific similarities in motifs and names between Morris's romances and *The Lord of the Rings*. For example, besides containing a forest named Mirkwood, both *Wolfings* and *The Lord of the Rings* portray messengers bringing war arrows to signal "a call to war." Both feature protagonists who must make a choice to risk almost-certain death to defend their people. And both feature a device that has "dangerous and hidden powers": a hauberk in *Wolfings* and the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*. Perry observes that "[i]n both tales . . . the plot hinges on the hero making the right choice about the use of the powerful weapon he has been given." He also remarks that in *Roots*, "major characters often have more than one name," and he finds a similarity between "Éowyn and Arwen's romantic interest in Aragorn" in *The Lord of the Rings* and the love triangle in *Roots* (Introd. to *The Roots of the Mountains* 13-14).

On the other hand, Perry also discusses significant differences, determining that Morris comes up short in some instances. One important one is the fact that, although Morris places his romances such as *Wolfings* and *Roots* within the time frame of recorded history [the periods of the Roman empire and Hunnish invasions, respectively], he "was relatively indifferent to the broader picture."[18] By contrast, Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth in the far past allowed him to construct "a history and geography so complex, that numerous books have been written to describe it" (Fwd. to *The House of the Wolfings* 8-9). He also claims that Morris' inexperience with real warfare shows in his depiction of female warriors, revealing a lack of understanding of the real physical stamina necessary to wield weapons, as well as the absence of any character like Tolkien's "deeply wounded Frodo" who must pay the "psychological costs of war" (Introd. to *The Roots of the Mountains* 14). He furthermore contrasts Morris's hostility to Christianity to Tolkien's devout Catholicism: "Morris had only northerness [sic] as his guide. Tolkien had northerness [sic] *and* Christianity. That was the critical difference between them." In keeping with the tendency of many others who privilege Tolkien over Morris, Perry makes the somewhat startling declaration that Morris's concept of northernness was inferior to Tolkien's: while Morris would have had a "dislike" of Nazism had he lived to see its rise, his sense of northernness "had little intrinsic ability to resist Nazi-like perversions calling for the "great Teutonic race" to unite. It was too inbred and self-contained," unlike Tolkien's (Fwd. to *The Wood Beyond the World* 10).

---

[18]However, the exact time frame of *Roots* cannot be identified from information given in the text. This is discussed further in chapter three.

Nevertheless, despite perceiving these significant differences, Perry declares in his Foreword to *The House of the Wolfings* that "what Morris and Tolkien had in common is far more important than their differences" (9). Both authors "drank deeply from those ancient literary wells of 'Northerness'" (sic) for inspiration (7), and both succeeded in "imagin[ing] a world with such skill that those who inhabit it seem as real as our next-door neighbor" (8).

Another commentator, Marjorie Burns (1991), points out that certain "Northern elements in Morris's romances (. . . the Germanic sense of enemy and battle in *The House of the Wolfings*) have their counterparts throughout *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. . ." (367). Garth (2003) observes that the folk names in Tolkien's story "The Fall of Gondolin" recall the names of the tribes in Morris's *The House of the Wolfings* (215). And Hammond and Scull in The Lord of the Rings: *A Reader's Companion* (2005) mention the connections between *The House of the Wolfings* and Tolkien's Mirkwood (13) and token of the Red Arrow [19] (540). Moreover, in their *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* (2006), they claim that "the social organization and the general air" of *The Wanderings of Húrin*, written around the end of the 1950s, "recall Morris's *House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* (2: 1088).

In regard to the latter work, Shippey in *The Road to Middle-earth* (1982; rev. ed. 2003) maintains that *The Roots of the Mountains* "gave a hint for Gollum," as well as the character of Brodda the Easterling in *The Silmarillion* (351). Editor Douglas A. Anderson in *The Annotated Hobbit* (2002) also mentions *The Roots of the Mountains* as he points

---

[19]*The Lord of the Rings* 798.

out several examples of influence, observing that "[t]he extent of William Morris's influence on Tolkien is often underrated." He remarks that in *The Roots of the Mountains* "we find a river named the Weltering Water, which runs through the Dale, and one called the Wildlake, which run [sic] away to the Plain-country. The similarity to Tolkien's Running River, Dale, and Forest River is easily apparent." Thus, Anderson finds the concurrence of geography and toponymy between the two works to be proof of specific influence. He also notes that the phrase "roots of the mountain" occurs twice in *The Hobbit* [it actually occurs three times, in addition to "the mountain's roots"] (243, 245n4). The significance of this phrase is discussed further in chapters three and four.

The Wood beyond the World also has been mentioned as a possible influence by Shippey (1980), who writes

> [p]robably *The Wood beyond the World* was an element in the making of Lothlórien, or better still Fangorn, where also characters wander in a network of lies and glimpses and coincidences presided over by a White Wizard, Gandalf, and his counterfeit Saruman, the shape-changer, the 'dwimmer-crafty', master of eidolons and seemings. (Introduction to *The Wood beyond the World* xvii)

Anderson (2002) observes that in *The Hobbit* a "phrase that seems a more deliberate echo of Morris" is "the wood beyond the Water," which "recalls the titles" of Morris's *The Wood beyond the World* and *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (245n4). And Michael White in his popular biography of Tolkien (2002) quotes a passage from *The Wood Beyond the World* to show that "Morris's writing had a similar feel to some of Tolkien's

more poetic writing, especially certain passages in *The Silmarillion*" (91-92).

Shippey (1982) furthermore suggests a connection between the Undying Lands of *The Story of the Glittering Plain* and those found in Tolkien's work (351). Burns (1991) points out the similarities of hall life in *The Glittering Plain* and *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (367). She also postulates a connection between the character Gríma or Wormtongue in *The Lord of the Rings* and the title of an Icelandic work translated by Magnússon and Morris, "The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue and Raven the Skald"[20] (370, 373n7), as do Hammond and Scull in 2005 (400).

A recent trend has been a tendency to seek out influences from Morris beyond his poetic works and romances. For instance, Marjorie Burns has focused upon Morris's *Icelandic Journals.*[21] In a 1991 article she points out that depictions of certain of the plot elements, character names, landscapes, and weather conditions in *The Hobbit* resemble passages in Morris's *Icelandic Journals.* She observes that the adventure with the trolls in *The Hobbit* and the company's journey to Rivendell is similar to Morris's account in his journal of his journey to Vatnsdale (Water-dale) in tone, style, and description, giving concrete examples (369-71). She furthermore suggests there is a link between the character Beorn in *The Hobbit* and Bjorn the Boaster of the *Journals* (371, 373n8), and that the character Grima or Wormtongue in *The Lord of the Rings* sounds similar to the locale of Grimstunga (370, 373n7). However, it is in the landscapes of Middle-earth

---

[20]Published in *Three Northern Love Stories, and Other Tales* (1875). It also appears in volume 10 of *The Collected Works of William Morris.*

[21]These, entitled *Journals of Travel to Iceland: 1871 1873*, comprise volume 8 of *The Collected Works of William Morris.*

where she finds some of the most striking evidence of influence from the *Journals*,
including descriptions of bogs, wastelands, caves, and "stairs" going through rough
mountain passes (371-72).

Burns expands this discussion in her book *Perilous Realms* (2005). She notes
there that, despite deep philosophical differences between the men, both tended to favor
relatively egalitarian, community-centered societies where rank and bloodline
nevertheless still play an important role, and they both "greatly valued fellowship" (78-
79). She points out other similarities between Morris's *Journals* and Tolkien's Middle-
earth, including the mentioning of trolls, "upright marking stones," and burial mounds
populated by spirits who sing (84). Morris and Tolkien make their landscapes come alive
in similar ways, assigning them active verbs and human characteristics (85). The name
Frodo echoes a place name mentioned by Morris, and "throughout the *Journals* there are
references to elves, trolls, giants, ravens, eagles, and of course, ponies, all of which
repeatedly occur in Tolkien" (86).[22] She finds "the strongest and most consistent
overlapping of characterization in Tolkien and Morris" to be the bungling persona that
Morris adopts and that of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*. Both are comically "inept" and at
times unheroic, both like food and comfort and only undertake adventures when
unexpected circumstances compel them, and both return home, after "each has found
himself through a journey and each has fulfilled a quest," having been "blessed by
'recovery'" (87-92).

Anne Amison (2006) likewise finds similarities in Morris's comical presentation

---

[22]However, one should note that most of these also occur in Morris's romances.

of himself in *The Journals* and *The Hobbit's* Bilbo Baggins. Both are fat, unused to

adventures, and therefore homesick and uncomfortable (129). *The Hobbit* has several

incidents which seem to parallel those in *The Journals*; for example, in both the traveling

parties have difficulty in lighting a fire, and their ponies are described similarly (130).

The dwellings of the hobbits also resemble those of the Icelanders described by Morris.

However, "one of his most important inspirations from the *Journals*," according to

Amison, is Tolkien's depiction of "sadly diminished" peoples like the Dúnedain in *The*

Lord of the Rings, whom she sees as echoing the state of the Icelanders Morris saw (131).

Both Burns and Amison provide quite compelling evidence, although each admits she

can find no direct evidence that Tolkien ever read the *Icelandic Journals*.

Another work postulated as an influence is, somewhat surprisingly, *News from*

Nowhere. Chester N. Scoville (2005) declares that Morris "made a deep and lasting

influence on J. R. R. Tolkien" but adds that the influence is "undeniable but hard to

quantify" (93). He proceeds to compare and contrast Morris's utopian society in *News*

from Nowhere with Tolkien's depiction of the Shire. He speculates that Tolkien possibly

knew *News from Nowhere* but "found it not to his taste" (96). Noting that there are many

similarities between the inhabitants of the two fictional lands, he demonstrates that

phrases from Tolkien's descriptions of the Shire's inhabitants could equally apply to

Morris's inhabitants of Nowhere. However, he concedes that he is not attempting to

prove "direct influence" and argues that the similarities rather show that "a similarly

Arcadian pastoral tradition was strong in both Morris and Tolkien" (97). Scoville

furthermore argues that the differences between their fictional societies demonstrate a

fundamental ideological difference between the two authors. Morris's utopian society

reflects his optimism in humanity and belief "in the improvement and possible perfection

of human society through political action" (99). In contrast, "no such earthly paradise

could exist for Tolkien, due to his Christian beliefs" (100). Although both men abhorred

the mechanized, industrialized society that they saw around them, their divergent visions

of society ultimately reveal that "the metaphysical underpinnings of their work are

entirely different" (96). Thus any influence from *News from Nowhere* must be a negative

one, with Tolkien reacting against its ideas.

Amison (2006) also argues that there are many parallels between Morris's utopian

society in *News from Nowhere* and the Shire of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

She claims that "The Shire is Nowhere seen through the lens of Tolkien's natural

conservatism" (132) and finds similarities in descriptions of work, the lack of

mechanization, the modes of transportation, love of eating, drinking, and smoking, the

de-emphasis upon book learning for children, and the welcome given to travelers.

However, most of these similarities are present as well in Morris's romances and in fact

could apply to medieval society in general. Amison also claims that "Nowhere is an

anarchist society. . ." and quotes Tolkien's expression of support for "Anarchy" in one of

his letters. She sees the lack of government in the Shire as reflecting the "rural ideal" of

News from Nowhere (134). However, Morris very clearly identifies the society of

Nowhere as representing communism and expresses disdain for anarchist ideas. His

political ideals are also abundantly evident in his romances, so Tolkien need not

necessarily have taken them from *News*. She also argues that Tolkien "transformed"

Morris into the character of Tom Bombadil, a claim that is questionable to say the least.

Although Tolkien may very well have read *News from Nowhere* at some point, neither

Scoville nor Amison provide convincing evidence of influence from that work.

Many other observers have remarked upon resemblances between the work of the

two authors. The content of their discussions has often been brief and unsystematic and

thus hard to categorize.[23] Also, since the publication of *The Silmarillion* in 1977 and

Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth in 1980, much attention has turned to

Tolkien's earlier work and the process by which he created his mythology. This interest

has only increased with the publication (1983-87) of the first five volumes of *The History*

of Middle-earth series that contain Tolkien's earliest surviving drafts for this mythology.

Several scholars have subsequently commented upon resemblances between this early

work by Tolkien and Morris's writings.[24]

---

[23]For example, Richard Purtill (1974) notes that "there are a number of parallels between Morris's work and Tolkien's" (205). He observes that "there is a closeness of atmosphere in Morris and Tolkien despite their differences" and that the characters of each would "not be totally out of place" in the world of the other (206), but he does not claim there is any direct influence. Northrop Frye in *The Secular Scripture* (1976) proclaims that "The invented languages of Tolkien come at the end of a long tradition which includes. . . the yea-verily-and-forsooth lingo in which William Morris wrote his later prose romances and translations" (110). Jonathan Evans (2000) discusses Tolkien's lifelong fascination with dragons, set in motion by his reading of the story of Sigurd and Fafnir in Lang's *Red Fairy Book*, which was a "free condensation of Morris's 131-page prose *Völsunga Saga*" (24). However, "Tolkien advances fantasy narratives of dragons and dragon slayers to a level of literary achievement which in the end would dwarf the popular, and arguably the scholarly, appeal of the writers he drew from [Morris and Lang]" (22).

[24]David Bratman (2000), for example, suggests that Morris influenced the "Antique" style of *The Book of Lost Tales* (73). John D. Rateliff (2000) claims that both Lewis and Tolkien in 1936 began "revitalizing their creative energies" by abandoning the "traditional forms à la William Morris and George MacDonald" they had previously used as vehicles for their created mythologies and adopting the pulp fiction genre that others such as Charles Williams and David Lindsay were successfully using to win audiences (201). Richard C. West (2000) describes the story "Turambar and the Foalókë" (1919) as being "in style and substance . . . as reminiscent of the prose romances of William Morris as anything Tolkien ever wrote" (240). Brian

TOLKIEN: "NOTORIOUSLY BEYOND INFLUENCE"?

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, there exists a widespread awareness of

similarities between the work of the two, even though no comprehensive survey of

Morris's influence upon Tolkien has ever been undertaken. This awareness, however, has

been slow in developing. In fact, Tom Shippey, one of the most important contemporary

Tolkien scholars (and a scholar of Old English as well), has argued that "[w]hen it comes

to modern writers, Tolkien was notoriously beyond influence" (*The Road to Middle-earth*

351). Like others who have examined Tolkien's sources, Shippey finds the "true

tradition" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 343) of those sources to lie primarily in medieval

literature and folklore, and he implies that Tolkien was influenced only to a limited

degree by nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary movements.

While there are various, and compelling, reasons that scholars have emphasized

traditional influences upon Tolkien and de-emphasized contemporary ones, the most

important reason probably is the sheer dazzling creativity of his work. Because there are

a plethora of fantasy writers now (many of them overly derivative of Tolkien), it is easy

to forget that when his trilogy appeared in the 1950s there was nothing else like it around.

In a famous 1954 review of *The Fellowship of the Ring* entitled "The Gods Return to

---

Rosebury, in his *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), quotes a passage from Tolkien's early story "The Flight of the Noldoli" to demonstrate his contention that "Tolkien was still too bewitched by Morris's prose mannerisms" to judge the inappropriateness of his archaic language (96). Leslie Ellen Jones (2003) quotes a passage from Tolkien's "The Theft of Melko" and compares it to "the mock-archaic" diction of a passage she gives from Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* (60). Alex Lewis and Elizabeth Currie in *The Forsaken Realm of Tolkien* (2005) theorize that Tolkien may have encountered Morris's "Scenes from the Fall of Troy" (in volume 24 of *The Collected Works* of William Morris) at Oxford, leading him to an interest in the medieval tales of Troy, which they posit had a connection with Tolkien's early story "The Fall of Gondolin" (22-23, 37). None of these authors, however, goes into great detail about his or her observations.

Earth," C. S. Lewis emphasizes this creativity:

> This book is like lightning from a clear sky; as sharply different, as
> unpredictable in our age as *Songs of Innocence* was in theirs. . . . [I]n the
> history of romance itself–a history which stretches back to the *Odyssey*
> and beyond–it makes not a return but an advance or revolution: the
> conquest of new territory.
>
> Nothing quite like it was ever done before. . . . [T]he ineluctable
> sense of reality which we feel in the *Morte d'Arthur* comes largely from
> the great weight of other men's work built up century by century, which
> has gone into it. The utterly new achievement of Professor Tolkien is that
> he carries a comparable sense of reality unaided. Probably no book yet
> written in the world is quite such a radical instance of what its author has
> elsewhere called 'sub-creation'. . . . Not content to create his own story, he
> creates, with an almost insolent prodigality, the whole world in which it is
> to move, with its own theology, myths, geography, history, palaeography,
> languages, and orders of beings–a world 'full of strange creatures beyond
> count'. (1082).

In this dazzling review, Lewis stresses Tolkien's originality and claims his book to be an
"advance or revolution" in a genre that is older than Homer. Lewis's review perhaps
initiated the legend of Tolkien's inability to be influenced by others. Lewis reinforces this
claim when he remarks, "No one ever influenced Tolkien–you might as well try to
influence a bander-snatch" (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 204). Tolkien often echoes this

viewpoint in his letters, where he denies being influenced by Charles Williams (209), E. R. Eddison (258), and Lewis himself (362). However, he certainly admits to being influenced by Morris in the two letters where he mentions the latter, which have been discussed above.

Almost certainly part of the reason for the hostility directed toward Lin Carter's study of Tolkien was due to the fact that Carter recognized Tolkien's work as part of a literary tradition that did not abruptly end with *Beowulf* and the Norse Sagas, a fact that many admirers of Tolkien would prefer to downplay or ignore altogether. Others may fear that a search for sources somehow minimizes Tolkien's creativity and genius. However, Tolkien himself once wrote that "one's mind is, of course, stored with a 'leaf-mould' of memories (submerged) of names, and these rise up to the surface at times, and may provide with modification the bases of 'invented' names" (*Letters* 409). To recognize that any gifted writer draws upon this "leaf-mould" for ideas as well as names should not in any way detract from his accomplishments.

MORRIS AND TOLKIEN'S "LEAF-MOULD"

Tolkien used the materials afforded by Morris's creative works as part of the "leaf-mould" he drew from to create an alternative to the world against which he found himself in rebellion, an alternative world that, in the words of Perry, can seem "more real" than his readers' own (Introd. to *The Roots of the Mountains* 8). In the following chapters this writer will analyze Morris's influence upon Tolkien in a systematic and comprehensive manner, primarily focusing upon one particular romance, *The Roots of the*

Mountains, and the ways elements from that work contributed to Tolkien's alternative world.

Chapter two examines why both Morris and Tolkien were drawn to and fascinated by myth, legend, and folklore. Almost certainly this attraction is related to their dislike of the modern world and what they saw as its evils. In constructing their fictional worlds as alternatives to the ugliness they saw around them, they turn to narratives from the past for their building blocks. And since these stories are also traditional, they too suggest the value the past holds for both men: for them perception of truth is unavoidably linked to an understanding of the past.

Because both authors drew from the same traditional sources, understanding their relationship to these sources is necessary in order to distinguish between parallel borrowings and those Tolkien specifically made from Morris. The attitude both men share about language is also closely tied to their views about mythology, folklore, and ultimately literature. Both men believed that they in some sense lived in a "fallen" world, and that this decline had been made manifest in an English language that had also become "fallen" or corrupted. Any amelioration of this condition therefore necessitates a transformation of language, preferably making it closer to its roots. Following Morris's example, Tolkien can thus create a decidedly archaic prose style that privileges words of Anglo-Saxon origin over Latinate ones.

Both authors had a wide range of knowledge of mythology, folklore, and medieval legends, and they were especially attracted to Icelandic literature, most importantly to the story of Sigurd in the *Völsunga saga*. Neither author, however,

slavishly copied these works but instead used them as springboards to launch their own imaginative creativity. Both were also keenly aware of contemporary scholarly developments in the fields of comparative mythology and folklore even as they created their own mythologies within the context of, and in some cases as a reaction against, these cultural and scientific currents. Although Morris, at least on some level, believed Northern mythology to be true, he apparently was not bothered by scholarly inquiry into the realms of myth and folklore. Tolkien, on the other hand, had an extreme aversion toward such scholarship, and his famous essay "On Fairy-Stories" is a reaction against and a response to the comparative mythologists and folklorists such as Max Müller, George W. Dasent, and Andrew Lang. In contrast to the ideas of scholars such as these whose views he found threatening to Christian beliefs, Tolkien holds that humans, created in the image of God, are sub-creators who replicate the act of creation through the invention of myths. Myths are thus in a sense a means to approach the truth, and the myth of the death and resurrection of Christ is the ultimate true myth. Furthermore, the writer of "successful Fantasy" has the ability to tap into that truth by creating new myths, thus providing "a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" ("On Fairy-Stories" 155). Morris's reverence toward Northern myth as manifested in his works may have bolstered Tolkien's sense of myth as reflecting truth, even if he cannot as a Christian accept Morris's own myths as being fully true. Using Morris's techniques for reshaping narratives from the past, including folkloric components such as proverbs and ballads, Tolkien could create new myths that transform reality into a "truer" form.

Chapter three analyzes the elements from which Morris created the fictional

world of *The Roots of the Mountains*–elements which constantly reappear in *The Lord of the Rings*. *Roots*, like its prequel *The House of the Wolfings*, follows a pattern of alternating prose and verse that was influenced by Old Norse literature such as the *Prose Edda*. *Roots*, however, differs from *Wolfings* in that it is set outside known time and history, and with its writing Morris was in fact helping to create the modern fantasy novel. He also creates an entirely fictional social order, complete with its own pagan religion, for its inhabitants. These Dalesmen and their allied peoples tend to be beautiful, relatively egalitarian, industrious, and kind to women. The Dusky Men, their enemies, represent the obverse of this society: they are ugly, foul, evil, sadistic, averse to labor, and thus worthy of eradication.

Some of the most memorable inhabitants of the Dale include the female warriors, and Morris's depiction of them was probably influenced by the *Eddas* and the *Völsunga saga*. The latter features women warriors such as the Valkyrie Brynhild and Gudrun the Niblung, who don armor and are capable of wielding swords. From these characters the female warriors of *Roots* (and ultimately *The Lord of the Rings*) probably originate. The characters of *Roots* also accept the reality or at least the possibility of supernatural beings such as wights, elves, and dwarfs, as well as the efficacy of magic and foretelling. The romance also frequently mentions legends that are only alluded to, which gives the work a sense of depth. To reinforce its sense of the past, Morris constructs the narrative using archaic diction, syntax, and semantic categories. And to revivify nature for nineteenth-century readers, he infuses detailed descriptions of natural features into the narrative, assigning to them active verbs and human characteristics. As a contribution to the adult

fairy-tale tradition, *Roots* is striking enough that elements from it, however transformed in *The Lord of the Rings*, still point back toward their origin.

Chapter four discusses Tolkien's creative processes and his admission of both conscious and unconscious borrowing as he created his own fictional works. As he was becoming familiar with medieval literature, Tolkien would have found many things foregrounded in *Roots*, perhaps especially the repetition of the term *Mid-earth*. He seems to have acquired a particularly long-lasting fascination with the phrase "roots of the mountains"; the exact phrase or variations on it occur repeatedly in his work, including *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Some of the contexts within which it is placed suggest that, among other things, Tolkien came to see it as a metaphor for the tradition of myth and folklore from which, often through the lens of Morris, he was using to build the "truth" of Middle-earth. For Tolkien, these roots represent a bastion against the evils of the modern world.

Tolkien openly admits in his 1960 letter that some of the fictional topography in *The Lord of the Rings* was based upon Morris's. Many specific elements from *Roots* reappear, sometimes transmogrified, including names, motifs, societal organization, diction, and topographical details. Morris's use of diction and description in order to revitalize language and re-enchant nature would have provided Tolkien with a powerful model. The place names Morris uses, for example, frequently reflect colors and often seem primeval and archetypical, like names found in ballads and folklore. Tolkien found them attractive because they sounded appropriately traditional and suited the geography of Middle-earth. Tolkien also borrows from the aspect of Morris's writing style the

tendency to give living qualities to inanimate objects; sometimes using exactly the same terminology. He found Morris's archaic diction inspirational as well because it seemed to rebel against modern "corrupted" English. He also drew inspiration from Morris's mentioning of supernatural beings such as giants, dwarfs, and wights, because it proved that such elements could be incorporated seriously into modern literature.

Two particular kinds of characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Orcs and the female warrior Éowyn, echo those in *Roots*. As ugly, evil, foul, sadistic, beastly, and worthy of annihilation, both Morris's Dusky Men and Tolkien's Orcs may embody the characteristics of those who uphold the evils of modern, and, for Tolkien, secular society. The cleansing of these remnants from their rule in *Roots* prefigures that of "The Scouring of the Shire" in *The Lord of the Rings* and enables both authors to rid their imaginary societies, at least temporarily, of the worst evils of modern capitalist industrialism. Like the female warriors of *Roots*, Éowyn dons armor, carries weapons, fights in battle, and is fearless and brave. Tolkien may have been attracted to Morris's idea of female warriors because he saw his own mother and wife as behaving heroically during times of hardship.

Finally, chapter five explores how the Romantic movement affected both Morris and Tolkien, in particular how its conventions and tropes, filtered through Morris, shaped Tolkien's fictional works. Morris bestows upon his created society in *Roots* the characteristics he thinks an ideal one should have. Its system of decision-making, a symbiotic relationship between those in hierarchical positions and those below them, finds itself replicated in Tolkien's Middle-earth. Morris also attempts to revitalize nature for contemporary readers by using descriptive techniques that Tolkien emulates.

Undeniable differences, however, remain between *Roots* and *The Lord of the Rings*, reflecting fundamental differences in the worldviews of the two authors. Morris, for example, recasts the paradigm of the Fall into secular and Marxist terms, while Tolkien accepts a literal Fall according to traditional Christian doctrine. While Morris believes that humans have the ability to create a better world through collective political action, Tolkien doubts that any human society or government can ultimately satisfy one's spiritual needs or take away the implications of one's own mortality, for all human institutions are inevitably tainted by the Fall. Tolkien in the end achieves a seamless interweaving of natural beauty, magic, morality, and spiritual transformation into Middle-earth, explaining why his work, although building upon Morris's in *Roots*, ultimately has more success in revivifying the past and achieving for the reader, in Coleridge's terms, "that willing suspension of disbelief." A brief concluding section will point toward some unresolved issues remaining for future scholars to explore.

As a whole, this dissertation explores the influence *The Roots of the Mountains* had on Tolkien's work, the depth of which has hitherto gone unrecognized. This writer will analyze similar character types such as the Dusky Men / Orcs and female warriors, as well as similar patterns in social decision-making, neither of which has yet received critical attention. He will also point out parallels in diction and topographical description too numerous to be accounted for as coincidences. Tolkien encountered Morris's works at a susceptible time in life and they spoke deeply to him, and while he may have tempered his early enthusiasm for Morris as a thinker, he continued to see the past through the historical and literary lens that Morris had crafted. Tolkien's world is no

carbon copy of *The Roots of the Mountains*, but Morris's romance provided Tolkien with both the inspiration and the building blocks with which he could fashion a fantasy world that was truly his own.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Concerning the attraction of fairy-stories, Tolkien once had this to say:

> The realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many
>
> things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and
>
> stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril;
>
> both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords. ("On Fairy-Stories" 109)

This idea of limitless wonder perhaps explains a basic reason humans have been attracted

to such stories for millennia. And in their turn, Morris and Tolkien, too, were drawn to

and fascinated by myth, legend, and folklore. Almost certainly, however, this attraction is

related to their dislike of the modern world and what they saw as its evils. Tolkien hated

modern capitalism, particularly as it undergirded industrialization, and some of his

statements about the topic are surprisingly like Morris's. In constructing their fictional

worlds as alternatives to the ugliness they saw around them, they turned to narratives

from the past for their building blocks. Since myths are stories that are redolent with

truth, Morris's and Tolkien's fascination with them is almost certainly related to their

belief that they reflect, at least on some level, truth and reality. And since these stories

are also traditional, they suggest as well the value of the past to both men: perception of

truth is thus unavoidably linked to an understanding of the past.

Their lives and literary works occurred within the larger context of the nineteenth-

century growth of interest in traditional narratives, including myths, folktales, and

medieval literature. This interest arose in part as a reaction against the social

disintegration and environmental degradation produced by the industrial revolution.

Morris's and Tolkien's literary interests and efforts represent a rebellion against the ills

they saw in their contemporary societies. And both men saw their literary efforts as

filling, at least partly, a void in the traditional materials that other countries were rich in,

but England seemed to be lacking. Their works were influenced by the scholarship of the

comparative mythologists and folklorists who had attempted to study mythology and

folklore on a scientific basis; in Tolkien's case, the reaction was largely a negative one.

Because both authors viewed contemporary English as a degraded form of language, they

sought to revivify it by privileging words of Anglo-Saxon origin and using archaic

grammatical constructions. They found a "purer" form of language to be necessary for

the truth of their fictional constructions, as were also folkloric elements such as proverbs

and ballads that traditionally have encapsulated truths for people. An understanding of

the common sources from which both authors drew is necessary in order to distinguish

Tolkien's specific borrowings from Morris.

MYTH, FOLKLORE, AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Both Morris and Tolkien were familiar with and reacted to the same source

materials (of folklore, myth, and saga), and their interests and activities occurred within

the broader social phenomenon of the entire nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

revival of interest in the medieval period and folklore. During the nineteenth century, for

example, English scholars became aware of the *Beowulf* manuscript and the corpus of

Old English literature that had been for the most part neglected or unknown. This

rediscovery was accompanied by an interest in other Northern and Germanic literature,

mythology, and folklore that developed practically into a Viking mania. In fact, Andrew

Wawn has observed that "In many ways, the Victorians invented the Vikings" and that

the period saw the publishing of numerous works with "the word 'Viking'. . . found on

dozens of title-pages . . . written for all conditions of men, some conditions of women,

and quite a few conditions of children" (3). The century also saw the activities of the

brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, which not only led to the further development of the

field of philology, a discipline which held an interest for both Morris and later Tolkien,

but also contributed to the growing interest among the English in folklore, especially that

indigenous to the British Isles. Just as the philologists recognized the common origins of

many languages of the world that we now call Indo-European, scholars of myth and

folklore thought they recognized many common elements in stories told by speakers of

these varied languages. These new discoveries and perceptions formed the cultural

backdrop to both Morris's and Tolkien's readings and interpretations of traditional

narratives.

REBELLION AND REVITALIZATION

This burgeoning interest in folklore and medievalism represented, according to

Dillon Bustin, a "revitalization movement" that occurred within the context of "a sense of

social disintegration" brought on by "the horrors of industrial capitalism (17-19).[25] Both

Morris and Tolkien found themselves in rebellion against these "horrors." With both men

it produced a distrust for mechanization. Speaking of machinery in "How We Live and

How We Might Live" (1885), Morris complains that

> in spite of our inventions, no worker works under the present system an
>
> hour the less on account of those labour-saving machines, so-called. But
>
> under a happier state of things they would be used simply for saving
>
> labour, with the result of a vast amount of leisure gained for the
>
> community to be added to that gained by the avoidance of the waste of
>
> useless luxury, and the abolition of the service of commercial war.
>
> (*Collected Works* 23: 19)

But he also reveals a fundamental distrust of machinery when he declares that at the

present time, "we are slaves to the monsters which we have created,"[26] and advocates the

elimination of machinery in producing goods whenever possible under a socialist society:

". . . I have a kind of hope that the very elaboration of machinery [under a socialist

society] . . . will lead to the simplification of life, and so once more to the limitation of

machinery" (*Collected Works* 23: 24-25). Morris of course was not the first Victorian

---

[25]Of this particular movement Dillon sees Morris as the "main prophet or innovator." (22).

[26]Compare with Shelley's observations in *A Defence of Poetry*, first published in 1840: "man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative facility . . . is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that these inventions which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam?" (134).

thinker to decry the negative impacts of mechanization; Thomas Carlyle, for example,

does it frequently in his writings.[27] In *Hard Times* (1854) Charles Dickens describes the

dreariness of his fictional Coketown.[28] And Morris's comparison of machines to monsters

also recalls the Book of the Machines in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872).[29] However, he

wrote *News from Nowhere* (1890) as a particular, immediate response to Edward

Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), which depicts a utopia that was repugnant to

Morris, where "a machine-life is the best which Mr Bellamy can imagine for us on all

sides," as Morris wrote in an 1889 review (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* 2:

505). In the utopian society he depicts in *News from Nowhere*, machines are only used

when necessary to do unpleasant work (*Collected Works* 16: 97). After the revolution,

"machine after machine was quietly dropped under the excuse that machines could not

produce works of art, and that works of art were more and more called for" (*Collected

Works* 16: 179). Morris's utopian society therefore has lost the necessity for machines,

which are antithetical to artistic creativity.

In Morris's contemporary society commercialism was leading to globalism and

cultural imperialism with a concomitant loss of cultural diversity. He explains how this

---

[27]In "Chartism" (1839), for example, Carlyle writes, "The huge demon of Mechanism smokes and thunders, panting at his great task, in all sections of English land; changing his *shape* like a very Proteus; and infallibly, at every change of shape, *oversetting* whole multitudes of workmen, and as if with the waving of his shadow from afar, hurling them asunder, this way and that, in their crowded march and course of work or traffic; so that the wisest no longer knows his whereabout" (*Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works* 10: 352).

[28]In his fictional town, "the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness" (24).

[29]Morris's daughter May remarks that "Butler's 'Erewhon' was a household word" in their home (*Collected Works* 22: xxvii).

works in "How We Live and How We Might Live":

> [S]o far-reaching is this curse of commercial war that no country is safe
>
> from its ravages; the traditions of a thousand years fall before it in a
>
> month; it overruns a weak or semi-barbarous country, and whatever
>
> romance or pleasure or art existed there, is trodden down into a mire of
>
> sordidness and ugliness; the Indian or Javanese craftsman may no longer
>
> ply his craft leisurely, working a few hours a day, in producing a maze of
>
> strange beauty on a piece of cloth: a steam-engine is set a-going at
>
> Manchester, and that victory over nature and a thousand stubborn
>
> difficulties is used for the base work of producing a sort of plaster of
>
> china-clay and shoddy, and the Asiatic worker, if he is not starved to death
>
> outright, as plentifully happens, is driven himself into a factory to lower
>
> the wages of his Manchester brother worker, and nothing of character is
>
> left him except, most like, an accumulation of fear and hatred of that to
>
> him most unaccountable evil, his English master. The South Sea Islander
>
> must leave his canoe-carving, his sweet rest, and his graceful dances, and
>
> become the slave of a slave: trousers, shoddy, rum, missionary, and fatal
>
> disease--he must swallow all this civilization in the lump, and neither
>
> himself nor we can help him now till social order displaces the hideous
>
> tyranny of gambling that has ruined him. (*Collected Works* 23: 8-9)

This creeping globalization to Morris not only spreads misery but creates a loss of

diversity, obliterating "the traditions of a thousand years" and replacing them with a

homogenous, profit-driven culture.

Not only does the global spread of industrial capitalism create a dull cultural uniformity, but its increasing mechanization is also accompanied by environmental degradation, a topic of special concern to Morris. In "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil" (1884) he bemoans the "smoke, stench and noise" that in his contemporary society "attend the use of elaborate machinery" (*Collected Works* 23: 115). In "How We Live and How We Might Live" he criticizes the "profit which won't take the most ordinary precautions against wrapping a whole district in a cloud of sulphurous smoke; which turns beautiful rivers into filthy sewers" (*Collected Works* 23: 22). And long before he became a socialist he penned these lines in *The Earthly Paradise* (1868):

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
>
> Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
>
>   Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
>
> Think, rather, of the pack-horse on the down,
>
> And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
>
> The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green.[30] (*Collected Works* 3: 3)

Contemporary conditions in his society were all the more unbearable for Morris because he did have a clear vision of an alternative. The apotheosis of all these horrors was embodied to Morris in the United States, an industrial powerhouse helping to lead the charge to the globalization of capitalism. Conditions in America were so bad, we are told

---

[30]Not all observers would agree with Morris that medieval London was "clean." John Kelly, for instance, mentions "the foul London air." According to him, "Even by medieval standards, sanitary conditions in the city were appalling" (211).

in *News from Nowhere*, that even after the revolution, "for nearly a hundred years the people of the northern parts of America have been engaged in gradually making a dwelling place out of a stinking dust-heap; and there is still a great deal to do, especially as the country is so big" (*Collected Works* 16: 98).

Not surprisingly, Tolkien is concerned with many of these same issues. For example, he expresses his fundamental distrust of machinery in a 1944 letter to his son Christopher:

> There is the tragedy and despair of all machinery laid bare. Unlike art which is content to create a new secondary world in the mind, it attempts to actualize desire, and so to create power in this World; and that cannot really be done with any real satisfaction. Labour-saving machinery only creates endless and worse labour. And in addition to this fundamental disability of a creature, is added the Fall, which makes our devices not only fail of their desire but turn to new and horrible evil. So we come inevitably from Daedalus and Icarus to the Giant Bomber. It is not an advance in wisdom! (*Letters* 87-88)

Thus Tolkien, like Morris, finds the use of machinery to be fundamentally flawed: "labour-saving machinery" does not do what it is supposed to do. And like Morris, he contrasts its use to art. However, Tolkien's reasons for distrusting machinery are tied to his Christian beliefs about the Fall. Because humans live in a world that is literally fallen, efforts to "actualize desire" are always bound to fail, unlike the potential of the "new secondary world in the mind." Because evil is present in the world, machines are subject

to be used for increasingly evil purposes. Toward the end of World War II he tells Christopher:

> Well the first War of the Machines seems to be drawing to its final inconclusive chapter–leaving, alas, everyone the poorer, many bereaved or maimed and millions dead, and only one thing triumphant: the Machines. As the servants of the Machines are becoming a privileged class, the Machines are going to be enormously more powerful. What's their next move? (*Letters* 111).

Machines seem to be taking on a life of their own, as represented by the capitalization of *Machine*. Tolkien's vision here is startlingly different from Morris's, where the workers are able through revolution to bring the machines under control.

Although he had no sympathy whatsoever for Hitler or the Nazis, Tolkien was greatly distraught that Christopher was in the Royal Air Force:

> [I]t is the aeroplane of war that is the real villain. And nothing can really amend my grief that you, my best beloved, have any connexion with it. My sentiments are more or less those that Frodo would have had if he discovered some Hobbits learning to ride Nazgûl-birds, 'for the liberation of the Shire'. Though in this case, as I know nothing about British or American imperialism in the Far East that does not fill me with regret and disgust, I am afraid that I am not even supported by a glimmer of patriotism in this remaining war. I would not subscribe a penny to it, let alone a son, were I a free man. It can only benefit America or Russia:

prob. the latter. But at least the Americo-Russian War won't break out for

a year yet. (*Letters* 115)

Tolkien's cynical attitude toward the war seems prophetic now, in light of the

decades of Cold War tensions that followed its ending. His remark here is also interesting

because he expresses his dislike of both British and American imperialism. With Tolkien,

just as with Morris, this imperialism was tied to the increasingly globalism of commerce

and the concomitant loss of cultural diversity. In 1943 he had complained to Christopher:

> The bigger things get the smaller and duller or flatter the globe gets. It is
>
> getting to be all one blasted little provincial suburb. When they have
>
> introduced American sanitation, morale-pep, feminism, and mass
>
> production throughout the Near East, Middle East, Far East, U. S. S. R.,
>
> the Pampas, el Gran Chaco, the Danubian Basin, Equatorial Africa, Hither
>
> Further and Inner Mumbo-land, Gondhwanaland, Lhasa, and the villages
>
> of darkest Berkshire, how happy we shall be. At any rate it ought to cut
>
> down travel. There will be nowhere to go. So people will (I opine) go all
>
> the faster. (*Letters* 65)

This going "all the faster" leads to increasing environmental degradation, a

particular concern of Tolkien's. Complaining of the noise pollution in Oxford, Tolkien

exclaims, "How I wish the 'infernal combustion' engine had never been invented"

(*Letters* 77). To Christopher, he writes, perhaps jokingly, "There is only one bright spot

and that is the growing habit of disgruntled men of dynamiting factories and power-

stations. . ." (*Letters* 64). In 1952 Tolkien sadly tells Rayner Unwin that he is thinking of

moving, even while he also comments about the British testing of the atomic bomb:

> This charming house has become uninhabitable–unsleepable-in,
>
> unworkable-in, rocked, racked with noise, and drenched with fumes. Such
>
> is modern life. Mordor in our midst. And I regret to note that the billowing
>
> cloud recently pictured did not mark the fall of Barad-dûr, but was
>
> produced by its allies--or at least by persons who have decided to use the
>
> Ring for their own (of course most excellent) purposes. (*Letters* 165 and
>
> 443n135.3)

His comment unites the local with the global and expresses as well the moral dilemma of

living in an ugly, fallen world. It also represents Tolkien's cognizance that the machines

of mass production have now become machines of mass destruction.

MORRIS AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES

A knowledge of Morris's and Tolkien's dissatisfaction with their contemporary

societies in necessary to understand their attraction to traditional cultural elements as a

means of rebelling against these societies. They came to regard contemporary art,

literature, and language itself as reflective of the moral and social decay that they saw

around them. Traditional narratives, on the other hand, hearken back to a past in which

society was more integrated and whole. Thus, both Morris and Tolkien came to reject

much of their contemporary, popular, mass-produced culture in favor of cultural elements

from the past that remained untainted by the ugliness of contemporary society.

Because of their classical education, both men had a thorough grounding in Greek

and Latin and could read classical mythology in the original languages. Morris in fact

published translations of the *Aeneid* (1876) and the *Odyssey* (1887).[31] In addition, both

were interested in Old English literature and made translations of *Beowulf*, although

Tolkien's is as yet unpublished. Both also could read Icelandic and were drawn to the

medieval literature of that language, most especially to the story of Sigurd found in the

Völsunga saga. And they both were widely read in contemporary collections of fairy

stories and folktales, notably those of the Brothers Grimm.

But the literature of medieval Iceland fascinated Morris the most. In his case it led

to a fruitful collaboration with Eiríkr Magnússon that resulted in the translation of over a

dozen sagas. Among those that were published in Morris's lifetime were *The Story of*

Grettir the Strong (1869), *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* (1870), and *Three*

Northern Love Stories (1875). Five of the six volumes of the Saga Library (1891-1905)

also appeared before his death; they include several shorter sagas as well as the

Heimskringla. Morris had apparently originally planned for that series to comprise fifteen

volumes, including translations of the *Poetic* and *Prose Eddas* (*Collected Letters* 3: 172-

74nn1 and 4).

Morris's list of "outstanding" books compiled for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1886

shows an incredible range of reading in the areas of myth, legend, folklore, and medieval

literature. He includes several English works, such as *Beowulf*, "The Ruin," "The Exile,"

and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles;* the Middle English *Morte d'Arthur* as well as *Piers*

---

[31]These comprise volumes 11 and 13 respectively of *The Collected Works of William*
Morris.

Plowman and Chaucer; works of Old Norse, such as the *Heimskringla* and "Some half-dozen of the best Icelandic Sagas"; the medieval German *Nibelungennot*; the Finnish *Kalevala*; the Welsh *Mabinogion*, and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Among non-European works he includes *The Thousand and One Nights*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Shah-Nameh* (*Collected Letters* 2: 515-16).[32]

Morris freely drew from these materials in his own works. He was especially attracted to the story of Sigurd found in the *Völsunga saga*. His 1877 epic *Sigurd the Volsung*, which he considered his greatest poetic achievement, is a retelling of that saga, and "The Lovers of Gudrun" from *The Earthly Paradise* is a poetic retelling of the *Laxdœla saga*. Among his other sources for *The Earthly Paradise*, according to his daughter May, are the Arabian Nights, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, classical stories from Lemprière, the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the *Golden Legend* (*Collected Works* 3: xxi-xix). She mentions *Havelok the Dane* as being the source for his romance *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (*Collected Works* 17: xxxix), and the *Mabinogion* as being the source of his poem *Love Is Enough* (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* 1: 443-44).

Morris was also highly familiar with the work of the Brothers Grimm, although he probably read the *Märchen* in English translation.[33] Morris's attraction to the Grimm

---

[32]The Sotheby *Catalogue* listing some of the books Morris owned that were auctioned off after his death reveals a startling range of interest in folklore. Besides possessing copies of most of the above works, either in the original or in translation, he owned collections of Icelandic (3), Scottish (22), ancient Egyptian (26), Persian (81), Russian (82, 83), Eskimo (83), Georgian (83), Indian (83), and Irish (101) legends and folktales (references to the Sotheby *Catalogue* here and elsewhere are to page numbers).

[33]May Morris observes that the beginning of "The Man Born to Be King" in *The Earthly Paradise* "is nearly identical with the Grimm tale of 'The Devil and the Three Golden Hairs'" (*Collected Works* 3: xix). She also remarks that one of Morris's "first attempts at illuminating a

stories and Northern myth and legend in the larger sense is almost certainly related the

his disappointment at the relative scarcity of such narratives in English tradition. In

Morris's opinion given in an 1886 lecture entitled "Early England," this dearth was

historically due to the coming of Christianity and the "shades of Rome":

> As far as our early literature is concerned that was a great misfortune. . . .
> [I]n England . . . the literature was mostly in the hands of the monks. . . .
> [W]e have lost the account of the mythology of the North from the Low
> German branch of the great Teutonic race. . . . Wotan and Woden are but
> names to us. . . . And yet all that pomp of religion [Christianity in the
> Middle Ages] does not make up to me for the loss of the stories I might
> have had of how the folk of Middlesex ate and drank and loved and
> quarrelled and met their death in the 10th century. (*Unpublished Lectures*
> 167-68)

In other words, Morris blames the coming of Christianity for the loss to England of

something he acutely feels is needed, a body of traditional narratives comparable to those

of other Northern peoples, most especially the Icelanders. It is perhaps a desire to remedy

---

book" was in regard to the "Story of the Iron Man" from Grimm (*Collected Works* 9: xix). Her
father also mentions the Grimms' tale of "the Flounder" in an 1888 letter to his other daughter
Jenny and describes it as "very funny" (*Collected Letters* 2: 846)*. In his list of outstanding books
Morris includes as an entry "Collections of folk tales, headed by Grimm and the Norse ones"
(*Collected Letters* 2: 514-17). And one of the characters in Morris's utopian future society in *News
from Nowhere* reveals that "everybody knows the tales" of Grimm, and William Guest discovers
that the hall of Bloomsbury Market is decorated with pictures from at least three tales from the
Grimms', including "the Seven Swans" [possibly Morris means "The Six Swans"], "The King of
the Golden Mountain," and "Faithful Henry" ["The Frog-King"] (*Collected Works* 16: 100).

this situation that guided Morris in his work, prompting him to make his saga translations

and hope his own rendering of the *Völsunga saga* would help popularize "the Great Story

of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks. . .

." (*Collected Works* 7: 285-86).

MORRIS AND COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE

Both Morris and (albeit at a later time) Tolkien were keenly aware of

contemporary scholarly developments in the fields of comparative mythology and

folklore even as they created their own mythologies within the context of, and in some

cases as a reaction against, these cultural and scientific currents. Morris, for example,

also includes Jacob Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology* (*Deutsche Mythologie*, first published

in 1844) in his list of outstanding works (*Collected Letters* 2: 514-17).[34] His mention of

Teutonic Mythology not only shows the high regard he had for that work but also

demonstrates that he was keenly aware of contemporary developments in the fields of

comparative mythology and folklore. In the same letter in which he discusses "The

Flounder" he also mentions Thomas Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*. He corresponded with

the folklorist Alfred Trübner Nutt (*Letters* 3: 312), and at least on one occasion with Max

Müller.[35] In his lecture "Early England" he mentions the pioneer British antiquarian John

Aubrey (*Unpublished Lectures* 161). He also owned a copy of W. A. Clouston's *Popular*

---

[34]He also owned an English translation of this work in three volumes done by J. S. Stallybrass (Sotheby *Catalogue* 44).

[35]Their correspondence seems to have been limited to the topic of protecting ancient buildings and apparently did not involve a discussion of comparative mythology (*Collected Letters* 1: 576).

Tales and Fictions (Sotheby *Catalogue* 23), which was, according to Richard M. Dorson,

"designed . . . as studies in the history of European folktales and comparative folklore"

(259-60). Morris also at least looked at a copy of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.[36]

It is difficult to determine the extent he was influenced by scientific studies of

mythology and folklore, however. In *The Romance of William Morris*, Carole Silver

discusses evidence that she feels proves that Morris's works were heavily influenced by

such contemporary studies. For example, she sees the influence of Müller's solar theory

in *Sigurd the Volsung* and its structural movements from season to season and from night

to day (115-16).[37] Characters such as Face-of-god, the protagonist of *The Roots of the*

Mountains, also reflect the influence of this theory, according to Silver, because of his

name, the fact that he, "[l]ike Sigurd . . . is golden-haired and beautiful," and "many of

his important insights and major tests occur at sunrise" (138-39).[38] Silver also claims that

---

[36] In a 1900 letter Frazer mentions that a friend told him that Morris had seen a previous edition of the work in which the publisher had botched the design on the cover and that Morris had "commented on it [the cover design] unfavourably, and no wonder" (*Selected Letters of Sir J. G. Frazer* 160).

[37]Müller's solar mythology has some resemblance to earlier ideas of Jacob Bryant (1715-1804) and George Faber (1773-1854), who used etymology in their endeavors to prove that all pagan belief systems had a common source, ultimately related to sun worship. Bryant's work influenced William Blake (Hungerford 57) as well as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Beer 66, 217-19).

[38]While Silver's observations are interesting, it is difficult not to suspect that one could use evidence such as hers to find a solar influence in most works of literature. The fact that it could be read into almost anything was one of the strongest criticisms of Müller's theory in the first place, and Müller himself was parodied as a solar hero on at least one occasion ("The Oxford Solar Myth"). It seems more likely that Morris emphasizes natural events such as seasonal changes and the movements of the sun as a reaction to what he sees as a denigration of nature in his contemporary society. In *News from Nowhere*, William Guest is surprised to find that the inhabitants have "that passionate love of the earth which was common to but few people at least, in the days I knew [the nineteenth century]; in which the prevailing feeling amongst intellectual persons was a kind of sour distaste for the changing drama of the year"

"beyond its general similarity to folklore, *The Wood Beyond the World* specifically

resembles *The Golden Bough*" of James Frazer (167), and that Morris was also

influenced by Lewis Henry Morgan, E. B. Tylor, and Andrew Lang, as well as by Frazer

(159). One certainly cannot discount the possibility that Morris was influenced by the

comparative mythologists and anthropologists that Silver mentions.[39] In *Socialism: Its*

Growth and Outcome (1893; originally published as *Socialism from the Root Up* in

Commonweal in 1886-88), Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax discuss the origins of religion

in terms that suggest an evolutionary model: they give an example of a sun-myth

developing into "an allegory of the soul and the divinity" (295), and a footnote refers to

William Robertson Smith, who posited an evolutionary model of the development of

religion (296n1). And in "Architecture and History" (1884), Morris in fact mentions his

interest in the "study of languages . . . especially on the side which, tending toward

comparative mythology, proclaims so clearly the unity of mankind" (*Collected Works* 22:

298). These examples certainly suggest that Morris agreed with at least some of the

conclusions contemporary scholars were drawing about mythology and folklore.

Morris's own religion in fact was an earthly one that did not conflict with his

Marxist beliefs but rather enhanced them. Unlike Tolkien, he apparently was not

---

(*Collected Works* 16: 207).

[39]Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax mention Lewis Henry Morgan in their *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, but their praise is tempered with criticism (20n1). Morris also apparently was familiar with at least some of the work of Lang, since he owned several volumes by him (Sotheby *Catalogue* 24, 45). Lang once wrote a parody of *The Roots of the Mountains* in mock-archaic language for the *Daily News*, but William Clarke says of Morris, "as he cares nothing for critical articles in the papers, he was not in the least affected thereby" (20). Lang (1905) both praises Morris and criticizes his archaic language in his chapter about him in *Adventures among Books* (97-117).

bothered by the results of scholarly inquiry into the realms of myth and folklore. He did, however, at least on some level believe that Northern mythology embodied the truth and on occasion referred to himself as a pagan.[40] Morris's biographer J. W. Mackail has this to say about Morris's beliefs about the religion of the North: "To Morris's mind, at any rate, the philosophy or religion that lived under these half-humanized legends was something quite real and vital: and it substantially represented his own guiding belief" (1: 333). In a written summary of Norse religion that he made around the time he was writing *Sigurd the Volsung*, Morris discusses the death of the gods during Ragnarök and the renewal of the earth that is to follow:

> And what shall be our share in it? Well, sometimes we must needs think that we shall live again: yet if that were not, would it not be enough that we helped to make this unnameable glory, and lived not altogether deedless? Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy: and this also we ourselves may give to the world.
>
> This seems to me pretty much the religion of the Northmen. I think one would be a happy man if one could hold it, in spite of the wild dreams and dreadful imaginings that hung about it here and there (Mackail 1: 334).

While this was written during the 1870s, a lecture he gave in 1887 ("The Early Literature of the North–Iceland"), during what was perhaps the height of his socialist activities,

---

[40]Sidney Cockerell recalls him remarking, "In Religion I am a pagan" (Morris, *Collected Works* 22: xxxii). Charlotte H. Oberg calls attention to this statement in *A Pagan Prophet: William Morris* (168).

demonstrates the continued influence of Northern religion, as he sets forth some of what

he finds to be attractive about this mythology:

> [F]rom the simplicity of the people the Gods are more obviously than in
> other mythologies the reflexion of their worshippers: good-tempered and
> placable though as fierce as you please, with no liking for or indeed
> endurance of servility and no complaisance for cowardice or yielding,
> kind to their friends and hard to their foes it must be said that the Norse
> Gods are distinctly *good-fellows*, and really about the best that mankind
> has made. In one point they are very specially a reflex of the men; that
> though [they] are long-lived they are not immortal, but lie under the same
> fate as mankind. (*Unpublished Lectures* 188-89)[41]

If these gods are indeed "the reflexion of their worshippers," they also seem to reflect

Morris himself and the values he holds important. Morris's idea of "reflexion"

demonstrates the influence of Marx and Engels, who in turn were influenced by Ludwig

Feuerbach.[42] His comments further suggest how he could reconcile his fascination with

---

[41]Compare with Thomas Carlyle's thoughts in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841): "To me there is in the Norse system something very genuine, very great and manlike. A broad simplicity, rusticity, so very different from the light gracefulness of the old Greek Paganism, distinguishes this Scandinavian System. It is Thought; the genuine Thought of deep, rude, earnest minds, fairly opened to the things about them; a face-to-face and heart-to-heart inspection of the things,--the first characteristic of all good Thought in all times. . . . [A] certain homely truthfulness and rustic strength, a great rude sincerity, discloses itself here. . . . [T]hough all dies, and even gods die, yet all death is but a phoenix fire-death, and new-birth into the Greater and the Better!" (*Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works* 12: 23-24, 46).

[42]The year before Morris's lecture was given, Engels in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* had claimed that Feuerbach "proves that the Christian god is only a fantastic reflection, a mirror-image, of man" (36).

Northern mythology and his Marxism: the fact that he perceives these gods to be made by

humans does not detract from their attractiveness, especially to someone who is always

cognizant of and emphasizes the value of useful labor. His ideas of humans as creators of

mythology are interesting to compare to Tolkien's idea that they are sub-creators.

Morris's recreation of Northern religion in his society of *The Roots of the Mountains* is

discussed in the next chapter.

TOLKIEN AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES

As a Christian and devout Catholic, Tolkien certainly does not share with Morris

the idea that religion is totally or even primarily human in origin. Nevertheless, he too,

like Morris, was fascinated from the beginning by traditional narratives and in time came

to be intrigued by the idea of making his own myths. In recounting his early life, he once

remarked in a letter, probably written in 1951:

> But an equally basic passion of mine [to creating languages] *ab initio* was
>
> for myth (not allegory!) and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic
>
> legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little
>
> in the world (accessible to me) for my appetite. I was an undergraduate
>
> before thought and experience revealed to me that these were not
>
> divergent interests–opposite poles of science and romance–but integrally
>
> related. (*Letters* 144)

Tolkien in fact was able to integrate his interests into a successful academic career. As a

reader and subsequently a professor at the University of Leeds (1920-25) and professor at

Oxford (1925-59), he concentrated upon scholarly work in Old and Middle English

literature. His published scholarly works include *A Middle English Vocabulary* (1922);

an edition of *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*, edited by himself and E. V. Gordon

(1925); "Chaucer as a Philologist: The Reeve's Tale" (1934); "Beowulf: The Monsters

and the Critics" (first delivered in 1936), an essay now considered as a classic in the field

of *Beowulf* studies; the preface to the revised edition of John R. Clark Hall's *Beowulf and

the Finnesburg Fragment* (1940); and an edition of the *Ancrene Wisse* (1962). After his

death, his translations of three Middle English poems into modern English were

published in 1975 as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*, and *The

Old English Exodus* appeared in 1981.

In addition to his academic endeavors in Old and Middle English, Tolkien

maintained an ongoing interest in Icelandic literature. At the University of Leeds he and

E. V. Gordon "helped to form a Viking Club among the undergraduates, which met to

drink large quantities of beer, read sagas, and sing comic songs" (Carpenter, *J. R. R.

Tolkien* 112). Subsequently Tolkien formed a reading club at Oxford called the

Coalbiters (*Kolbítar* in Icelandic). This group of dons included, among others, George

Gordon, Nevill Coghill, C. T. Onions, and C. S. Lewis, and met periodically to read sagas

in Old Norse (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 125). The club, which in some ways prefigured

the Inklings, eventually disbanded, but only after "reading all the principal Icelandic

sagas and finally the Elder Edda" (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 152).

Tolkien's classic essay "On Fairy-Stories" (first given as a lecture in 1939), now

considered a classic by fans of his work for the insight it gives into the author's mind and

beliefs about myth-creation, demonstrates even further his remarkable range of reading in medieval literature, mythology, and folklore. The works of medieval English literature that he mentions include *Beowulf*, Layamon's *Brut*, *Sir Gawain*, John Gower's *Confession Amantis* and *Mirour de l'Omme*, and the Arthur legend. Works from the Icelandic include the *Elder Edda* and the *Völsunga saga*. He discusses several tales recorded by the Grimms, including "The Crystal Ball" (*Die Kristallkugel*), "The Goosegirl" (*Die Gänsemagd*), "The Juniper Tree" (*Von dem Machandelboom*), "The Gnome" (*Dat Erdmänneken*), and "The Frog-King" (*Der Froschkönig*), and he also refers to Jacob Grimms' *Teutonic Mythology*. He likewise mentions a wide variety of fairytale and folklore collections, including French (*Cabinet des Fées* and Charles Perrault's *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye*), Gaelic (J. F. Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*), Norse (George W. Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*), and ancient Egyptian (E. A Wallis Budge's *An Egyptian Reading Book for Beginners*). Furthermore, he cites several collections by Andrew Lang, including the *Lilac*, *Blue*, *Green*, and *Violet Fairy Books*.[43]

When asked about his sources by correspondents, Tolkien generally identified traditional works of legend and myth. In a 1938 letter to the *Observer*, Tolkien claimed that much of *The Hobbit* was "derived from (previously digested) epic, mythology, and fairy-story*"* and that "*Beowulf* is among my most valued sources; though it was not consciously present to the mind in the process of writing. . ." (*Letters* 31). To Pauline

---

[43]Of these works, Morris was also especially interested in *Beowulf*, the Arthurian legends, the *Elder Edda*, the *Völsunga saga*, the "Frog-King," *Teutonic Mythology*, and Dasent's and Campbell's collections.

Baynes in 1961 he identifies a line from *Beowulf* as being the source of inspiration for the poem "The Hoard" in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (*Letters* 312). He elsewhere cites *Beowulf* in connection with the origin of the word Orc ("Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*" 171). To W. H. Auden in 1955 he reveals that he derived the Ents of *The Lord of the Rings* from the *eald enta geweorc* of *The Wanderer* (*Letters* 212 , 445n163.2). And, of course, the names and speech of the Rohirrim are represented in the form of Old English, which Tolkien discusses in Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* (1136).

Another important source was the Finnish *Kalevala*, which he tells his son Christopher in a 1944 letter "was the original germ of the Silmarillion" (*Letters* 87). But he especially emphasizes his borrowings from Old Norse literature. He, like Morris, was especially drawn to the story of Sigurd. Concerning *The Hobbit*, he reveals to one correspondent in 1949 that the dragon "Smaug and his conversation obviously is in debt" to "Fáfnir in the late Norse versions of the Sigurd-story," more so than to the dragon in *Beowulf* (*Letters* 134). Elsewhere he refers to Fáfnir as "the prince of all dragons" and confesses that, after encountering this story as a child,[44] he "desired dragons with a profound desire" ("On Fairy-Stories" 135). He tells Rayner Unwin that a passage from his poem "Bombadil Goes Boating" echoes "the otter's whisker" of the *Völsunga saga* (*Letters* 315, 449n237.1). And the name of Gandalf, as well as those of the Dwarves in *The Hobbit*, come from the *Völuspá* in the *Elder Edda* (*Letters* 31, 383).[45]

---

[44]As mentioned above, this was a condensation of Morris's translation.

[45]Tolkien once composed a poem about the Völsung material in the *Elder Edda* in the meter in which many of the Eddaic poems are composed, the *fornyrðislag*. This poem,

Tolkien's remarks indicate that he, like Morris, quite intentionally borrowed from these traditional stories. Just as Morris desired his work to make up for the dearth of these stories in his native England by translating sagas and popularizing the Sigurd story, "which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks" (*Collected Works* 7: 286), [46] Tolkien desired as well to reconnect to a tradition that he felt had become lost in England by borrowing from the corpus of Northern myth, legend, and folklore. He writes, probably in 1951:

> . . . 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. . . . Do not laugh! But once upon a time . . . I had a mind to
> make a body of more or less connected legend . . . which I could dedicate
> simply to: to England; to my country. (*Letters* 144).

It was this desire to give such a body of legend "to England" that led him to begin the original tales of his mythological cycle. Giving thanks to a correspondent in 1956, he writes, "Having set myself a task, the arrogance of which I fully recognized and trembled at: being precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own: it is a wonderful thing to be told that I have succeeded. . ." (*Letters* 230-31).

"Volsungakviða En Nyja," was, according to Humphrey Carpenter, "probably written in the late 1920s or early 1930s," and remains unpublished (*Letters* 379, 453n295.3).

[46]As previously mentioned, Tolkien most likely read these remarks by Morris while attending King Edward's School.

TOLKIEN AND COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE

However, although he had a fascination for these traditional materials, Tolkien had an extreme aversion toward contemporary scientific studies of it. "On Fairy Stories" was in fact a response to the comparative mythologists and folklorists. He begins the essay by carefully distinguishing himself from those who "scientifically" study such tales:

> [O]verbold I may be accounted, for though I have been a lover of fairy-stories since I learned to read, and have at times though about them, I have not studied them professionally. I have been hardly more than a wandering explorer (or trespasser) in the land, full of wonder but not of information. . . . And while he [a traveller] is there it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates should be shut and the keys be lost. (109).

As for scientific studies of these tales, Tolkien has this to say:

> Such studies . . . are the pursuit of folklorists or anthropologists: that is of people using the stories not as they were meant to be used, but as a quarry from which to dig evidence, or information, about matters in which they are interested. . . . [S]tudents of folk-lore are apt to get off their own proper track. . . . They are inclined to say that any two stories that are built round the same folklore motive . . . are 'the same stories'. . . . Statements of that kind may express (in undue abbreviation) some element of truth; but they are not true in a fairy-story sense, they are not true in art or literature." (119)

Unlike Morris, who sees such scholarship providing proof of "the unity of mankind,"

Tolkien protests that these studies completely miss the point about fairy-stories; they are

also heavily subjective and not truly scientifically impartial. Just as he takes to task some

Beowulf scholars for ignoring the literary merits of that epic in "Beowulf: The Monsters

and the Critics," he criticizes the wider tendency to ignore the artistic and literary merits

of all traditional narratives in the quest to find their origins.[47] In the same essay he

criticizes George W. Dasent for engaging in "bogus pre-history" (120) and Max Müller

for having a "view of mythology as a 'disease of language' [that] can be abandoned

without regret" (121), and he characterizes Andrew Lang's series of *Fairy Books* as being

"like stalls in a rummage-sale" (131).

Those who study these stories and forget about the totality of their meaning while

focusing upon particular elements miss the point. The meaning, according to Tolkien, is

much more important than the question of their origins. Debates about whether "similar"

fairy stories owe their origins to independent invention, inheritance, or diffusion can

overshadow the fact that "[T]o an inventor, that is to a storymaker, the other two must in

the end lead back" (121). Tolkien refers to this action of myth creation as *sub-creation*

(122). This term helps to distinguish Tolkien's beliefs about the purpose of myths and

fairy stories from those of others. He discusses several ideas about the origins of these

tales and dismisses the idea that they began as personifications of nature, evolved into

---

[47]In his essay on *Beowulf*, Tolkien mentions "the dust of quarrying researchers," who
have seen the epic poem as "an attractive quarry" for its "historical interest." "*Beowulf*," Tolkien
insists, "is in fact so interesting as poetry, in places poetry so powerful, that this quite
overshadows the historical content. . ." (6-7). He also criticizes those scholars who wish to
characterize it as "a wild folk-tale" (10, 12).

myths, and then degenerated into folktales:

> Personality can only be derived from a person. The gods may derive their
> colour and beauty from the high splendours of nature, but it was Man who
> obtained these from them, abstracted them from sun and moon and cloud;
> their personality they get direct from him; the shadow or flicker of divinity
> that is upon them they receive through him from the invisible world, the
> Supernatural. There is no fundamental difference between the higher and
> lower mythologies.[48] (123)

Tolkien thus rejects the evolutionary model embraced by the comparative folklorists (but
which had largely been supplanted by more recent anthropological studies) and denies
that the origins of myths lie in "primitive" or underdeveloped thought. And his
capitalization of *Supernatural* emphasizes his belief that the power of mythmaking is a
gift from the Creator to all humans, even to those of pre-Christian times. Furthermore,
discussing the tale of Thor in the Elder Edda, Tolkien declares:

> If we could go backwards in time, the fairy-story might be found to
> change in details, or to give way to other tales. But there would always be
> a 'fairy-tale' as long as there was any Thórr. When the fairy-tale ceased,
> there would just be thunder, which no human ear had yet heard. (124)

There can thus be no subhuman or partially human or "primitive" myths: only full
humans, created in the image of God, have the power of sub-creation. Using "scientific"

---

[48]In "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," Tolkien also targets Müller and his
followers when he writes: "The myth has other forms than the (now discredited) mythical
allegory of nature: the sun, the seasons, the sea, and such things" (15).

ideas such as totemism to explain the origin of folktales is therefore ridiculous: a story such as "The Frog-King," where a princess marries a frog, does not owe its origins to a primitive state of consciousness which could actually believe such a thing possible, but is rather there because those who told it realized that "it was so queer and the marriage absurd, indeed abominable" (152).

Iwan Rhys Morus sees Tolkien's ideas about fairy stories to be a reaction against both the comparative mythologists such as Max Müller and the early folklorists such as Andrew Lang. In both cases, Tolkien "is opposing the secular views" of scholars whose conclusions were challenging traditional Christian beliefs. They saw mythology and fairy stories as embodying false beliefs, and their studies, culminating with the work of James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, led to the implication that Christianity was just another false one. Tolkien, however, holds that humans, even pagans, are created in the image of God and have the ability to approach aspects of the truth by replicating the act of creation through the invention of myths. Myths are thus in a sense a means to approach the truth, and the myth of the death and resurrection of Christ is the ultimate true myth (Morus 5-8).

Furthermore, the writer of "successful Fantasy" has the ability to tap into that truth by creating new myths, thus providing "a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth." Tolkien coined a word, eucatastrophe, to denote the "joy" that is "the mark of the true fairy-story (or romance)." He adds that "The peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" ("On Fairy-Stories" 153-55). In a letter probably written in 1951, he elaborates on this Christian theme further:

> After all, I believe that legends and myths are largely made of 'truth', and
>
> indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and
>
> long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must
>
> always reappear. There cannot be any 'story' without a fall–all stories are
>
> ultimately about the fall–at least not for human minds as we know them
>
> and have them. (*Letters* 147)

Additionally, in Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien refers to "folk-tales" as media "where at least a shadow of truth is preserved." (1137). However, his ambivalence toward the conclusions some folklorists drew about folktales and myths perhaps explains why he once wrote, complaining about being identified as a "professor" on a blurb for *The Hobbit,* that "I wish I could be rid of the 'professor' altogether. . . . It gives a false impression of 'learning', especially in 'folklore' and all that" (*Letters* 366-67).

Tolkien, however, found it interesting that a poem of his, "Errantry," was becoming a part of living folklore. He discovered in 1952 that this poem was circulating in an oral tradition when a correspondent in search of its origins wrote him for help. He told Rayner Unwin that

> I must say that I was interested in becoming 'folk-lore'. Also it was
>
> intriguing to get an oral version–which bore out my views on oral tradition
>
> (at any rate in early stages): sc. that the 'hard words' are well preserved,
>
> and the more common words altered, but the metre is often disturbed
>
> (*Letters* 162).

Tolkien goes on to theorize about how this poem, which was first read to a literary club and

later published in 1933[49], entered the oral tradition. Humphrey Carpenter mentions that in a 1966 "letter on the subject of the oral transmission of 'Errantry', Tolkien noted that 'a curious feature was the preservation of the word *sigaldry*, which I got from a thirteenth-century text'" (*Letters* 44 n133.3). His comments reveal a keen interest in and knowledge about folkloric processes, despite his protestations of a lack of expertise in this field.

And in fact, in many ways, Tolkien as author takes the position of Tolkien as ethnographer. Certainly in the manner they are composed his works sometimes betray an influence from folklorists and anthropologists. For example, the appendices at the end of *The Lord of the Rings* are reminiscent of the scholarly notes found in some collections of folklore. They contain much information about the inhabitants of Middle-earth and their legends that could be described as ethnographic, as does his prefatory material concerning Hobbits and the Shire. Jane Chance in fact writes that "Professor Tolkien the historian in the appendices and prologue to *The Lord of the Rings* also acts like an Andrew Lang in collecting, classifying, and organizing historical and philological information about a nonexistent species and world. . ." (*Tolkien's Art* 31).

MORRIS AND LANGUAGE

Morris and Tolkien share an attitude toward language that is often remarkably similar and important to take note of, since their view of language is closely tied to their views about mythology, folklore, and ultimately literature. Both men believed that they in some sense

---

[49]It later appears in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962), where Tolkien presents it as having been written by Bilbo Baggins (8).

lived in a "fallen" world. While Tolkien certainly believed that the world was fallen in a

Christian sense, both he and Morris also believed it had fallen in a social sense from a better

(at least in some aspects) medieval past into a modern society that was ugly and ultimately

dehumanizing. This belief reflected a larger current of thinking that had become widespread

in Western culture ever since its origins in eighteenth-century German romanticism and

nationalism. Both men felt this decline had been made manifest in an English language that

had also become "fallen" or corrupted. In an 1885 letter Morris writes:

> You see things have very much changed since the early days of language:
>
> once everybody who could express himself at all did so beautifully, was a
>
> poet for that occasion, because all language was beautiful.[50] But now
>
> language is utterly degraded in our daily lives, and poets have to make a
>
> new tongue each for himself: before he can even begin his story he must
>
> elevate his means of expression from the daily jabber to which centuries
>
> of degradation have reduced it. (*Collected Letters* 2: 483)

His view underscores the need to find origins–the pure form of language. He

elaborates further in a lecture given on December 12, 1886, entitled "Early England." As

a direct contrast to contemporary Victorian society, he argues that the Anglo-Saxons

> bore with them a literature, unwritten of course, but fragments of which
>
> having been afterwards written down are still left us: and doubtless these
>
> early poems at least, in which language is uncorrupted and has not yet

---

[50]Compare with Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry*: "In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry; and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful. . ." (781).

learned to speak with the double tongue, reflect the mind of the people

which produced them; the epic of Beowulf is worthy of a great people for

its sincerity of language and beauty of expression, and nowhere lacks the

epic quality of putting clear pictures before the readers' eyes; nor is there

anything in it coarse, ignoble, or degrading; on the contrary it breathes the

very spirit of courageous freedom: to live is good and to die is good if you

are valiant and faithful and if you reckon with great deeds and the fair

fame that comes with them of more account than a few more short years of

a trembler's life upon the earth. This is the simple ethic of our forefathers,

and in these poems [it] is so set forth that it is clear they really believed it

and that in consequence life amidst all its sufferings and hardships was a

continuous poem to them.[51] (*Unpublished Lectures* 163)

Once, then, language, Old English in particular, reflected "sincerity" and "beauty of

expression" and "the simple ethic of our forefathers," demonstrating Morris's view of the

close connections between language and morality.

Seen in this light, Morris's use of archaisms is an attempt to "rise above the daily

jabber" that he felt was antithetical to the poetic spirit. His view that the English

language had degenerated reflects a current of thought that was also prevalent among

---

[51]Some of Morris's thoughts here are again reminiscent of Carlyle's. In *Past and Present* (1843), for example, Carlyle writes: "The hands of forgotten brave men have made it [literature] a World for us. . . . This English land, here and now, is the summary of what is found of wise, and noble . . . in all the generations of English Men. Our English speech is speakable because there were Hero-Poets of our blood and lineage." And later, "Our Speech, in these modern days, has become amazing. . . . To us all serious speech of men . . . has become jargon, more or less insane" (*Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works* 13: 164-65, 189). For Carlyle's influence on Morris's idea of the heroic, see Barbara Yvonne Gribble's dissertation listed in the bibliography.

philologists during the nineteenth century. John Mitchell Kemble, for example, had

argued that language increasingly became more arbitrary with the passage of time,

distancing its speakers from its original "true forms." Contemporary English had become

"mechanical" and alienated from its original "meaning":

> It is only in "old languages like Anglo-Saxon" Kemble complained to W.
> B. Donne, that "the metaphorical uses of language have not overlaid the
> original system and vital vigour, and the metaphysics are readily
> comprehended. . . . [*L*]*anguage in its spontaneous period is sensous*,
> which golden law write up in any Etymological Dictionary you possess.
> When a tongue becomes dead like the English of our own day, Society
> keeps the key to its coffin!" (Wilson 36)

In the preface to his 1846 compendium of Anglo-Saxon readings for beginning

students, Benjamin Thorpe elaborates upon this theme by quoting from a favorable

review of another book of his by "C. P. S." in *Dolman's Magazine* of the previous year:

> Let our English youth of both sexes be taught to drink deeply of the well
> of English undefiled. . . . The greatest harm that was ever inflicted on the
> English language came from Johnson, who in giving English endings to
> long-drawn Latin words, foolishly thought to impart dignity of style to his
> writings by words big, not with meaning, but with sounding emptiness. . . .
> [O]ur young men have to be taught to follow our best and latest writers,
> and always to choose an Anglo-Saxon word before a Latin one. When this
> shall be done, then may we look forward to a bright period in our

country's literature. We shall have our ears charmed with a flow of sounds

as strong as they are sweet and beautiful, instead of, as often now happens,

being wearied with a namby pamby gibberish made up of Greek, Latin,

and French words with English endings. (*Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* v-vi)

It is quite possible that Morris read this preface at some point; he certainly was closely

familiar with other works by Thorpe (find source).[52] At any rate, his own philosophy of

translation, as related by Eiríkr Magnússon,[53] seems to reflect the ideas in the preface:

[W]hile Middle English literature is markedly coloured by the use of

Romance words, Morris's poetry and his narrative prose are as markedly

Teutonic. He often used to say that the Teutonic was the poetical element

in English, while the Romance element was that of law, practice and

business. . . . [He frequently denounced] it as something intolerable to

have read an Icelandic saga rendered into the dominant literary dialect of

the day–the English newspaper language. . . . [T]he Homeric dignity of the

saga style. . . . cannot be reached by the Romance element in English. If it

is to be reached at all–and then only approximately–it must be by means

of the Teutonic element in our speech–the nearest akin to the Icelandic.

(*Collected Works* 7: xvii-xviii)

Morris himself in 1886 goes further and specifically blames the influence of French for

---

[52]Several works by Thorpe that Morris owned are listed in the Sotheby *Catalogue*, including *Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1842 [102]), *Northern Mythology* (1851-52 [102]), and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1861 [2]).

[53]May Morris does not indicate when Magnússon sent these remarks to her.

the degradation of English:

> [L]iterature also became Frenchified and here to its great misfortune as I
> think. The great works of the English poets ever since Chaucer's time
> have had to be written in what is little more than a dialect of French and I
> cannot help looking on that as a mishap. If we could only have preserved
> our language as the Germans have theirs . . . . (*Unpublished Lectures* 177)

This echoes the sentiments expressed by Morris elsewhere in his letters and lectures; evidently he felt that loan words from French had diluted the English language and contributed to its degraded state. Morris was certainly not alone in this view during the nineteenth century: Thomas Carlyle, for example, tended to favor words of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic derivation in his writings (Chapman 195-96), and he may have directly influenced Morris, who admired his work. At any rate, Morris's views about the degeneration of the English language had a profound effect upon his translations, causing him to privilege words of Anglo-Saxon origin over those borrowed into English from the Romance languages. Chauncey B. Tinker notes Morris's tendency to avoid Latinate words in his rendering of *Beowulf* (107), and P. M. Tilling observes that Morris in his translation tends to use words derived from French only "where there is no obvious alternative derived from Old English," adding that, according to Magnússon, "Morris resented Romance words" (166-67).

This carried over into Morris's own works. In his romances, including *The Roots of the Mountains*, Morris created a prose style that was decidedly archaic and privileged words of Anglo-Saxon origin over Latinate ones. A perfect example is the verse

prefatory to *The Roots of the Mountains*:

> Whiles carried o'er the iron road,
>
> We hurry by some fair abode;
>
> The garden bright amidst the hay,
>
> The yellow wain upon the way,
>
> The dining men, the wind that sweeps
>
> Light locks from off the sun-sweet heaps–
>
> The gable grey, the hoary roof,
>
> Here now–and now so far aloof.
>
> How sorely then we long to stay
>
> And midst its sweetness wear the day,
>
> And 'neath its changing shadows sit,
>
> And feel ourselves a part of it.
>
> Such rest, such stay, I strove to win
>
> With these same leaves that lie herein.

Of the ninety-three words here, only nine (*carried*, *garden*, *dining*, *gable*, *aloof*, *changing*, *part*, *stay*, and *strove*) are derived from French or Latin, and three of those (*garden*, *gable*, and *strove*) are actually ultimately of Germanic origin. This represents a use of words of Latinate origin at a frequency of about ten percent, a percentage that is dramatically lower than that typically used in English.[54]

---

[54]One might also compare the opening lines of Morris's "Apology" to *The Earthly Paradise* (1868):
> Of Heaven and Hell I have no power to sing,
> I cannot ease the burden of your fears,

If we make a linguistic comparison between this and the opening prose lines from

The Roots of the Mountains–

> Once upon a time amidst the mountains and hills and falling streams of a
>
> fair land there was a town or thorp in a certain valley. This was well-nigh
>
> encompassed by a wall of sheer cliffs; toward the East and the great
>
> mountains they drew together till they went near to meet, and left but a
>
> narrow path on either side of a stony stream that came rattling down into
>
> the Dale: toward the river at that end the hills lowered somewhat, though
>
> they still ended in sheer rocks . . . (*Collected Works* 15: 1)

–we also see a similar tendency to privilege words of Anglo-Saxon origin over those

borrowed from Latin and its descendent Romance languages, most notably French. Here

only seven words (*mountains* [twice], *certain*, *valley*, *encompassed*, *river*, and *rocks*) out

of ninety are of Latinate origin.

TOLKIEN AND LANGUAGE

Tolkien also was antipathetic toward the French language, writing in 1958 that ". .

> Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
> Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
> Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
> Or hope again for aught that I can say,
> The idle singer of an empty day.

Out of a total of fifty-nine words here, only four–*have*, *ease*, *pleasure*, and *past*–are ultimately of Latinate origin–appearing at a frequency of less than ten percent. This example also illustrates the fact that, rather than being a practice he adopted after his exposure to Icelandic literature, Morris's proclivity for using words of Anglo-Saxon origin is apparent even in his earlier literary efforts.

. I dislike French. . ." (*Letters* 288). However, he does not extend this dislike to every Romance language, declaring in 1967, "I have . . . a particular love for the Latin language, and among its descendants for Spanish" (*Letters* 376). Nevertheless, his own preference for English words of Anglo-Saxon origin can be illustrated by the famous verse that begins *The Lord of the Rings*:

> Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
>
> Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
>
> Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
>
> One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
>
> In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
>
> One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
>
> One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
>
> In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie. (*The Lord of the Rings* v, 50)

Out of the fifty-seven words in these lines, only one, "Mortal," is of Latinate origin. Although it is quite different in tone from the verse opening *The Roots of the Mountains* (the appearance of *shadows*, however, in both is intriguing), the same pattern of using words of Old English origin is apparent.[55]

While the percentage of Latinate words in the prose sections of *The Lord of the Rings* is certainly greater than that of the Rings Verse, one can still easily find passages consisting primarily of words from Old English, as the first paragraph from the chapter

---

[55]Tom Shippey has also observed that *The Lord of the Rings* "does its best to avoid Latinisms" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 5).

"Helm's Deep" demonstrates:

> The sun was already westering as they rode from Edoras, and the light of it
>
> was in their eyes, turning all the rolling fields of Rohan to a golden haze.
>
> There was a beaten way, north-westward along the foot-hills of the White
>
> Mountains, and this they followed, up and down in a green country, crossing
>
> small swift streams by many fords. Far ahead and to their right the Misty
>
> Mountains loomed; ever darker and taller they grew as the miles went by.
>
> The sun went slowly down before them. Evening came behind. (526)

Of the ninety-four words in this passage, only seven (*turning*, *rolling*, *Mountains* [twice],
country, *crossing*, and *miles*) are ultimately of Latinate origin, a frequency of well under
ten percent. Furthermore, the ancestral forms of three of those (*turning*, *crossing*, and
miles) entered the English language during the Old English period. Thus, if we make a
linguistic comparison between this passage and the introductory lines of *The Roots of the
Mountains*, we find not only a similar tendency to assign active verbs to natural objects
(which will be discussed in chapters three and four), but also a similar tendency to
privilege words of Anglo-Saxon origin.

The reason Tolkien found the archaic diction in Morris's romances to be
noteworthy has to do with the similarities both men had in attitude toward modern
English, which they regarded as a fallen tongue. Tolkien confesses to W. H. Auden in
1955 that modern English is "very remote from my personal taste" (*Letters* 214). He also
expresses this hostility satirically when he writes to his son Christopher that

> Col. Knox says says 1/8 of the world's population speaks 'English', and

that is the biggest language group. If true, damn shame–say I. May the

curse of Babel strike all their tongues till they can only say 'baa baa'. . . . I

think I shall have to refuse to speak anything but Old Mercian." (*Letters*

65).

Tolkien, at least in the beginning, modeled his own writing style heavily upon

Morris's, as his 1914 letter indicates. And he, like Morris, has been criticized quite

frequently for his style and literary diction. In 1954, responding to criticism of his archaic

style in *The Lord of the Rings*, he wrote of

the pain that I always feel when anyone–in an age when almost any

auctorial manhandling of English is permitted . . . immediately dismisses

out of court deliberate 'archaism'. . . . But a real archaic English is far

more *terse* than modern; also many of things said [in *The Lord of the*

Rings] could not be said in our slack and often frivolous idiom. . . .

(*Letters* 225-26)

Tolkien thus reveals his antipathy toward modern English as a literary medium. He

continues by claiming that "there would be an insincerity of thought, a disunion of word and

meaning" and that it would be "far more bogus than the actual 'archaic' English that I have

used" to put contemporary language into the mouth of a king depicted in a heroic age,

arguing that "such 'heroic' scenes do not occur in a modern setting to which a modern

idiom belongs." Tolkien "can see no more reason for not using the much *terser* and more

vivid ancient *style*, than for changing the obsolete weapons, helms, shields, hauberks into

modern uniforms." And in justifying an example of inverted word order he comments:

[I]f modern English has lost the trick of putting a word desired to emphasize (for pictorial, emotional or logical reasons) into prominent first place, without addition of a lot of little 'empty' words (as the Chinese say), so much the worse for it. And so much the better for it the sooner it learns the trick again. And *some* one must begin the teaching, by example. I am sorry to find *you* affected by the extraordinary 20th.C. delusion that its usages *per se* and simply as 'contemporary'. . . have some peculiar validity, above those of all other times. . . . (*Letters* 225-26).

Tolkien here is obviously privileging the use of "archaic English" and making several substantial claims for it in the process: it is more flexible, "terser," and "more vivid"; modern English, on the other hand, is "slack and often frivolous" and contains "a lot of little 'empty' words." Most importantly, however, he claims that conveyance of the heroic is not possible through the medium of modern English. Since he has, however, "set myself a task . . . to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own" (*Letters* 230-31), it is necessary to turn to another medium, that of "archaic English." In other words, to create the world Tolkien desires, one in contrast to contemporary England, he must create an idiom in contrast to contemporary English.

LANGUAGE, MYTH, AND TRUTH

For Tolkien, the making of myths is inextricably tied to language. "It was just as the 1914 War burst on me," he writes, "that I made the discovery that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the

'legends' which it conveys by tradition." Esperanto and other constructed languages are

therefore "far deader than ancient unused languages, because their authors never invented

any Esperanto legends" (*Letters* 231). Presumably, the lack of contemporary legends in

England could mark English as being moribund as well; truly, if England had lost its

legendary traditions, the loss would almost certainly be related to developments in

modern English, from Tolkien's standpoint. Thus, the recreation of this tradition would

have to involve a recreation of language, and in Tolkien's case, also the creation of

invented languages, especially the Elvish ones. Writing about himself in 1968, he

declares: "The imaginary histories grew out of Tolkien's predilection for inventing

languages. He discovered . . . that a language requires a suitable habitation, and a history

in which it can develop" (*Letters* 375). He also elsewhere claims that he ultimately

created his mythology to provide a vehicle for the Elvish languages he had constructed

and that "the making of language and mythology are related functions" ("A Secret Vice"

210).

Ultimately, of course, for Tolkien as well as Morris, the creation of myths is

associated with truth. Around 1951 Tolkien told a correspondent that "[m]yth and fairy-

story must, as all art, reflect and contain in solution elements of moral and religious truth.

. ." (*Letters* 144). The ultimate truth for Tolkien is the Evangelium, the story of the birth

and resurrection of Christ, one that is "high and joyous. Because this story is supreme;

and it is true. Art has been verified." The happy endings of all fairy tales ultimately point

to this true myth ("On Fairy-Stories" 156).

Like Tolkien, Morris also regarded writing in the genre that is now termed

fantasy as a means of approaching the truth. He approaches this topic in an 1889 address:

> As for romance, what does romance mean? I have heard people mis-called
> for being romantic, but what romance means is the capacity for a true
> conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present. I
> think that is a very important part of the pleasure in the exercise of the
> intellectual faculties of mankind which makes the most undeniable part of
> happiness. (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* 146-47)

In *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, Morris and E. Belfort Bax criticize the French
literature of the eighteenth century for portraying characters who were "sham" and
"bundles of unconscious unreality" (132). For Morris, then, true literature must reflect
the truth of history that romance reflects. In 1880 he had written in "The Beauty of Life":
"With that literature in which romance, that is to say humanity, was re-born, there sprang
up also a feeling for the romance of external nature, which is surely strong in us now,
joined with a longing to know something real of the lives of those who have gone before
us. . ." (*Collected Works* 22: 59). Here again we find Morris linking romance with the
"real" as well as the rebirth of humanity. While Morris's idea of truth is certainly
different from Tolkien's, he still often casts reality in moralistic terms of "true" and
"false," criticizing the sham and hypocrisy in society around him. For example, in
"Monopoly: or, How Labour is Robbed" (1887) he rails against the "sham literature,
sham art, sham enjoyment, newspapers, advertisements, jubilees, and all kinds of
disgraces" of his contemporary society (*Collected Works* 23: 251).[56] "[W]e Socialists," he

---

[56]Morris's hatred of sham also shows a Carlylean influence (Gribble 268-72).

writes in the *Commonweal* in 1886, "say that in the true society which we are striving to realize, honesty and mutual respect will become so habitual that the very meaning of these commandments [the Ten Commandments] will have grown dim to us" (*Political Writings* 206). And in this "true" society, there will be a "true" literature worthy of it, as he predicts in 1888:

> Surely here again all will be changed, and our literature will sympathize with the earlier works of men's imagination before they learned to spin out their own insides like silkworms into dreary yarns of their sickly feelings and futile speculations; when they left us clear pictures of living things, alive then and for ever. We shall not desire and we shall not be able to carry on the feverish and perverted follies of the art and literature of Commercialism. (*Political Writings* 339)

The literature of the future is thus a return to the past. And Morris almost certainly saw his own efforts as a contribution to "true" literature.

TRUTH AND THE ELEMENTS OF FOLKLORE

Proverbs, an important facet of folklore, play a prominent place in Morris's romances[57] as well as in Tolkien's mythical world. These include the appropriation of English proverbs as well as the creation of "pseudo-proverbs." Although no one seems to have studied Morris's use of proverbs, they are numerous and prominent in his romances

---

[57]That Morris's interest in proverbs was intentional is suggested by his possession of a 1659 folio copy of James Howell's *Proverbs, or Old Sayed, Sawes and Adages in English, Italian, French, and Spanish, whereunto the British are added* (Sotheby *Catalogue* 71).

as well as his political writings. Morris typically refers to them as "old saws." For example, in *News from Nowhere*, William Guest mentions that he has heard that "a woman is as old as she looks," and follows up with "the old saw is proved right again" (*Collected Works* 16: 19). Later in the work Hammond uses a proverb to make a point about the formerly bad days of capitalism: "You know that according to the old saw the beetle gets used to living in dung; and these people whether they found the dung sweet or not, certainly lived in it" (*Collected Works* 16: 94). In *The Well at the World's End*, the knight of Higham angrily tells Ralph during a tense standoff that "ye have strengthened the old saw that saith, Tell me what thy friends are, and I will tell thee what thou art" (*Collected Works* 19: 186). In *The House of the Wolfings*, the Roman Captain, when dealing with his foes, muses to himself, "let us remember the old saw that saith 'a bridge of gold to a fleeing foe,' and let them depart with no more hurt of Romans"(*Collected Works* 14: 134). In *The Roots of the Mountains*, we find Face-of-god delivering to the Bride "the message of an old saw": "to-morrow is a new day" (*Collected Works* 15: 162-63). Later Face-of-god relates in council that the inhabitants of the Dale "remember the old saw, "Grief in thy neighbour's hall is grief in thy garth" (*Collected Works* 15: 249). The characters in Morris's romances clearly tend to turn to "old saws" during times of decision or change. Wolfgang Mieder's observation about the importance of proverbs certainly holds true for Morris's characters as well: "Proverbs fulfill the human need to summarize experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs" (1).

Unlike Morris's use of proverbs, Tolkien's has been studied by several scholars.

Michael N. Stanton, for example, lists about seventy proverbs, pseudo-proverbs, and proverbial expressions in *The Lord of the Rings*. They provide "a means of teaching its various groups of characters more about one another, and . . . underwrite . . . the wisdom or truth of what simple people say" (331). Stanton notes that some of Tolkien's proverbs are drawn straight from English ones, some are modified to suit the needs of the story (such as "All that is gold does not glitter"), and some are found only in Middle-earth (333). A variation of his classification probably would be applicable to Morris's proverbs as well, and it is highly possible that Tolkien's proclivity to create proverbs in his fiction may have been influenced by Morris's use of them in his romances.

Tom Shippey discusses Tolkien's use of one proverb in *The Road to Middle-earth*:

> Tolkien was perhaps amused by the proverb 'Where there's a will there's a way'. It is not recorded till 1822, but would have sounded much the same in Old English. He made it into a line of alliterative poetry, accordingly,, in *LOTR*, p. 787, 'Where will wants not, a way opens'. 'Where there's a whip there's a will', say the orcs, *LOTR*, p. 910. In the Old Norse *Hanðismál* there is a discouraging variant, *Illt er blauðom hal brautir kenna*, 'It's no good showing a coward the road', or as I would put it, 'Where there's no will there's no way'. (379n6)

Shippey's remarks indicate the complexity of studying Tolkien's use of proverbs. Tolkien was undoubtedly familiar with the daily use of this proverb, may have conceived how it would have sounded in Old English, and was probably aware of cognate proverbs

in Old Norse, all simultaneously. He therefore playfully creates these variants for *The Lord of the Rings.*

Tolkien apparently also often used proverbs in everyday speech, to judge by the frequency with which they appear in his published letters. These proverbs seem to follow the pattern that Stanton has noted. Many of the proverbs and proverbial sayings are common English ones which he uses in specific everyday situations. Those in his published letters include expressions such as "giving the devil his due" (93), "it seems to have come out pretty well in the wash (141), "they wanted to have their cake without eating it" (151), "it never rains but it pours' (181). In many cases Tolkien modifies common English proverbs, sometimes creating anti-proverbs, some of which are drawn from the Bible and works of literature. For example, commenting about nations that were trying to remain "neutral" between the Western and Soviet blocs, Tolkien wrote that "they are between the devil and the deep sea all right (and you can stick which D you like on to which side you like)" (89). In another letter he mentions his longing for landscapes full of "space" and "barrenness" and that "of course; man cannot live on stone and sand, but I at any rate cannot live on bread alone" (91).[58] In another, discussing the uncertainty of the origin of the word "hobbit," Tolkien exclaims, "Oh what a tangled web they weave who try a new word to conceive!" (407).[59] And in a variation on the expression "to pile Pelion on Ossa,"[60] Tolkien writes in response to a generous gift of whisky from a

---

[58]Cf. Matthew 4:4.

[59]Cf. Sir Walter Scott's "Oh what a tangled web we weave, / When first we practise to deceive!" from *Marmion*, canto vi, stanza 17.

[60]Originally *Imponere Pelio Ossam*–Virgil, *Georgics*, i. 281.

correspondent, "You pile Weathertop on Erebor, as Bilbo might have said, with your other generosities" (430).

Tolkien in his letters apparently also coins sayings that seem proverbial and that seem to take on the functions of traditional proverbs. In speaking of an ordinary day he writes, "otherwise life is as bright as water in a ditch" (92). In another he writes that "the good are often stumbling blocks" (92)[61]. He also developed a propensity to use proverbs he had created in his works in his letters to correspondents. The quotation from Gandalf, "He that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (*Letters* 414),[62] has already been mentioned in chapter one. In another letter, while declining to help a different correspondent with "an academic project," he repeats this proverb, as well as another from *The Lord of the Rings* (in a somewhat annoyed tone): "Do not meddle in the affairs of Wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger" (*Letters* 424).[63]

 Tolkien additionally employs songs that resemble ballads, another important form of folklore, in his works, as does Morris. Their attraction to these traditional songs is closely tied to their dislike of contemporary music, which they felt represented the degradation of society. Dillon Bustin summarizes Morris's attitude toward music thus:

> Morris was not a musician, but he held strong convictions about music
>
> history and musical taste. In his opinion, style began to be debased with

---

[61]Cf. Ecclesiasticus 39:29-30

[62]Cf. "We murder to dissect"–Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," line 28, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

[63]Anti-proverbs based upon this one by Tolkien have become rife on the World Wide Web: "Do not meddle in the affairs of programmers . . . ," for example.

the invention of counterpoint at the close of the Middle Ages. He detested

most Romantic composers, particularly Wagner. He disliked the piano,

preferring more venerable instruments such as the violin and lute, and

more ancient forms such as plainsong. He collected texts of folk ballads.

(25)

Bustin also calls attention to remarks Morris made in an 1891 address (26), where Morris

declares that

in the Art of Music what the 'unsophisticated' person takes to is not the

fine works of Art, but the ordinary, commonplace, *banal* tunes which are

drummed into his ears at every street corner. That is natural. In other

words, there is a tendency for all people to fall under the domination of

tradition of some sort; and the fine tradition, the higher tradition, having

disappeared, men will certainly fall into the power of the lower and

inferior tradition. (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* 1: 307)

For Morris, therefore, the degeneration of society has been accompanied by the

degeneration of music. Seen in this light, Morris's interest in traditional forms of music

like plain song and ballads is not surprising. His biographer, J. W. Mackail, notes that "he

and Burne-Jones adhered for a long time, of going to sing plain-song at the daily morning

services in St. Thomas's Church. . . . [T]hey belonged to the plain-song Society which

practised regularly. . ." (1:66). In Morris's list of outstanding books he includes "The

Danish and Scotch-English Border Ballads" (*Collected Letters* 2: 516). He also once

admitted to a student that he was strongly influenced by "our own Border Ballads"

(Mackail 1: 198), and some of his own poems were adaptations from "Icelandic and Danish ballads" (Mackail 1: 288). According to May Morris, Sidney Cockerell noted in his diary that, among the books that Morris had considered printing with his Kelmscott Press, was "Some Mediaeval English Songs and Music" (*Collected Works* 24: xv).[64]

> In his 1887 lecture "Feudal England," Morris praises the medieval ballad poetry of the people, wholly untouched by courtly elegance and classical pedantry; rude in art but never coarse, true to the backbone; instinct with indignation against wrong, and thereby expressing the hope that was in it; a protest of the poor against the rich, especially in those songs of the Foresters, which have been called the mediæval epic of revolt. . . . Half a dozen stanzas of it are worth a cartload of the whining introspective lyrics of to-day; and he who, when he has mastered the slight differences of language from our own daily speech, is not moved by it, does not understand what true poetry means nor what its aim is. (*Collected Works* 23: 52)

It is worth noting that these ballads not only are "of the people" but exist in a language different "from our own daily speech." Morris illustrates the spirit of revolt he finds attractive in an especially striking scene in *A Dream of John Ball,* where a ballad singer offers to sing

---

[64]Morris's especial interest in these songs is reflected by his ownership of several works listed in the Sotheby *Catalogue*: Robert Jamieson's *Popular Ballads and Songs from Tradition* (47), J. Wilson McLaren's *Scots' Poems and Ballants* (64), Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* (100), and a complete ten-volume set of Fr. J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (27). He also owned collections of Swedish and Danish folksongs (28, 101).

a stave of Robin Hood. . . . And he fell to singing in a clear voice .

. . My heart rose high as I heard him, for it was concerning the

struggle against tyranny for the freedom of life . . . of the taking

from the rich to give to the poor; of the life of a man doing his own

will and not the will of another man commanding him for the

commandment's sake." (*Collected Works* 17: 224)

The spirit of protest in these ballads almost certainly inspired Morris when he composed

his own political songs. His first, "Wake, London Lads!", which J. W. Mackail describes

as "a stirring ballad," was written for a protest meeting in 1878 and "distributed in the

hall and sung with much enthusiasm" (1: 351). Some of his later socialist poems

appeared in a pamphlet entitled *Chants for Socialists* (1885). One of them, "The March

of the Workers," also shows influence from another tradition: it follows the meter of

"John Brown's Body" (*Collected Works* 24: xxxii-iii), a song with folk origins in

America. A postmodernist reader of *News from Nowhere* would look in vain in this world

of the future for syncopated, synthesized, and sampled music, finding instead that the

inhabitants enjoy listening to Welsh folk-songs (286). Ballad-like songs also play an vital

role in the structure and content of his romances such as *The Roots of the Mountains*.

Tolkien also tended to prefer traditional types of music to what he saw as the

degraded popular music of his time, much of which was emanating from America. In

1944 in a letter to Christopher he predicts "one certain result" of the war will be:

a further growth in the great standardised amalgamations with their

mass-produced notions and emotions. Music will give place to

jiving: which as far as I can make out means holding a 'jam

session' round a piano (an instrument properly intended to produce

the sounds devised by, say, Chopin) and hitting it so hard that it

breaks. This delicately cultured amusement is said to be a 'fever'

in the U. S. A. O God! O Montreal! O Minnesota! O Michigan!

(*Letters* 89).

Popular music therefore is repugnant to Tolkien because of its "mass-produced notions

and emotions," which are ultimately artificial and banal. He later expresses sympathy

with Christopher for having to endure listening to "Jive and Boogie-Woogie," which he

characterizes as "essentially vulgar, music corrupted by the mechanism, echoing in

dreary unnourished heads" (*Letters* 111). And in 1964 he complains of a neighbor who is

"a member of a group of young men who are evidently aiming to turn themselves into a

Beatle Group. On days when it falls to his turn to have a practice session the noise is

indescribable. . ." (*Letters* 345).[65]

In reaction to the banality of the popular music he was surrounded with, and

which he associated with mechanization, Tolkien remained interested in traditional

musical forms. According to Tom Shippey, Tolkien was probably familiar with Lowry

Charles Wymberly's *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (*The Road to Middle-

earth* 347). Tolkien quotes three stanzas from the Scottish ballad of "Thomas the

Rhymer" near the beginning of his essay "On Fairy-Stories" (110). He also wrote thirteen

---

[65]One can only imagine the depths of Tolkien's horror if he were aware of trends
in popular music that have taken place since his death.

songs, including some in Old English and Gothic, that were privately printed in *Songs for the Philologists* (1936). They were meant to be set to the tunes of several traditional English songs, including "The Carrion Crow," "The Mermaid," "The Vicar of Bray," and "The Fox Went Out." (Hammond and Anderson 293-94). The mention of these tunes indicates that Tolkien had quite a wide knowledge of traditional English songs. Furthermore, he sings a version of the one to the tune of "The Fox Went Out" on a recording made in 1952 that was released in 1975 as *J. R. R. Tolkien Reads and Sings from His* The Hobbit *and* The Fellowship of the Ring (*The Annotated Hobbit* 73-74n17). Moreover, he once told Clyde S. Kilby that "Elvish ought not to be read but sung" and then proceeded to chant a passage "in a slow and lovely intonation" (Kilby 26-27).

Ballads are intricately associated with the beginnings of Tolkien's mythological cycle. During the nineteenth century the idea of *Liedertheorie* was influential. It originated with F. A. Wolf, who proposed that epics such as those of Homer began as "short, independent, anonymous, nonliterate" ballads that were fused into a whole by an individual poet–in this case, Homer. In line with this idea, Elias Lönnrot created the *Kalevala*, the national epic of the Finns, from individual, traditional Finnish songs, although he apparently believed he was "reassembling" an epic. Tom Shippey implies that Tolkien may have been influenced by *Liedertheorie* and the example of the *Kalevala*, a work he much admired, as he composed his own mythological cycle ("Tolkien and the Appeal of the Pagan" 148-49). Shippey also points to a passage in Carpenter's biography where Tolkien discusses the *Kalevala* ("Tolkien and the Appeal of the Pagan" 158). As recorded by Carpenter, Tolkien, "read[ing] a paper on the *Kalevala* to a college society," says:

These mythological ballads . . . are full of that very primitive undergrowth

that the literature of Europe has on the whole been steadily cutting and

reducing for many centuries with different and earlier completeness

among different people. . . . I would that we had more of it left–something

of the same sort that belonged to the English. (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*

67)

And Tolkien's perception of the composition of the *Kalevala* is further illuminated in his

characterization of it as "the Finnish ballads" in a 1914 letter (*Letters* 7).[66] This

perception was almost certainly related to the form of composition of his mythological

material, for he forthrightly tells W. H. Auden in 1955 that "the beginning of the

legendarium . . . was an attempt to reorganize some of the Kalevala . . . into a form of my

own" and mentions that, at least for a period, it was done in verse (*Letters* 214-15). In

fact, Tolkien associates music itself with creativity, as is evident by his creation story in

The Silmarillion, the *Ainulindalë,* where the World is created by the Music of the Ainur

(the Holy Ones), who "fashion the theme of Ilúvatar [God] to a great music" (15). Songs

of course also play a significant role in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Morris and Tolkien use other folkloric elements in their works as well. The

riddles in *The Hobbit* are one famous example. But in fact, the entire legendarium of

Tolkien, conciously or unconciously, came to resemble a vast corpus of folkloric

material. In his foreword to *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien discusses its changes

through time. While its "large narrative structure" went through "relatively little change,"

---

[66]This also happens to be the first of the two published letters where he mentions Morris.

> [I]t was far indeed from being a fixed text . . . while the same legends
>
> came to be retold in longer and shorter forms, and in different styles. As
>
> the years passes the changes and variants, both in detail and in larger
>
> perspectives, became so complex, so pervasive, and so many-layered that
>
> a final and definitive version seemed unattainable. (vii)

In fact, this is exactly how the oral process works in authentic, living, folklore, creating constant change and abundant variations in its elements. Not only is this process a characteristic of Tolkien's work but also of the characters he creates. Verlyn Flieger has noted the importance of the oral tradition as a whole for the characters in Tolkien's works; for example, some "composed [songs] orally" (*Interrupted Music* 62). This tradition, however, is equally important for the characters in Morris's stories, especially those who live in the preliterate past, such as the Goths in *The House of the Wolfings* and the peoples of *The Roots of the Mountains*.

A PROBLEM OF DISCERNMENT

Of course, no matter how much they hearkened back to tradition, neither Morris nor Tolkien were truly able to escape the strictures of their own times, and both were influenced by contemporary ideas and events even as they interpreted the past. Morris in fact claims to look at the past not as a means of escape but rather a way of understanding how a better future could unfold. In 1893, writing the Preface to Robert Steele's *Medieval Lore*, he declares that:

> at the present time those who take pleasure in studying the life of the

Middle Ages are more commonly to be found in the ranks of those who

are pledged to the forward movement of modern life; while those who are

vainly striving to stem the progress of the world are as careless of the past

as they are fearful of the future. (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*

1: 287-88)

Morris certainly considers his socialist ideals to be on the side of "progress," but he is

also never completely able to escape from the English upper-class worldview. And

Tolkien, although he frequently denounces tragic world events and the negative trends of

his contemporary times, nevertheless betrays in his letters a keen interest in and

knowledge of those same current affairs. Moreover, his sophisticated understanding of

linguistics and "pagan" mythology is one that no one in the medieval period would likely

have had.

Nevertheless, the fact that both Morris and Tolkien immersed themselves in and

drew inspiration from many of the same sources of myth, legend, and folklore raises a

serious problem for a study like this: how does one distinguish influences from Morris in

Tolkien's writing from influences from traditional materials that are affecting both

authors simultaneously? Richard Purtill raised this question in 1974 when, after noting

similarities in the work of the two men, perceptibly warned that "Tolkien need not have

learned this generalizing style from Morris. Both were influenced by Northern saga and

Old English literature" (206). Tom Shippey, one of the most important Tolkien scholars,

also raised this issue in 1980, when he noted that the influence of such an unorthodox

writer as Morris is "more than usually hard to prove." After mentioning several elements

of Tolkien's work that were almost certainly influenced by Morris, Shippey warns: "However Tolkien could read sagas and romances as well as Morris (indeed rather better), so that when one sees similarity it may not be descent from one to another, but rather descent of both from some centuries-old common source" (Introd. to *The Wood beyond the World* xvii). While one might take issue with Shippey's privileging the knowledge of Tolkien over Morris, the concern he raises is legitimate. The remainder of this dissertation will be an attempt to deal with and solve this perplexing problem. In particular, Morris's specific and distinctive use of the elements of myth and folklore, along with archaic language and semantic constructions, to create the reality of *The Roots of the Mountains* is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

The Roots of the Mountains, like its prequel, *The House of the Wolfings*,

represents another attempt by Morris to use elements and techniques from traditional

narratives of the past in order to create his own mythic past. Unlike *Wolfings*, however,

Roots takes place in a setting and time that lie outside known geography and history. Its

length and large number of characters are features that would prepare the way for

Tolkien's much longer and involved work. Its fictional societies would also have an

important impact upon Tolkien as he created his own. The characters of its good

societies, the Burgdalers and their allied peoples, are beautiful, generous, brave, and

harmonious, in contrast to the society of the Dusky Men, who are ugly, foul, evil, and

predatory. Women are accepted as warriors in the good societies and play important roles

in the narrative, and their depiction would influence Tolkien in his portrayal of Éowyn.

The good characters of *Roots* are also pagans who have benign characteristics, unlike the

Dusky Men who practice human sacrifice. Morris attempts to recreate the atmosphere of

this mythic past by using archaic words, syntax, and semantics according to specific

patterns. He also gives detailed descriptions of natural features and imparts living

characteristics to them in order to revivify nature. These elements in *Roots* will find clear

echoes in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In response to those who might despair that all the patterns of fairy-stories had

been "all discovered by men long ago," Tolkien replies, "that is not true. The seed of the

tree can be replanted in almost any soil, even in one so smoke-ridden (as Lang said) as

that of England ("On Fairy-Stories" 145). Morris certainly attempts to plant another such

a seed with *Roots*. This work both represents a response to the void he perceives in

England's traditional literature caused by the Norman invasion as well as an attempt to

reverse the decline of language by further experimenting with a new literary style,

invigorated with archaic features, that would be freed from the degradation into which

contemporary language had fallen. He takes the alternating prose and poetry style of the

Prose Edda and other Icelandic works, modifying it in the process and using it to

underscore the vast sense of depth in time and cultural continuity that lies behind his

fictional society. The various peoples he describes in ethnographic terms reflect his ideas

about the importance of cultural diversity, and the details of their cultural beliefs and

practices contribute to the believability of this romance. To create the fictional world of

Roots, Morris combines elements from history, legend, and folklore along with

geographic knowledge from his Icelandic travels in 1871 and 1873. He also uses a

taxonomy of archetypal, folkloric-related names to reify its topography and in the process

turn it into a concrete, realistic geography. With *Roots*, Morris attempts to fuse form,

style, content, and background into a seamless whole that reflects the worldview of its

people, one greatly separated in distance and time from his own contemporary England..

As we shall see, Tolkien found many characteristics of *Roots* to be noteworthy and

memorable.

Roots[67] was published in November of 1889. J. W. Mackail has this to say about Morris's delight in his finished work:

> "I am so pleased with my book," Morris said soon after it was published, "–typography, binding, and I must say it, literary matter–that I am any day to be seen huggling [sic] it up, and am become a spectacle to Gods and men because of it." As to the "literary matter," he said afterwards that this of all his books was the one which had given him the greatest pleasure in writing. (2: 227)

Roots was intended to be a sequel to *The House of the Wolfings,*[68] which had been published in the December of the previous year. Both works deal in subject material with the Goths. *Wolfings* tells of their resistance to the Romans and is set in "Central Europe in the second or third century," according to Mackail (2: 213). May Morris describes this era of "tribal life on the verge of Roman conquest" as "a period which had a great fascination" for her father, "who read with critical enjoyment the more important modern studies of it as they came out" (*Collected Works* 14: xxv). *Roots* tells of their descendants during a time period that "can hardly be later than the seventh century," Mackail claims (2: 214).

 The House of the Wolfings marks an important milestone in Morris's work, for it is written in prose alternating with verse. Mackail notes that its style "was suggested by

---

[67]Its complete title is *The Roots of the Mountains wherein Is Told Somewhat of the Lives of the Men of Burgdale, Their Friends Their Neighbours Their Foemen and their Fellows in Arms*.

[68]Its complete title is *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and All the Kindreds of the Mark Written in Prose and in Verse*.

the Icelandic Sagas, but used in a fresh and quite delightful way" (2: 214). Much of the important dialog is in poetry, with some in song. The author strikingly and quite successfully uses it to evoke the aura of the distant past. The poetry demonstrates Morris's contention, previously mentioned, that in the heroic past, "life amidst all its sufferings and hardships . . . was a continuous poem" (*Unpublished Lectures* 163). *Wolfings* also evokes the aura of that time period by its use of archaic language, and compound expressions including kennings such as are used in *Beowulf* and Norse literature appear: "hammer's leavings" (23), "fire's thrall," "spear-rain" (99), "sword rampart (103), "harvest of the sword" (108) "war-sea" and "steel spray" (128).[69]

Its story takes place in a location that seems to be central Germany. The Goths live in clearings in a forest along a river called the Mirkwood. They farm and raise livestock, live communally, own slaves (thralls), and from time to time engage in warfare. They worship gods who have the same names as those found in the Norse Eddas and believe heroes who die in battle go to Valhall (Valhalla). The protagonist, Thiodolf, a mighty warrior descended from a god, leads his people to resist a Roman incursion. His lover, who is a valkyrie, gives him a magical hauberk made by a dwarf for protection. Thiodolf discovers, however, that wearing the hauberk interferes with his ability to function as a war leader and leads to defeat in battle. He therefore rejects the hauberk and gives his life for his people, who completely crush the Roman army and thus ensure that their way of life will continue.

---

[69]All page references in this paragraph pertain to volume 14 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

The tone of its sequel, however, is quite different from that of *Wolfings*, partly because Morris decided to use a different narrative structure for *Roots*. Soon after he began working on it, he told his daughter: "This time I don't think I shall 'drop into poetry' at least not systematically. For one thing the condition of the people I am telling of is later, (whatever their date may be) than that of the Wolfings" (*Collected Letters* 3: 24). In fact, however, *Roots* also uses an alternating structure of prose and verse, but the verse is less frequent than in *Wolfings* and it occurs in the form of song. Morris's language is still rich with archaisms. The inhabitants of the Dale are described in ethnographic detail, and they do seem more technologically and socially advanced than the Wolfings: they have writing, for example, and build bridges, walls, and towers; they also own no slaves.

But the most important difference between the two works is how the author treats history and geography. The action and characters of the *Wolfings* can be related to real historical personages and events. The Roman Empire and its repeated attempts to invade the regions of Germany are historically documented, and the peoples mentioned, such as the Goths, Gauls, and Burgundians, were historical groups. Moreover, the names of the characters in *Wolfings* match or resemble those of real or legendary Norse and Anglo-Saxon personages: Elfric, Thorkettle, Viglund, Asbiorn, Thorolf, Athalulf. The time period of the romance can be pinpointed quite exactly, too, since, after the utter defeat of the Romans, we are told by the narrator that "about this time they began to stay the spreading of their dominion, or even to draw in its boundaries somewhat" (*Collected Works* 14: 208).

In contrast, *Roots* seems to fall outside known history and time. The location of

the setting, the Dale and its neighboring lands, does not appear to match any historically

known locale, and its characters do not suggest those of any concrete historical period.

Although they are presumably meant to be Goths living somewhere in Eastern Europe,

no definite information identifying them as such is ever given in the romance. The reader

is told that there are cities in the plains to the west, including the "City of Cities," but if

the city is meant to be Rome or Constantinople, this fact is never mentioned. Also, the

characters bear names that often seem archetypal and do not seem to reflect historical

personages: Face-of-God, the Sun-beam,[70] Bow-may, Wood-father, Folk-might. The gods

they worship do not bear attested Norse names, but instead are called the God of the

Earth, the Face, the Wolf, among others. The economy and social organization of the

people often seems medieval, but Christianity is strangely absent. In addition, the

romance often has a fairy-tale atmosphere.

In fact, while writing *Roots*, consciously or otherwise, Morris began creating the

modern fantasy novel. May Morris seems to realize its nature as a distinctive and

transitional work when she comments that, while it has "the atmosphere of the Sagas. . .

[,] its delicate poetic detail and the measure of unconcealed emotion that is allowed to its

personages, does no doubt verge on the methods of the later romances. . ." (*Collected

Works* 14: xxv). Certainly its happy ending, much unlike the heroic ending of *The

Wolfings*, brings it within the realm of the fairy tale as defined by Tolkien.

Morris had come to a point in his life where he felt the need to enter the realm of

---

[70]Morris generally places the definite article in front of her name.

fairy tale and find solace there. J. W. Mackail directly associates Morris's return to

romance with his discouragement with the state of the socialist movement. He quotes

from a letter written by Morris to Georgiana Burne-Jones, where Morris admits that he is

"a little dispirited over our movement in all directions" (1: 205-6). Although he lectured

energetically for the Socialist League in 1889, he was increasingly becoming dissatisfied

with the direction toward anarchism the organization was taking, and would resign from

the League in November of 1890 (*Collected Letters* 3: xxvii-iii, xxx). Many other things

were going wrong in his personal life as well. His close friend Charles Faulkner, with

whom he had once traveled to Iceland, had become paralyzed; his younger daughter,

Jenny, was incapacitated by recurring epileptic fits; and his wife, Jane, had for quite a

while been romantically involved with the poet William Scawen Blunt. Norman Kelvin,

the editor of *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, observes that "Morris probably did

write his last romances out of need: need to write of young heroes beloved by women

descended from natural, kind, and beautiful Ellen of *News from Nowhere*, descended, that

is, from the woman who loved Morris's undisguised alter ego, Guest" (*Collected Letters*

3: xxviii). Although *Roots* chronologically precedes *News from Nowhere*, Kelvin's

comment holds the same relevance for it as well.

Written during a transitional period in Morris's life, *Roots* marks another

noteworthy change: Morris's interest in book production. He had already chosen the type

for *The House of the Wolfings*, "modelled on an old Basel fount," and he was so pleased

by the result that "he could not bear for a while to hear any adverse criticism even on the

demerits of the type" (Mackail 2: 213). For *Roots*, he not only chose the type, which

resulted in "a page of great beauty," according to Mackail, but also selected "one of his own chintzes" for the binding of "a small number of copies of the book printed on hand-made paper." Mackail notes that "his interest in the production of printed books was now fully aroused on all its sides; and he was already beginning to plan out the printing and production of such books himself" (2: 227). His interest would result in the foundation of his own famed Kelmscott Press, which began printing books in January 1891, and which allowed Morris the opportunity to oversee all details of the printing process, including the creation and selection of type, bindings, illustrations, and maps. In many ways his involvement in the production process of *Roots* prefigures Tolkien's involvement with his own publisher, who allowed him an enormous amount of input into cover and jacket designs, illustrations, and maps of his works.

The book was published by Reeves and Turner in November of 1889. Morris happily writes to his sister Emma on November 21 that "The Book, *the* Book seems to be selling well" (xii). However, he must have been disappointed by the several reviewers who parodied his work. An example appeared in the November 20, 1889 issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, written in mock-*Roots* style. It began: "A goodly book in sooth it is which William the Hall-Bedecker, by some called the Folk-Fellowship-Furtherer, and by others Will o' the Wildgoose-Chase, hath put forth in these days to gladden this our winter-tide withal." The anonymous reviewer suggested that the book might put the reader to sleep:

> [A]fter plodding manfully on for the space of haply two turnings of the
> hour-glass we were ware of a sudden lightness and giddiness besetting us,
> and did forthwith begin to skip and gambol from leaf to leaf, even as a

> grasshopper skippeth from blade to blade in the meadow. The voice of the
>
> tale-teller became first as a strange babbling, then as a hum, then as a
>
> drone, in our ears, until at last the abovesaid skipping grew utterly needful
>
> lest we should be quelled and overcome by an exceeding great drowsiness.

By most accounts Morris was indifferent to reviewers, but perhaps because of his

fondness for *Roots*, he seems to have been disturbed by this particular review, referring in

a November 28 letter to "the chap in the P. M. G. (whose head I should like to punch)"

and calling him "that fool" (*Collected Letters* 3: 131 and 132n1).

TITLE, STRUCTURE, PLOT, AND CHARACTERIZATION

The phrase "the roots of the mountains" is, according to Richard Mathews, "an

old colloquial way of speaking about foothills—and significantly, a commonplace rather

than an upper-class phrase" ("William Morris's *Roots*" 70). However that may be, it was

certainly used by several prominent authors during the nineteenth century, including Lord

Byron and John Henry Newman. The idea that mountains could have roots seems to be

an ancient one. The phrase *radices montis* appears frequently in Latin literature; Caesar

uses it in his *De bello Gallico*, Livy does so in *De urbe condita*, and the Latin Vulgate

contains several instances of it.[71] English usage of the expression may possibly have been

reinforced by the Authorized Version of the Bible.[72] However, the *Younger* (*Prose*) *Edda*

---

[71]For example, Exodus 19:17 and 24:4. However, the meaning more properly may be "foot" here.

[72]Job 28:9 reads: "He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots." A phrase in Jonah 2:6 (2:7 in Catholic versions) in some recent English translations has been rendered "the roots of the mountains" (New American Standard Bible, New

also contains the phrase, which is one of the six improbable items used by the dwarfs to make the fetter that binds the Fenris wolf (94). This fetter, named Gleipnir, was made from "the noise of a cat's footsteps, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain,[73] the sinews of a bear, the breath of a fish, and the spittle of a bird" (40). Using Gleipnir, the gods were able to bind the wolf through trickery, although the god Tyr lost his right hand as a result. Morris certainly was familiar with the *Prose Edda* and quite likely became intrigued by the phrase as he found it there. Not only would the phrase have appealed to his imagination, it also suggests the idea of mountains having the qualities of living beings.

Roots contains around 154,000 words, substantially more that *The House of the Wolfings*, and is divided into fifty-nine chapters with titles that often find echoes in Tolkien's later work: "New Tidings in the Dale,""The Ending of the Gate-thing," "Of the Great Folk-mote: Men take rede of the War-faring, the Fellowship, and the War-leader. Folk-might telleth whence his People came. The Folk-mote sundered," "Of the Hosting in Shadowy Vale," and "Departure from Silverdale" are all titles that seem strongly reminiscent of Tolkien's.[74] In form, *Roots* follows a pattern of alternating prose and poetry. Eighteen out of a total of twenty-three of the verses are songs, many more than is found in *Wolfings*. Morris admits in a somewhat elliptical fashion where the idea of alternating prose and poetry originated when he tells a correspondent in November 1888

International Version, New American Bible).

[73]In the original, *rótum bjargsins*.

[74]The capitalization here follows that of the table of contents.

that *Wolfings* "is written partly in prose and partly in verse: but the verse is always spoken by the actors in the tale, though they do not always talk verse; much as it is in the Sagas, though it cannot be said to be formed on their model" (*Collected Letters* 2: 836). In fact the verse sections, which often allude to legends of the past, in tone sometimes resemble those of the *Younger* or *Prose Edda*, which uses allusions to legends from the *Elder Edda* as interludes in its prose. These allusions impart to the work a sense of great depth in time. The structure of the Prose Edda probably ultimately had some influence upon both the structure of *Roots* as well as its own sense of depth in time. Tom Shippey, although he does not mention Morris, discusses the similar sense of depth in Tolkien's work (*The Road to Middle-earth* 229-35, 308-17).

The story itself of *Roots* takes place in the Dale, which is located at the Roots of the Mountains that nearly encircle it. The inhabitants belong to three different groups of people, the Burgdalers, the Shepherds, and the Woodlanders, all of whom speak the same language but are culturally somewhat different. The protagonist, Face-of-god, also called Gold-mane, discovers another group of distantly related peoples in the mountains, the Kindred (or Children) of the Wolf, who warn him of an impending attack by the Dusky Men, a horde of evil warriors from the East. The Dalesmen unite with each other and the Kindred of the Wolf to annihilate the Dusky Men and reclaim Silverdale, the homeland taken from the Kindred of the Wolf, as well as freeing the people of Rosedale, the home of a people of a different language who had been subjugated and cruelly enslaved by the Dusky Men.

Roots contains a large number of characters; approximately seventy are named

(although a few of these are dead), and new characters such as Gold-may are introduced

up until nearly the end of the romance. Although some of the characters are only

mentioned briefly, others periodically reappear and play important roles in the plot.

Traditionally, characters in most medieval literature, romances, and folktales are rather

one-dimensional and evidence little psychological insight or development, for the most

part. This also holds true for most of the characters in *The House of the Wolfings*: for

example, the protagonist, Thiodolf, does not hesitate to refuse to wear the enchanted

hauberk when he discovers that its use of it leads to defeat for his people, and thus

willingly goes to death in order to save them. The choice seems clear-cut to him and does

not cause a moral dilemma.[75]

Most of the minor characters in *Roots* are similarly conceived; they frequently

reflect the stock character of the brave warrior. However, unlike *Wolfings*, several of the

characters in *Roots* have personalities that are more complex because they face real moral

dilemmas. These are primarily caused by a choice that Face-of-god (Gold-mane) has

made: although he is engaged to marry a woman of his people named the Bride, he falls

in love with a woman of the Children of the Wolf, the Sun-beam, and determines to

marry her instead. His choice has repercussions for the remainder of the romance. He is

haunted by feelings of remorse and concern for the feelings of the Bride, and he breaks

into tears on at least one occasion. He wonders if Stone-face is correct when the latter

suggests that he has been ensnared by a wood-wight. When he receives the mistaken

---

[75]The Wood-sun, a valkyrie who is Thiodolf's lover, is the only character who truly faces
a moral dilemma. She first tries to deceive Thiodolf about the nature of the hauberk, but
subsequently tells him the truth, only to lose him forever as she had feared.

news that the Bride has been killed, he throws himself back into the battle, acting quite recklessly. At the end of the story he must give his second-born child to the Bride to raise, as promised, partly as an atonement for his actions.

Several other characters are also dramatically affected by his decision. The Bride, after a period during which she comes to the painful realization that Gold-mane no longer loves her, voluntarily frees him from his obligation. She also saves him from the necessity of publicly announcing it by instead proclaiming it herself, making it appear as if she calls off the wedding. At the same time, she announces that she will fight in battle for her people. Folk-might, the Sun-beam's brother, falls in love with the Bride, and becomes so angry at Gold-mane for his treatment of her that he tries to kill him when they meet at the hall on the mountain; this act creates tension between the two characters, who must remain allies in their fight against the Dusky Men. Iron-face, the father of Gold-mane, becomes so wrathful at his son that he draws a sword upon him at an assembly, the Gate-thing, a serious violation of the mores of this people, and must later make atonement for his act. The Sun-beam finds her relationship with the Bride to be quite awkward, and she also bears guilt because she ensnared Gold-mane with her beauty, not because she loved him at first, but as a calculated attempt to enlist him the cause of protecting her people. Happily, however, everything works out all right in the end, since the Sun-beam in reality falls in love with Gold-mane, and everyone winds up with the right spouse: Gold-mane with the Sun-beam and Folk-might with the Bride.

Morris's details in plot and characterization have had some detractors, nonetheless. For example, L. Sprague de Camp, although speaking of *The Well at the*

World's End, characterizes "Morris's technique" as "another locust took away another grain," and warns that "the reader may weary" of it (44). Nevertheless, the great detail that Morris goes into in plot, characterization, and topography in his romances actually heightens their realism and believability to a careful reader. Robert Steele lavishly praises *Roots* as "perhaps the finest story of primitive Northern life ever written. In this romance the poet touched the high-water mark of his prose style: its archaisms, if such there be, are exactly necessary for the expression of his thought, and the narrative itself is exciting and well-planned" (Vallance 369). Tolkien certainly found much to emulate in its details.

The society of the Dalesmen is more advanced than that of their ancestral Goths. For example, the houses of the kinsfolk no longer bear animal names (111);[76] this possibly represents a progression from totemism. Unlike the Wolfings, the Burgdalers live in a walled town, build bridges and towers, and make use of writing. And also unlike the Wolfings, they practice neither human sacrifice nor slavery. They still are beset by periodic wars: one old man, Fork-beard of Lea, declares that if he survives the present war with the Dusky Men, that he "shall have lived through five" (285). Their society has no lords (14), although it is presided over by six dale-wardens and the Alderman, whose position is hereditary. The men meet in assemblies such as the Gate-thing (165) and the Folk-mote and tend to decide questions democratically through consensus. Face-of-god, despite being the Alderman's son, does manual labor such as "fetching wood and water" and "sweeping out the hall" (76), "driving a bull into a goodman's byre" (91), and

---

[76]Unless otherwise indicated, the remaining page references in this chapter pertain to volume 15 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

"deal[ing] with the lambs and ewes" (97). He warns Sun-beam that when they are married she must not expect him to always live the life of a glorious warrior:

> For thus it shall not be. When I drive the herds it shall be at the
> neighbours' bidding whereso they will; not necks of men shall I smite, but
> the stalks of the tall wheat, and the boles of the timber-trees which the
> woodreeve hath marked for felling; the stilts of the plough rather than the
> hilts of the sword shall harden my hands; my shafts shall be for the deer,
> and my spears for the wood-boar, till war and sorrow fall upon us, and I
> fight for the ceasing of war and trouble. (140)

Morris gives many other details of their customs, including one where men are expected to kiss all women's hands (39), the contests of women (29) and men (105), their writing with runes (64), their washing before meals (106), their drinking from horns (107), their burial practices (90), their customs for settling disputes (64, 281), and their wedding customs (397-98). The Burgdalers are hospitable to guests (36, 86), are courteous and have good manners (202), and hold stingy people in low esteem (64). They treat the thralls who have escaped from the Dusky Men kindly, and "their hearts were moved to pity" by the sad condition of Dallach, a runaway thrall whom they encounter (192). In many ways they live in an idyllic society. Face-of-god tells Sun-beam about the life she can expect in Burgdale:

> And thou wottest of our people that there is little strife and grudging
> among them, and that they are merry, and fair to look on, both men and
> women; and no man there lacketh what the earth may give us, and it is a

saying amongst us that there may a man have that which he desireth save

the sun and moon in his hands to play with. . . . (140)

Their society is much the same as the utopian one Morris would describe in *News from*

Nowhere: a good and just society is reflected by kind, beautiful, and just people.

The Dusky Men, however, who threaten this society, represent its obverse. Their

totally negative characteristics are opposed to the (mostly) positive characteristics of the

Burgdalers and their allies, who are generally loyal, brave, and kind to guests. Their

physical appearance reflects their nature as well. They phenotypically differ from the

people of the Dale; they are "grim and hideous . . . to look on" (195), and "short of

stature, crooked-legged, long-armed, very strong for their size: with small blue eyes,

snubbed-nosed, wide-mouthed, thin-lipped, very swarthy of skin, exceeding foul of

favour" (88).[77] The Sun-beam characterizes them as "short of stature, crooked of limb,

foul of aspect" (112). Hall-face characterizes them as "dusky foul-favored men" (154).

As these examples illustrate, the word *foul* is quite frequently associated with them: they

cause their thralls to live a "foul life" (213), they commit "foul deeds (188), and the

buildings they use become "befouled" (355). However, even though they are "foul," they

go to war "clad in gay raiment," which happens to make them easy targets for arrows.

The Dusky Chief is described as "very gaily arrayed, with gilded scales all over him, so

that, with his dark face and blue eyes, he looked like some strange dragon" (334).

The Dusky Men are organized into "Dusky Companies or Tribes" (205). Their

---

[77]According to Florence Boos, Morris derived many elements of the appearance and customs of the Dusky Men from Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (329-30).

society lacks harmony, for they "are much given to man-slaying amongst themselves" (195) Unlike the Dalesmen, they have a hierarchal society, including chieftains and lords, and their thralls are treated cruelly by their masters. Because their thralls "die fast," they must make fresh conquests to procure more thralls (205). This is necessary because the Dusky Men disdain work. The former thrall Dallach tells Face-of-god what had happened after they took over Rosedale:

> [T]hey had no mind to till the teeming earth or work in the acres we had given them, or to sit at the loom, hammer in the stithy, or do any manlike work; it was we that must do all that for their behoof, and it was altogether for them that we laboured, and nought for ourselves; and our bodies were only so much our own as they were needful to be kept alive for labour. (195)

They frequently torture their thralls and even mutilate their bodies (200). Dallach describes one of their sadistic entertainments: "it was a sport of the Dusky Men to set a match between their thralls to fight it out with sword and buckler or otherwise; and the vanquished man, if he were not sore hurt, they would scourge, or shear some member from him, or even slay him outright. . ." (203-4).

The narrator associates the word *torment* with them on around seventeen different occasions. Upon first encountering Dallach, Gold-mane notices "marks of stripes on his back and sides," which were the signs of "tormenting and scourging" (190). Other former thralls, the Runaways, tell him that "the Dusky Men took no delight save in beholding torments and misery" (204). Two thralls whose master has been slain express fear, "for if

they fell into the hands of the dusky Men, and their master missing, they should first be questioned with torments, and then slain in the evillest [sic] manner" (317). Face-of-god had previously warned the Burgdalers of their threat:

> [These] foemen are now of a mind to fall upon this Dale and destroy it, as they have done with others nigher to them. And they will slay our men, and lie with our women against their will, and enthrall our children, and torment all those that lie under their hands till life shall be worse than death to them. (173)

Not only do they Dusky Men enjoy inflicting pain, they seem to hate beauty as well. Those they have conquered, says Folk-might,

> all bear grievous pains daily; for the Dusky Men are as hogs in a garden of lilies. Whatsoever is fair they have defiled and deflowered, and they wallow in our fair halls as swine strayed from the dunghill. No delight in life, no sweet days do they have for themselves, and they begrudge the delight of others therein. Therefore their thralls know no rest or solace; their reward of toil is many stripes, and the healing of their stripes grievous toil. (135)

The Dusky Men "have no women of their own" (136), and therefore must procure women either through kidnapping, purchase, or conquest. The Sun-beam relates that they "used all women whom they took as their beastly lust bade them. . ." (112). The children of these unions tend to resemble "the race of their begetters. Of the men-children they reared most, but the women-children they slew at once; for they valued not women of

their own blood. . ." (303). This out-of-kilter society thus demonstrates its cruelty further

by its practice of female infanticide. This of course is totally unlike the society of the

Burgdalers, who, as previously mentioned, value their women to the extent that every

man must kiss the hand of each woman he meets according to custom (39). The Dusky

Men's treatment of women stands as a stark contrast to the marriage customs of the

people of the Dale and the Children of the Wolf.

The practice of human sacrifice adds to their list of unwholesome customs. They

are in fact preparing to sacrifice victims when the Burgdalers and Kindred of the Wolf

launch their surprise attack (323-25). The attackers by way of contrast had only sacrificed

animals, "hallowed beasts all garlanded with flowers," to their own gods (291).

These unsavory warriors are frequently referred to as *felons*. Gold-mane calls

them "murderous Folk" (173), and Dallach emphasizes their evil nature when he calls

them "devils" (190) and compares them to trolls (195). In fact, the word *evil* or variants

thereof is used about seventeen times in association with the Dusky Men. For instance,

Stone-face says they have "the aspect of the evil men who over-ran the kindreds of old

time" (169). When the Burgdalers first encounter Dallach, he introduces himself as "the

runaway thrall of evil men" (190). The narrator implies that they are the cause that the

"threat of evil overhung the Dale" (232). Bow-may refers to them as "evil things" (239).

Bow-may's comment shows how these men are often characterized in nonhuman

terms. The characters continuously dehumanize them by referring to them in terms of

animals. Gold-mane compares them to insects when he declares that his people will

destroy them "as lads a hornet's nest" (152). Another character calls them "pests of the

earth" (175). Gold-mane furthermore characterizes them "as venomous as adders, as fierce as bears, and as foul as swine" (152). The narrator describes them as "long-armed like apes" (339). In battle we find them "baying and yelling like dogs" (346), with the last ones about to meet their death "howling like dogs, and chattering like apes" (352-53). In keeping with their beastly nature, the Kindred of the Wolf hunt them in the woods.

They are represented as mocking others; they "mock . . . their bed-thralls," for example (208). Even as they are about to die, they "with shrieking laughter mocked at the overcomers. . . . [,and] With that last mock," they die (356). They also curse; when they first realize the onset of the attack, they "fell to yelling and cursing" (329). During battle they raise a "hideous confused yelling" (329), and they become a "howling throng" (329). Their "cries and yells" are "fierce and wild" (332). They "shrieked in answer" to Gold-mane's war whoop (340).

They fight with crooked swords (86), and are slain with grey-feathered arrows (239). Although they fight with a "rage" that is "great" (333), and are "fierce" (339), they are not characterized as brave. Furthermore, their superior numbers, however, give them no advantage in battle, for they are also a "stumbling jostling throng," in contrast to the ordered ranks of their attackers (329). They also fight "in evil order" (333). Facing the spears of their foes, they "shrunk back yelling, or turned their backs and rushed at their own folk with such fierce agony. . ." (329). We even find them "trampling their own dead and wounded" (335). Because of their dehumanized nature, their attackers can slaughter them with impunity. Previously we have been told that the Children of the Wolf "slay them without pity, as if they were adders or evil dragons; and indeed they be worse"

(173). At the great battle Folk-might instructs the warriors to "[s]lay every felon" (352).

As Gold-mane had previously remarked, they are "evil folk to be swept from off the face

of the earth" (159).

The annihilation of the Dusky Men contrasts sharply to the fate of enemies of *The*

House of the Wolfings, the Romans, whose survivors are spared and even allowed to

partake in the victory feast. It can smack of genocide and racism to a careless modern

reader. However, since the beliefs Morris expresses elsewhere completely negate the idea

that he would support either racism or genocide, one must turn elsewhere for insight into

the Dusky Men. According to Margaret R. Grennan (1945), the Dusky Men, whom she

identifies as Huns,

> provide the contrast for Morris' Happy Valley. To anyone familiar with
>
> the industrial history of the nineteenth century and with Morris' revolt
>
> against it so profound that it penetrated his entire being, there are
>
> unmistakable implications in the story of the Dusky Men and their
>
> treatment of their thralls. . . . Dusky Men always end by enslaving those
>
> who temporize with them, and the people of Rosedale, following a policy
>
> of appeasement, learn the lesson at the price of their freedom. No
>
> compromise with the Dusky Men of any age was Morris' insistent
>
> message to the workers of England, no pact with the current
>
> commercialism; and those who tried it brought a part of their troubles
>
> upon themselves. This principle kept Morris aloof from the "gas and
>
> water" socialism of his own generation. . . . (119-20).

As Grennan observes, the Dusky Men have several characteristics similar to capitalists, who, from a Marxist point of view, do no useful work and live off the labor of others. Just as he does with the Dusky Men, Morris often associates the word *torment* with the negative aspects of capitalism. For instance, in "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil" Morris claims that in a "true Society" that "No man would be tormented for the benefit of another. . ." (*Collected Works* 23: 106), and that "It is clear also that much work which is now a torment, would be easily endurable if it were much shortened" (*Collected Works* 23: 112). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to read *The Roots of the Mountains* simply as some type of social allegory, for Morris is here also confronting the nature of evil. This confrontation would have interested Tolkien, who modeled his Orcs upon Morris's Dusky Men, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The religion of the Burgdalers and their allies seems, on the surface, to be quite similar to the Norse religion as described in the *Eddas*. Belief in and homage to the gods form an important part of the daily life of the inhabitants. The Sun-beam explains that she loves Shadowy Vale because, "it is to me as if the Fathers of the kindred visit it and hold converse with us" (115). However, no Norse names are given to their gods, unlike *The House of the Wolfings*, whose inhabitants honor Frey (49) and Odin, "the Father of the Slain" (57); refer to themselves as the Children of Tyr (68), believe in the Norns (111), and believe that heroes fallen in battle go "on the road to Valhall" (195).[78] The gods in *Roots*, by way of contrast, do not quite correspond to those worshiped by the Wolfings.

---

[78]Page references in this sentence refer to volume 14 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

Five gods are mentioned: the Face, who is the sun, the Warrior, the God of the Earth, the Wolf, and the Moon. The Wolf, however, is worshiped only by the Kindred of the Wolf. The slight differences between the religions of the two peoples are revealed when Gold-mane and the Sun-beam pledge to marry each other. Face-of-god, who is a man of the Burgdalers, pledges by the "God of the Earth, and the Warrior and the God of the Face," while the Sun-beam, who belongs to the Folk of the Wolf, pledges by "the Wolf and the Warrior and the God of the Earth" (124).

The Fathers are often mentioned with the gods, and the terms often seem to be synonymous. Like the Norse (at least the royal houses), the people of the Dale and the Children of the Wolf believe themselves to be descended from the gods. However, to a certain extent, the gods have ambiguous identities. Their names are often repeated in groups of three; this and the seeming interchangeability of their names calls to mind the monotheistic Christian invocation to the Trinity. They also do not correspond to the Norse gods of the *Eddas*. There Frey controls both the sun and the fruitfulness of the earth (Sturluson 35), and so either the Face or the God of the Earth could correspond to him in *Roots*. Also, is the Warrior meant to represent Tyr or Odin? The Wolf possibly could represent the latter, since Odin was accompanied by two wolves, but nothing clearly suggests this in the romance. Wolves in the *Prose Edda*, however, are generally associated with evil: two of them chase the sun and moon and will eventually catch them (Sturluson 20), and the monstrous Fenris wolf, the son of Loki, threatens the gods until they fetter him; however, he will be loosed at Ragnarok and is fated to swallow Odin (Sturluson 39-42, 73). In contrast, the god who is called the Wolf in *Roots* has only

positive connotations. Furthermore, the City of the Gods in *Roots* is referred to by Face-of-god as "the City that shall never perish" (50), which sounds more like the New Jerusalem of Christianity than Valhalla in Asgard, which is doomed to perish in Ragnarok.

What Morris actually and significantly does in *Roots*, which makes it different from *The House of the Wolfings*, is to create a new religion for its created inhabitants, one that seems concrete and believable despite having never been historically known. This religion has other aspects that would have attracted Tolkien's attention. For example, the inhabitants almost never discuss the afterlife, and this would prove a model for Tolkien as he created the belief system for the inhabitants of Middle-earth, one that would not conflict with Christianity that would arise many thousands of years later than the time of *The Lord of the Rings*. The religious practices of the inhabitants in *Roots* seem innocuous and would not cause distress from a Christian point of view: for instance, they sacrifice only animals, not humans, unlike both the Wolfings and the Dusky Men; they pray and address songs to their gods for aid and success; and the sign of the Hammer that they make over meals practically parallels the Christian custom of saying grace. Their religion in fact is one of virtuous and noble pagans, the idea of which attracted both C. S. Lewis and Tolkien, and which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

One way Morris seeks to re-enchant the world in his fictional work is by investing the world with the supernatural beings people once believed it held.. To the characters in *Roots* these beings are real. Much information about them is provided in the romance by the character Stone-face, the foster-father of Face-of-god. He describes these beings that

inhabit the woods as thus

> Therein are Kobolds, and Wights that love not men, things unto whom the
> grief of men is as the sound of the fiddle-bow to us. And there abide the
> ghosts of those that may not rest; and there wander the dwarfs and the
> mountain-dwellers, the dealers in marvels, the givers of gifts that destroy
> Houses; the forgers of the curse that clingeth and the murder that flitteth to
> and fro. There moreover are the lairs of Wights in the shape of women,
> that draw a young man's heart out of his body, and fill up the empty place
> with desire never to be satisfied, that they may mock him therewith and
> waste his manhood and destroy him. (21)

These beings seem quite malevolent according to Stone-face's description, and he refers
to them as the Foes of the Gods. He later warns Face-of-god that "the wights that waylay
the bodies and souls of the mighty in the Wild-wood . . . at Yuletide are they most
abroad" and describes one that he himself once encountered:

> [I]t was in the likeness of a woman . . . and she trod the snow light-foot in
> thin raiment. . . . [T]he icy wind blew her raiment round about her, and
> drifted the hair from her garlanded head toward me, and she as fair and
> fresh as in the midsummer days. . . . We sat in the hall together . . . and
> methought that the birds sang and the flowers bloomed, and sweet was
> their savour, though it was mid-winter. A rose-wreath was on her head;
> grapes were on the board, and fair unwrinkled summer apples on the day
> that we feasted together.

By morning, however, both the hall and woman had vanished, leaving him alone in the snowy woods and making him

> A wanderer . . . with an empty heart and a burning never-satisfied desire;
> who hath seen in the uncouth places many an evil unmanly shape, many a
> foul hag and changing ugly semblance; who . . . hath seen many things,
> but hath never again seen that fair woman, or that lovely feast hall. (74-
> 75)

Stone-face's encounter somewhat resembles those between men and supernatural beings in traditional ballads. In those such as "King Orfeo" and "Thomas Rhymer," a human is liberated after a period of time in the Otherworld (Buchan 143). There is also a resemblance with *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* by Keats. *Wight*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is an archaic or obsolete word that dates back to the Old English period and which is used for either "good or bad . . . supernatural, preternatural, or unearthly beings." This definition underscores the fact that wights need not necessarily be evil. And these beings in *Roots* are not always hostile toward mankind. When Gold-mane first visits the hall on the mountain, Wild-wearer (Folk-might under an assumed name) "called healths" during their meal "to the Wood-wights," as well as to the gods and their guest, Gold-mane (43-44). Stone-face first theorizes that the Children of the Wolf who drive off Dusky Men that attacked Hall-face's party are "Wights of the Wood that be of the Father's blood, and our very friends" (155). He later says that wights can become angry if humans they associate with are mistreated (382). In *Roots* the term *wight* encompasses malevolent creatures as well as those that are benevolent toward humans,

much as in the Icelandic sagas. For example, *Grettis saga*, which Magnússon and Morris translated, contains examples of both. On the one hand, Grettir fights against a barrow-wight, and by killing it is able to retrieve treasure from the barrow (*Collected Works* 7: 39-40). He also kills an evil wight in a cave and frees the people of that dale from its haunting (*Collected Works* 7: 165-67). On the other hand, he is befriended by Hallmund, one of the landwights (*land-vaettir*) and "a friendly spirit of the mountains," who fights for him against his enemies (*Collected Works* 7: 134n, 140-41, 231n).

Although wights are the folkloric creatures most commonly mentioned in *Roots*, there are several others. Besides the Kobolds, ghosts, and dwarfs mentioned above, there are also trolls, which are always spoken of as malevolent beings. They avoid the sunlight (169) are also "man-devouring" (355), and, as previously mentioned, are so fearsome that the Dusky Men are compared to them. One song mentions mountain-trolls (59). Tolkien's hill-trolls, who attempt to bite their victims' necks in the battle at the gates of Morannon, may owe something to Morris's characterization. *Roots* also mentions elves, although few details are given. Tales of the elves are associated with the rock called the Staff-stone, and since that rock is not feared by the people of Shadowy Vale, they probably consider elves to be beneficent. Nearly all these beings, including wights, ghosts, dwarfs ("dwarves"[79]), trolls, and elves, appear in *The Lord of the Rings*.

However, sometimes Face-of-god wonders about the veracity of such beings. He asks the Sun-beam, whom Stone-face has suspected of being one of the beguiling wights,

---

[79]Tolkien's spelling *dwarves* has become so pervasive that a recent translation of the *Prose Edda*, Jesse Byock's, uses his spelling.

if stories about them are true. She replies that

> [T]he man [Stone-face] is a true man; and of these things are there many
> ancient tales which we may not doubt. Yet so it is that such wights have I
> never yet seen, nor aught to scare me save evil men: belike it is that I have
> been over-much busied in sorrow and ruin to look after them: or it may be
> that they feared me and the wrath-breeding grief of the kindred. (104)

Thus Sun-beam, who has been living in the wild, affirms her belief in these creatures
even while she rationalizes why she has not encountered any of them. Gold-mane seems
to retain a skepticism, perhaps because Stone-face is quick to attribute any type of evil
encounter, especially that with the appearance of the Dusky Men, to supernatural
creatures such as wights and trolls. During a scouting expedition into the woods, after
they encounter the runaway Dallach, Face-of-god asks Stone-face, smiling,

> ". . . [W]here I pray thee are these elves and wood-wights, that we meet
> them not? Grim things there are in the woods, and things fair enough also:
> but meseemeth that the trolls and the elves of thy young years have been
> frighted away."
>
> Said Stone-face: "Maybe, foster-son; that hath been seen ere now, that
> when one race of man overrunneth the land inhabited by another, the
> wights and elves that love the vanquished are seen no more, or get them
> away far off into the outermost wilds, where few men ever come." (198)

Again, a character rationalizes why these creatures have not been seen. Nevertheless, his
belief in them remains firm, even though his words imply that these creatures are

retreating with the times. Just as in *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a sense that these beings will one day vanish.

Other events that can only be described as supernatural also take place in *Roots*. The characters accept the existence of magic, and one group, the Woodlanders, are said to be experts in "wizardry" (5). Gold-mane, like several characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, seems drawn compulsorily by some supernatural power. While the reasons some events happen are eventually revealed to have rational explanations, others never are. Although the Sun-beam tells Gold-mane the restlessness that caused him to wander in the woods to the hall on the mountain was caused by hearing a song that her brother in disguise sung specifically to bring about that result, it is difficult to imagine how such a song, without supernatural intervention, would cause him to travel to that exact spot, a remote place he had never visited before. She also admits that a woman of her kindred, Wood-mother, "made a waxen image of thee [Gold-mane] and thrust through the heart thereof the pin of my girdle buckle, and stroked it every morning with an oak bough over which she had sung spells" (118). Her admission leaves open the possibility that this sympathetic magic was the real reason Gold-mane was finally drawn to her. The Sun-beam is also foreseeing according to her own admission, and predicts several events, including Gold-mane's arrival at her hall, that cannot be rationalized away given the information presented in the romance. Just as in *The Lord of the Rings*, these foreseen events play key roles as the plot develops.

Other folkloric elements in *Roots*, some of which also turn up in *The Lord of the Rings*, include an admonition to secrecy (55, 83) and the reluctance of characters to

reveal their own names (38). As previously mentioned, the narrator and characters of

Roots constantly allude to other legends and stories. For instance, when Gold-mane first

meets the Sun-beam, "it seemed to him as if she were the fairest and the noblest of all the

Queens of ancient story" (39). When Stone-face theorizes that the killers of a

Woodlander may be "evil wights," "some of the older folk . . . deemed his words wise,

for they remembered their ancient lore and many a tale of old time" (88). As the great

battle with the Dusky Men approaches, the people of the Dale feast and are happy, so that

"you might rather have deemed that this was the land whereof tales tell, wherein people

die not, but live forever, without growing any older than when they first come thither. . ."

(232). Folk-might, while telling of his people's origin, says "Midst the Mid-earth's

mighty Woodland of old we had our home" (288). Previously, his sister the Sun-beam

had told Gold-mane that the token of the Wolf, "the god and Father of our Fathers . . .

telleth the tale of so many days, that the days which now pass by us be to them but as the

drop in the sea of waters" (103). Even though the ancient tales are only alluded to, they

give the reader the impression of a vast depth in time, of a cultural tradition and

continuity that makes the characters and their worldview seem real.

FEMALE WARRIORS

According to Florence Boos, Morris derives his idea for female warriors from

Edward Gibbon's account of the Goths in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

However, Morris's creation of the social and belief systems of the inhabitants of *Roots*,

also manifests the influence of both the *Eddas* and the *Völsunga saga*. The latter features

women warriors such as the Valkyria [Valkyrie] Brynhild and Gudrun the Niblung, who

don armor and are capable of wielding swords. For example, Brynhild wears a helmet

and byrny and carries a sword (*Collected Works* 7: 353), and Gudrun the Niblung "does

on her a mail-coat and takes to her a sword, and fights by her brethren, and goes as far

forward as the bravest of man-folk: and all spake in one wise that never saw any fairer

defence than in her" (*Collected Works* 7: 385). These characters undoubtedly helped

contribute as well to the female warriors of *Roots*.

Although female warriors are found in other romances by Morris, including *The

House of the Wolfings* and *The Well at the World's End*, their portrayal is most fully

developed in *Roots*. The most prominent ones mentioned are the Bride of the Dale and

the Sun-beam[80] and Bow-may of the Children of the Wolf. The people of the Dale have a

long history of women engaging as warriors, for Iron-face admits that women fighting

"hath oft been done and praised aforetime" (181). For the Children of the Wolf, however,

it is especially vital that women perform roles as warriors, since their numbers are so

small and their enemies so great.

Nevertheless, they fulfill feminine duties as well. When Face-of-god meets Bow-

may again in Shadowy Vale, he finds her holding "the distaff which she bore in her hand

(for she had been spinning) as if it were a spear" (125). Clearly the strength of women

does not detract either from their femininity or attractiveness. The Bride is described

thus:

---

[80]The Sun-beam is armed and present at the battle with the Dusky Men, although the
narrative does not make clear whether she actually fights.

> She was a fair woman and strong: not easily daunted among perils: she
> was hardy and handy and light-foot: she could swim as well as any, and
> could shoot well in the bow, and wield sword and spear: yet was she kind
> and compassionate, and of great courtesy, and the very dogs and kine
> trusted in her and loved her. (16-17).

The Sun-beam iterates her own feminine qualities when she explains to Gold-mane,

> Thou hast seen me amongst men of war, amongst outlaws who seek
> violence; thou hast heard me bid my brother to count the slain, and I
> shrinking not; thou knowest (for I have told thee) how I have schemed and
> schemed for victorious battle. Yet I would not have thee think of me as a
> Chooser of the Slain, a warrior maiden, or as of one who hath no joy save
> in the battle whereto she biddeth others. O friend, the many peaceful hours
> that I have had on the grass down yonder, sitting with my rock and spindle
> in hand, the children round about my knees hearkening to some old story
> so well remembered by me! (139).

Thus she ensures that Gold-mane will not think her devoid of qualities that would make
her a good wife and mother in his society.

Women in *Roots* are frequently praised for their skill and prowess. The Bride, for
instance, is characterized as "a very deft archer" (303). Bow-may is "the closest shooter
of all the kindreds" (322). Face-of-god praises Bow-may's prowess with the bow and
tells her, "Thou shalt be in my company whenso I fare to battle." She responds that
"Indeed . . . therein thou sayest but the bare truth: nowhere else shall I be, and thou shalt

find my bow no worse than a good shield" (82). Face-of-god tells her that she "belike

shalt be withal a true fighting-fellow" (84). Later, he praises her for being "wise in war"

(240). When she comes to Burgstead, he asks his father to give her a gift, saying that "her

shaft it was that delivered me when my skull was among the axes of the Dusky Men: else

I had not been here" (245). As they are discussing the forces of their allies in council,

Face-of-god says that the Children of the Wolf have "some two or three score of women

that will fight, whoever says them nay; and many of these are little worse in the field than

men; or no worse, for they shoot well in the bow" (174).

As in *The Lord of the Rings*, women avidly desire to fight in battle. The Bride

announces she will fight in battle by walking into the assembly clad in armor, holding a

spear, and "girt with a sword" (178). After Iron-face threatens to get her kindred to

compel her to remain at home, she replies, "And how will ye compel me thereto? . . . .

Are there thralls in the Dale?" (180). And later, she declares, "since I have learned to be

deft with mine hands in all the play of war, and as hardy-hearted as any, I will give

myself to the Warrior and the God of the Face; and the battle-field shall be my home. . ."

(180). The Sun-beam also remains cognizant of the necessity brought upon by war; she

reminds Gold-mane that before they can become married, "there are deeds to be done,"

deeds of battle (126).

In *Roots*, like *The Lord of the Rings*, a female warrior is associated with a gift of

armor. In this case it is Bow-may, who asks for a hauberk and helm made by Gold-

mane's father as a gift (149). Iron-face gives her "a hauberk of ring-mail of his own

fashioning," and she became "exceeding glad, and scarce knew how to cease handling

that marvel of ring-mail" (246-47).

The female warriors in *Roots* do not blench from battle. "Bow-may tells Gold-mane that the Sun-beam "is not wont to grow pale when battle is nigh her" (144). The narrator tells us that the Bride was present in Hall-face's company when they were attacked by the Dusky Men, and she "had done a man's service there, fighting very valiantly" (212). As they prepare to travel to do battle with the Dusky Men, she "stood . . . in her glorious war-gear, looking as if she were new come from the City of the Gods . . . [, and] whosoever looked on her . . . there arose a murmur of praise and love" (226-27). When the fighting host departs from Shadowy Vale, the Bride travels "in all her war-gear; and the morning sun shone in the gems of her apparel" (303).

On the Great Day of Battle with the Dusky Men, Bow-may is so calm that she "notched and loosed at whatever was most notable, as though she were shooting at the mark on a summer evening in Shadowy Vale" (327). However, fearing that she may die in battle, she asks Face-of-god to kiss her. He "kissed her face, and now the tears ran over it, and she said smiling somewhat: 'Now is this more than I looked for, whatso may betide" (335). Although she becomes wounded, she returns to battle and aids Face-of-god:

> [I]f she had not the might of the mightiest, yet had she the deftness of the deftest. And now was she calm and cool, shielding herself with a copper-bossed target, and driving home the point of her sharp sword; white was her face, and her eyes glittered amidst it, and she seemed to men like to those on whose heads the Warrior hath laid the Holy Bread. (345)

During battle, the Bride "in her glittering war-gear"shoots arrow after arrow "as if she were some daintily fashioned engine of war" (332).

In *Roots*, as in *The Lord of the Rings*, the mistaken news of a female warrior's death inspires a character to battle frenzy. During battle, Hall-ward tells Face-of-god that he saw the Bride fall: "The Bride is dead, and thou hast lost thy troth-plight maiden. O death, death to the Dusky Men!" Although another warrior says that she was merely hurt,

> Face-of-god heard him not. He forgot Dale-warden [his sword] lying in
> his sheath, and he saw that the last speaker had a great wood-axe broad
> and heavy in his hand, so he cried: 'Man, man, thine axe!' and snatched it
> from him, and turned about to the foe again, and thrust through the ranks,
> suffering none to stay him till all his friends were behind and all his foes
> before him. And as he burst forth from the ranks waving his axe aloft,
> bare-headed now, his yellow hair flying abroad, his mouth crying out,
> 'Death, death, death to the Dusky Men!' fear of him smote their hearts, and
> they howled and fled before him as they might; for they said that the
> Dalesmen had prayed their Gods into the battle. . . . All that blended host
> followed him mad with wrath and victory. . . . and terrible was the
> slaughter of the Felons. (346-47).

As the battle is won, he discovers that the Bride is still alive and he "wept as a child" (351).

The end of the final battle with the Dusky Men marks the end of the role of female warriors. All of them become happily married: the Sun-beam with Gold-mane, the

Bride with Folk-might, and Bow-may with Hart of Highcliff. Thus the union of the

Dalesmen and the Children of the Wolf is cemented by marriage. When Bow-may visits

the Bride some three years later, she presents to her Gold-mane and the Sun-beam's

second child, to be raised by her as Gold-mane had promised. Bow-may has already born

a child herself. When Folk-might hears this, he declares

> 'Good is thy story,' said Folk-might; 'or deemest thou, Bow-may,
> that such strong and goodly women as thou, and women so kind and
> friendly, should forbear the wedding and the bringing forth of children?
> Yea, and we who may even yet have to gather to another field before we
> die, and fight for life and the goods of life.'
>
> 'Thou sayest well,' she said; 'all that hath befallen me is good
> since the day whereon I loosed shaft from the break of the bent over
> yonder.'

We are also told that the Bride will bear two children of her own. With the need of their

martial abilities gone, the female warriors must now fulfill their necessary roles as wives

and mothers, necessary for the continuance of their people.

The importance of the female warriors in *Roots* lies in their believability. Their

existence is accepted and considered normal by the male characters in the romance, and

this enhances their credibility with the reader. They provide a viable model for the female

warrior, Éowyn, in *The Lord of the Rings*, who will be discussed further in the next

chapter.

STYLE

Morris's style becomes overwhelmingly important as he seeks to evoke and re-enchant the past. His style in many ways responds to the concerns of the Romantic poets who preceded him. For example, in *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley argues that "the popular division into prose and verse is unadmissable in accurate philosophy" (113), and that "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error" (114). Morris's work breaks down the division between poetry and metrical prose by his use of poetic diction and techniques in prose. Shelley also claims that "In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry. . ." (111), but he also argues that language becomes changed and less conducive to poetry through time: During "the infancy of art," poets have a

> language [that] is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before
>
> unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension,
>
> until the words which represent them, become, through time, signs for
>
> portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and
>
> then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which
>
> have been thus disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler
>
> purposes of human intercourse (111).

Morris seems to echo these thoughts in the quote given in chapter two, where he argues that

> You see things have very much changed since the early days of language:
>
> once everybody who could express himself at all did so beautifully, was a

poet for that occasion, because all language was beautiful. But now

language is utterly degraded in our daily lives, and poets have to make a

new tongue each for himself: before he can even begin his story he must

elevate his means of expression from the daily jabber to which centuries

of degradation have reduced it. (*Collected Letters* 2: 483)

Thus, it becomes necessary for the poet (in the larger sense that Shelley uses the term) to

revivify language if one wants to use it for "the nobler purposes of human intercourse."

The logical way to do so is to revive words from the past, words that still represent

"integral thoughts." Therefore, the archaic language Morris uses in *Roots* represents an

attempt to break free of the constrains of a modern language that has gone so

metaphorically mad that words have endless connotations that frustrate any attempt to

arrive at definite meanings.

Morris uses language in several specialized ways to evoke the aura of the distant

past. One is his use of specific archaic terms to represent "integral thoughts." For

example, cattle are referred to as *neat* and *kine*, and the leader of the Burgdalers is called

the *Alderman*. Slaves are referred to as *thralls* and wagons are called *wains*. Other

archaic words that would send many modern readers to the dictionary include *gangrel*

(168), *stares* (253), *frith* (277), *airts* (279), *handsel* (281), *bennets* (322), *flockmeal* (326),

and *flatlings* (331).[81] In one place the Sun-beam praises Gold-mane's martial abilities,

exclaiming, "Good spear-casting, forsooth!" (106). Besides archaic words, Morris also

---

[81]Unless otherwise indicated, page references in this chapter refer to volume 15 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*.

employs archaic spellings such as *clews* (253).

He furthermore tends to emphasize words with prefixes of Anglo-Saxon origin that were common in Old and Middle English but that are uncommon or sound archaic in modern English. A notable example is his frequent use of words with the prefix *be-*. We find it used in verb forms such as *begrudge*, *belittle*, *betake*, *bestirred*, *bethought*, *behoof*, *begat*, *beguile*, *besetteth*, *befalleth*, *bewrayed*, and *bewailed*, as well as with such adverbs as *belike* and *betimes* and adjectives such as *begemmed*. Sometimes these words are clustered together; one example is: "first went . . . the flower-bedecked misery of the Runaways, men and women going together, gaunt, befouled and hollow-eyed, with here and there a flushed cheek or gleaming eye, or tear-bedewed face. . ." (211). The clustering strongly suggests the intentional nature of Morris's usage of this type of words. In fact, however, these types of words frequently occur throughout the text. Chapter 37, for example, a fairly short chapter, contains *begrudge*, *begrudged*, *betimes* (twice), *betwixt* (twice), *betoken*, *bewray* (twice), *bewrayest*, *bestirred*, *bethought*, *behold*, *befall* (twice), *befell* (three times), *behoof*, *betide*, and *behalf*.

He also commonly employs a-prefixing as well, in verb forms such as *a-doing*, *a-nursing*, *a-talking* and *a-singing*, forms relatively uncommon in modern English except in dialectal usage. He also tends to prefer the *a-* prefix in other types of words as well: *a-land*, *agone*, *aforetime*, *adown*, *athwart*. *anigh*, *acold*, *a-tiptoe*, *apaid*. While forms such as these appear sparingly in the English Bible and are common in the plays of Shakespeare and poetry of Milton, they are again relatively uncommon in modern English.

Morris also frequently uses words with the *un-* prefix, which may be illustrated by the debate in the war council after the Folk of the Wolf arrive at Burgdale. At the council Face-of-god declares, "We may scarce leave the Dale unguarded." He also predicts that they will be "falling on the foe unawares" (250). All those "unmeet for battle" should "gather" into Burgdale. Folk-might in his turn suggests that they gather all their warriors into one force, even though "we are undone indeed if we fail." Face-of-god counters that it might give the Dusky Men who escape a chance to slay those "unhappy people under their hands." The Dale-warden mentions that if any Dusky Men reach the Dale, even if those who remain behind "keep themselves unmurdered," their foes will plunder the countryside (251). Face-of-god denigrates the strategic ability of the Dusky Men, saying they are not able to "unravel tangled clews" (252). Morris's use of *un-* words here tends to emphasize the tension and serious of the situation and underscore the latent conflict in the debate.

Other types of prefixing that Morris employs includes *over-* (*overworn*, *overrunners*, *overstop*, *over-hard*, *overmastered*, *overthwart*), *mis-* (*mislike*, *mishandled*), and *after-* (*after-grief*). To a lesser extent he employs suffixes such as *-most* (*hindermost*, *midmost* [329]), *-less* (*tidingless* [95] and *wordless* [331]), and *-ward* (*vanward* [309], *rearward* [305], and *usward* [386]). He also often uses compound forms, such as *foot-weary* (295), *other-where* (296), *light-clad* (297), *battle-merry* and *shrilly-clear* (301).The reasons for Morris's preference for these words is not hard to guess. While the use of these types of word formation was common in Old English, it began to decline after the Norman invasion, and they are relatively little-used in modern English, while

Latinate prefixes such as *re-*, *in-*, and *trans-*, are typically the ones used in modern word formation. Morris's innovation with such words lies in his concentrated usage throughout the entire narrative of his romances, including prose sections, and not just in poetry.

One distinctive trait of Morris is the frequent use of the interjection *lo!*. One section of the narrative that prominently features this trait is the great battle with the Dusky Men. As Gold-mane and Folk-might spy upon the Dusky Men before the onset of battle, they "heard a loud blast of horns come up from the town, and lo! a great crowd of men wending their ways" with thralls they are preparing to sacrifice (321). After the battle begins, as Wood-wise prepares to order his bowmen (and Bow-may) to retreat, "from behind them rang out the merry sound of the Burgdale horns, and he turned to look at the wood-side, and lo! thereunder was the hill bright and dark with men-at-arms [reinforcements]. . ." (327). During fierce battle, Face-of-god is knocked down but gets back up, "and heard as he arose a great shout close to him, and a shrill cry, and lo! at his left side, Bow-may, her sword in her hand," comes to aid him (337). Gold-ring falls in battle but is not slain, and unexpectedly gets up again to help the war-leader: "as Face-of-god cleared a space about him, lo! almost within reach of his sword-point rose up a grim shape from the earth. . . . [A] cry of joy went up from the kindred. . . ."(340). Face-of-god is relieved to find that when he reencounters his father, brother, and Stone-face, that "the ranks of the Face opened, and lo! the Sun-beam in her bright war-gear" was "unhurt and unsullied" (350). Morris therefore tends to use *lo!* to signal to the reader the importance of sudden reversals of events

Another important aspect of Morris's style is his use of archaic forms for the

second person pronouns: *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, *thine*, and *ye.* Face-of-god at one pivotal point

pleads with Sun-beam, asking "But tell me this if thou wilt: dost thou desire me as I

desire thee? Or is it that thou wilt suffer me to wed thee and bed thee at last as mere

payment for the help I shall give to thee and thine?" (121). Another notable aspect,

moreover, is his use of *-est* for the second person singular ending and *–eth* for the third

person singular form. The following dialogue from Face-of-god to Sun-beam upon their

second parting illustrates the mood and tone these forms of language can create:

> In all this there is but one thing for me to say, and that is that I love thee;
>
> and surely none the less, but rather the more, because thou lovest me, and
>
> art of my kind, and mayest share in my deeds and think well of them.
>
> Now is my heart full of joy, and one thing only weigheth on it; and that is
>
> that my kinswoman the Bride begrudgeth our love together. For this is the
>
> thing that of all things most misliketh me, that any should bear a grudge
>
> against me. (146)

Language such as this can be quite powerful as it evokes the mood of a distant past, but

some of the forms can be quite startling to a modern reader. Frequently Morris also uses

archaic forms of verbs: *spake*, *smote*, and *gat* are archaic past tense forms he often

employs, and *bearedst* (272) seems even more unusual. He also employs archaic past

participle forms that look unusual to a modern reader: *litten* (296), *builded* (308),

foughten (335), and *astonied* (339).

Some of Morris's terms are quite obscure; one example that he may have derived

from Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* is *mar-feast*. Some forms are quite startling as well: *it*

repenteth me (163), for example, sounds backwards in syntax to a modern reader.

Meseemeth, another term commonly used, has the same effect. On one occasion, Face-of-god "considered and thought, till *him-seemed* he could see the whole battle yet to be fought" (335; emphasis added). Morris frequently resorts to altering syntax to conform to archaic usage in other ways: "Now giveth Wood-wise the word to these sixteen. . ." (324), for example. Negative statements are frequently formed by placing *not* after a verb: "Bow-may spake not, but stamped her foot with anger" (334), for instance; "Folk-might skulketh not. . ." (335), and "a spear smote him on the breast, but entered not" (337). Morris also employs reflexive forms in constructions such as "There then they made them ready . . ." (323). Such reflexive pronouns without *-self or -selves* tend to be absent in modern English outside dialectal usage.

Morris interestingly capitalizes certain words for emphasis. Although his use of capitalization is not always consistent, there are several words and terms in *Roots* that are sometimes capitalized and which must have caught Tolkien's eye. The most important, and those which have implications for Tolkien's later work, are the words *Ring* and *Fellowship* (270), and the phrases *Roots of the Mountains* (366), *Hall on the Mountain* (384), and *Great Undoing* (354).

As the examples above may suggest, the King James Version of the Bible had a tremendous impact upon Morris's style. He, after all, grew up in an Evangelical Anglican household and originally entered Oxford intending to become a clergyman. Many phrases in *Roots* sound biblical. For example, after the capitulation of the people of Silverdale to the Dusky Men, Dallach says that "we went about our work in fear and trembling" (195).

His words sound very much like Phillipians 2:12, which reads, in part, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Later, after Face-of-god receives the Kindred of the Wolf, he brings "them up on to the dais, and sat down on the right hand of his father. . ." (218). This echoes several verses in the Bible, including Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." In both cases, the biblical meaning semantically resembles the one in Morris's romance, as does the one when, later, the Alderman gives to Sun-beam as a gift a golden girdle containing images of, among other things, "beasts of the field and fowls of the air" (246). This seems to echo Psalms 8:7-8, where the psalmist praises the Lord for giving humans dominion over "the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air." However, it also echoes another verse that has a quite different semantic import: I Samuel 17:44, where Goliath tells David, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." It is difficult to say to what extent Morris consciously uses biblical language, but his occasional echoing of the King James Version certainly imparts a dignity to his prose and helps elevate his style.

Old English poetry such as *Beowulf* makes use of alliteration. Morris tends to use alliteration in his poetry but also in his prose in *Roots* as well. For example, the following paragraph describing the Bride contains a noticeable alliteration of the *g* sound, as well as to a lesser extent other sounds:

> [A] warrior came forth into the innermost of the ring of men, arrayed in
> goodly glittering war-gear; clad in such wise that a tunicle of precious

> gold-wrought web covered the hauberk all but the sleeves thereof . . . shod
>
> with sandals gold-embroidered and gemmed. This warrior bore a goodly
>
> gilded helm on the head, and held in hand a spear with gold-garlanded
>
> shaft, and was girt with a sword whose hilts and scabbard both were
>
> adorned with gold and gems . . . (178).

Morris undoubtedly uses prose alliteration in an attempt to mimic the effect that poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period had on the reader. He also takes stock phrases from Anglo-Saxon poetry. For example, during battle we find Face-of-god having a mental picture of Sun-beam "calling for him amidst the hard hand-play" (344). We find the same phrase in the Old English *The Battle of Brunanburh*, where it is said that the Mercians did not refuse the hard hand-play (*heardes hondplegan*). Another character, Dallach, is wounded in battle, "so little he recked of point and edge" (222). This echoes a phrase of l. 1549 of *Beowulf*, *wið ord ond wið ecge*.

Morris's use of these poetic techniques and diction in the prose narrative of *Roots* has had a mixed response from critics. An anonymous 1890 reviewer in the *Spectator* claimed that Morris had used in *Roots* "a lingo which to many people would prove unintelligible"and which "exasperates" the reader (*William Morris: The Critical Heritage* 335). E. P. Thompson, on the other hand, writes that Morris's diction "becomes melodious and consistent, sustaining the remote, impersonal and dream-like quality in which the values of the peoples can be shadowed forth" (678). Certainly Morris's stylistic efforts mark a creative and noteworthy attempt to re-enchant the past and make it come alive, one that a young Tolkien would have found impressive.

SEMANTICS

Morris also semantically creates the illusion of the distant past by his terms of counting and noting the passing of time. Counting, for instance, is not only done by hundreds but by *long hundreds* as well. Morris also uses *scores* and *half-scores*. To give an example, we are told that the warriors from Shadowy Vale number "two long hundreds lacking five; of whom two score and ten were women, and three score and ten lads under twenty winters. . ." (302). One hundred is referred to as *ten tens* on at least one occasion (177), groups of fifty as *half-hundreds* (225), and a period of sixteen days is denoted *two eights of days* (250). As these examples demonstrate, Morris often uses the plural forms of numbers, and sometimes he follows them with the possessive form of a noun. For example, as the leaders of the allied kindreds discuss the numbers of their forces as opposed to those of the Dusky Men, Face-of-god declares that they have "sixteen long hundreds of men," compared to the Dusky Men in Silverdale, who have "three thousands or thereabout" (250).

Such a counting system seems quite alien to a modern reader, but it reinforces the aura of distance in time in the romance, as does the measuring of time. As the example above demonstrates, the ages of individuals are marked by *winters*, just as in Anglo-Saxon times, although the ages of some characters such as Gold-mane's is measured in *summers*. And months are referred to as *moons*; "this very moon" (249) is an example. Noon is *noontide* (315), evening is *even-tide* (394), and nighttime is *night-tide* (248). Suppertime is *supper-tide* (388). A holiday or day of celebration is a *high-tide* (67), and the midwinter celebration is *Yule-tide* (9). *Tide* may refer to seasons of the year as well:

springtime is thus *spring-tide* (389). To add to a modern reader's disorientation, we read that "the War-leader gave out the morrow of the morrow for the day of the departure of the Host. . ." (380). And Morris also tells us that these people measure the time of the day with a sun-dial (160).

Although distance is sometimes measured in miles, it is also measured in *leagues*: "Wild is the waste and long leagues over," sing Wood-wont and Bow-may on one occasion (132). Other measurements are used, such as *furlongs*: "the hillside below the two captains lay two furlongs west of this southern way," for instance (321). Shorter distances can be measured variously: for example, "there was a space of ten strides or more betwixt the Dalesmen and their foes" (329), and "the Dalesmen cleared a space five fathoms' length before them" (331). In another passage we find that "Three paces from him [Gold-mane] went Bow-may. . ." (392). As will be discussed in the next chapter, we find these measures echoed by Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings*.

COLORS

Colors tend to be sparsely mentioned and generally reflect those prevalent in English folklore which, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*, "are black, white, red, green, and to a lesser extent blue" (75). Yellow is also used; several characters are described as "yellow-haired," and the light from windows is described by this color. Brown frequently is used to describe skin color, and grey to describe eye and hair color. Orange is totally absent, and pink and purple nearly so. Golden, and to a much lesser extent gilded, is used as a color, especially to describe man-made objects such as

swords and jewelry, as well as the sun; however, silver is never used as a color.

Morris often intimates colors without using direct color words. For example, in one passage Face-of-god sadly thinks "of the Bride lying pale and bleeding" (351). He also tends to emphasize the contrast between light and darkness in a monochromatic manner. For instance, on the evening when Face-of-god first encounters the Folk of the Wolf, he reaches a heath from where he can see the mountains, "the snowy peaks flushed with the sinking sun against the frosty dark-grey eastern sky; and below them the dark rock-mountains" (34). As the battle against the Dusky Men begins, Wood-wise, one of the Kindred of the Wolf, turns around to discover that "thereunder was the hill bright and dark with men-at-arms…" (326). While the brides wait at the place of the Maiden Ward, the narrator tells us that "as they shifted in the sun they changed colour like the king-fisher shooting from shadow to sunshine" (399).The last song of the romance begins with the lines: "The sun will not tarry; now changeth the light, Fail the colours that marry the Day to the Night." (400). And in a passage of singular beauty, Morris emphasizes the contrast between light and shadow with only a terse description of color:

> High aloft floated the light clouds over the Dale; deep blue showed the distant fells below the ice-mountains; the waters dwindled; all things sought the shadow by daytime, and the twilight of even and the twilight of dawn were but sundered by three hours of half-dark night" (398).

On their wedding night, Gold-mane promises the Sun-beam that "out of the shadowed orchard shall we come into the open town-meadow, and over its daisies shall the moonlight be lying in a grey flood of brightness" (403-4).

The monochromatic colors and contrast between light and darkness impart an elemental tone to the romance and sometimes give it a feel analogous to watching a black and white movie. In the contrast between light and darkness shadows become important; we find, for instance, that spears thrown during battle are described as casting shadows: "their own spears cast long bars of shadow on the whiteness of the sunny road" (329). Shadows are mentioned at least twenty-two times, including the prefatory verse, shade at least twice, and Shadowy Vale, the location where the Children of the Wolf live in hiding, and thus a place of import in the romance, around eighty-seven times (including chapter titles). Tolkien's use of monochromatic colors and frequent mentioning of shadows, highlighted in the prefatory verse, is thus highly reminiscent of Morris's and will be further discussed in the next chapter. Unlike most contemporary writers of historical fiction, both Morris and Tolkien force the reader into the framework of the past by using the semantic references of the past.

TOPOGRAPHY

In many ways the geography of *Roots* is a most important character. The narrator begins the romance by describing the Dale, including its waters and varying vegetation. Next, he describes the three different peoples of the Dale and their relationship to their environment. He then proceeds to describe Burgstead, the chief town of the Dale. Only in chapter two do we first meet the protagonist and the plot begins.

Morris's knowledge of Icelandic geographic influenced his depiction of the topography in *Roots*. For example, the Dale is surrounded by high, rugged mountains

with heaths. There are cliffs, high passes, and waterfalls. There is also a dormant

volcano, the Shield-broad to the north, and the eruptions of past ages created a barren

landscape that is difficult to traverse. The latitude of the Dale seems quite northerly, since

there are only only three hours of night during midsummer (398). Nevertheless, the

downs and woods of the Dale seem much more like England, and the high snowy peaks

in the distance resemble the Alps. Ultimately, Morris fuses English, Icelandic, and alpine

landscapes as he creates the fictional topography of *Roots*.

The narrator reveals the names of over fifty locations during the course of the

romance. They often sound elemental and archetypal, like those in folklore, and

frequently reflect colors in some way: Greenbury, Whitegarth, and Shadowy Vale, to

mention three examples. Some named locations are settlements, such as Burgstead and

Carlstead, and one, the Portway, is a road. Sometimes natural features are given names,

such as the Staff-stone and the House-stone. The characters have a deep sense of

location, and often they are introduced to the reader along with their location: Hart of

Highcliff, for instance, or Worm of Willowholm (175). Tolkien does much the same, and

many of the names in *Roots* show up in different permutations in *The Lord of the Rings*,

which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Morris uses several distinct geographic terms that turn up later in *The Lord of the

Rings*. For example, *scree* or *screes* appears around eleven times in *Roots*. As the host

goes to war traveling through the mountain pass, there "were wide screes of loose stones

that they must needs climb up and down" (305). Another common term is *ghyll*. The war

party must later "go down into the ghyll that cleft the wall of Silver-dale" (312).

The word *tangle* is frequently associated with vegetation. We find the phrase "tangle of the wood," for example (31). A party of retreating Dusky Men "ran for the tangled thicket" trying to escape (209). One song has the line, "And thy Noons the tangled brake were cleaving" (277). The warriors of the Host traveling toward Silverdale camp in a vale "not much tangled with undergrowth" (312). And after the victory of the Great Battle, the Redeman and his companions sing:

> For not yet through the wood and its tangle ye wander;
>
> Now skirt we no thicket, no path by the mere. . . . (390)

A specific term that Morris uses for a grass lawn is *sward*. For example, the warriors traveling through the pass leading from Shadowy Vale first travel on a "wide smooth sward" (305). Morris more specifically also uses the term *green-sward*. As the forces of the Dale and of the Kindred of the Wolf espy the valley beside the volcano Shield-broad, they notice that it is dark except for "a space of bright green-sward." They know their going will be tough, for ancient lava "had heaped itself up round about the green-sward," cooling and creating a jumbled maze. "[M]idmost of the green-sward" they see their camping place for the night, which takes them two hours to reach (307-08). Later in the romance, as the victorious Dalesmen travel back to the Dale, Face-of-god talks with the Sun-beam and Bow-may as they "travel through a great oak-wood, where for a space was plain green-sward bare of all underwood" (391).

The narrator often describes features of the land in terms that suggest they are alive. His descriptions form an integral part of his attempt to re-enchant nature through fiction. For instance, the author uses verbs and adverbs to impart motion to hills and

mountains in the following passage:

> [T]oward the river . . . the hills *lowered* somewhat, though they still *ended* in sheer rocks; but up from it, and more especially on the north side, they *swelled* into great shoulders of land, then *dipped* a little, and *rose* again . . . *higher* and *steeper*, and ever *higher* till they *drew* dark and naked out of the woods to *meet* the snow-fields and ice-rivers of the high mountains. (1)

Much later, we read that "further east uphove the black shoulders of the Great Waste and the snowy peaks behind them" (197). Likewise, the narrator causes the motion of water to come to life:

> [H]ere and there from the hills . . . *came trickles* of water that *ran* in pretty brooks *down to* the river; and some of these *sprang bubbling up* amidst the foot-mounds of the sheer rocks; some *had cleft* a rugged and strait way through them, and *came tumbling down* into the Dale. . . . Now when the Weltering Water *came* out of the rocky tangle near the pass, it *was turned aside* by the ground till it *swung right up* to the feet of the Southern crags; then it *turned* and slowly *bent round* again northward, and at last fairly *doubled back on itself* before it *turned* again to *run* westward; so that when, after its second *double*, it *had come* to *flowing* softly westward under the northern crags, it *had cast* two thirds of a girdle *round about* a space of land. . . . (2-3; emphasis added)

Swift waters moreover can be described as boiling; for example, men of the Kindred of the Wolf throw the bodies of the Dusky Men that have been killed "into the boiling

caldron" of the Shivering Flood (146).

 The narrator very noticeably imparts motion and vitality to the sun and moon as well. For example, we read of the "southering sun" (166) and the "westering sunlight" (189). On one occasion, at dawn "the sun smote the eastern side of Shield-broad [a dormant volcano] ruddy" (308). In another, cliffs are mentioned "whose greyness was gilded yet by the last rays of the sun" (12). During battle, Gold-mane cheers Bow-may, predicting the tide of battle will go in their favor "as the sun cleaveth the clouds on the autumn morning" (335). Previously, Gold-mane has been described as "white-skinned, but for the sun's tanning" (12). Similarly, the moon is often described in terms of motion. Concerning Gold-mane, one night "between his rough path and the shimmer of the dancing moonlit water, he saw the moon smite on something gleaming. . ." (150). On the night of his wedding to Sun-beam, he declares to her that the "night-dark waters . . . shall be like wavering flames of white fire where the moon smites them. . ." (404). Sun-beam turns around and sees "lo! before her the moon just beginning to lift himself above the edge of the southern cliffs" (405). This personified moon is male, just as the moon in Norse mythology.

 Both the sun and moon are depicted as *waxing* or *waning*. After a snowstorm, for example, hunters see "the young waxing moon white and high up in the heavens" (78). And in the final song of the romance, the brides address the sun, singing

   O Sun, now thou wanest! yet come back and see

   Amidst all that thou gainest how gainful are we. (401)

Waxing and *waning*, however, are used in many other instances to mark the passage of

time. In the second chapter, the when we are first introduced to Gold-mane and the Bride, the narrator recounts that "So deepened the night and waned, and Gold-mane and the Bride still talked sweetly together. . ." (24). Gold-mane first encounters the Children of the Wolf "as the day was waning" (33). Gold-mane remarks to Sun-beam as sunset occurs in Shadowy Vale that "the day is waxing old" (123). The Runaways are brought to Burgstead "as the evening was waning" (210). When Folk-might first speaks with the Bride, he recounts how that the second time he saw her he realized that "thine happy days were waning" (271).

The narrator frequently uses other words to mark the passage of time, such as forms of the verb *to wear*. Thus, in the prefatory verse, the narrator invokes our feelings as how seeing "some fair abode,"

> How sorely then we long to stay
>
> And midst its sweetness wear the day,
>
> And 'neath its changing shadows sit,
>
> And feel ourselves a part of it.

When Gold-mane spends his first night at the Hall on the Mountain, Folk-might calls for a song for it gets later, because, "the night weareth and the guest is weary" (44). Later, we find that Gold-mane is happy, because "in two days' wearing" he will be "awaiting the token" he is eagerly expecting from the Friend, who is the Sun-beam (91). Even later, after giving the token to the Bride, she sadly tells him, "For as the days wear, the dealings between us shall be that thou shalt but get thee away from my life," but then urges him to "be at peace! And leave all to the wearing of the years. . ." (164-65). Iron-face declares

after the Bride's troubling declaration that she will not marry Gold-mane: "indeed I would that to-day were yesterday, or that many days were worn away" (184).

To mark the passage of time, the size and motion of shadows becomes important, as the excerpt from the prefatory verse above demonstrates. Elsewhere, the narrator tells us that it is not yet time for the Folk-mote to start, because "it still lacked some minutes of the due time, as the Alderman wotted by the shadow of the great standing-stone betwixt him and the Altar" (275). The brides assembled at the Maiden Ward ritually and playfully drive away men as "the sun was westering and the shadows growing long" (400). After Gold-mane arrives, he describes to the Sun-beam how they will move through a "shadowed orchard" on the way home (403), with motion implied by the use of the past participle form of the verb *to shadow* as an adjective. They will then cross the Weltering Water, with "the night-dark waters . . . like the void of all things where the shadows hang over them" (404). Tolkien uses similar techniques in emphasizing contrast, which are discussed in the next chapter.

As the prior example demonstrates, the narrator also reinforces this sense of living topography by attributing the characteristics of living creatures to natural features. These may include parts of the human body. The "great shoulders of land" and "the feet of the Southern crags" mentioned above are two examples. We also find out that fells have shoulders (77), hills (1) and cliffs (3) have faces, valley walls (2) and brooks (91) have lips, the space within the curve of a river has a throat (3), a mountain has a neck (147) a brook (91) and a cliff (77) can have a lip, a hill has a brow (341), and a pass has jaws (255). On one journey Face-of-god and his companions climb over a "mountain-

neck" and "were going athwart all those great dykes that went from the ice-mountains toward the lower dales like the outspread fingers of a hand. . ." (147). In another passage, a character who is describing Shadowy Vale affirms that "the voices of its waters never ceased. . ." (172). Sometimes they can even have emotions; for example, "the red and angry rack of clouds" (95). Attributes such as these give the reader the impression of living vitality in natural features.

At other times these features are described in terms of human artifacts; for instance, the Staff-stone is described as "a great rock rising straight up from the plain like sheaves of black staves standing close together" (297). On the road from Shadowy Vale, "the cliffs rose up like bundles of spear-shafts. . ." (303). Concerning the warriors traversing a narrow passage alongside the Shivering Flood, the narrator tells us that "the way [was] so narrow, that the sky overhead was to them as though they were at the bottom of a well" (305). Natural features can appear to wear clothing, as the "great fells clad with pine wood" indicates (1).

At times the narrator describes them in architectural terms, which is not surprising given Morris's interest in architecture. Thus, in one place "a great buttress of the cliffs thrust itself into the way" (309). Near the valley next to the volcano Shield-broad, there is "a wall of rocks tossed up into wild shapes of spires and jagged points" (307). In another location, "one great rock was in special as great as the hall of a wealthy goodman, and shapen like to a hall with hipped gables, which same the men of the Wolf called House-stone" (310). We also find the falls of a river being compared to stairs, as when, after leaving the valley near the Shield-broad, the traveling warriors eventually encounter a

gap where "the Shivering Flood . . . came down from the east in many falls, as it were over a fearful stair. . ." (309).

By personifying nature in *Roots*, Morris seeks to remove the barriers that have arisen between it and humankind. By doing so he places himself solidly within the Romantic tradition. Morris has, in the words of a song of the Redesman in *Roots*, "The Love of the Earth" (212), and this love particularly manifests itself in a love of trees. For Morris they symbolize fruitfulness. In *Roots* the narrator mentions that "in many places the Dale was fair with growth of trees, and especially were there long groves of sweet chestnut standing on the grass, of the fruit whereof the folk had much gain" (10). But to the north of Burgdale lies trees of a different nature: "The wood itself thereabout was thick, a blended growth of diverse kinds of trees, but most of oak and ash; light and air enough came through their boughs to suffer the holly and bramble and eglantine and other small wood to grow together into thickets, which no man could pass without hewing a way" (4). This type of forest is wilder and more prominent in *Roots*. Fiona MacCarthy observes that Morris as a boy wandered through "the depths of Epping Forest like a small-scale version of one of his own heroes." She furthermore remarks:

> In Morris's iconography of nature a forest was the place where you both lost yourself and found yourself. . . . [His] ideal forests were enormous: 'I don't care much about a wood unless it is a very big one,' Morris once wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones. . . . He always saw his role as the defender of the mystery: 'we want a thicket, not a park, in Epping Forest.' He believed there was a certain morality in wildness, a recuperative value. (14-15).

MacCarthy's observations are borne out by Morris's narrative in *Roots*. There, the forest is a place of mystery, full of wights and other dangers, but of opportunities as well: there, free from the constraints of his family and society, Face-of-god encounters his future wife, the Sun-beam. Morris's other romances, such as *The Well at the End of the World*, have thick, mysterious forests as well. That they were ultimately based upon "this strange, unexampled, and most romantic wood," as Morris referred to Epping Forest (*Collected Letters* 4: 275), seems certain.

Morris was moved enough by the wanton destruction of trees to speak out publicly. When the practice of making destructive clearings in Epping Forest was brought to his attention, he wrote a letter of protest to the *Daily Chronicle*, stating:

> I was born and bred in its neighborhood . . . , and when I was a boy and young man, knew it yard by yard . . . . In those days it had no worse foes than the gravel stealer and the rolling fence maker, and was always interesting and often very beautiful. From what I can hear it is years since the greater part of it has been destroyed, and I fear . . . what is left of it now runs the danger of further ruin. . . . It was certainly the biggest hornbeam wood in these islands, and I suppose in the world. . . . I very much fear that the intention of the authorities is to clear the forest of its native trees, and to plant vile weeds like deodars and outlandish conifers instead. . . . [I[f . . . we let the matter slip out of the hands of the thoughtful part of the public: the essential character of one of the greatest ornaments of London will disappear, and no one will have even a sample left to show

what the great north-eastern forest was like. (*Collected Letters* 268-69).

Morris clearly with his letter intends to raise public consciousness to the threat that the forest faced. However, it also demonstrates his awareness that nature is in retreat. By his time, England's original forests have been reduced to remnants, and even the future of these seem uncertain. The disenchantment of nature is so pervasive that few people are concerned by this problem or even see it as a problem. Morris is therefore both racing against the clock and fighting public apathy has he tries to raise awareness of this problem.

Morris's fictional response to this dilemma, as exemplified in *Roots*, is to try to show the vibrancy, beauty, and majesty of nature. C. S. Lewis has explained the attractiveness of Morris's landscapes thus:

> Other stories have only scenery: his have geography. He is not concerned
> with 'painting' landscapes; he tells you the lie of the land, and then you
> paint the landscape for yourself. To a reader long fed on the almost
> botanical and entomological niceties of much modern fiction–where,
> indeed, we mostly skip if the characters go through a jungle–the effect is
> at first very pale and cold, but also very fresh and spacious. We begin to
> relish what my friend called the 'Northernness'. No mountains in
> literature are as far away as distant mountains in Morris. ("William
> Morris" 221)

Lewis thus suggests that Morris has the ability to create the illusion of distance and space with his landscapes. This illusion was important to Tolkien also as he sought to create the

distant and spacious realms of Middle-earth. As we shall see, Tolkien frequently echoes

Roots as he uses specific terminology and features from Morris to help create the

topography in *The Lord of the Rings*.

INTERPRETING *ROOTS*

Most commentators about *Roots* tend to interpret it through the lens of Morris's

Marxist beliefs. Frederick Kirchhoff (1979), for example, argues that the marriage of the

Bride that helps to cement the alliance between the people of Burgdale and the

Silverdalers (the Folk of the Wolf) reflects Morris's belief in "the historical necessity

propelling distantly related tribes into the formation of a people" (125). This process

relates to the division Morris and Bax had made in *Socialism from the Root Up* between

"lower, middle, and upper" barbarism, "which they then identified with the gens, the

tribe, and the people." *Roots* therefore fictionally represents the transition "between tribe

and people" (122). Furthermore, "The optimism of *The Roots of the Mountain* is born of

a reading of history through which the inevitable decline of gens society is a necessary

stage in the rediscovery of the virtues of the gens in the 'open society' of a communist

utopia." The romance "is a major component of Morris' utopian vision—an imaginary

past that serves as his dialectical stepping stone to an imaginary future" (126). Kirchhoff

thus interprets *Roots* primarily through the framework of Morris's Marxist beliefs.

Likewise does Carole Silver (1982), although she instead sees Morris as "writing

socialist myth rather than Marxist history": "Deviating from Marxist theory, Morris

shows the gens system coexisting with early medieval institutions" (135). She also argues

that "despite Morris's skillful use of the metaphors of personal, social, and cosmic union, his romance lacks conviction" and that "the plot . . . is poorly contrived and proportioned" (189).

Both Kirchhoff and Silver make valid observations, and one must certainly take Morris's political beliefs into account in any interpretation of his works. Commentators, however, seemingly have heretofore failed to recognize that *Roots* is fundamentally a fairy tale.[82] It begins, "Once upon a time. . . , and the ending presents itself as the ending of a "tale." And while it does not end with the signal phrase, "And they lived happily ever after," its content at the ending does reflect much happiness, with the main characters getting married, having children, and joyously reuniting periodically.[83] The union of the peoples at the end of the story is even described in terms that echo the traditional wedding vow: they "became as one Folk, for better or worse, in peace and in war, in waning and waxing" (411). *Roots* in fact constitutes a resounding affirmation of marriage, surprising considering his own unhappy marriage, his own political beliefs about marriage that were influenced by Marx and Engels, and the very different social relations he would soon represent in *News from Nowhere.* It also marks a break with works such as *Sigurd the Volsung* and *The House of the Wolfings* that had tragic or heroic endings.

---

[82]Silver, however, does see *Roots* as a "myth of reconciliation" that "takes many forms as he describes forgiveness and marriage among individuals, union among political and social units, and the wedding of cosmic forces, all of which will result in the creation of a golden age on the ordinary earth" (136).

[83]In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien writes, "As for the beginning of fairy stories: one can scarcely improve on the formula *Once upon a time*." He also recognizes that "end-phrases" of fairy-stories are varied and need not be "and they lived happily ever after." The latter phrase is "an artificial device" anyway, since an end-phrase cannot "be thought of as the real end of any particular fragment of the seamless Web of Story" (160-61 n. H).

Many elements in *Roots* betray its fairy-tale nature. The names of Gold-mane and the Sun-beam, for example, evoke names found in other fairy tales. A dog, Sure-foot, faithfully leads Gold-mane to the hiding place of the Children of the Wolf in Shadowy Vale. The Children of the Wolf make their living partly by engaging in thievery, but they only rob bad people. With the exception of problems caused by the love triangle, good and evil are fairly clear-cut. The good characters tend to be exceptionally good and the bad ones (the Dusky Men) are irredeemably evil. One has a feeling that in the ending, with the good characters rewarded with happiness and the bad ones exterminated, justice has been served.

Roots is also rife with wish-fulfillment. Gold-mane (i.e., Morris) is frequently praised for his abilities and on occasion even praises himself. When his people must choose a War-leader, they unanimously confirm him. Women are highly aware of his good looks; one calls him "the fairest man of the Dale." After he kisses her hands, she goes away where she thinks he cannot see her and "kissed both her hands where he had kissed them erst" (30). When Bow-may first kisses him on a winter day, she breaks into tears and says, "Now smelleth the wood sweeter, and summer will come back again" (83-84). One suspects that in *Roots*, Morris through Gold-mane gets the love and recognition that he may have often felt lacking in real life.

By using the approach pioneered by Vladimir Propp, one is able to further demonstrate the fairy-tale nature of *Roots*. Propp, who studied the structure of the fairy tale, contends that "All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure." (23). He identifies thirty-one functions of dramatis personae and argues that all fairy tales are

limited to these functions (21). Even though all tales do not have all functions, the functions present in an individual tale follow a sequence "that is always identical" (22). As the following table (Table 1) shows, most of Propp's functions have counterparts in *Roots*, and they often, although not always, occur in the same sequence. *Roots* therefore seems to clearly fall within the parameter of a fairy tale, at least by measurement of Propp's functions.

The basic pattern is the same, although functions sometimes deviate somewhat from those found in shorter, traditional fairy tales. However, a question more germane for this dissertation must be asked: would *Roots* fall within Tolkien's definition of a fairy tale? Tolkien includes the following characteristics of fairy-stories in "On Fairy-Stories": [A] 'fairy-story' is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy. Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic. . ." (114). In *Roots*, the characters certainly believe in magic, and enough preternatural events that are not explained away occur to cause the romance to fit within this basic definition. Tolkien also says that a fairy story should have an "enchantment of distance, especially of distant time" (116), that the marvels of the story cannot be explained away as a dream (116), and that it cannot be a 'Beast-fable' (117). *Roots* clearly meets these requirements as well.

Tolkien also stipulates that in a fairy-story, the "Right side and the wrong side" should be "clear" (133n), and that justice should be done (136-37). While there is some moral ambiguity caused by the love triangle, the main characters wind up with the right spouse in the end. The difference between the good nature of the allied peoples and

TABLE 1. PROPP FUNCTIONS AND *ROOTS* COUNTERPARTS

PROPP FUNCTION	COUNTERPART IN *ROOTS*
I. One of the members of a family absents himself from home.	Face-of-god (Gold-mane) feels a strange restlessness and wanders in the woods (19).
II. An interdiction is addressed to the hero.	Stone-face warns Face-of-god of the perils of wandering in the woods (20).
III. The interdiction is violated.	Face-of-god surreptitiously goes back into the woods (24).
IV. The villain makes an attempt at reconaissance.	Two Dusky Men ask for lodging at the home of Wood-grey, a Woodlander (86).
V. The villain receives information about his victim.	The Dusky Men are able to spy out the house and its inhabitants (86).
VI. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings.	The Dusky Men pretend to be lost wayfarers (86).
VII. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy.	Wood-grey offers the two men lodging (86).
VIII. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family.	During the night the two men tie up Wood-grey's two daughters and attempt to carry them off. In resisting the men Wood-grey meets his death (86-87).
VIIIa. One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something.	Face-of-god desires to wed the Sun-beam (71). Also, the Sun-beam and her people have been driven from their home (112-13).
IX. Misfortune or lack is made kinown; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or is dispatched.	The Sun-beam summons Face-of-god to Shadowy Vale with a message attached to an arrow (96).
XI. The hero leaves home.	Face-of-god surreptitiously departs Burgstead and travels to Shadowy Vale (97).

TABLE 1, continued

PROPP FUNCTION	COUNTERPART IN *ROOTS*
XII. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper.	The Sun-beam asks Face-of-god to prove his spear-casting ability. He proves his prowess when he complies (105-06).
XIII. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor.	Face-of-god agrees to help the Sun-beam's people (120-21).
XIV. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.	Face-of-god acquires a future bride, Sun-beam (124), who has powers of foreseeing (119).
XV. The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search.	Face-of-god is led to Shadowy Vale by a dog (99-101). He and his men are later led by the Children of the Wolf to Silverdale (311-13).
XVI. The hero and the villain join in direct combat.	Face-of-god leads his forces in battle to victory over the Dusky Men (336-37).
XVII. The hero is branded.	Two heroines are wounded in battle: the Bride and Bow-may (336-37, 346).
XVIII. The villain is defeated.	The Dusky Men are slaughtered (356).
XIX. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated.	Face-of-god gets the Sun-beam and her people are restored to Silverdale (373, 376-77).
XX. The hero returns.	Face-of-god and the Sun-beam return to Burgstead (394-96 [He had, however, returned prior to this as well.]).
XXIX. The hero is given a new appearance.	Face-of-god appears aged (387).
XXXI. The hero is married and ascends the throne.	Face-of-god marries the Sun-beam and becomes a great chieftain (397-405).

the evil nature of the Dusky Men is also plainly spelled out. As mentioned before, the

reader has the sense that justice has been served when the Dusky Men are defeated and

annihilated and the good characters are rewarded with peace and marriage.

Tolkien furthermore states that recovery ("regaining of a clear view") should

occur. "[T]hings seem clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity"

(146). Escape should happen as well: "Why should we not escape from or condemn the

'grim Assyrian' absurdity of top-hats, or the Morlockian horror of factories."[84] Escape

should be from "our present time and self-made misery . . . the ugliness of our works, and

of their evil" (150). The careful reader of *Roots* certainly will be able to see his or her

own contemporary society in a new light when comparing it with that in the romance.

And the book does provide escape into a worldview that is far different from our own.

The final and most important characteristic, however, is the Consolation of the

Happy Ending, which Tolkien explains as

> the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the
>
> sudden joyous 'turn' (for there is no true end to any fairy-tale). . . . [I]t is a
>
> sudden or miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not
>
> deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility
>
> of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of
>
> much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is

---

[84]In a footnote Tolkien approvingly quotes Christopher Dawson, who in *Progress and Religion* takes "the full Victorian panoply of top hat and frock coat" that has "spread with that culture all over the world," as being representative of the "grim and Assyrian beauty" of Victorian culture, which "was out of touch with the life of nature and of human nature as well" (*Progress and Religion* 68-69). Tolkien very slightly misquotes Dawson.

evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the

world, poignant as grief. (153).

This last trait is more problematic, for although *Roots* has a happy ending, it is

not unambiguously so. Peace brings sadness as well as joy. By reclaiming and resettling

Silverdale, the Children of the Wolf become so distant from Burgdale that visits between

the two peoples can only occur infrequently. Friends and relatives are thus parted. The

Bride, the Sun-beam, and Bow-may must leave their homes and dwell with the people of

their husbands. As the Bride says goodbye to Gold-mane, she cuts short her farewell,

saying "yet doth my heart ache with the sundering" (385). Folk-might muses to his

friends, "does it not seem strange to you that peace sundereth as well as war" (377). Thus

the ending is bitter-sweet.

Furthermore, the characters still live in a time when the threat of war is ever-

present. As they journey back to the Dale after the great battle with the Dusky Men, the

Sun-beam and Face-of-god have this conversation:

> 'Thinkest thou,' said the Sun-beam, "that the winning of
>
> Silverstead is the last battle which thou shalt see?'
>
> 'Nay,' said he, 'nay.'
>
> 'Shall thy Dale—our Dale—be free from all trouble within itself
>
> henceforward? Is there a wall built round it to keep out forever storm,
>
> pestilence, and famine, and the waywardness of its own folk?'
>
> 'So it is as thou sayest,' quoth Face-of-god, 'and to meet such
>
> troubles and overcome them, or to die in strife with them, this is a great

part of a man's life.' (391).

Here the Sun-beam and Gold-mane recognize that happiness must be tempered with the realization that it can never be permanent. As she awaits the day of her wedding, the Sun-beam "feed[s] her soul with the joy of the days to be, whatever trouble might fall upon them, whereof belike she foreboded some" (397). Her powers of foreseeing make her aware of future troubles. Morris's Dale may be a utopia, but it is no paradise—rather it is cognizant of the sad reality that happiness in this life is fleeting. One should enjoy it while it lasts, as the Sun-beam does.

The ambiguity of Morris's happy ending, however, does not at all preclude it falling within Tolkien's realm of fairy-stories. As a Christian, Tolkien himself concurs that permanent joy and satisfaction are not possible within the confines of our world, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, *The Lord of the Rings* itself echoes this ambiguous ending in several ways. *Roots*, therefore, has much in common with the fairy-story as discussed by Tolkien. Of course, however, it differs from traditional fairy tales in its length, sheer amount of intricate details, and obvious suitability for adult readers. The following chapter demonstrates how Tolkien takes specific elements of plot, language, and topography from this long and involved adult fairy tale as he creates a monumental one of his own.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

Tolkien seems to have found *The Roots of the Mountain* particularly fascinating,

judging by its many echoes that occur in Tolkien's own work. He certainly admits in his

1960 letter that some of the fictional topography in *The Lord of the Rings* was based upon

Morris's.[85] However, other elements from *Roots* seem to show up as well, for there are

many similarities in plot motifs, character names, and even phrasing. The length and

narrative structure of *Roots*, as well as its extremely detailed topographic and

ethnographic information about the land and its pagan inhabitants, give the romance an

air of reality and serious that Tolkien was striving for in his own work. It would have

provided a powerful model for Tolkien as he sought to write his own adult fairy tale of

epic proportions.

This chapter explores several of the most important ways that Tolkien drew from

Roots, using certain elements and in the process transmogrifying them. It first explores

Tolkien's fascination with the phrase "the roots of the mountains." It thereupon proceeds

to discuss the striking parallels in plot motifs between *Roots* and early drafts of *The Lord

of the Rings*. Two elements in particular of Tolkien's final work that show strong

indications of influence from *Roots* are then discussed in detail: the Orcs and the female

---

[85]As mentioned in chapter one, the letter reads: "The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after the Battle of the Somme. They owe more to William Morris and his Huns and Romans, as in *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*." (*Letters* 303).

warrior Éowyn. Moving from these characters to the metaphysical underpinnings of *The Lord of the Rings*, the religion and supernatural forces and beings of Middle-earth are examined. We then proceed from a discussion of depth in time to specific elements of style, diction, and semantics that resemble those found in *Roots*. The chapter concludes with an examination of some of the questions *The Lord of the Rings* raises about its purpose and interpretation as an adult fairy tale.

Tolkien seems to have acquired a long-lasting fascination with the phrase "roots of the mountains"; the exact phrase or variations on it occur at least twice in *The Silmarillion* and five times in *The Hobbit*. In the latter, after Bilbo Baggins encounters the creature Gollum, the two engage in a riddle contest, which Bilbo wins. The first riddle Gollum asks, before the contest actually begins, is this:

> *What has roots as nobody sees*
>
> *Is taller than trees,*
>
> *Up, up it goes*
>
> *And yet never grows?*

Bilbo easily guesses the answer, *mountain* (*The Annotated Hobbit* 121; emphasis in original). Gollum's choice for riddle is not surprising and quite appropriate, given that they are at that moment talking "at the very roots of the mountain" (*The Annotated Hobbit* 119).[86]

The phrase or variants thereof occurs at least thirteen times in *The Lord of the Rings*. Some of the contexts within which it is placed suggest that, among other things,

---

[86]According to George W. Boswell, this riddle is original on Tolkien's part, unlike several others told in the contest that have analogues elsewhere (47).

Tolkien came to see it as a metaphor for the tradition of myth and folklore from which, often through the lens of Morris, he was using to build the "truth" of Middle-earth. For instance, Gandalf narrates that Smeagol, the original name for Gollum, was once "[t]he most inquisitive and curious-minded of [his] family" and who "was interested in roots and beginnings" (53). When he first lays eyes on the Misty Mountains, he thinks that "The roots of those mountains must be roots indeed; there must be great secrets buried there which have not been discovered since the beginning" (54). Elsewhere, when Treebeard takes Merry and Pippin to his home, he tells them they are "near the roots of the Last Mountain" (470). Gandalf tells their companions of the Fellowship that

> Treebeard is Fangorn, the guardian of the forest; he is the oldest of the Ents, the oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-earth. . . . Merry and Pippin have been fortunate. . . . For he came here two days ago and bore them away to his dwelling far off by the roots of the mountains. (499)

Here roots are associated with age and tradition, the home of an almost-forgotten being so ancient that he has become nearly mythical. For Tolkien, roots ultimately represent a bastion against the evils of the modern world; as Gandalf says about Aragorn, "The old that is strong does not wither,/Deep roots are not reached by the frost" (247).

Tolkien began writing this work of "deep roots" in December of 1937, not long after publication of *The Hobbit* (*Letters* 27). He apparently originally intended the sequel to *The Hobbit* to be a tale primarily for children, which was what his publisher desired. He also evidently intended for the story to be fairly short, because in October 1939 he

expressed hope to his publisher that he "may be able to submit it early next year (*Letters*

41).[87] However, despite the popularity of *The Hobbit*, he had come to regret some of its

tone and style, which he later expressed on several occasions. For example, he would

write to W. H. Auden in 1955 that *The Hobbit*

> was unhappily really meant, as far as I was conscious, as a 'children's
>
> story,' and as I had not learned sense then, and my children were not quite
>
> old enough to correct me, it has some of the silliness of manner caught
>
> unthinkingly from the kind of stuff I had served to me. . . . I deeply regret
>
> them. (*Letters* 215)

Again, in a 1959 draft he would write:

> When I published *The Hobbit* . . . I was still influenced by the convention
>
> that 'fairy-stories' are naturally directed to children. . . . And I had
>
> children of my own. . . . But it had some unfortunate effects on the mode
>
> of expression and narrative method, which if I had not been rushed, I
>
> should have corrected. . . . I had given a great deal more thought to the
>
> matter before beginning the composition of *The Lord of the Rings*; and
>
> that work was not specially addressed to children or to any other class of
>
> people. (*Letters* 297)

Tolkien did notice a trend in the narrative of *The Hobbit*, however. Although it

originally began as a story for his own children, unrelated to the mythological material

Tolkien had been putting in "coherent form" (the Silmarillion), it "naturally became

---

[87]In fact, it took him ten more years to finish it (*Letters* 136).

attracted towards this dominant construction in [his] mind, causing the tale to become larger and more heroic as it proceeded" (*Letters* 346). Thus he was conscious that his mythological material increasingly helped shape the style of *The Hobbit* as its story progressed. This mythological material, as several critics mentioned in chapter one have noticed, was strongly influenced in tone and style by Morris.

A similar process occurred during the writing of *The Lord of the Rings*. The language in the original drafts, as presented in *The Return of the Shadow*, is similar to that in *The Hobbit*, and it contains many intrusions by the narrator, such as "as some of you may remember" (13). Speaking of the disappearance of Bilbo Baggins, the narrator says, "I am going to tell you a story about one of his descendants, and if you had only read his memoirs . . . you might have been puzzled" (15). These intrusions or asides to children not only link the story to that of *The Hobbit* but demonstrate the lingering influence of what was popularly thought to be the proper tone and style for writing for children.

However, as the drafts progress, the style becomes markedly more serious. This finds its most dramatic reflection in the dialogue given to Trotter, the character, then a hobbit, who was precursor to Strider (Aragorn). At first he talks like a hobbit, using simple sentences and contractions:

> But as for my coming with you, I will say just this: I know all the land
> between the Shire and the Mountains, for I've wandered over most of them
> in the course of my life; and I'm older now than I look. I might prove useful.
> For I fancy you'll have to leave the open Road after tonight's accident. I
> don't think somehow that you will be wanting to meet any of these Black

Riders. . . . They give me the creeps. (*The Return of the Shadow* 153)

By the time the party reaches Weathertop, and Trotter tells the story of Beren and

Lúthien, he is no longer saying "I fancy," for his style has totally changed:

> But Thingol the Elven-king was wroth . . . and he sent Beren upon a
>
> hopeless quest ere he could win Lúthien. . . . [T]hey came even to
>
> Angband and beguiled the Enemy, and overthrew him, and took a Silmaril
>
> and fled. . . . [T]he dread wolf-warden of Angband, being maddened by
>
> the fire of the Silmaril that consumed his evil flesh within, roamed through
>
> the world, wild and terrible. . . . Thus befell the Wolf-hunt of Doriath. . .
>
> .And the great wolf leaped upon Beren and felled him and grievously
>
> wounded him. . . . and he died in her [Lúthien's] arms. . . . [Choosing to
>
> become mortal,] So it was that Lúthien alone of all the Elven-kin had died
>
> indeed. But by her choice the Two Kindreds were joined, and she is the
>
> fore-mother of many in whom the Elves see yet, though the world
>
> changeth, the likeness of Lúthien the beloved whom they have lost.[88] (*The*
>
> *Return of the Shadow* 182-84)

Here several traits characteristic of Morris's phrasing occur, including a preference for

words with be- prefixes, the -eth ending for verbs, the use of *ere*, and alteration of syntax.

Giving a high-and-serious style of discourse to Trotter as he progressively becomes

transformed into Aragorn is part of the process whereby Tolkien sought to make his

sequel to *The Hobbit* more serious and heroic-sounding.

---

[88]As Christopher Tolkien notes, his father took this passage "almost word for word" from a 1937 manuscript of the *Quenta Silmarillion* (182).

For Tolkien's viewpoint about fairy tales and their audience was changing, and he was becoming dissatisfied with some of his previous narrative and stylistic practices. His essay "On Fairy-Stories" marks his new ideas about such works. It was first given as a lecture in March of 1939, during the time period when he was writing *The Lord of the Rings*.[89] There he forthrightly argues that there is no "natural connection between the minds of children and fairy-stories." The association of the two is "an accident of our domestic history," because "Fairy-stories in the modern lettered world have been relegated to the nursery. . ." (130). This has had the unfortunate effect of spawning "a dreadful undergrowth of stories written or adapted to what was or is conceived to be the measure of children's minds and needs. The old stories are mollified or bowdlerized. . . ." Even worse, they have sometimes exemplified "the falsification of values" (137). In opposition to this attitude toward the genre, he maintains that "If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults" (137). Clearly he began to see *The Lord of the Rings* as a counterweight and alternative to practices he disliked in contemporary fairy-tale works. He refers to his essay when he, explaining how *The Lord of the Rings* came about, tells W. H. Auden in 1955 that he already "had expressed the view that the connexion in the modern mind between children and 'fairy stories' is false and accidental, and spoils the stories in themselves and for children. I wanted to try and write one that was not addressed to children at all (as such); also I wanted a larger canvas" (*Letters* 216).

This is why, In August of 1938, he found himself telling his publisher that the draft

---

[89]By this time it had already reached over 300 pages in manuscript form (*The Return of the Shadow* 310).

was "getting quite out of hand" and "progresses towards quite unforseen goals" (*Letters* 40). Explaining his comments to Stanley Unwin a couple of months later, he says he meant "it was running its course, and forgetting 'children', and was becoming more terrifying than the Hobbit [sic]. . . . It is more 'adult,'" as were his own children (*Letters* 41).

In the process of creating his own adult fairy tale, he subconsciously draws from Morris, the author of the adult fairy tales that he most admired. As the drafts progress, and language and theme become more adult, influence by Morris becomes more apparent. Some indications of this, however, emerge at least as early as the first type-script draft of the second chapter.[90] There we find many parallels with *Roots*: a pattern of alternating prose and song, a concern with geography, elemental-sounding place names that are the same or similar to Morris's in *Roots*, a propensity for contrasting light with darkness, the frequent mention of shade and shadows, and the attribution of action verbs to roads and the moon. Colors are similarly sparse and natural features are described in architectural terms.

A comparison between chapters two through seven of *Roots* and the original second and third chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* shows that many features of the former seemed to be paralleled by the latter, although in different permutations and order. The following table (Table 2) illustrates these parallels.[91]

---

[90]Christopher Tolkien's discussion places this early in 1938, although some emendations to the draft may have occurred at times subsequent to this.

[91]All page references to *Roots* here and in the remainder of this chapter pertain to volume 15 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*. All page references to Tolkien's early drafts refer to Tolkien's *The Return of the Shadow* (1988), edited by Christopher Tolkien. It comprises volume 6 of *The History of Middle-earth* series.

TABLE 2: PLOT PARALLELS

The Roots of the Mountains	**Early drafts of *LotR***
1. The narrative begins late in the evening (11).	1. The narrative begins at twilight (49).
2. Gold-mane is traveling home along a road during autumn (11).	2. Bingo [the precursor to Frodo] travels along the road with two other companions during autumn (51).
3. The setting sun is "gilding the chestnut groves" (12).	3. The trees are "[t]ouched with gold" of the rising sun (51).
4. Gold-mane is traveling back to the Dale (13).	4. A character, Odo, mentions "the Men from Dale" (54).
5. He is "murmuring to himself snatches of old songs" (13).	5. The companions sing a song, the tune of which is "as old as the hills" (56).
6. He engages in banter with friends upon reaching home (13).	6. The companions engage in banter (49).
7. He objects to being called a lord. (14).	7. Gildor [an elf] describes it as "bad" that the Lord of the Ring is looking for Bingo (74).
8. A "noisy crowd" brings in "bowls and cups and dishes and trenchers" (14).	8. The elves serve them with cups and "heaped plates and dishes" (62).
9. His mother, who is dead, was named the Jewel (16).	9. The elves call Bingo "a jewel among hobbits" (62).
10. Their meal, which includes bread, fruit, and wine, is described (18).	10. A meal of bread, fruit, and potent drink is described (62).
11. He discusses his restlessness and mentions that "the World is wide" (19).	11. Bingo discusses his desire for adventure, and Gildor mentions "the Wide World" (63).
12. Redesman sings a song about traveling on a road (22-23).	12. Bingo sings a song about traveling on a road: "The road goes ever on and on" (53).
13. Redesman's song mentions the west wind (22).	13. The narrator mentions that "[t]he West wind was sighing" (56).

TABLE 2, continued

The Roots of the Mountains	Early drafts of *LotR*
14. Gold-mane leaves secretly the next day (24).	14. The companions leave and travel secretly (54, 63).
15. He tells a character whom he meets that he does not know where he is going (27).	15. In Bingo's song the direction of their road is unknown (53).
16. He encounters three women (29-30).	16. The companions encounter a party of elves (59).
17. He discovers an unexpected path that was previously unknown to him (31).	17. The companions' "walking song" mentions "hidden pathways" (56-57).
18. He follows the path through "the tangle of the wood" (31).	18. Bingo will later dream of "a sea of tangled trees" (105).
19. He eats in the wood (32).	19. The companions eat in the wood (52).
20. He drinks from a beaker he fills in a brook (32).	20. They fill their water-bottles from a stream (52).
21. He falls asleep, with his head on "a little mound" (32).	21. "Odo fell asleep, pillowed on a smooth hillock" (61).
22. Upon waking, he guides himself by "the whereabouts of the sun" (32).	22. The companions will later guide themselves by the sun (91).
23. He soon discovers "a wide well-grassed wood-lawn, hedged by the wood . . . on three sides, and sloping upward on the fourth" (34).	23. They stop at "a wide space of grass," where "[t]he wood bordered it on three sides," with a downward slope on the fourth (61).
24. There he discovers a hall (35).	24. On this "green-sward" (which is near Woodhall) is the hall of the elves (61).
25. He decides to investigate, because he is "fain . . . for a bed beneath a roof" (35).	25. Bingo has previously complained that he misses his "beautiful feather-bed" (51).
26. There he encounters an unexpected danger (35).	26. Gildor tells Bingo that he has encountered an unexpected danger (64).
27. The people that he meets offer him lodging (38).	27. The elves offer the companions lodging (60).

TABLE 2, continued.

The Roots of the Mountains	**Early drafts of *LotR***
28. One of the hall's inhabitants looks to him like "the noblest of all the Queens of ancient story" (39).	28. The elves sing a song about an ancient Queen (59).
29. Their night meal is prepared with the aid of torches and eaten by firelight (41).	29. The elves provide a night meal with torches and firelight (61).
30. The hall's inhabitants are reluctant to reveal their true names (38-39).	30. Gildor advises Bingo not to reveal his name to any Black Rider (64).
31. That night he sleeps in a bed with a pillow (48).	31. The hobbits are laid upon "soft beds" (62).
32. Most of the inhabitants of the hall are gone by morning (49).	32. Gildor tells Bingo, "in the morning we shall have gone. . ." (65).
33. The Friend (the Sun-beam in disguise) admonishes Gold-mane to secrecy (55).	33. Gildor warns Bingo that he should not talk to any Black Rider (64).

This discussion of parallels is of course selective, omitting many dissimilarities. However, it illustrates the fact that even in his initial drafts for *The Lord of the Rings* he seems to be echoing *The Roots of the Mountains* quite frequently. This echoing of motifs, names, and even phrasing seems to reflect the profound effect that this romance had upon Tolkien.

NAMES FROM THE "LEAF-MOULD"

Tolkien's letters contain clues as to how this echoing may have come about. In several of them he discusses the way he viewed his own creative processes. He once wrote that "To me a name comes first and the story follows" (*Letters* 219). Responding to a reader in a 1956 letter, Tolkien discusses how the process of creativity began working within him:

> [W]hen I was an undergraduate . . . [I] began to explore my own linguistic aesthetic in language composition. It was just as the 1914 War burst on me that I made the discovery that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong. . . . [T]he Greek mythology depends far more on the marvellous aesthetic of its language and so of its nomenclature of persons and places and less on its content than people realize. . . . So though being a philologist by nature and trade (yet one always primarily interested in the aesthetic rather than the functional aspects of language) I began with language, I found myself involved in inventing 'legends' of the same 'taste'. (*Letters* 231)

Although Tolkien here immediately refers to his own created languages, his remarks

indicate the preeminent importance names hold in his work.

In a 1967 letter to W. H. Auden, he admits to consciously borrowing names for their sound, although here the context is Norse literature:

> This leads to the matter of external 'external' history: the actual way in which I came to light on or choose certain sequences of sound to use as names, *before* they were given a place inside the story. . . . I remember much of this process–the influence of memory of names or words already known, or of 'echoes' in the linguistic memory, and few have been unconscious. Thus the names of the Dwarves in *The Hobbit* (and additions in the *L. R.*) are derived from the lists in *Völuspá* of the names of *dvergar*, but this is no key to the dwarf-legends in *The L. R.* The 'dwarves' of my legends are far nearer to the dwarfs of Germanic [legends] than are the Elves, but still in many ways very different from them. (*Letters* 383)

He proceeds to discuss two cases of unconscious borrowing that he admits to, owning that one of them, *Erech*, probably happened because he "knew and had read a good deal about Mesopotamia, and the other, *nazg*, "the word for 'ring' in the Black speech," derived from *nasc*, "the word for 'ring' in Gaelic," a language that he had "at various times studied" (*Letters* 384-85).

Several facts become clear from his remarks to Auden. Whenever Tolkien read something frequently or with great interest, names and other words that were aesthetically pleasing to him made a strong impression. They would recur to his memory before he placed them in his stories, presumably for their suitability as a character or

place name. His use of them was frequently conscious, although sometimes not, and their function in his writings did not necessarily correspond to their function in the original source. Although he makes no mention of Morris in this discussion, his words here explain quite clearly how place names, character names, and even specific phrasing used by Morris, a writer he had read with intensity and great pleasure (at least during some portions of his life), could be transmogrified and, often in different contexts, used in Tolkien's own writings. *Roots* probably became an important source because Tolkien was attempting to do something similar to what Morris had done: to write an adult fairy tale of epic proportions with realistic topographical and ethnological description.

While it may at first seem unclear why particular words, phrases, and names from *Roots* are echoed and others are not, an explanation may lie in an observation by Tom Shippey about how Tolkien chose names for characters. In his drafts he would write "out a string of names" for a character until "he got one that felt right," and he began with sound rather than meaning, although there could be a convergence of sound and meaning in the name finally chosen, such as *Saruman* (*The Road to Middle-earth* 291). A simple explanation, then, of why names resembling those in Morris occur in Tolkien's work is that their sound and meaning contributed to the constructed truth and reality of his constructed world, and their occurrence furthermore suggests a fundamental affinity between that world and the one constructed by Morris. Tolkien furthermore tends not to use words, phrases, or stylistic practices from *Roots*, such as the frequent use of translated or created kennings, that do not contribute to the believability of Middle-earth.

The following table (Table 3) illustrates some of the parallels in names.

TABLE 3: PARALLELS BETWEEN MORRIS AND TOLKIEN

The Roots of the Mountains	*The Lord of the Rings* (unless otherwise noted)
The Roots of the Mountains	This phrase along with variants appears at least twice in *The Silmarillion*, three times in *The Hobbit*, and thirteen times in *The Lord the Rings*
The Dale contains a Wildlake that flows into a Weltering Water	The Dale contains a Long Lake in the Wilderland and a Running River (*The Hobbit*)
Woodlanders	Wood-men (*LotR*), Wood Elves (*The Hobbit*)
the Dusky Men	Men of the Darkness, Dunlendings, Dunedain
the Dusky Lord	the Dark Lord
the swarthy men	the Swarthy Men, Swertings
Fellowship (capitalized)	*The Fellowship of the Ring*
Folk-mote	Entmoot, Shiremoot
Felons (the Dusky Men)	Fell Winter, Fell Riders
weed-stuff (merchandise)	Pipe-weed (tobacco)
Iron-face, Iron-hand (names of characters)	Iron Crown, Iron Hills
the Great Waste	the Waste
Mid-earth	Middle-earth
the wild-wood	Wild Wood
Fork-beard, Red-beard	Treebeard

TABLE 3, continued

The Roots of the Mountains	*The Lord of the Rings* (unless otherwise noted)
Shadowy Vale	Shadowmere, Shadowy Mountains, Land of Shadow, Shadow Host
Doom-ring	doom ring (*Silmarillion*), Mount Doom (*LotR*)
"horns blowing"	Hornblower (character's name)
Men of the Sickle	the Sickle
Men of the Vine	Brandywine, Holdwine (names)
Men of the Bridge	many place names with *bridge*: the Bridge, the Lost Bridge, Bridgefields
House of the Steer (branch of men)	the Stoors (branch of hobbits)
Council in the Hall	Council of Elrond
the Murder-carles	Mordor
watches (in the middle of Wood-dale)	Watchwood
"strides" (p. 340)	Strider (character)
"steps" beside a waterfall (p. 315)	Stair Falls
Upton	Upbourn
the Shepherds	the Shepherds of the Trees (Ents)
Holm (place of battle)	Helm's Deep (place of battle)
Outlanders (p. 289)	the Outlands
Brightlings	Easterlings, Dunlendings

TABLE 3, continued

The Roots of the Mountains	*The Lord of the Rings* (unless otherwise noted)
Kindreds of the Dale	Elder Kindred (the Elves), the three kindreds
Lord of the Folk	Lord of the Rings
the Dale-Warden, the Door-wardens	Warden of the House of Healing
Rusty (character)	Rushy (place)
War-well (character)	Hoarwell (river)
the World Mountains (marking the limits of the world)	World's End
Silverdale	Silverlode, Silvertine
Rosedale	people of the Rose
the Wildlake	Wilderland, Wild Wood, Wild Men
the Water	the Weltering Water
Hasting	Haysend
Dallach	Bragollach
Sure-foot (character)	Proudfoots (hobbit family)
the Elder (men–p. 146)	the Elders (Elves)
the Shivering Flood	the Grey Flood
Greenbury (town), Portway (road)	the Greenway (road)
Earl (p. 52)	Eorl

TABLE 3, continued

The Roots of the Mountains	*The Lord of the Rings* **(unless otherwise noted)**
Burgstead	Mundburg
"scourers of the Waste" (p. 332)	"The Scouring of the Shire" (chapter title)
Worm of Willowholm	Wormtongue

As this table demonstrates, a large number of parallels in naming between the two works exists. This not only suggests that Tolkien subconsciously found *Roots* a productive source for names, but also highlights the similarity in nature of the fictional worlds they ultimately create.

Like *Roots*, *The Lord of the Rings* contains a large number of named characters. In fact, over three hundred (including beasts and monsters) are listed in the index. Some of them are the stock characters of traditional literature and lore. However, just as in *Roots*, several of the major characters face moral dilemmas. Unlike *Roots*, most of the dilemmas revolve around the One Ring: the Company is on a quest to destroy the Ring, but its power and allure constantly tempt and corrupt those who come into contact with it. Nonetheless, one particular dilemma that a character faces in *The Lord of the Rings* is similar to that of *Roots*: Aragorn is involved in a love triangle. Éowyn desperately falls in love with him, and she desires to accompany him on the Paths of the Dead, despite the danger and the fact that she would be abdicating her responsibility to her people. Aragorn's honesty forces him to rebuff her advances and refuse to let her go. His refusal of her, however, causes him great pain. It also has tremendous unforseen-but-happy consequences for the outcome of the Battle of the Pelennor Fields: Éowyn in disguise goes into battle and, along with Merry, kills a Ringwraith. In the end, she falls in love with Faramir and is wedded to him. Her rejection by one lover and subsequent acceptance by and marriage to another closely parallels the story of the Bride in *Roots*.

Numerous other parallels in plot motifs between the two works are listed in Appendix A. The following discussion will concentrate upon two of the most important

plot elements in *The Lord of the Rings* that correspond to those discussed about *Roots* in

the preceding chapter: the Orcs and the female warrior Éowyn.

FOUL AND EVIL ORCS

Tolkien's Orcs are one of the most important elements in *The Lord of the Rings*

that are clearly derived from *The Roots of the Mountains*. While there are physical

differences between individual Orcs, their appearance seems remarkably like Morris's

Dusky Men. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the Dusky Men were described as

"short of stature, crooked-legged, long-armed, very strong for their size: with small blue

eyes, snubbed-nosed, wide-mouthed, thin-lipped, very swarthy of skin, exceeding foul of

favour" (*Collected Works* 15: 88). We find that Tolkien's Orcs resemble them quite

closely. For example, the narrator characterizes an Orc chieftain thus: "his broad flat face

was swart; his eyes were like coals, and his tongue was red" (325).[92] The narrator

describes one leader, Grishnákh, as "a short crooked-legged creature, very broad and

with long arms that hang almost to the ground" (447). His followers are described as

"long-armed crook-legged Orcs" (451). After the attack of Orcs at Parth Galen, the

Company discovers the bodies of "four goblin soldiers of greater stature, swart, slant-

eyed, with thick legs and large hands." These larger Orcs had been in the service of

Sarmuman (415).

Tolkien also frequently associates the words *foul* and *evil* with these creatures.

---

[92]Unless otherwise indicated, page references in the remainder of this chapter refer to *The Lord of the Rings*.

Merry and Pippin are "aware" of Grishnákh's "great head and hideous face" and "his foul

breath was on their cheeks" (455). Another who carries Pippin has "a filthy jowl and

hairy ear" (452).[93] Like Morris's Dusky Men, Orcs are also characterized as evil. Gandalf

relates that of the Orcs at the Mines of Moria, "some are large and evil: black Uruks of

Mordor (324). In another place, the narrator tells us that Grishnákh "passed like an evil

shadow" (456). Elsewhere, we find that the Orc named Shagrat has an "evil face" (906).

These foul and evil creatures, like the Dusky Men, are organized into tribes (445).

Their society is also hierarchical; they have masters, explains Aragorn, although "they

are not trusty servants" (490). They also tend to be quarrelsome. During one argument,

Uglúk asserts his authority by proclaiming, "I am Uglúk. I command," and beheading

two opposing Orcs (446-47). When Aragorn and his companions later find their bodies,

he theorizes: "There was a quarrel, I guess: it is no uncommon thing with these foul folk"

(422).

As is the case with the Dusky Men of *Roots*, Orcs prefer not to do useful work.

Most of their activities in *The Lord of the Rings* are destructive and malicious. Although

it does not spell out their specific aversion toward manual labor, Tolkien previously had

described their attitude about work in *The Hobbit*, throwing in some social commentary

about his own contemporary times in the process:[94]

Hammers, axes, swords, daggers, pickaxes, tongs, and also instruments of

---

[93]In addition, Haldir, one of the Elves, says Orcs have "foul feet" (345). After Boromir is slain, Legolas declares to his companions, "We cannot leave him lying like carrion among these foul Orcs (414). Treebeard refers to them at least twice as "foul folk" (473-74), and in Appendix F Tolkien calls them "this foul people" (1131).

[94]Tolkien most frequently uses the term *goblin* instead of Orc in *The Hobbit*.

torture, they make very well, or get other people to make to their design,

prisoners and slaves that have to work till they die for want of air and

light. It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have

since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large

numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always

delighted them, and also not working with their own hands more than they

could help; but in those days and those wild parts they had not advanced

(as it is called) so far. (*The Annotated Hobbit* 109)

"Instruments of torture" are therefore one of their specialties. Like the Dusky

Men, their cruelty abounds, and they enjoy tormenting their victims. In *The Lord of the*

Rings, Arwen's brothers, Elladan and Elrohir, ride with the Rangers of the North,

"forgetting never their mother's torment in the dens of the orcs" (227).[95] One of the Orcs

who have captured Merry and Pippin complains, "There's no time to kill them properly. .

. . No time for play on this trip." Another asks why the hobbits are wanted alive: "Do

they give good sport?" (445). Grishnákh promises Merry and Pippin that "everything you

have, and everything you know, will be got out of you in due time, everything! You'll

wish there was more that you could tell to satisfy the Questioner. . ." (456). The prospect

of their torture causes Aragorn to decide not to follow Frodo but instead try to rescue

Merry and Pippin, because, he says, "if I seek him [Frodo] now in the wilderness, I must

abandon the captives to torment and death" (419).

Like the Dusky Men, Orcs love destruction for its own sake and either hate or

---

[95]Tolkien inconsistently capitalizes *Orc*.

seem oblivious to beauty: "No other folk make such a trampling," pronounces Legolas, examining the trail of those who have Merry and Pippin. "It seems their delight to slash and beat down growing things that are not even in their way" (419). Following the trail, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli later find that "the sweet grass of Rohan had been bruised and blackened as they passed" (424). The Orcs of Saruman hew down trees and sometimes do not even use the wood, relates Treebeard (474).

Like the Dusky Men, Orcs seem to have no females of their own. In a letter Tolkien says that the Orcs were "bred by the First Enemy," who is Morgoth (*Letters* 151). In another he suggests that they ultimately derive from some of the Elves in early days who were "subjugated and corrupted" (*Letters* 191). They are "pre-existing real beings on whom the Dark Lord has exerted the fullness of his power in remodelling and corrupting them, not making them" (*Letters* 195). Tolkien, however, does not elaborate on how this "remodelling" occurred. At one point the narrator refers to them as "maggot-folk" (702), therefore possibly implying that they breed like maggots. On the road to Isengard, Treebeard tells Merry and Pippin that the Enemy made Orcs "in mockery of" Elves (486). He also suggests that Saruman has created Orcs that can stand the sunlight by "blend[ing] the races of Orcs and Men. That would be a black evil," he exclaims (473). Thus, there is also the suggestion of miscegenation here as well as of the need of the Orcs for another race to propagate themselves, just as with Morris's Dusky Men.

As does Morris, Tolkien emphasizes the inhuman nature of his foul and evil beings. And like Morris, he does this by comparing them to insects, snakes, swine, dogs, and apes. For instance, in one place the narrator characterizes them as "swarming black

figures" (329). From the high seat upon Amon Hen, Frodo can see that "the Misty

Mountains were crawling like anthills: Orcs were issuing out of a thousand holes" (400).

We see one Orc during an attack "diving under Aragorn's blow with the speed of a

striking snake" (325). Frodo in Lothlórien remembers that "Orcs were as keen as hounds

on a scent, it was said" (345). Uglúk, who serves Saruman, calls the Orcs who serve

Sauron "little swine" (446) and "mountain maggots" (449), as well as the "the maggots

and the apes of Lugbúrz" (454). At the battle in Helm's Deep, Orcs assaulting the

Deeping Wall "sprang up" ladders "like apes in the dark forests of the South" (535).

To reinforce these comparisons, the anatomical features of Orcs are referred to in

nonhuman and sometimes specifically animalistic terms. The body parts of an Orc

carrying Pippin are referred to as "its head" and "its neck" (447). One is described as

having yellow fangs (445), and another is said to have "hard claws" (450). Grishnákh,

suspecting that either Merry or Pippin carries the One Ring, begins "to paw" the two

hobbits as he tries to search them (455). Boromir says that Orcs "prowl on the east

shore"of the Anduin (390), and Merry refers to them as "beastly Orcs" (453). Standing at

the entrance to Shelob's Lair, Sam tells Frodo that he fears that Gollum has led them to

"[s]ome beastly hole of the Orcs" (717). Their beastly nature is such that it becomes

proverbial. When Boromir recites the proverb, "The wolf that one hears is worse than the

orc that one fears", Aragorn answers, "where the warg howls, there also the orc prowls"

(298). Because of their beastly nature, Orcs must be hunted. When Legolas and Gimli

reencounter Aragorn after the attack on the Fellowship at Parth Galen, Legolas declares,

"We have hunted and slain many Orcs in the woods. . ." (414). And while introducing

himself to the men of Rohan, Aragorn declares, "I am hunting Orcs" (432).

Like the Dusky Men, Orcs are frequently depicted making animalistic cries. In the Mines of Moria, while attacking the Company at Balin's tomb, the Orcs emit "shrill cries" (323). When the Company repulses them, the Orcs "fled shrieking" (325). When they later spot the Company runing toward the bridge, "a shrill yell went up" (329). Then, as the Balrog appears, "The orcs yelled and poured over the stone gangways" (330). Elsewhere, as they fight and overpower Boromir, "Fierce and shrill rose the yells of the Orcs" (413). Those who have taken Merry and Pippin hostage emit "yells and screeches" when they discover the hobbits are gone (457).

When they do make human sounds they frequently curse others, like the Dusky Men. When Uglúk asserts his authority over his opponents, one of them falls over backward upon Merry "with a curse." Before Uglúk is able to restore order, "There was much cursing and confusion" (447). When the Orcs spot the pursuing Men of Rohan, "There was some cursing and scuffling," before some break away to try to escape. Uglúk subsequently refers to the Rohirrim as "cursed horse-boys" (451).

In battle, like Morris's Dusky Men, the Orcs use swords with curved blades. At the Mines of Moria, the Company discovers weapons, and "Some of the swords were crooked: orc-scimitars with blackened blades" (322). And like Morris's Dusky Men, they are killed with grey-feathered arrows, in this case by the Men of Rohan (440). Their fighting ability is not much of a match for brave humans; for example, Boromir slays around twenty at Parth Galen before he is finally overcome (414). While hurrying toward Isengard with their captives, "They kept no order, thrusting, jostling, and cursing" (449).

On another occasion, the narrator says that they "shot widely" (453). Their "confusion," "scuffling," and disorder have been mentioned above. They are so panicked by the sight of Gandalf at Helm's Deep that they "reeled and screamed and cast aside both sword and spear. Like a black smoke driven by a mounting wind they fled" (542). Orcs are eager to fight in battle but seem to be routed quite easily.

Because of their inhuman nature, they, like the Dusky Men, can be killed with impunity. The Elf Haldir tells Frodo of the fate of a band of pursuing Orcs: "None of the Orcs will ever return out of Lórien" (346). The Men of Rohan completely annihilate the band that takes Merry and Pippin hostage (438). As the battle of Helm's Deep ends, the remaining Orcs flee under the trees that have arrived from Fangorn, "and from that shadow none ever came again" (542). Their own evil nature helps cause them to become undone.

Tolkien's Orcs have been susceptible to misinterpretation by superficial readers. In fact, some have argued that Tolkien's depiction of Orcs reflects his own racism, surely a serious misreading of his text and purpose. His published letters in fact show him criticizing racism in South Africa (73), "the wholly pernicious and unscientific race-doctrine" of the Nazis (37), and the use of the word *Nordic* because of its association with "racialist theories" (375). As Anderson Rearick III has observed, "A central error when thinking of Orcs in Tolkien's imagination is to envision them as mortal beings like hobbits and men. However, their darkness is not determined by race but by their alliance with evil" (870). Like the Dusky Men do for Morris, Orcs therefore represent Tolkien's confrontation with the problem of evil in society.

"A LADY HIGH AND VALIANT": THE FEMALE WARRIOR ÉOWYN

In contrast to the evil, foul, and rather inefficient Orc warriors, *The Lord of the Rings* features a singularly different type of warrior: a brave woman. Morris's female warriors in *Roots* clearly influenced Tolkien's ideas about fighting women. In *The Lord of the Rings*, however, there is really only one female warrior present. She is Éowyn, the great niece of Théoden, king of the Rohirrim (Men of Rohan), and sister to Éomer. When first encountered by the reader she is performing a womanly role, ministering to her uncle Théoden in the hall Meduseld at Edoras. Éowyn is described thus: "strong she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings" (515). Háma, the Doorward of Théoden, in words reminiscent of Morris's description of the Bride, suggests that she, in the king's absence, be "as Lord to the Eorlingas" because "She is fearless and high-hearted. All love her."[96] Théoden agrees and then orders, "Let the heralds announce to the folk that the Lady Éowyn will lead them!" The king proceeds to confer authority upon her: she "knelt before him and received from him a sword and a fair corslet" (523).

However, she chafes at her womanly role and longs for the action of battle. When Aragorn returns to Edoras and tells of the battle in Helm's Deep, "then her eyes shone" (783). Although she thinks it is "madness" for Aragorn, with whom she has fallen in love, to try the Paths of the Dead, she asks to go with him. When he refuses and reminds her that her duty is to those under her charge, she retorts, "But am I not of the House of

---

[96]Compare Morris's description of the Bride: "she was hardy and handy and light-foot: she could swim as well as any, and could shoot well in the bow, and wield sword and spear: yet was she kind and compassionate, and of great courtesy, and the very dogs and kine trusted in her and loved her." (16-17).

Eorl, a shieldmaiden and not a dry-nurse?" She asks if she will "always be left behind" while the men "win renown." She furthermore declares, "But I am of the House of Eorl and not a serving-woman. I can ride and wield blade, and I do not fear either pain or death." Rather, she fears "To stay behind bars, until use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire" (784). In the morning, when Aragorn parts for the Paths of the Dead, she appears "clad as a Rider and girt with a sword." Aragorn, however, refuses to let her ride with his company. (785).

Similar to the case of the Sun-beam in *Roots*, the narrator describes Éowyn in her armor. At Firienfeld, Merry sees that "she wore a helm and was clad to the waist like a warrior and girded with a sword" (795).[97] And like Bow-may in *Roots*, Éowyn is associated with a gift of armor, only she is the giver. She provides Merry with "a small helm, and a round shield, and other gear." She apologizes to him that "No mail we have to fit you" and "nor any time for the forging of such a hauberk," but she provides him with "a stout jerkin of leather, a belt, and a knife" (802).

When her uncle prepares to ride to the aid of Gondor, however, she refuses to stay behind but instead disguises herself as Dernhelm, ostensibly a male Rider.[98] When Merry first espies Dernhelm standing in the ranks, he is startled to see "the face of one without hope who goes in search of death" (803). She later offers to take Merry, whom has been forbidden to accompany Théoden's company, along with her hidden under her cloak.

---

[97]The Sun-beam is described in *Roots* as wearing "a long hauberk over her kirtle falling below her knees, a helm on her head and plated shoes on her feet" (300). She is later described as having a "sword girt to her side" (350).

[98]The Bride in *Roots* also refuses to stay at home from battle, even though Iron-face at first threatens to have her kindred compel her to do so (179).

Merry agrees, not recognizing her and still thinking she is a man. She stays close to her

uncle when the battle begins, and when he is pinned beneath his horse and threatened by

the Lord of the Nazgûl, she, "faithful beyond fear," confronts the terrible being. When

the Lord reminds her of the prophecy that no living man "may hinder" him,

> Then Merry heard of all sounds in that hour the strangest. It seemed that
>
> Dernhelm laughed, and the clear voice was like the ring of steel. 'But no
>
> living man am I! You look upon a woman. Éowyn I am, Éomund's
>
> daughter. You stand between me and my lord and kin. Begone if you be
>
> not deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite you, if you touch
>
> him.' (841)

As the winged creature he rides attacks her, "Still she did not blench: maiden of

the Rohirrim, child of kings, slender but as a steel blade, fair yet terrible. A swift stroke

she dealt, skilled and deadly.[99] The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn

head fell like a stone. . . . A light fell about her, and her hair shone in the sunrise" (842).

Merry had seen her, unhelmed, with eyes "hard and fell, and yet tears were on her

cheek.[100] A sword was in her hand, and she raised her shield against the horror of her

enemy's eyes" (841). The sight of her suddenly inspires the terrified hobbit with courage.

As the Ringwraith springs upon her, Merry stabs him behind his knee. Hearing Merry's

---

[99]Compare Morris's description of Bow-may in battle: "And now was she calm and cool, shielding herself with a copper-bossed target, and driving home the point of her sharp sword; white was her face, and her eyes glittered amidst it, and she seemed to men like to those on whose heads the Warrior hath laid the Holy Bread" (345).

[100]Bow-may also cries during battle in *Roots*: "the tears ran over" her face after Face-of-god gives her a "farewell" kiss (335).

cry she, although her arm had been broken, "drove her sword between crown and mantle" and finishes off the Ringwraith (842).

When Éomer, who did not even suspect that she had accompanied the Men of Rohan from Edoras, sees her lying on the battlefield, he mistakenly thinks she is dead, and goes into a battle frenzy. "Death, death, death! Death take us all!", he cries[101], "and he spurred headlong back to the front of the great host" (844). Like Face-of-god's battle frenzy in *Roots*, Éomer's turns, although here only temporarily, the tide of battle, for "[t]he great wrath of his onset had utterly overthrown the front of his enemies" (846). Prince Imrahil, however, notices Éowyn's pale face and realizes she is still alive. She is then borne to the Houses of Healing.

After the battle she is lauded by men. When she awakens, Gandalf praises her as being "so valiant," and she mentions her determination to fill the "empty saddle of some fallen Rider" while "there are deeds to do" (868)[102]. Legolas also comments upon her fearlessness (874). She longs to ride again in battle, but is refused by Faramir. He tells her, "you are a lady high and valiant and have yourself won renown that shall not be forgotten. . ." (964). After he declares to her his love,

> Then the heart of Éowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And
>
> suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her. . . .[She said,
>
> B]ehold! The Shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor

---

[101]Compare this to Face-of-god's cry upon hearing that the Bride had fallen, mentioned in the last chapter: "Death, death, death to the Dusky Men!" (337).

[102]Compare the Sun-beam's words to Gold-mane: "there are deeds to be done" (126).

vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be

a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren." (964-65)

Thus, Faramir's genuine love effects an abrupt transformation of Éowyn, causing

her to reciprocate by falling in love with him. Thus, by the end of *The Lord of the Rings*,

she, like the female warriors of *Roots*, returns to a womanly role. Éomer announces her

marriage at the funeral feast of Théoden, and they are "trothplighted" before those

assembled in the Golden Hall.[103] "'Thus,' said Éomer, 'is the friendship of the Mark and

of Gondor bound with a new bond, and the more do I rejoice'" (977). Her marriage, like

that of the Bride in *Roots*, therefore helps cement a union between two peoples.

Éowyn, however, is not the only female warrior in Tolkien's mythos. He also

conceived Galadriel, at least originally, as being such. In explaining to a reader the

meaning of Galadriel's name, "Maiden crowned with gleaming hair," he says it is a

"secondary name given to her in her youth in the far past. . . . She was then of Amazon

disposition and bound up her hair as a crown when taking part in athletic feats" (*Letters*

428). One may only theorize that Tolkien found himself drawn to this idea of brave

female warriors because it in some ways reflects his own mother, whom he saw as a

heroic figure who struggled to raise him and his brother in the face of ostracism from her

family due to her conversion to Catholicism. In a 1963 letter to his son Michael, for

example, he mentions that he had "witnessed (half-comprehending) the *heroic* sufferings

and early death in extreme poverty of my mother who brought me into the Church"

(*Letters* 340; emphasis added).

---

[103]In *Roots*, Face-of-god and the Sun-beam also become "troth-plight" (146).

However, a 1963 response to a reader, where he further elaborates upon his conception of Éowyn, may provide a clue to another interpretation. Tolkien writes, "Although not a 'dry nurse' in temper, she was also not really a soldier or 'amazon', but like many brave women was capable of great military gallantry at a crisis" (*Letters* 323). He also mentions here that both she and Faramir were "motherless." In a 1956 draft to another reader, he identifies himself with Faramir: "As far as any character is 'like me' it is Faramir–except that I lack what all my characters possess (let the psychoanalysts note!) *Courage*" (*Letters* 232). Since both he and his wife Edith were orphans, one may theorize that on some level at least Éowyn represents his wife Edith. Because Tolkien was forbidden by his guardian to see her, they had to endure a painful separation for several years, and Edith's teenage sufferings could seem quite heroic to Tolkien. Perhaps ultimately some of Éowyn's strong qualities are a conflation of those he saw in his mother and wife.

RELIGION AND THE SUPERNATURAL

In addition to these concrete plot elements, religion seems to permeate Middle-earth, although overt references to it are rare. One occurs when Théoden rides into battle, "bourne up on Snowmane like a god of old, even as Oromë the great in the battle of the Valar when the world was young" (838). During the battle between Faramir's men and the Southrons, when the Oliphaunt appears, Damrod, one of Faramir's men, cries, "May the Valar turn him aside" (661), which sound like a religious invocation. When Gandalf crowns Aragorn he says, "Now come the days of the King, and may they be blessed

while the thrones of the Valar endure (968).

Although not much additional information is given about the Vala during the course of the story, some appears in the appendices. In Appendix A, Tolkien calls the Valar "the Guardians of the World" (1035). When the Númenoreans try to pass to the Undying Lands, thus violating a ban laid upon them, "the Valar laid down their Guardianship, and called upon the One, and the world was changed. Númenor was thrown down and swallowed in the Sea, and the Undying Lands were removed forever from the Circle of the World" (1037). Oromë or Araw is said to be "the huntsman of the Valar, who alone of the Valar came often to Middle-earth in the Elder Days" (1039 n.). According to Appendix D, the last and most important day of "the six-day week of the Eldar" was named after "the Valar or Powers" (1110). In Appendix E the Quenya word *vala* is defined as "angelic power" (1123). Furthermore, in reference to God, death is called "the gift of the One to Men" (1063). Although Tolkien is not explicit in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Valar are the angelic beings, sometimes seen as gods by humans, who helped God (the One) create the world.

Religious practices, however, seem almost absent from Middle-earth. One occurs before a meal after Faramir takes Frodo and Sam to his hideout at Henneth Annûn:

Before they ate, Faramir and all his men turned and faced west in a moment of silence. Faramir signed to Frodo and Sam that they should do likewise.

'So we always do,' he said, as they sat down: 'we look towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that is, and to that which is beyond Elvenhome and will ever be.' (676)

Clearly this custom seems religious in nature, especially in regard in its reference to the eternal, but Faramir does not refer to any specific deity or spirit on this occasion. Frodo admits to Faramir that hobbits do not have any similar custom: thus their connection with or conception of religion seems even more tenuous and diffuse. Nevertheless, the characters of *The Lord of the Rings* appear constantly aware of higher powers, both good and evil. The word *powers* is at least on one occasion specifically used to refer to spiritual forces: "[T]here are other powers at work far stronger" says Aragorn at Parth Galen about Frodo's choice between going south to Gondor or east to Mount Doom (404).

Religion thus paradoxically seems to be omnipresent and absent at the same time. The reader cannot clearly perceive whether the inhabitants of Middle-earth are polytheistic or monotheistic. Thus, the narrator's remark about "a god of old," mentioned above, sounds polytheistic and seems to conflict with Tolkien's mention of "the One" in Appendix A. However, as the last chapter discussed, the polytheism of *Roots* as well seems monotheistic at times, with the gods used interchangeably and mentioned in threes like the Christian trinity. Also, Face-of-god's "City that shall never perish," mentioned in the previous chapter, seems to correspond quite well with Faramir's "that which is beyond Elvenhome and will ever be." This ambiguity and fluidity between paganism and monotheism is the most striking parallel between the religious systems in the two books.

Although Tolkien explains and reconciles the two systems in his letters as well as the material that was posthumously published as *The Silmarillion*, most readers of *The Lord of the Rings* for the first two decades or so after its publication would have had no access to this material. Tolkien seems to have cultivated this careful ambiguity about

religion because he was dealing with a tale in the far past, which would have taken place

before the Christian doctrines he believed in had been proclaimed. Like Morris in *Roots*,

he portrays non-Christian characters who are quite virtuous. In both works the good

characters tend to be brave, honest, honorable, generous, and prone to forgiveness. In *The*

Lord of the Rings, as Tom Shippey observes, the Riders of Rohan "do not hold slaves,

commit incest, practise polygamy" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 202).[104] The same holds

true for most of the rest of the peoples of Middle-earth, as well for the Dalesman and the

Children of the Wolf in *Roots*. Shippey moreover notes that the Inklings "were

preoccupied with" the concept of "*virtuous* pagans" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 198).[105]

The same may be said about Morris, but in his case he seeks to show that Christian moral

values are not dependent upon adherence to Christianity but will occur naturally

wherever a just, "true" society exists. Tolkien, on the other hand, could not portray his

virtuous characters as being Christian, since they lived in pre-Christian times, but neither

could he portray them as pagans doomed to perdition, according to Shippey, because of

both his professional interests and the fact that "he could appreciate their sterling

qualities." Their depiction in *The Lord of the Rings*, therefore, represents Tolkien's

resolution of this quandary (*The Road to Middle-earth* 199). Although the virtuous

pagans of *Roots* find strong parallels in *The Lord of the Rings*, and probably influenced

---

[104]Shippey continues, "Their society has in a word been bowdlerised. They are so virtuous that one can hardly call them pagans at all."

[105]Although Shippey does not mention it, one of the pagans they would have been most preoccupied with was Morris himself. In his essay entitled "William Morris" (originally read in 1937), C. S. Lewis calls Morris "a true Pagan" (225) and declares, "The appeal of this Pagan poet to the Christian reader is obvious" (230).

the latter, they paradoxically illustrate the fact that the two writers deal with religion in similar ways for quite different reasons.

Even though religion is only indirectly mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*, supernatural occurrences and beings, as in *Roots*, abound. The existence of these preternatural occurrences and beings is not usually associated with any specific or overt religious system of belief. Their reality, often portrayed in concrete terms, is accepted by characters in both books. Just as *Roots* contains elves, dwarfs, trolls, wights, and ghosts, and men who practice "wizardry," there are Elves, Dwarves, trolls, wights (including barrow-wights), ghosts, and wizards in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien probably found Morris's mentioning of supernatural beings inspirational because it proved that such elements could seriously be incorporated in modern literature.

Magic also permeates Middle-earth and at least some of these beings are able to tap into and wield it. Barrow-wights, for example, are able to lay spells on the mounds that they haunt (146). The doors at the Mines of Moria can only be opened if one cites the correct "spell of command" (306), and Gandalf claims that he "once knew every spell in all the tongues of Elves or Men or Orcs that was ever used for such a purpose" (307). As Gandalf's remark indicates, wizards such as himself have tremendous power. He is also ostensibly able to return from the dead after he falls into the abyss with the Balrog. After he returns as Gandalf the White, his power only increases. He makes Gimli's axe leap out of his hand (494), causes Wormtongue to sprawl (514), and can communicate by thought with the mighty horse Shadowfax (505).

The preternatural powers that some characters have include the ability to see into

the future. Like *Roots*, *The Lord of the Rings* contains several characters who have the power of foreseeing. The Lady Galadriel, for example, sends this word to Aragorn:

Dark is the path appointed for thee:

The Dead watch the road that lead to the Sea. (503).

Aragorn thereupon realizes that it is meant for him to travel the Paths of the Dead. He himself is at times foreseeing, predicting at one point that "Not West but East does our doom await us" (523). He also tells Merry that he should accompany Théoden: "your road lies with him, I think, Merry. But do not look for mirth at the ending. It will be long, I fear, ere Théoden sits again in ease at Meduseld. Many hopes will wither in this bitter Spring" (773). Aragorn's foreboding is proven correct when Théoden is killed in battle. As this example demonstrates, events that have been predicted by those with powers of foreseeing tend to come true, although not always in the expected fashion. The Lord of the Nazgûl, for example, is cocksure on the battlefield, since it was foreseen that he could not be killed by any living man. Unfortunately for him, he encounters a woman, Éowyn, and a hobbit, Merry, neither of whom is technically a living man, and is therefore slain.

As previously mentioned, the narrator and characters of *The Lord of the Rings* frequently allude to stories from the far past, much as happens in *Roots*. For example, at Weathertop, Aragorn tells his companions the story of Beren and Lúthien, who "was the daughter of Thingol, a King of Elves upon Middle-earth when the world was young" (193). The phrasing Aragorn uses here imparts to the reader a sense of vast depths of time, similar to that Morris creates through his characters' words in *Roots*. In the Mines of Moria, Aragorn says of Gandalf that "He is surer of finding the way home in a blind

night than the cats of Queen Berúthiel" (311).[106] No other information about these cats or this queen is given to the reader. We find that the existence of the *palantíri*, the seeing-stones, has been "a secret known only to a few; in Arnor they were remembered only in a rhyme of lore among the Dúnedain" (597). Elsewhere, the narrator tells us that at Rivendell, Gandalf's "long white hair, his sweeping silver beard , and his broad shoulders, made him look like some wise king of ancient legend" (226).

As in *Roots*, the past weighs heavily upon the peoples of Middle-earth. After the remnants of the Company first encounter the men of Rohan and mention halflings, one Rider, Éothain, laughs:

> 'Halflings! But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?'
>
> 'A man may do both,' said Aragorn. 'For not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time. The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day.' (434)

With his words Aragorn expresses the continuity of tradition and history, even though it may not be consciously felt or only remembered in snatches of half-forgotten lore. This sense of continuity is contrasted to Éothain's immersion in the here-and-now, which makes him small-minded, provincial, and unable to see the big picture of events unfolding around him.

---

[106]Tolkien admits to W. H. Auden in 1955, "I have yet to discover anything about the cats of Queen Berúthiel" (*Letters* 217).

This sense of depth succeeds so well that, after the success of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien began doubting the wisdom of publishing the background material of the Silmarillion. He wrote,

> Part of the attraction of The L. R. is, I think, due to the glimpses of a large history in the background: an attraction like that of viewing far off an unvisited island, or seeing the towers of a distant city gleaming in the sunlit mist. To go there is to destroy the magic, unless new unattainable vistas are again revealed. (*Letters* 333)[107]

The retrospective vision of Morris and Tolkien, their longing to look back into the depths of prehistory, shows affinity with the Romantic tradition and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

STYLE

To reinforce this sense of depth, Tolkien uses a style in *The Lord of the Rings* that is often highly reminiscent of that in *Roots*. He would have found Morris's diction inspirational because it seemed to rebel against a modern "corrupted" English. Tolkien tends to impart dignity and the grandeur of the past through assigning Morrisian-style language to specific characters and pivotal scenes in *The Lord of the Rings*. This language not only is appropriate but contributes to the underlying reality he tries to create. Tom Shippey observes that several characters present at the Council of Elrond "come over as archaic, blunt, clearsighted," and that Gandalf at the Council uses "an

---

[107]Tom Shippey quotes and discusses this passage in *The Road to Middle-earth* (229-30).

older vocabulary than usual, as if to authenticate himself" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 120). Using language reminiscent of Morris actually helps Tolkien to "authenticate" the entire atmosphere of Middle-earth. Although critics have quite frequently castigated his style, Shippey notes that if Tolkien had used modern English,

> The discrepancy between modern usage and archaic thought would simply have sounded bogus. . . . His prose style was carefully calculated, and had its proper effect, in the long run, and for those not too provoked to read carefully. One might say, in Aristotelian terms, that the trilogy succeeded in harmonising its *ethos*, its *mythos*, and its *lexis*. . . (*The Road to Middle-earth* 220-21).

Tolkien's style, then, is an integral and necessary facet of the whole concept of Middle-earth. A modern style would have only led to a Modern-earth, no matter how "archaic" the other elements may have been.

Tolkien tends to use many of the same archaic words that occur in *Roots*.[108] Thus, he uses *kine* for cattle (755) and *wains* for wagons (763). Other examples include *gangrel* (657), *leeches* (845), *leechcraft* (860), *mayhap* (835), *naught* (473), *thither* (401), the verb forms *builded* (751) and *gainsaid* (959), and the phrase *I deem* (509). *Roots* contains all of these, as well as *forsooth*. Speaking of Saruman, Éomer asks Théoden, "What aid can he give to you, forsooth?" (580).

Tolkien, like Morris, frequently employs words that begin with *be-*, although not

---

[108]However, many of the lexical examples from *Roots* given in this and the following section also occur in other romances by Morris. While the sheer number of correspondences in archaic diction mentioned here demonstrate the strong and continuing influence of Morris upon Tolkien, it does not necessarily imply an exclusive influence from *Roots*.

to the extent of Morris in *Roots*. Thus we find *besom* (474), *beset* (437), *befall* (283), *bewilderment* (592), *bestowed* (594), and *befriended* (757). We also encounter *betide*: Gandalf declares to the guards at the Great Gate of Gondor that, "Whatever betide, you have come to the end of the Gondor that you have known" (751).[109] Upon meeting Pippin soon thereafter, Denethor employs *belie* when he compliments the hobbit by repeating and modifying a proverb: "once again it is shown that looks may belie the man–or the halfling! (756). Tolkien, like Morris is *Roots*, also frequently uses the word befall in its various forms. Elrond tells Aragorn, "I foretell that the span of your life shall be greater than the measure of Men, unless evil befalls you. . . ." (1057).[110] Other words of this type in *The Lord of the Rings* that correspond to specific words present in *Roots* include *behold*, *begotten*, *begrudged*, *belated*, *belike*, *beset*, *betrothed*, and *bewildered*.

A-prefixing also frequently occurs in *The Lord of the Rings*. There it most notably is used by Aragorn. At Amon Hen, for instance, he ponders, saying, "I read the signs aright. . ." When he hears the horn of Boromir, he exclaims, "Alas! An ill fate is on me this day, and all that I do goes amiss" (413). Soon thereafter he grieves again, "All that I have done today has gone amiss" (414). He also contemplates that "There is evil afoot in Isengard" (416). Partaking in Boromir's funeral song, he sings, "From the high walls westward I looked afar. . ." (417). Later, as the Company pursues the Orcs, Aragorn remarks of an eagle that Legolas sees, "He must be far aloft indeed" (423). He again

---

[109]Compare with *Roots*, where, after Face-of-god kisses Bow-may during battle, she says, "Now is this more than I looked for, whatso may betide" (335).

[110]Compare with *Roots*, where we are told that, when Face-of-god journeys through the wood toward the Hall on the Mountain, "no evil befell him"(98).

complains that his choices "have gone amiss" (426). Further on, he explains to the other

remaining members of the Company that the men of Rohan "are not akin" to the people

of Gondor (431). Tolkien uses words beginning in *a-* in these instances especially to

individuate the character of Aragorn and help to impart to him a distinctive personality.

Words beginning with the *un-* prefix are extremely common in the narrative as

well. For instance, the narrator tells us that "in the moonlight the Ring of Isengard looked

like a graveyard of unquiet dead" (554). They are also used by several characters. For

example, Aragorn declares, "We may not shoot an on old man so, at unawares and

unchallenged. . ." (492-93). And the guard at the gates of Edoras tells the Company,

"Maybe your coming was not wholly unlooked-for" (509). When Pippin tells Théoden

that he and Merry are hobbits, Théoden replies, "Hobbits?. . . . Your tongue is strangely

changed, but the name sounds not unfitting so" (557). As these two last examples

demonstrate, words beginning with un- are sometimes used with another negative word

to make a double-negative. "[M]aybe my doom will be not unlike hers," speaks Arwen of

Lúthien, as recorded in Appendix A (1058).[111]

Words beginning in *un-*, however, are most noticeably spoken by Gandalf or occur in

scenes involving him. For instance, in the hall at Edoras he sings:

> Unmarred, unstained is leaf and land
>
> In Dwimordene, in Lórien (514).

---

[111]Compare with *Roots*, where an angry Folk-might tells the Sun-beam that if Face-of-
god comes to the Hall on the Mountain, "it is not unlike that I shall drive a spear through him"
(119).

There, Wormtongue refers to Gandalf when he exclaims to Théoden, "If I cannot undo their word, hear me at least in this, lord!" (519-20).[112] But *un-* prefixing is most noticeable during the chapter entitled "The Voice of Saruman," in which Gandalf confronts the wizard Saruman at the Tower of Orthanc. There, "Merry and Pippin sat on the bottom step, feeling both unimportant and unsafe." Pippin declares, "I wish I could step off back to the guardroom unnoticed!" (577). After Gandalf calls for Saruman, "the window above the door was unbarred." Some of the bystanders "listened unwarily to" the voice of Saruman, and the voices of others seemed "uncouth" to them. "[N]one were unmoved" as Saruman spoke with the "tone . . . of a kindly heart aggrieved by injuries undeserved." Gimli mentions that he is "Like, and yet unlike" Gandalf in appearance (578). Saruman guilefully declares that he wants to save Théoden from "unwise" counsels (579). Gandalf later inquires if Saruman has "things to unsay." "[N]one were unmoved" by Saruman's effort to beguile Gandalf, we are told (581). After his attempt fails, Saruman rejects Gandalf's offer of clemency, asking rhetorically, "Does an unarmed man come down to speak with robbers out of doors?" (582). The ball that Wormtongue attempts to drop on the Company (or perhaps Saruman) is retrieved "unharmed." But Gandalf remains calm and "unmoved" (584). He declares Saruman to be an "Unhappy fool" (585) and predicts that he will seek "to go and come unmarked" from the Tower of Orthanc (587). Tolkien uses *un-* prefixing not only to underscore the conflict occurring during this tense scene, but also to subtly emphasize the ancient (archaic) aspect of the wizards, who have lived long upon Middle-earth and have a

---

[112]Compare to these words by Face-of-god: "What shall I have done to-morrow that I have hitherto left undone" (33). *Undone* and *undoing* together occur over ten times in *Roots*.

wealth of knowledge of past events. It also helps reinforce the sharp distinction between the two wizards, who are almost totally opposite in nature by this point.

Other types of common prefixing, sometimes involving word combination, that Morris also uses include *over-*: *overthrown* (556), *overshadowed* (74), *over-burdened* (502), *overmastered* (362), *over large* (534), *over much* (754), and *overhung* (341. He also frequently employs the suffix *-less*. Gandalf tells Aragorn at the Hall of Edoras, "Needless is Théoden's demand, but it is useless to refuse" (115). Words with this suffix are prominent in that chapter, "The King of the Golden Hall." There we find a "tireless" Gandalf (506), flowers like "countless stars" (507), "heedless" visitors (508), a "riderless" Shadowfax (513), Wormtongue described as a "witless worm" (514), a people who cannot be left "shepherdless" (518), a "fearless" Éowyn (523), Gimli's "restless" axe (523-24), as well as "doubtless" (509, 513, 524), not to mention the "endlessly remote and yet a present threat" of Mount Doom (517). The use of *-less* words in this chapter may reinforce the sense of loss: Théoden has come under the spell of Wormtongue, losing his strength and judgement in the process.

Like Morris, Tolkien tends to frequently compound words, sometimes inventing new ones in the process. Thus, the reader finds *dwimmer-crafty* (437), *wizard-wheedling* (591), *errand-runner* (516), *fell-handed* (524), *orc-stuff* (912). Treebeard employs some such as *man-food* (561) as well as *stone-cracking* and *earth-gnawing* (569).

As many of the above examples demonstrate, Tolkien assigns archaic language and words prefixes derived from Old English most frequently to his long-lived or immortal characters, such as the wizards Gandalf and Saruman, the Elves, and Aragorn.

Some, like Aragorn, are of ancient lineage, and the use of archaic language is meant to

ennoble them as well as link them with the past. The hobbits much less frequently use

language that sounds archaic.

Tolkien, like Morris, sometimes alters syntax during dialogue to give an archaic

flavor. It is most notably spoken by or associated with scenes involving the wizards

Gandalf and Saruman. Gandalf frequently inverts sentence order as he tells his

companions what transpired after they were separated at the Mines of Moria and he was

pulled off the bridge by the Balrog's whip. "Long time I fell," he recounts. He and the

Balrog finally plunged into water, and "Cold it was as the tide of death: almost it froze

my heart" Gimli, who is listening to Gandalf's narrative, responds, "Deep is the abyss

that is spanned by Durin's Bridge. . ." Gandalf then continues, "Ever he [the Balrog]

clutched me, and ever I hewed him. . . . As for the "nameless things" in the deep dark

water, "Even Sauron knows them not" (501). When the Balrog reaches the "window in

the snow. . . . Out he sprang." Speaking of listeners, Gandalf says, "Thunder they heard. .

. ." He declares, "Naked I was sent back. . . . And naked I lay upon the mountain-top.

Faint to my ears came the gathered rumour of all lands. . . ." When rescued by the eagle,

Gwaihir the Windlord, he tells the bird, "Ever am I fated to be your burden, friend at

need. . . ." Gwaihir replies, "A burden you have been . . . but not so now. Light as a

swan's feather in my claw you are" (502). In Lothlórien, continues Gandalf, "Healing I

found and I was clothed in white. Counsel I gave and counsel took. Thence by strange

roads I came, and messages I bring to some of you." But the message from Galadriel

brings little cheer to one of the companions: "'Dark are her words,' said Legolas, 'and

little do they mean to those that receive them'" (503).

Inverted syntax also occurs during the confrontation between Gandalf and Saruman. When Saruman appears, he declares, "Two at least of you I know by name. Gandalf I know too well. . ." (578). He retorts to Gimli, "Far away is your home and small concern of yours are the troubles of this land" (579). He also warns Éomer, "Meddle not in policies which you do not understand" (580). When Théoden rebuffs his smooth words, Saruman angrily tells the king of Rohan, "Too long have they [the house of Eorl] escaped the gibbet themselves. . . . I know not why I have had the patience to speak to you. For I need you not. . . ."[113] Attempting then to deceive Gandalf, he declares to him, "Much we could still accomplish together to heal the disorders of the world" (581).

Another distinctive feature of Tolkien's style, like Morris's, is the use of the interjection *lo!*. Its importance can be illustrated by examples from the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. At the onset of battle, Théoden's "shield was uncovered, and lo! it shone like the image of the Sun. . ." (838). However, when the Ringwraith attacks him, "But lo! suddenly in the midst of the glory of the king his golden shield was dimmed" (840). After the Ringwraith has been overcome, Éowyn falls "upon her fallen foe. But lo! the mantle and hauberk were empty." Merry then goes to the king and "stooped and lifted his hand to kiss it, and lo! Théoden opened his eyes, and they were clear, and he spoke. . ." (842). As Éomer prepares to make his last stand, he looks at the ships that he thinks are bearing enemies, "And lo! even as he laughed at despair," he suddenly realizes that

---

[113]This example, as well as the previous one, illustrate the placement of the word not after the verb, an archaic featured present in *Roots* that was mentioned in the last chapter.

friends and not foes are on the way to the battle (847). The narrator, like that of *Roots*,

uses "lo!" to signal sudden changes in events and to heighten the emotion and suspense

of the narrative.

In a manner similar to Morris in *Roots*, Tolkien frequently uses prose alliteration.

For instance, as Gandalf and members of the Company ride toward Edoras, "Suddenly

Shadowfax stood still and neighed" (506). The narrator also uses *s*-alliteration as he

describes Éowyn: "Slender and tall she was in her white robe girt with silver; but strong

she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings" (515). The Orc Uglúk settles a

challenge to his authority when he "sprang forwards, and with two swift strokes swept

the heads off two of his opponents" (447). *F*-alliteration occurs when Legolas questions

Aragorn: "Celeborn warned us not to go far into Fangorn. . . . What are the fables of the

forest that Boromir had heard?" (442). And after dispatching the Ringwraith, "Éowyn fell

forward upon her fallen foe" (842).

SEMANTIC PARALLELS

Through the use of other archaic words in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien seeks to

replicate the semantic categories of the past, thus echoing the tendency in *Roots* to do so.

Tolkien, like Morris, frequently counts by scores. Standing in front of the gates at the

Mines of Moria, Gandalf claims that he "can still remember ten score of" spells that

potentially could open the gates (307). Later, the numbers of Orcs are also counted by

scores: Merry and Pippin "were left with the Isengarders, a grim dark band, four score at

least. . ." (451). Further along, Ghân-buri-Ghân, the leader of the Wild Men in Drúadan

Forest, reveals to the Men of Rohan that he has counted their numbers, and they "have a score of scores counted ten times and five," but will be outnumbered by the Orcs guarding the road to Minas Tirith (832). After the Battle of Pelennor Fields, the reader is told that the life span of the people of Gondor has become so diminished that "those among them who passed the tale of five score years with vigor were grown few, save in some houses of purer blood" (860). Appendix A tells of Arwen that "As Queen of Elves and Men she dwelt with Aragorn for six-score years in great glory and bliss" (1062).

Sometimes the order of numbers is reversed, an archaic practice found in *Roots*. For example, when the Company reaches Hollin, Gandalf declares, "Five-and-forty leagues as the crow flies we have come. . ." (282). As the Men of Rohan prepare to ride to aid the city of Minas Tirith, they muster their forces, and there "were marshalled in many companies well nigh five and fifty hundreds of Riders fully armed. . ." (802).[114]

Tolkien, like Morris, sometimes uses specific diction to suggest the passage of time in the quite-different time period of the past. Thus, we find *tide* used for *time* on the occasion when Éomer asks Aragorn to accompany him, since he "would be a strength indeed to the sons of Eorl in this evil tide" (437). In the calendar of the hobbits the *Yuletide* lasts six days, comprising the last three days of the old year and the first three of the new (1109).[115] This period and other specific measurments of times and dates used by hobbits, Elves, and others are spelled out in Appendix D. The words *yestereve* (389) and

---

[114]Compare with *Roots*, where Face-of-god is described as "a young man of three and twenty summers" (11).

[115]In *The Silmarillion*, noontide, a term used in *Roots*, appears several times, as in "the Noontide of the Blessed Realm" (63).

yesteryear (438), found in *Roots*, also occur in *The Lord of the Rings.*

And as also occurs in *Roots*, the ages of characters are sometimes presented in terms of *winters* and *summers*. When Éowyn first sees Aragorn, she thinks that he is "wise with many winters" (515). Gamling, the leader of those watching the breached dike at Helm's Deep, evaluates the defenders of the Deep thus: "most of them have seen too many winters, as I have, or too few, as my son's son here" (530-31). Beregond, a guard at Minas Tirith, confesses to Pippin "that to us you look almost as one of our children, a lad of nine summers or so. . ." (763).

Like *Roots*, *The Lord of the Rings* measures distances sometimes in miles but also frequently in leagues and furlongs, with fathoms for shorter lengths. One example, when the Company approaches Hollin, has been given above. Another occurs when the remnants of the Company pursue the Orcs who have Merry and Pippin. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli stand upon a ridge and see below them "twenty fathoms or more . . . a wide and rugged shelf." From there Legolas also espies "a great company on foot." He says, "They are many leagues away: twelve I guess. . ." (423). After they lose their horses, they contemplate the fact that "endless leagues lay between them and the Men of Rohan, their only friends in this wide and dangerous land" (443). As they later leave Helm's Deep, together with some of the Rohirrim and Gandalf, the latter estimates the distance to Isengard as "About fifteen leagues, as the crows of Saruman make it. . ." (548). The Ents measure distances in *strides*; Treebeard tells Merry and Pippin, "I have brought you about seventy-thousand ent-strides" to his home at Wellinghall (470). Men in *The Lord of the Rings* use *paces* as well. As the Men of Rohan ride back from the

Fords of Isen, they discover that men are riding behind them. "When they were some fifty paces off, Éomer cried in a loud voice" and accosted them. A man dismounted and approached, and "At ten paces . . . stopped." He then announced that they were friends of Aragorn (774).

Like the archaic terms measuring quantity, time, and distance, the colors found in *The Lord of the Rings* are basic and for the most part comprise those traditionally found in folktales and ballads. One example is the description of the Starkhorn: "its jagged peak, clothed in everlasting snow, gleamed far above the world, blue-shadowed upon the East, red-stained by the sunset in the West" (791). Another example occurs on the morning that Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli first spot the Men of Rohan. They stand atop a hill and see this:

> North-westward stalked the dark forest of Fangorn; still ten leagues away stood its shadowy eaves, and its further slopes faded into the distant blue. Beyond there glimmered far away, as if floating on a grey-cloud, the white head of tall Methedras, the last peak of the Misty Mountains. . . . Aragorn saw a shadow on the distant green, a dark swift-moving blur. Legolas stood beside him, shading his bright elven eyes . . . and . . . saw . . . many horsemen, and the glint of morning was like the twinkle of minute stars. . . . Far behind them a dark smoke rose in thin curling threads. (429).

Contrast is sometimes expressed with color; for example, as the remnants of the Company pursue the Orcs, "Long slopes they climbed, dark, hard-edged against the sky already red with sunset" (420). However, like Morris, Tolkien tends to emphasize

monochromatic colors to highlight the contrast between darkness and light.[116] At the dell

near Weathertop, the Black Riders appear, and "[s]o black were they that they seemed

like black holes in the deep shade behind them." Frodo is able to see inside their "black

wrappings": "In their white faces burned keen and merciless eyes; under their mantles

were long grey robes; upon their grey hairs were helms of silver" (195). During the

Entmoot, Merry and Pippin find themselves "watching the patches of sun on the grass

and the shadows of the sailing clouds passing over the floor of the dingle" (482).

Elsewhere, as members of the Company and the men of Rohan approach the mountains

near Isengard, "out of the deep shadow of the dale rose a vast spire of smoke and vapour;

as it mounted, it caught the rays of the sinking moon, and spread in shimmering billows,

black and silver, over the starry sky" (552). After the Captains of the Outlands and their

troops march into Minas Tirith, "Pippin looked up, and it seemed to him that the sky had

grown ashen-grey, as if a vast dust and smoke hung above them, and light came dully

through it. But in the West the dying sun had set all the fume on fire, and now Mindolluin

stood black against a burning smoulder flecked with embers" (771).

TOPOGRAPHY

As the examples above demonstrate, color and contrast are inextricably bound

with landscape in *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien also implies place and language are

bound together, and myth is inextricably bound with geography. As he wrote the tales

---

[116]Compare both the previous example and the last one in the present paragraph with Morris's monochromatic description of the view from near the Hall on the Mountain: "the snowy peaks flushed with the sinking sun against the frosty dark-grey eastern sky; and below them the dark rock-mountains. . ." (34).

that would later be published as *The Silmarillion*, which he desired to "dedicate . . . to England; to my country," he sought to create a mythology according to these terms: "It should possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our 'air' (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East) . . ." (*Letters* 144). He holds to much of the same principle with *The Lord of the Rings* (although he expands his geography somewhat: the domains of Gondor east of the Anduin seem to smack of Southern Europe). But in looking for a model for his fictional topography, he needed to look no further than Morris, whose topography in *Roots* synthesized elements from northern and western Europe.

The Roots of the Mountains especially seems to have profoundly affected Tolkien's use of place. That romance takes place in a land called "the Dale" that lies between mountains and contains the Wildlake into which flows the Weltering Water. In *The Hobbit* we also find a land called "the Dale" which also lies between mountains and contains the Long Lake (which lies in the Wilderland) as well as the Running River. As mentioned in chapter one, Douglas A. Anderson has observed that the similarities in geography are "easily apparent"; he also quotes Richard Mathews as saying that "Tolkien was clearly influenced by Morris's sensibility for landscape and geography . . . and his obvious pleasure in naming" (*The Annotated Hobbit* 243-45).[117]

As in *Roots,* the geography of Middle-earth could be described as the paramount character. In fact, Brian Rosebury has argued that "Middle-earth, rather than any of the

---

[117]Anderson does not give the specific source for his Mathews quote.

characters, is the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*" (qtd. in Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 367 n. 9). The narrator truly gives the reader an abundance of geographical detail, even quantifying fine points of distance and direction as its characters travel. And a large number of locales have names: the index to *The Lord of the Rings* lists around five hundred place names, including towns, roads, rivers, forests, mountains, and other features. Many of these names are based upon color, such as Blackroot Vale, the White Mountains (Ered Nimrais), the Grey Havens, the Green Hill Country, the Redhorn Gate, the Silverlode. They often suggest archetypal elements.

There are several specific topographic and toponymic features in *The Lord of the Rings* that seem to echo ones found in *Roots*. As the following table (Table 4) demonstrates, most of them come from sections of *Roots* that have Icelandic or Alpine landscapes.

Like Morris's landscape in *Roots*, Middle-earth contains *screes* and *ghylls*. As they travel toward Mount Doom, Frodo and Sam go up a ravine that "ended in a sharp slope of screes and sliding stones" (922). The narrator describes the road toward Mordor as "a tumbled land of rocky ghylls and crags" (885). Frodo and Sam find it difficult going along ridges, the Morgai, "pathless as they were and scored with deep ghylls" (924).

As does Morris in *Roots*, Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* frequently associates the word *tangle* with vegetation. At Woodhall, Frodo finds that a "thicket was more tangled than it had appeared" (89). At Crickhollow, Frodo dreams that he is looking out "over a sea of tangled trees" (108). As the Company draws nearer to the Misty Mountains, they sometimes sleep "hidden under the tangled thorn-bushes that grew in

TABLE 4: TOPOGRAPHIC PARALLELS

Feature	*Roots*	*The Lord of the Rings*
1. Setting	Mid-earth	Middle-earth
2. An important road that is named	the Portway	the Greenway
3. A crossroads where an important event takes place	the crossroads at Silverburg, where the main battle with the Dusky Men takes place	the Cross-roads
4. A dark pool associated with death	the Death Tarn (contains misshapen trout)	the pool at the western gates of the Mines of Moria (contains a creature with tentacles)
5. A secret pass involving a tunnel	the pass into Shadowy Vale	the pass at Cirith Ungol
6. A pillar of rock within a ring	the Doom-ring at Shadowy Vale	the Tower of Orthanc at Isengard
7. A dyke of waters	the pass between the dale of the Shield-broad and Silverdale	the western gates of the Mines of Moria
8. Steps beside a waterfall	the pass between the dale of the Shield-broad and Silverdale	the falls of Rauros
9. A spray from rushing water that creates a rainbow	the pass out of Shadowy Vale into the dale of the Shield-broad	the falls of Rauros
10. A volcano and volcanic landscape	the Shield-broad and environs	Mount Doom and environs

thickets in many places" (282). At Lothlórien, Celeborn warns the Company that they

should avoid "becoming entangled in the Forest of Fangorn" (373).[118] As they paddle

down the Anduin and near the rapids, they pass through a country "tangled with

brambles and creepers" (384). And later, when Merry and Pippin escape from the Orcs

and enter the forest of Fangorn, they travel "with as much speed as the dark and tangled

forest allowed" (461).

Like Morris, Tolkien uses the terms *sward* and *greensward* to describe a grassy

lawn. The narrator describes the Mirrormere as being surrounded by "a smooth sward,

shelving down on all sides to its bare unbroken rim" (333). When the Company

prepares to depart from Lothlórien, a curious Sam picks up one of the Elvish ropes "that

lay upon the greensward" (371). Later, as the remnants of the Company prepare to

release Boromir's funeral boat, they row past "the green sward of Parth Galen" (417).

After Merry, Legolas, and Gimli wake up from their rest at Helm's Deep, "they passed

the mounds of the fallen on the greensward beside the road" (776). In Minas Tirith,

Pippin finds Beregond's young son Bergil playing on a "narrow greensward" between

two wings of a building (768).

Like the narrator in *Roots*, the narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* often assigns

action verbs to natural features to suggest motion and life. Marjorie Burns has written

that both authors

are also masters at instilling a sense of mood and consciousness into the

---

[118]When Treebeard later hears about this, he replies to Merry and Pippin, "And I might have said much the same, if you had been going the other way. Do not risk getting entangled in the woods of *Laurelindórenan* [Lothlórien]!" (467).

landscapes they describe. Light and shade, wind and cloud, rivers and

valleys and mountains seem nearly alive, and the ways in which Morris

and Tolkien create this effect are very much alike. Both make skilful use

of verbs, active verbs; both describe their landscapes in vividly human

terms and do so far more consistently than writers usually do."[119]

(*Perilous Realms* 85)

Thus, as he and Pippin ride toward Gondor, Gandalf mentions that "the White

Mountains are drawing near" (596). As they get closer to Minas Tirith, "the mountains

of the South marched past" (747). We also find that "downs run" (428), and the forest

of Fangorn "stalked" (429). While Merry and Pippin sleep at Wellinghall, Treebeard's

home, "The bright stars peered out of the sky." They awake to find that "[s]hreds of

high clouds were overhead, running on a stiff easterly wind" (438). As other members

of the Company travel toward Isengard, "the swelling grass-lands rose and fell like a

wide grey sea" (550).

In *The Lord of the Rings* as well as *Roots*, waters come alive with action verbs.

As Treebeard, Merry, and Pippin travel toward Methedras, "Down the hillside the

young Entwash, leaping from its springs high above, ran noisily from step to step to

meet them" (469). The narrator describes the vitality of the water at Wellinghall thus:

A little stream escaped from the springs above, and leaving the main

water, fell tinkling down the sheer face of the wall, pouring in silver

drops, like a fine curtain. . . . The water was gathered again into a stone

[119]Burns, however, gives only a few examples, and nearly all of the following discussion
is comprised of original observations on the part of this writer.

basin . . . and thence it spilled and flowed away beside the open path, out

to rejoin the Entwash in its journey through the forest. (470)

As in *Roots*, swift waters can be described as boiling. After hearing Faramir tell of

seeing his brother Boromir's body riding in a boat, Frodo wonders how it could have

passed the falls on the Anduin "and not founder in the boiling pools" (667).

Like Morris, Tolkien imparts vitality to the sun and the moon by action verbs,

often using the same words. As Gandalf and Pippin gaze at the city of Minas Tirith,

"the sun climbed over the eastern shadow and sent forth a shaft that smote the face of

the City" (751).[120] Just as the storm at Edoras ends, "a shaft of sun stabbed down" (515).

As Frodo, Sam, and Gollum travel through the marshes, the narrator tells us that they

cannot see that "Far above the rot and vapours of the world the sun was riding high and

golden" (626). As the Riders of Rohan close in on the Orcs who have Merry and Pippin,

"The sunset gilded their spears and helmets, and glinted in their pale flowing hair"

(453). During the battle at Helm's Deep, "the westering moon rode glimmering yellow"

(534). Describing an interplay of moonlight and water, the narrator tells us that, while

Frodo and Faramir watch Gollum at the hideout in Ithilien, "The moonlight still slanted

down to the fall's foot and gleamed on the ripples of the basin" (684). The Men of

Rohan, when they find they are being pursued after crossing the Isen, see that "[t]he

moonlight glinted here and there on the points of spears" (774).[121]

---

[120]Compare this passage from *Roots*: "the sun smote the eastern side of Shield-broad ruddy" (308).

[121]Compare with the scene in *Roots* where Face-of-god, returning home at night, encounters enemies: "he saw the moon smite on something gleaming.. . . [A]n axe gleamed bright in the moon" (150).

As in *Roots*, we find several instances where the sun is described as *westering*. For instance, as the hobbits and Aragorn travel toward Rivendell, after encountering the stone trolls, they look for a place to camp, while "a shoulder of the hills cut off the light of the fast westering sun" (208). When the Men of Rohan ride into Helm's Deep, the narrator tells the reader that "[t]he sun was already westering" (526). While Frodo and Sam travel with Faramir in Ithilien, before they are blindfolded they see "glinting far off in the westering sun the wide waters of the Anduin" (673). And when the hobbits return to the Shire and encounter the ruffians at Bywater, Pippin draws his sword, which "glinted in the westering sun" (1005).[122]

Tolkien also frequently uses *waxing* and *waning* to refer to the moon. As the remainder of the Company set out on the trail of the Orcs who have captured Merry and Pippin, "The waxing moon was riding in the West, and the shadows of the rocks were black" (421). As they and Gandalf later approach Edoras, "The waxing moon sank into the cloudy west" (506). When they and the men of Rohan travel toward Helm's Deep, they make a camp "under the starry sky and the waxing moon" (526). And after the battle there Gandalf tells Théoden to look for him "ere the waning of the moon" (544).

Like Morris, Tolkien marks the passage of time by using forms of the verb *to wear*. For instance, as night falls on the members of the Company searching for Merry and Pippin, Gimli complains, "now we must halt again and wear the night away" (429). When the Entmoot enters its third day, "the morning wore on[,] the wind fell and the air grew heavy with expectancy" (484). On the third day of their journey through the

---

[122]Compare with a scene from *Roots*, where a character waves a sword "in the air till the westering sun flashed back from it" (257).

marshes, Frodo, Sam, and Gollum find that "As the day wore on the light increased a little. . ." (626). And near the end of the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, as Frodo, Bilbo, and Sam ride toward the Grey Havens, the reader is told that "they rode gently down into the beginning of the trees as afternoon was wearing away" (1027). The use of *wearing* at this point not only subtly helps to reinforce the sense of weariness that Frodo feels but also marks the changing of an era: the Third Age has come to a close, even as Frodo's and Bilbo's time in Middle-earth is ending.

This heightened sense of time explains why Tolkien, like Morris, emphasizes the motion of shadows to mark its passing. As Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli climb a hill during their search for Merry and Pippin, "The sun sank and the shadows of evening fell like a curtain" (429). In Ithilien, just before the battle between Faramir's men and the Southrons, Frodo and Sam watch as "[t]he sun rose till it neared the South. The shadows shrank" (660). On the evening when the Captains of the Outlands arrive to aid Minas Tirith, by the time the last men marched into the gates, "the red sun had gone behind Mindolluin [a mountain]. Shadow came down on the City" (771). As the men of Rohan ride from the hills to Harrowdale, "Day was waning. In the last rays of the sun the Riders cast long pointed shadows that went on before them" (791). *Shadowed* can be a verb as well: on the road to Bucklebury, Frodo hides from a Black Rider "behind a tree that overshadowed the road" (74). After Frodo and Sam are compelled to go with Faramir, they "passed into green-shadowed woodlands" (669). Tolkien's propensity to impart motion and vitality to shadows, as does Morris's, suggest his desire to create a sense of time that is tangibly experienced rather than measured. The living features they

assign to natural objects, including the sun and moon, suggest that these descriptions are efforts to re-enchant the world, representing a longing to return to a more animate universe.

This contention is reinforced by their tendency to assign human characteristics to natural objects. Tolkien attributes many of the same human characteristics to natural features as Morris does in *Roots*.[123] At the Entmoot, Merry and Pippin look at a mountain "from the lip of the dingle" (481). As Aragorn and the hobbits are attacked near Weathertop, they see "Over the lip of the little dell . . . they felt, rather than saw, a shadow rise" (195). When the marching Southrons pass Frodo, Sam, and Gollum in hiding, the latter "crawled insect-like to the lip of the hollow" to get a better view (645). Mountains and hills especially tend to be described in terms of human anatomy. Upon their first sighting of Mount Mindolluin, Gandalf and Pippin see "its tall face whitening in the rising day" and the city of Minas Tirith "upon its out-thrust knee" (751). The Hill of Guard of that city joins the mountain by "a narrow shoulder" (752). Much earlier in the narrative, when Frodo and his companions leave the house of Tom Bombadil, they travel under a "hill-brow," where "Goldberry stood beckoning to them" (135). After rescuing the hobbits from the barrow-wight, Tom returns "over the brow of the hill," bringing their ponies to them (144). Elsewhere, the narrator calls the narrow passes of Helm's Deep behind the Deeping Wall "the jaws of the Deep" (535). He also tells us that the camp of the Riders of Rohan at the Firienfeld was "laid upon the lap of the

---

[123]Burns mentions that "Like Morris, Tolkien gives life to his landscapes . . . through the use of human form," but neither mentions *Roots* nor gives examples from Tolkien other than listing body parts and mentioning "'yawning' openings" (*Perilous Realms* 85).

great mountains behind" (794), and that "the half-seen heads of the mountains westward

were crowned with stars" (796). Another mountain, which Aragorn, his companions,

and the Shadow Host pass by, is named Tarlang's Neck (790). Much earlier in the

narrative, "[a]t the broken feet of the Emyn Muil," Frodo and Sam had found the going

difficult (612). As the previous chapter discusses, comparisons of natural features to

faces, brows, lips, jaws, necks, shoulders, and feet all occur in *Roots*.

Mountains can also be clothed, like humans. At Harrowdale, when the the men

of Rohan ride out of the hills, we read that "Darkness had already crept beneath the

murmuring fir-woods that clothed the steep mountain-sides," and the stream ran

"between pine-clad walls" (791). From the western top of the dingle where the Entmoot

is being held, Merry and Pippin can see "[l]ong tree-clad slopes" (481); the dingle itself

is described as "grassclad" (479). Streams, too, have voices: on the road from the Tower

of the Moon, a stream, Morgulduin, ran, and "Frodo could hear its stony voice" (697).

Its voice reinforces the sense of the difficulty he and Sam face at this point. In

Blackroot Vale, Aragorn's party finds that "the stream beside them went down with a

cold voice over many falls" (788). Natural features can also have human emotions: at

the feet of Emyn Muil, Frodo and Sam see "the bare stony slopes frowned over by the

cliff which now rose again" (612). When Frodo looks into the mirror of Galadriel, he

sees a sea that "raged" and the sun "sinking blood-red into a wrack of clouds" (364).[124]

Tolkien also describes landscape features in terms of human artifacts sometimes,

---

[124]Compare this to the "red and angry rack of clouds" Face-of-god sees after a storm on the second day of his watch at the Maiden ward (95).

as does Morris. Two particular comparisons that are also found in *Roots* are to spears and a cauldron. After crossing the Fords of Isen, Gandalf points out to Pippin, "Yonder are the Thrihyrne peaks like black spears" (596-97). When Gandalf, several of the Company, and Théoden and his men ride into Isengard, they find the Ring of Isengard "filled with steaming water: a bubbling cauldron" (556).[125]

Features moreover are also described in architectural terms. A mountain in *The Lord of the Rings*, just as in *Roots*, may have a buttress. The Starkhorn, for example, "loomed up above its vast buttresses swathed in cloud" (791). A rock may also look like a spire. As the Company rests at Parth Galen, and Frodo wrestles with his decision about what to do next, he looks out at the island in the river and notices the "grey faces of inaccessible rock, crowned by a great spire of stone" (396). Natural objects can resemble buildings as well. At Treebeard's home, "Two great trees stood . . . like living gate-posts" (470), and "the tree-trunks looked like pillars molded out of luminous stone" (471). When Frodo and Sam are caught in the storm on the Emyn Muil, the water "spouted out over the cliff like the gutters of a vast roof" (609). And, as in *Roots*, a waterfall is compared to a stairway. After they escape from the mines of Moria, the Company looking northward sees a glen where "a torrent flowed like a white lace over an endless ladder of short falls." Aragorn tells the rest of the Company that they are seeing the Dimrill Stair (333).

Comparing natural objects and features to human characteristics and artifacts are part of both Morris's and Tolkien's efforts to re-enchant the world, to symbolically

---

[125] Compare these examples to the cliffs that "rose up like Bundles of spear-shafts" (303) and the "boiling caldron" of the Shivering Flood (146) in *Roots*.

restore balance between humans and the natural world. In this regard trees take on a

great importance for Tolkien, who seemed endlessly fascinated with them. In 1955, for

example, he wrote, "I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees, and

always have been; and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear as some find

ill-treatment of animals" (*Letters* 220). He tells another correspondent in 1958, "I like

gardens, trees, and unmechanized farmlands. . ." (*Letters* 288). Tolkien on occasion

even refers to himself as a tree. Writing about the news of the death of C. S. Lewis in

1963, Tolkien tells his daughter, Priscilla, that he feels "like an old tree that is losing its

leaves one by one: this feels like an axe-blow near the roots" (*Letters* 341).

Tolkien also tends to associate trees with art. His story, "Leaf by Niggle"

(1945), is about a painter who paints a picture of a tree that he can never quite finish,

but eventually encounters alive on a journey that he takes (death). Tom Shippey has

suggested that "Leaf by Niggle" is an allegory about Tolkien's own work as a literary

artist (*The Road to Middle-earth* 43-44).[126] In a 1962 letter to his aunt, Jane Neave,

Tolkien refers to *The Lord of the Rings* as his "own internal Tree" and says that during

the drafting he found that it was "growing out of hand, and revealing endless new

vistas" (*Letters* 321). If one takes his words literally, Tolkien even privileged his love of

trees above his love of art. In 1944 Tolkien writes to Christopher, "If a ragnarök would

burn all the slums and gas-works, and shabby garages, and long arc-lit suburbs, it cd.

for me burn all the works of art–and I'd go back to trees" (*Letters* 96).

---

[126]In a 1954 letter Tolkien says that he used allegory in "Leaf by Niggle" to represent the process of "subcreation" (*Letters* 195). However, he would tell his aunt in 1962 that the story "is not really or properly an 'allegory' so much as 'mythical' (*Letters* 320).

Tolkien's love of trees manifests itself in many ways in *The Lord of the Rings*, but most dramatically in the creation of the Ents. With those beings he goes beyond metaphorically assigning vital qualities to actually reifying them by making the Ents mobile. They are treelike creatures that can actually walk and talk. Also called the Shepherds of the Trees, they originally came into being because of Yavanna, one of the Valier (the female Valar), had wished, "Would that the trees might speak on behalf of all things that have roots, and punish those that wrong them!" (*The Silmarillion* 45-46). By the Third Age of Middle-earth the Ents reside in the forest of Fangorn, and the most prominent one is Treebeard, whom Gandalf describes as "the guardian of the forest; he is the oldest of the Ents, the oldest living thing that still walks beneath the Sun upon this Middle-earth," with his dwelling "by the roots of the mountains" (*The Lord of the Rings* 499). Aroused by the news Merry and Pippin bring, he arouses his fellow Ents and exacts a fearsome retribution upon the wizard Saruman and his Orcs who have been destroying the trees of Fangorn.

With their vengeance, Tolkien symbolically allows nature to fight back against those who have been desecrating it. Tolkien was sensitive to the destruction of trees that he saw going on all around him. In a 1972 letter to the *Daily Telegraph* he writes:

> In all my works I take the part of trees as against all their enemies.
> Lothlórien is beautiful because there the trees were loved; elsewhere
> forests are represented as awakening to consciousness of themselves. . . .
> Fangorn Forest was old and beautiful, but at the time of the story tense
> with hostility because it was threatened by a machine-loving enemy. . . .

Mirkwood had fallen under the domination of a Power that hated all

living things but was restored to beauty and became Greenwood the

Great before the end of the story. It would be unfair to compare the

Forestry Commission with Sauron because as you observe it is capable

of repentance; but nothing it has done that is stupid compares with the

destruction, torture and murder of trees perpetrated by private

individuals and minor official bodies. The savage sound of the electric

saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing." (*Letters* 419-

20).

Thus, Tolkien through his fiction seeks to revivify the forests so that they become

"loved" and "Great" once more. In regard to this literary effort, Anne C. Petty has

written that

. . . .Tolkien takes advantage of the printed page to provide himself an

outlet for revenge. He creates champions and personifications of nature

who can take up the crusade for him, righting the wrongs inflicted on hill

and tree by those who mar the landscape with evil intent. . . . He never

marched in mass demonstrations against the location of oil pipelines,

didn't carry signs protesting pollution of rivers, never served as a

whistle-blower when houses were built over chemical dumpsites, never

drove spikes into trees to prevent them from being logged. But the

dismantling of Isengard by Ents and Huorns is one of the most satisfying

acts of retribution committed to paper. In this sense, Tolkien's pen was

definitely mightier than any sword he might have waved trying to stop

the felling of trees or building of parking lots. (*Tolkien in the Land of*

Heroes 219-20)

According to Petty, Tolkien's effort has been a resounding success.

INTERPRETING TOLKIEN'S ADULT FAIRY TALE

Unlike the case of *Roots*, the connection between fairy tales and *The Lord of the*

Rings has long been noticed by careful readers. No doubt this has been due to

widespread awareness of Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-stories," as well as by remarks

made by him in the letters that have been published. In 1956, for instance, Tolkien tells

Michael Straight that *The Lord of the Rings* "is a 'fairy-story', but one written

—according to the belief I once expressed in . . . "On Fairy-stories' that they are the

proper audience—for adults" (*Letters* 232-33). Several important studies of *The Lord of*

the Rings in relation to fairy tales occurred early on. Robley Evans (1972), for example,

discusses *The Lord of the Rings* in the context of "On Fairy-Stories" and even refers to

it as "Tolkien's fairy-story" (192). Walter Scheps (1975) discusses its affinity with fairy

tales in "The Fairy-tale Morality of *The Lord of the Rings*." More recently, Anne C.

Petty (1979) in *One Ring to Bind Them All: Tolkien's Mythology* has discussed the

work in the light of Propp's theories (12-14, 34-41).[127] The next chapter will discuss

The Lord of the Rings within the context of the Romantic movement and the adult fairy-

tale tradition. It also focuses upon the differences between *Roots* and *The Lord of the*

---

[127]Petty's mythology-based study of Tolkien draws upon Propp, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Joseph Campbell.

Rings, showing how they reflect fundamental differences in the experiences,

worldviews, and ultimate purposes of Morris and Tolkien.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the profound impact that the Romantic movement had upon both Morris and Tolkien and how its ideas affected *The Roots of the Mountains* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Morris's work in many ways can be seen as a response to Romantic conventions and tropes. With *Roots* he embodies these in specific ways that Tolkien imitates in his work, such as the depiction of particular landscape features. Morris also becomes, in Shelley's terms, the legislator of his created society by endowing it with the characteristics he thinks an ideal society should have. The system of decision-making in *Roots*, a symbiotic relationship between those in hierarchical positions and those below them, finds its replication in Tolkien's Middle-earth.

The chapter will conclude by analyzing the differences between *Roots* and *The Lord of the Rings*, differences that reflect the incompatible worldviews of the two authors. While both conceive of loss within the paradigm of the Fall, Morris recasts it into secular and Marxist terms while Tolkien views it in religious and moral terms. Morris believes that humans have the ability to create a better society through political action, one that will satisfy all human longings and needs, and *Roots* exemplifies his vision. Tolkien, however, does not believe that any human society or government ultimately can satisfy an individual's spiritual needs or take away the implications of one's own mortality. Rather, humans are tainted by the Fall and therefore unable to achieve true lasting peace and happiness within the confines of this life. Tolkien's

seamless interweaving of natural beauty, magic, spirituality, morality, and meaning into Middle-earth explains why his work, although building upon Morris's in *Roots*, ultimately has more success in revivifying the past and achieving for the reader, in Coleridge's terms, "that willing suspension of disbelief."

The perception that humans had become separated from the spirit, mystery, and beauty of the universe owes its origins ultimately to the beginning of the Romantic movement. The poets now known as Romantics flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in the context of tremendous social, economic, and political upheavals. They represented both a response to the unfulfilled promises of the Enlightenment as well as a reaction against the rationalism, utilitarianism, social fragmentation, and negative effects of industrialism that had accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism. Most of the Romantic poets could no longer believe in the certainties of traditional religion. They faced a phenomenon that Max Weber would much later refer to as "disenchantment." In "Science as a Vocation" (1918-19) Weber would write, "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world'" (155). The Romantic poets, however, still felt a need for the spirituality, mystery, and sense of belonging that Christianity traditionally had offered. Their response to "disenchantment" was to recast the religious and mythic patterns of the past into a more acceptable secular and poetic form. As M. H. Abrams writes,

> A conspicuous Romantic tendency, after the rationalism and decorum of
> the Enlightenment, was a reversion to the stark drama and suprarational

mysteries of the Christian story and doctrines and to the violent conflicts

and abrupt reversals of the Christian inner life, turning on the extremes

of destruction and creation, hell and heaven, exile and reunion, death and

rebirth, dejection and joy, paradise lost and paradise regained.

However, they often attempted to so in a more-or-less secular framework, "reconstituting them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being," according to Abrams (66). As Northrop Frye writes in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, the romantic tendency is "to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience." This contrasts with other patterns of organizing mythic material in literature, "undisplaced myth" and "realism," both of which gravitate toward the apocalyptic or demonic forms of "metaphorical identification" (139-40). According to Frye's classification, then, the romantic organization "tends to displace myth in a human direction" and "conventionalize content in an idealized direction" (136-37). The romantic organization therefore lies between traditional mythic modes of thought and utilitarian and rationalistic ways of thinking, and thus became attractive to those who found it more relevant to the conditions and problems of life during the industrial revolution.

As the Victorian era progressed, the problems that had concerned the poets of the Romantic period only deepened. The trajectory of the French Revolution, which had originally inspired many of them, left them confused and disheartened when its promise of human advancement was not fulfilled. These poets' ideas, however, would have a strong and continuous effect upon English writers during the remainder of the

nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, as indeed they still do today.

Both Morris and Tolkien wrote within the context of this tradition. Morris, for instance,

repeatedly praised the poets of the Romantic period in his lectures, crediting them with

the rebirth of poetry in England. In an 1880 lecture entitled "The Beauty of Life," he

argues that "the hope lighted by the torch of the French Revolution" caused poetry to be

> born again, and the English Language, which under the hands of
>
> sycophantic verse- makers had been reduced to a miserable jargon,
>
> whose meaning, if it have a meaning, cannot be made out without
>
> translation, flowed clear, pure, and simple, along with the music of Blake
>
> and Coleridge: take those names, the earliest in date among ourselves, as
>
> a type of the change that has happened in literature since the time of
>
> George II. (*Collected Works* 22: 58-59)

Again, in an 1884 lecture he observes that

> poetry . . . was born again, and the school of what for want of a better
>
> word I am compelled to call the Romantic writers arose. I have said it
>
> was a long and weary way between the ancient poets of our race and the
>
> elaborate trifler Pope; but Coleridge and Keats and Shelley and Byron
>
> claim brotherhood not only with Shakespeare and Spenser, nay not only
>
> with Chaucer or even William Langland, but yet more perhaps with that
>
> forgotten man who sang of the meeting of the fallow blades at
>
> Brunnanburg, or who told of the old hero's death in the lair of the gold-
>
> guarding dragon; or he who bewailed the ruin of the ancient city, or he

who sang so touchingly of the friendless, lonely man the Wanderer.

(*Unpublished Lectures* 72).

These remarks confirm Morris's faith in the ability of Romanticism to provide a reconnection with the past, of "clear, pure, and simple" language and of brotherhood.

In the section of "Modern Poets" included in his 1886 list of outstanding books, he mentions six poets, five of whom belong to the Romantic school: Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron.[128] (*Collected Letters* 2: 507). Further demonstrating his abiding interest in these poets, his own Kelmscott Press published an edition of *The Poems of John Keats* in 1894, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* in three volumes in 1894-95[129], and *Poems Chosen out of the Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in 1896.

But it was Keats who most attracted Morris. When his daughter Jenny was being treated at a nursing home in Malvern in 1889, he sent her a four-volume set of Keats' poetry because, he told her, "I wanted you to have a nice parcel on your birthday" (*Collected Letters* 3: 12 and nn1-2). Before publication of the Kelmscott edition of Keats' poems, when he saw a specimen sheet upon which *La Belle Dame sans Merci* was printed, he was able to identify mistaken words and quote the correct ones by memory, telling Sidney Cockerell that "it was the germ from which all the poetry of his

---

[128] He intentionally "omit[s] those of this generation, whether dead or alive" and singles out Milton for especial censure: "the union in his works of cold classicism with Puritanism (the two things which I hate most in the world) repels me so that I *cannot* read him."

[129] A few years earlier, according to Fiona MacCarthy, Morris had provided a copy of Shelley's *Poems* for the Kelmscott House reading room of the Socialist League's Hammersmith Branch (520).

group had sprung. . .” (*Collected Letters* 4: 129-30n4).

Morris's biographers have tended to emphasize his debt to Keats. J. W. Mackail notes that in a letter to Keats' friend Charles Cowden Clarke, Morris wrote of "Keats, for whom I have such boundless admiration, and whom I venture to call one of my masters" (1: 200).[130] Mackail furthermore declares that "Keats he held the first of modern English poets" (1: 219). E. P. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* sees Morris's early life to be overwhelmingly shaped by Keats, claiming that "the evidence of his influence may be found in every page of *The Defence of Guenevere*" (10). He maintains that Keats responded to the philistinism he saw in his contemporary society by creating "a self-enclosed aesthetic . . . excluding the world of action and social reality" where "Art . . . was conceived as a compensation for the poverty of life." According to Thompson, "Again and again, in the life of young Morris and Burne-Jones, in the Pre-Raphaelite circle and their friends, we shall meet with echoes of Keats's life." Like Keats, Morris felt artistically "suffocated" by Victorian society. However, unlike Keats, Morris would come to see the need to work actively for political change. Even in his youth, "the world of art and imagination was both a palace of refuge and a castle in revolt against the philistines" (19-20). In a similar vein, Fiona MacCarthy in her recent biography has noted that an early poem by Morris, "The Willow and the Red Cliff," is "particularly Keatsian" (76) and that Keats impressed Morris with "his supreme visual quality" (77).

Unlike the case with Keats, however, Wordsworth's influence seems to have

---

[130]This letter also appears in *Collected Letters* 1: 65.

been a negative one. In an 1867 letter, Morris had this to say about Wordsworth: "his cold unhuman, & sometimes prolix poetry has not much attraction for me, even now I'm grown old." His omission of Wordsworth in association with "the music of Blake and Coleridge," mentioned above, is significant. In an 1892 talk at Kelmscott House, Morris claimed that he had "pretended to like" Wordsworth during his student days at Oxford (*Collected Works* 22: xxxi). This suggests that his interest in Wordsworth did not last long. In light of Morris's own poetic endeavors, as well as his remarks about language discussed in chapter two, it seems certain that he would have found Wordsworth's ideas about poetic diction unattractive. His own tastes and practice, in fact, conform much more closely to the ideas of Coleridge, who had argued in support of traditional poetic diction in his *Biographia Literaria*, maintaining that the language of successful traditional poets was closer to "real" or "common" language than that of "Mr. Wordsworth's homeliest composition" (2: 56).

In *The Roots of the Mountains* (as well as *The House of the Wolfings*), Morris uses many Romantic tropes and conventions. Keats, according to Thompson, influenced the "Truth to Nature" perspective of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, prompting them to depict minute details. They had the "fallacy," he contends, of "painting each vein and mottle on a leaf, painting the coat of a sheep hair by hair, . . . in the belief that by so doing they were approaching closer to the portrayal of reality" (52). One observes a similar perspective in *Roots* and indeed other romances by Morris: natural features are described in details typically not present in medieval works of literature. Such works, as well as more-recently collected folktales, generally mention natural features without

giving anything more than perfunctory descriptions. Since readers (or listeners) were closely familiar with natural features and interacted with them quite often, there was no need to give detailed descriptions. Morris, however, unlike the composers of these traditional works, feels the necessity of doing so. Since his readers no longer have a close connection to nature, description is necessary to remind them of its vitality and revivify it. Thus, on the day Face-of-god first encounters the Children of the Wolf in *Roots*, he walks not merely through a forest, but rather one where the types of trees, the thickness of the vegetation, the intensity of the sunlight, the specific kinds of animals encountered, the slope of the terrain, the direction of Face-of-god's journeying, and even the smell of the water he finds, "smacking of the damp musty savour of the woodland" (32), is recounted. Such description is necessary to make nature come alive to readers who have become separated from it. Similarly, in *The Lord of the Rings*, as the hobbits journey through the Old Forest, their direction of travel is described as well as the types of trees they encounter, the presence or lack of undergrowth, the slope of the land, the roughness of the terrain, the intensity of the sunlight, and the sound of running water (111-15). Tolkien's proclivity to engage in similar description, of a type that is lacking in the traditional works most often identified as his sources, further suggests that his sense of Romantic recreation ultimately comes from Morris.

Roots also responds to many of the concerns raised by Shelley in *The Defence of Poetry*, although Morris possibly encountered those ideas indirectly through the works of others. Shelley's ideas certainly have relevancy to *The Roots of the Mountains* from a visionary and political standpoint. Shelley argues that "Poets are the unacknowledged

legislators of the world" (140); they

> were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a
>
> poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not
>
> only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws
>
> according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the
>
> future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the
>
> fruit of latest time.

A poet (in Shelley's larger sense of the word) thus has the power to peer into the future

and discover how "present things ought to be ordered." Poets' words enable them to

become "the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of

the arts of life" (112). In *Roots*, Morris takes this concept to heart by actually depicting

a working "civil society" complete with laws and arts. And although he bases the

society of *Roots* on patterns from the past, he also exemplifies the way "present things

ought to be ordered." Instead of seeing the future in the present, Morris modifies

Shelley's viewpoint by seeing it in the past. In some ways, then, *Roots* represents a

practice run for the society he would soon depict in *News from Nowhere*.

    Roots also subtly modifies an artistic argument present in Shelley's essay.

Shelley had made a sharp demarcation between a poem and a story, calling the latter

> a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other bond of connexion
>
> than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect. . . . Time, which
>
> destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts, stript of
>
> the poetry which should invest them, augments that of Poetry, and for

> ever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which
> it contains (115).

Shelley thus maintains that a story becomes constrained by time and the cause-and-effect relationships of a narrative that are connected to circumstances and setting. In other words, it quickly becomes dated, while a poem, at least a good one, breaks free from these constraints and continues to manifest its underlying truth in edifying ways. However, by inference, a story that could shed its connections to identifiable time, place, and circumstance could possibly break free of these constraints and infinitely continue developing "new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth." Morris consciously seems to be experimenting with this idea with *Roots*, because he writes about his then-work-in-progress to Charles Eliot Norton in June 1889, saying, "I have actually another prose romance in hand whereof I hope to send you a copy before the year is out. I will rather carry out Oscar Wilde's theory of the beauty of lying, as it will have neither time, place, history, or theory in it."[131] Morris here is referring to Wilde's essay, "The Decay of Lying," which uses *lying* in a figurative sense to ridicule realism in art and presents "four doctrines of the new aesthetics." First, "Art never expresses

---

[131]"The Decay of Lying" is, in the words of Norman Kelvin, "an essay in the form of a dialogue" that had recently appeared in the January 1889 issue of *Nineteenth Century* (*Collected Letters* 3: 77 and nn3-4). The dialogue occurs between two fictional characters, Cyril and Vivian. Vivian reads an article he has written, "The Decay of Lying: A Protest," that ridicules realism in art. "The ancient historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction," he wittily observes (8). These realistic authors write "novels which are so lifelike that no one can possibly believe in their probability" (10). Contrast Wilde's use of *lying* with Sidney's remarks in his *Defense of Poesy*, where he argues that the poet "nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false; so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies. But the poet, as I said before, never affirmeth. The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writeth."

anything but itself" (54). Secondly, "All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals" (55). Thirdly, "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life." And finally, ". . .Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art" (56). Morris's allusion to this essay therefore implies that *Roots* has no ostensible didactic purpose or ulterior meaning and that he intends that the reader should just accept it on its own terms, as a literary work of art.

Lack of "theory" is relevant to Shelley's idea that, while "the poetical faculty" can improve morality by "engender[ing] in the mind a desire" for "the beautiful and the good" (134-35), the poet "would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither" (118). A poet therefore must refrain from open didacticism, in order for his work to remain outside time. *Roots*, then, with its reification of a working and desirable social order, its attempts to break free from the strictures of identifiable time and setting, and its avoidance of didacticism, seems to represent Morris's application of techniques that Shelley suggests in *A Defence of Poetry*.

Like Morris, Tolkien was profoundly impacted by the ideas of the Romantic poets, but this influence appears to have been indirect, primarily coming through the medium of other more-recent writers, most importantly Morris himself. Tolkien only infrequently mentions any of the Romantic poets in his published letters and apparently does not name Byron, Coleridge, Keats, or Shelley at all. He alludes to Blake's *Milton* in a 1944 letter to Christopher discussing Uruks (Orcs), claiming that he has "met them,

or thought so, in England's green and pleasant land" (*Letters* 90).[132] He also ostensibly

criticizes Wordsworth in 1965 letter to Michael Tolkien where he mentions reading in

the *Times* a poem about T. S. Elliot, apparently occasioned by his death, written by John

Masefield. Tolkien calls it "a perfect specimen of bad verse, a ludicrous 'all-time low'. .

. . Almost down/up to Wordsworth's zero standard" (*Letters* 353). Tolkien's remarks

here suggest that he did not think highly of Wordsworth's poetry.[133]

John Garth observes that Tolkien disliked verse as a child and that a teacher at

King Edward's, R. W. Reynolds, "tried largely in vain to spark his interest in the

mainstream giants of English poetry, such as Milton and Keats" (13). He claims that

Tolkien, when preparing for his exams at Oxford in 1915, had to borrow "introductions

to Dryden and Keats from the library, as well as primers in Shakespeare and poetry, as

---

[132]Hammond and Scull note that Tolkien's diary records that in February 1919: "Tolkien reads part of William Blake's prophetic books, which he has never seen before, and discovers to his astonishment several similarities in the nomenclature (though not necessarily the function) between Blake's beings and those in his own mythology" (*The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* 1: 107-8).

[133]In his essay "William Morris," C. S. Lewis responds to those who criticize Morris's archaic language:

> The objection to his language is largely a hangover from the old Wordsworthian theory of diction. It is, of course, perfectly true that Morris invented for his poems and perfected in his prose-romances a language which has never at any period been spoken in England; but I suppose that most instructed people are now aware (as Wordsworth was not aware) that what we call 'ordinary' or 'straight-forward' English prose, as we have all tried to write it since Dryden's time, is almost equally an artificial speech—a literary or 'hypothetical' language based on a French conception of elegance and a highly unphilological ideal of 'correctness' (220).

Although these are Lewis's words, not Tolkien's, they may help shed light upon how the Inklings viewed Morris in relation to poetic diction. Lewis himself seems to have had mixed feelings about Wordsworth: in one essay he describes D. H. Lawrence's use of four-letter words "as artificial . . . as . . . the most desperate parts of *Lyrical Ballads*" ("Four-Letter Words" 174). He thought highly of *The Prelude*, however, as did his brother Warnie, who mentions in a 1970 entry to his diary that he has read it five times (296).

late as the eve of his first paper" (82). Garth's remarks suggest that Tolkien by this date

had rarely read modern English poets and was not familiar with many important works,

including those of Keats. However, Tolkien did make a drawing in 1913 that was

inspired by Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (*Tolkien and the Great War* 36).[134]

 While this drawing demonstrates that he read at least that poem by Coleridge,

the latter's influence upon him is difficult to gauge. Both R. J. Reilly and J. S. Ryan

have argued that Coleridge's ideas about creativity and imagination shaped Tolkien's

beliefs about the nature of fairy-stories. Reilly, for example, considers Tolkien's

conception of Faërie in "On Fairy-Stories" to be "a product of the 'esemplastic'

imagination" (97), and Ryan agrees (112).[135] Reilly also observes that Tolkien does

away with Coleridge's distinction between Fancy and Imagination, subsuming the

former under the latter (97). However, George MacDonald also distinguishes between

these terms in "The Fantastic Imagination" (314), so Tolkien need not have encountered

them directly from Coleridge. Furthermore, Ryan sees Tolkien's ideas about "the

mythical mode of imagination" as expressed in "Beowulf: The Monsters and the

Critics" to be derived from MacDonald and C. K. Chesterton and not taken directly

from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (109). He also sees similarities between

Tolkien's ideas and those of Owen Barfield and argues that Tolkien's "analysis of the

---

[134]This drawing appears in Hammond and Scull's *J. R. R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*, where the authors also note that Tolkien's "description of the place where the elves awoke in Middle-earth" bears some similarities to "Kubla Khan." This passage has been printed in *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One* (41 and 65 n. 14).

[135]Coleridge discusses the term "esemplastic" in chapter 10 of *Biographia Literaria* (1: 168-70).

creative imagination . . . goes beyond Coleridge's use of Platonic concepts to an implicitly Christian romanticism" (111-12). Ryan's remarks suggest the fact that Coleridge's influence upon Tolkien probably came through the intermediary works of other writers.

MORRIS AND TOLKIEN

AND THE ADULT FAIRY TALE TRADITION

George MacDonald's work points to another way in which Tolkien was indirectly influenced by the Romantic tradition: the fairy tale. Both he and Morris wrote within the context of the tradition of the literary fairy tale, a type of story that resembles the folktale in form but has an identifiable writer and tends to be more self-conscious. Jack Zipes in *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves* observes this about the origins of this genre in England:

> [T]he utilitarians did indeed view the Romantics as "enemies of the Enlightenment" à la [E. T. A.] Hoffman because they questioned the Protestant ethos and the prescriptions of order conceived by the utilitarians to establish the good society on earth. The questioning spirit of the Romantics enabled them to play a key role in fostering the rise of the literary fairy tale in Great Britain, for the symbolism of the tales gave them great freedom to experiment and express their doubts about the restricted view of the utilitarians and traditional religion. Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, Thomas Hood, Samuel Coleridge, and Hartley

Coleridge all wrote interesting fairy tales along these lines. . . . In time,

the return of the magic realm of the fairies and elves was viewed by the

Romantics and many early Victorians as a necessary move to oppose the

growing alienation in the public sphere due to industrialization and

regimentation in the private sphere. (xv)

Zipes moreover notes that as the nineteenth century progressed, these stories began

tackling social themes and attacking "the 'norms' of English society," exemplified by

the fairy tales of Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, and George MacDonald (xx). After

1860, "fairy-tale worlds by British writers moved in two basic directions." Most

writers, including Andrew Lang and Harriet Childe Pemberton, tried to "reconcile

themselves and their readers to the status quo of Victorian society" (xxiii). Another

group of writers, however, one that is more widely remembered now, included Carroll,

MacDonald, Oscar Wilde, Juliana Horatia Ewing, Mary De Morgan, and Kenneth

Grahame. They "instilled a utopian spirit into the fairy-tale discourse that endowed the

genre with a vigorous and unique quality of social criticism" that would be "developed

further" by writers such as Tolkien and Lewis (xxv).[136] These Victorian authors

criticized conditions and trends that they perceived to be social ills, such as the

oppression of women, crass materialism, the class system, and the devaluation of

Christian values (xxvi-xxviii). Many of them also advocated and actively worked for

political change in British society. Zipes details some of the fascinating connections

between Victorian fairy-tale writers and illustrators:

---

[136]Zipes includes certain authors like Christina Rossetti and Edith Nesbit in both groups.

As is well known, MacDonald was a good friend of Ruskin and Carroll and shared many of the social convictions of Dickens and Morris, whom he also knew. Morris was very much influenced by Ruskin, and in turn his ideas attracted Mary De Morgan, Laurence Housman, and Walter Crane, who illustrated numerous fairy books. Kipling heard the tales of De Morgan as a child and was a great admirer of Juliana Horatia Ewing. Wilde studied with both Ruskin and Walter Pater and developed his own anarchical brand of socialism. . . . Grahame was greatly influenced by Frederick James Furnivall, an active member of the Christian Socialist movement, who introduced him to the works of Ruskin and Morris. . . . [Edith] Nesbit was one of the founders of the Fabian Society . . . , and she became close to George Bernard Shaw [and] H. G. Wells. . . . (xxviii-xxix)

As Zipes's remarks indicate, both Morris and Tolkien belong to the category of writers that practiced social criticism: neither engages the reader to become reconciled to the contemporary culture. They do so, however, from entirely different standpoints: Morris's reflects a socialist critique of society while Tolkien's reflects a Christian one. However, while Zipes considers Tolkien a conservative, he also claims he "unearths buried and repressed 'non-synchronic' elements of unfulfilled wishes and dreams which cannot be left unfulfilled if the potential of human beings to bring about a millennium on earth is to be achieved" (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 149). According to Zipes's interpretation, then, Tolkien's work is ultimately as subversive as Marxist writers such as Morris.

Both authors have intriguing connections with the Christian writer George

MacDonald. Zipes notes that "MacDonald's life was filled with struggles against social

conservatism, religious orthodoxy, and commercial capitalism." Although he never

advocated a revolutionary change to society, "[w]riting in the fantastic mode apparently

freed him to explore personal and social problems to a degree that fostered his

radicalism and innovation" (*Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 102-3). Richard H.

Reis has theorized that Morris influenced MacDonald (45), but the writers had more

basic ties as well. They actually knew each other, and MacDonald lived in Morris's

house in Hammersmith before Morris occupied it. MacDonald's "forte as a writer,"

according to Fiona MacCarthy is that "MacDonald's books, like Morris's 1890s'

novels, influenced the whole genre of twentieth-century fantasy. It is strange to think of

these suggestive magic stories being composed over three decades by two such solid

adult writers in that straight up and down London House" (391-92). Although no clear

evidence exists, it is possible that the example of MacDonald inspired Morris to

experiment with the adult fairy-tale genre.[137]

Much greater evidence exists for MacDonald's influence upon Tolkien. In a

1938 letter to the *Observer*, Tolkien strongly implies that the work of MacDonald had

an influence upon *The Hobbit* (*Letters* 31). His essay "On Fairy-Stories" mentions

---

[137]Although *Roots* is the only complete late romance of Morris's that begins with "Once upon a time," most of the others have beginnings that clearly resemble those of fairy tales. *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, for example, begins: "It has been told that there was once a young man. . ." (*Collected Works* 14: 211). *The Wood beyond the World* starts out: "Awhile ago there was a young man dwelling in a great and goodly city by the sea. . ." (*Collected Works* 17:1). *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* begins with "Whilom, as tells the tale. . ." (*Collected Works* 20: 1). "The Story of Desiderius," an incomplete draft printed in volume 21 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*, does begin with "Once upon a time" (310).

several works by MacDonald, including "The Giant's Heart," *The Golden Key*, and *Lilith*. In fact, Tolkien's essay was highly shaped by and reflects many of the ideas found in MacDonald's essay "The Fantastic Imagination." In that essay MacDonald writes that the fairy tale need not contain any fairies, that it cannot be defined (313), that "the laws of its existence" must be consistent (314-15), that it should reflect true morality (316), that the reader should have freedom to read his own interpretation into it (320), that it should not be an allegory (317), that its audience should be "childlike" (317), and that a fairy-tale should not be spoiled by explanation (321). Tolkien responds to all these in his essay, mostly agreeing.

Thus, he and Morris saw the past, albeit in different ways, through the lenses of nineteenth-century Romanticism and nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fairy tales. While they could have come to some of their viewpoints individually, they saw the same materials through the same lenses and take some of the same literary standpoints. They both view the pagans of the past as being prone to voluntarily and noncoercively working together for the common good, for example, and both find the form of the fairy tale to be a suitable medium for dealing with adult themes. Such common stances make it strongly probable that Tolkien drew, consciously or otherwise, on his memories of Morris's vision while creating his own.

THE QUEST FOR MEANING

One of the standpoints upon which they agree turns around MacDonald's claim that a fairy tale must not be allegorical. As has been previously discussed, Morris

denied that *Roots* had any ulterior meaning. He had a particular averseness to

allegorical interpretations of his works. In 1895, when a reviewer in *The Spectator*

interpreted *The Wood beyond the World* to be, in Morris's words, "a Socialist allegory

of Capital and Labour," Morris felt that he had to respond (*Collected Letters* 4: 293). In

a July 16, 1895 letter to that publication, he wrote:

> I had not the least intention of thrusting an allegory into "The Wood
>
> Beyond the World;" it is meant for a tale pure and simple, with nothing
>
> didactic about it. If I have to write or speak on social problems, I always
>
> try to be as direct as I possibly can. On the other hand, I should consider
>
> it bad art in any one writing an allegory not to make it clear from the first
>
> that this was his intention, and not to take care throughout that the
>
> allegory and the story should interpenetrate, as does the great master of
>
> allegory, Bunyan. (*Collected Letters* 4: 291)

Although Morris does not directly speak of *The Roots of the Mountains* here, his

comments have a relevancy to that work, since they indicate a fundamental

philosophical stance in his writing. When he is didactic, he openly indicates this, and

does not surreptitiously slip allegory into any of his works. *The Wood beyond the*

World, and by extension *Roots*, is fundamentally "meant for a tale pure and simple."

Readers who seek ulterior motives for it miss the mark, if one takes Morris's words

literally.

Tolkien, perhaps following Morris, had a remarkably similar attitude toward his

own fictional works. After *The Lord of the Rings* became popular, Tolkien found

himself disturbed by some of the interpretations others had of this adult fairy tale, especially allegorical ones. In a Foreword prepared for the second edition he discussed its "motives and meaning":

> The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at 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. . . . As for any inner meaning or 'message it has none. It is neither allegorical or topical. . . . I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. (6-7).

Tolkien began denying that *The Lord of the Rings* was allegorical even before it was published, telling his publisher, Stanley Unwin, in 1947 that his son, Rayner Unwin, who had been reading the manuscript, was mistaken about its allegorical nature (*Letters* 121). He declared in 1954 that "my mind does not work allegorically" (*Letters* 174). In 1955 he wrote to his American publishers, the Houghton Mifflin Company, that *The Lord of the Rings* was "not 'about' anything but itself" and that it had "*no* allegorical intentions, general, particular, or topical, moral, religious, or political" (*Letters* 220). He told Michael Strait in 1956 that "The Scouring of the Shire" was not a comment on postwar England (*Letters* 235). In 1957 he told a correspondent that allegorical interpretations of the five wizards in *The Lord of the Rings* as representing the five senses and Orcs representing Communists were wrong (*Letters* 262). In 1961 he said he was angered by and "utterly repudiate[d]" any attempt to equate Sauron with Stalin (*Letters* 307).

However, Tolkien's emphatic and repeated denials that his work was allegorical have in no way stopped observers from giving allegorical interpretations to *The Lord of the Rings*. For instance, in an essay entitled "The Sins of Middle-earth: Tolkien's Use of Medieval Allegory," Charles W. Nelson maintains that the moral failures of the various peoples of Middle-earth represent the Seven Deadly Sins: "Dwarves-Greed, Men-Pride, Elves Envy, Ents-Sloth, Hobbits-Gluttony, Wormtongue-Lechery, and Orcs-Anger" (84).

Other allegorical-style readings indicate how commentators can arrive at extremely divergent interpretations. For example, in *Breaking the Magic Spell*, Jack Zipes, who has studied fairy tales from a leftist perspective, argues that *The Lord of the Rings* as well as *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion* "are devoid of Christian doctrine" (164). Because of contemporary social conditions and beliefs, Tolkien uses a "secularized allegorical form" to convey his religious views. Therefore, "God is absent from the Middle Earth [sic]" (165). Moreover,

> In the particular case of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo and
> Frodo . . . present a secularized religious communion which offers the
> hope to alienated individuals that imagination can pierce the
> administered walls of their existence and illuminate the path toward a
> utopia within humankind's grasp. (176).

Tolkien uses "the fairy tale to articulate deeply felt philosophies and to project utopian visions of better worlds which human beings are capable of realizing with their own powers" (149). Thus Zipes sees the vision and message of Middle-earth as framed

within primarily secular humanistic terms, pointing to the way forward out of the alienation humans face in contemporary capitalist society. From this viewpoint, hobbits and humans too therefore have no need for Christian theology as they struggle toward a better society. Zipes's contention in fact makes Tolkien's outlook sound almost like Morris's socialist agenda.

Compare this to the Catholic perspective found in Bradley J. Birzer's *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth*. In the foreword, Joseph Pearce declares that "It is . . . not merely erroneous but patently perverse to see Tolkien's epic as anything other than a specifically Christian myth" (ix). In this "Christian myth" Gandalf is "the archetypal prefiguration of a powerful Prophet or Patriarch," Aragorn represents Catholic authority, and Boromir represents fallen man. Furthermore,

> Ultimately, *The Lord of the Rings* is a sublimely mystical Passion Play. The carrying of the Ring—the emblem of Sin—is the Carrying of the Cross. The mythological quest is a veritable Via Dolorosa. Catholic theology, explicitly present in *The Silmarillion* and implicitly present in *The Lord of the Rings*, is omnipresent in both, breathing life into the tales as invisibly but as surely as oxygen. Unfortunately, those who are blind to theology will continue to be blind to that which is most beautiful in *The Lord of the Rings*. (xi-xii).

Afterwards, Birzer in the preface claims that he has discovered that "the Ring represented sin, the *lembas* the Blessed Sacrament, Galadriel the Blessed Virgin Mary" (xvi). Later he tells us that Mordor represents hell (70). Thus Pearce and Birzer read

The Lord of the Rings in allegorical and religious terms that are diametrically opposed to Zipes.

The claims of Zipes, Pearce, and Birzer certainly illustrate how readings of *The Lord of the Rings* are often colored by preconceptions of the readers. They also illustrate the dangers of allegorical interpretations of works. Such interpretations can foster a simplistic response to the work and inure the reader against its richness and complexity. Locked into one specific interpretation, such a reader can become dismissive of other interpretations and only see the didactic dimensions that he or she perceives as being the most important facets of the work. Literary artists who are not intentionally creating allegorical works would understandably want to avoid fostering such readings of their works, as they can reduce their artistry to simple didacticism and limit its appeal.

Tolkien, then, like Morris, clearly does not construct his romances as consciously allegorical works. However, other methods of interpretation may be valid, as Tolkien himself admits. In his Foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, after proclaiming that he "cordially dislike[s] allegory in all its manifestations," he goes on to say: "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 (xxiv).

Allegory, thus, is coercive, and as the characters of Middle-earth reject coercion, so does Tolkien, as did Morris in his romances, reject this tactic as an author. In this

regard he certainly strongly agrees with MacDonald, who had written about fairytales that "Everyone . . . who feels the story, will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another." This does not mean that an author's values, opinions, and ideas can be absent from fiction. He admits to Walter Allen in 1959 that "long narratives cannot be made out of nothing; and one cannot rearrange the primary matter in secondary patterns without indicating feelings and opinions about one's material. . ." (*Letters* 298). But these "feelings and opinions" need not prevent the reader from bringing his own feelings, opinions, and experiences to the reading. Judging by the remarks he makes in his letters, Morris would concur.

LEGISLATING THE DALE AND MIDDLE-EARTH

Their joint refusal to coerce the reader carries over to the types of societies both men depict in their works. Morris's society in *Roots* rejects coercive methods, and Tolkien would have found this society an attractive model for many reasons. Certainly in their fiction, as they create "those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered," they do so in certain remarkably similar ways. Morris's ideas about how a just society would make decisions are more clearly expressed in *Roots* than in *News from Nowhere*. Because their society is good and just, the people voluntarily work together for the good of all. Coercion is rarely needed, and although hereditary hierarchical figures like the Alderman and Face-of-god exist, they depend as leaders upon emotional ties, good will, and recognition of their leadership ability. Thus, the councils of

deliberation depicted in *Roots* demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between hierarchical figures and those who they lead. Before he solidifies his war plans, Face-of-god talks with those in "every house of the Dale, and to the Shepherds and the Woodlanders" to make sure that "there is no man amongst them but will follow" him (249). During assemblies such as the Gate-thing issues are freely discussed until a consensus is reached. No divisive votes occur in *Roots*. Its councils of deliberation therefore strike a balance between hierarchical and antihierarchical ways of making decisions.

These assemblies quite closely reflect Morris's ideas about how decisions should be made in a socialist society (or by socialists in a capitalist society). All should be able to participate in decision-making, and once a decision has been made, everyone should work together to carry it out. His emphasis upon volunteerism and consensus highlight the libertarian nature of his socialism.[138] On the other hand, the presence of hierarchical figures in *Roots* represents the need for authority, which Morris, unlike the anarchists, thought would be necessary in a socialist society. He wrote in the *Commonweal*, during the same time period that he was writing *Roots*,

> If freedom from authority means the assertion of the advisability or
> possibility of an individual man doing what he pleases always and under
> all circumstances, this is an absolute negation of society, and makes
> Communism . . . impossible. Even in Communist society, differences of

---

[138]In 1887, Morris told the Rev. John Glasse, a member of the Socialist League, ".. . I have an Englishman's wholesome horror of government interference & centralization which some of our friends who are built on the German pattern are not quite enough afraid of, I think" (qtd. in Thompson 451).

opinion would arise . . . which must be settled by the vote and authority

of the majority (qtd. in Thompson 550).

While Morris speaks here in abstract terms of the "authority of the majority," in

practical terms there would have to be a person or persons designated with the authority

to carry out this authority. His own viewpoints about decision-making were no doubt

colored by his experiences in the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist

League, where factional bickering led to contentious votes that created winners and

losers, hardened divisions, and fostered splits (Thompson 358-59, 453, 508). These

painful experiences, as well as his disdain at that point for parliamentary politics,

explain the absence of voting per se in *Roots*.

C. S. Lewis, for one, was impressed with Morris's descriptions of society,

calling them a success:

> The great use of the idyllic in literature is to find and illustrate the
>
> good—to give a real value to the *x* about which political algebra can then
>
> work. The tribal communities which Morris paints in *The House of the*
>
> *Wolfings* or *The Roots of the Mountains* are . . . perhaps the most
>
> successful attempts ever made, to give *x* a value. . . . Morris . . . paints
>
> the actual going on of the communal life, the sowing, planting, begetting,
>
> building, ditching, eating, and conversation. And . . . , from remote
>
> Mirkwood and unhistoric Burgstead, brings back a sentiment that a man
>
> could really live by" ("William Morris" 227-28).

Nevertheless, all is not perfect in his utopia. As mentioned in chapter three, the Sun-

beam predicts there will be problems lying in the future, some caused by the "waywardness" of men. While stingy individuals in this society, such as Penny-thumb, are frowned upon and laughed at by others, the social pressure does not seem powerful enough to effect a change in character. Furthermore, as the narrative illustrates, human passions and their mutability have the power to create great unhappiness and disrupt social harmony. Morris, whose own Marxism is imbued with moralism, seems to recognize that there are moral dimensions to humans that are independent of and resistant to societal conditions and controls, but finds himself unable to analyze them or recognize the contradictions they pose for his utopia. Morris does not consider in *Roots* the possibility that individuals might not want to voluntarily cooperate or act for the greater good of the folk. The possibility that some characters might head for the hills, or try to make an alliance with the enemy, instead of marching off cheerfully to fight the Dusky Men, never seems to occur to Morris. In this aspect his vision is even more utopian than that in *News from Nowhere*, which contains a character, Ellen's father, who does not approve of the new revolutionary society. The recognition of this possibility in *News from Nowhere* may subtly and paradoxically represent Morris's deepening realization of the difficulties of effecting a societal change like the one he favored.

Tolkien was certainly influenced by Morris's desire to create a better world. As mentioned in the first chapter, the TCBS, the society of Tolkien and his friends at King Edward's School, was inspired by the example of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The TCBS also wanted to use art to make world a better place (Garth 105). And the hobbits

in many ways constitute a utopian society in *The Lord of the Rings*. We are told, for

example, that hobbits traditionally "never fought among themselves" (5). And in the

section of the prologue entitled "Of the Ordering of the Shire," Tolkien describes their

government. Tolkien says the Shire "had hardly any 'government'. Families for the

most part managed their own affairs. Growing food and eating it occupied most of their

time. In other matters they were, as a rule, generous and not greedy, but contented and

moderate. . ." (9) They had ruled themselves for the thousand years or so after the death

of the last king of Gondor. They are led by a Thain or chieftain, a title that was

hereditarily passed along in the Took family, similar to the Alderman position that

hereditarily remains in the House of the Face in *Roots*. The Took family was "accorded

a special respect," much like the House of the Face, but the Thainship was only a

"nominal dignity" except during emergencies. The Mayor, who is also the Postmaster

and First Shiriff [sic], is elected every seven years at a fair, but we are not told how the

election process works (9-10)

Thus, the government of the Shire depends primarily upon the social harmony of

the hobbits and their proclivity to voluntarily work together. It, like the system of

making decisions in *Roots*, is a symbiotic relationship between those in hierarchical

positions of authority and those whom they lead.[139] As in *Roots*, these positions are

necessary (in *Roots* they are only significant during public assemblies and times of

crisis) but are fairly noncoercive. Hobbits voluntarily obey their laws, even though they

[139]In 1955, writing about *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien said: "There are of course certain things and themes that move me specially. The inter-realations between the 'noble' and the 'simple' (or common, vulgar) for instance. The ennoblement of the ignoble I find specially moving" (*Letters* 220).

are a thousand years old, because "The Rules . . . [are] both ancient and just" (9).

Although we do not get to see the closer workings of the hobbits' government, there are several councils of deliberation in *The Lord of the Rings* that bear strong resemblances to those in *Roots*. As in that romance, means of arriving at decisions reflect a symbiotic relationship between those with hierarchical power and those who are being lead. At the Council of Elrond, for example, Elrond clearly takes the position of authority. Afterwards, he has the final say so of who participates in the Fellowship and tells the hobbits, "I will choose you companions to go with you" (275). However, he exerts no coercion: Frodo voluntarily offers to try to take the Ring to Mount Doom, and the other members of the Fellowship voluntarily and willingly choose to go with him. When Merry and Pippin insist upon joining the Company, Elrond reluctantly gives in rather than trying to force them to do otherwise, even though his "heart is against" Pippin traveling with them (276). Elrond tells the Company that they accompany Frodo "as free companions." They "may tarry, or come back, or turn aside into other paths as chance allows. . . . [N]o oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will" (281). This reluctance to coerce others runs as a constant theme throughout the narrative, and stands in stark contrast to the tactics of Sauron.

As in *Roots*, divisive voting is avoided. When the Company fails in trying to climb the mountain pass at Caradhras, dissension arises when Gandalf proposes journeying through the Mines of Moria. Several members of the Fellowship speak out against such a course, and Boromir declares that he will refuse, "unless the vote of the whole Company is against me." Frodo, in order to defuse the tense situation, says, "I

beg that there should be no vote, until we have slept on it. Gandalf will get votes easier in the light of the morning than in this cold gloom" (297). However, almost immediately thereafter they hear the Wargs howling, forcing everyone to quickly to come over to Gandalf's point of view. Thus, the course of events in the narrative ensure that a vote is not necessary.

A similar instance occurs at Parth Galen, where the Company must decide between heading westward over the plains of Rohan and eventually to Minas Tirith, or eastward toward Mount Doom. Frodo asks for an hour alone to give him time to think. While he is absent Legolas proposes that the entire Company help make the decision, saying, "Let us call him back and then vote! I should vote for Minas Tirith." Gimli agrees with him, saying "And so should I," but then adds that "now that we have reached the last choice, it is clear to me that I cannot leave Frodo. I would choose Minas Tirith, but if he does not, then I follow him." Both Legolas and Aragorn then say they will go with Frodo too (402-3). But the dissension present in the Company never gets to the voting stage, for at that point Boromir returns, the Company realizes Frodo is missing, and while searching for him they are attacked by a party of Orcs. Again, the course of events in the narrative postpones a contentious vote.

In a 1944 letter to Christopher, Tolkien claims that the ancient Greek word for democracy was "not a word of approval but was nearly equivalent to 'mob-rule'" and that the Greek philosophers "did *not* approve of it" (*Letters* 107). He tells W. H. Auden in 1955 that he is not "a 'democrat' in any of its current uses, except that I suppose . . . we are all equal before the Great Author, *qui deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit*

humiles" (*Letters* 215).[140] The following year, in a draft of a letter to another

correspondent, he explains his hostility to the word further:

> I am *not* a 'democrat' only because 'humility' and equality are spiritual
>
> principles corrupted by the attempt to mechanize and formalize them,
>
> with the result that we get not universal smallness and humility, but
>
> universal greatness and pride, till some Orc gets hold of a ring of
>
> power–and then we get and are getting slavery. (*Letters* 246).

Tolkien, then, like Morris, totally opposes the operations of modern democracy.

Morris's detailed descriptions of decision-making in *Roots* may thus offer a desirable

alternative. His picture of an organic society which recognizes its need for authority

could serve as a powerful model for Tolkien. Unlike Morris, however, he does not

believe that working toward socialism will create a better society. In fact, Tolkien

distrusted any type of modern government. The ultimate problem with government is

that those who are to govern are also the inhabitants of a fallen world: it exemplifies his

beliefs of the far-reaching effects of the original Fall, a topic further discussed below.

A DIFFERENCE IN WORLDVIEWS

Tolkien's distrust of any type of modern government illustrates a fundamental

difference between his thought and Morris's. Although the fictional societies they

depict reveal strong similarities in power relations and social harmony, they ultimately

do so for very different reasons. Morris believes that people, working collectively, have

---

[140]Tolkien's reference to Luke 1:52 in this context almost seems to signify an overturning
of the entire social order.

the power by themselves to create a better world. They have no need of any extraneous

supernatural help in doing so. Once this better society is created, people, who by nature

are good and artistic, will tend to behave morally, flourish artistically, and find

satisfaction in material existence and a feeling of togetherness with society. Morris

expresses his thoughts of such an existence in "How We Live and How We Might

Live" (1885):

> I console myself with visions of the noble communal hall of the future,
>
> unsparing of materials, generous in worthy ornament, alive with the
>
> noblest thoughts of our time, and the past, embodied in the best art which
>
> a free and manly people could produce; such an abode of man as no
>
> private enterprise could come anywhere near for beauty and fitness,
>
> because only collective thought and collective life could cherish the
>
> aspirations which would give birth to its beauty, or have the skill and
>
> leisure to carry them out. (*Collected Works* 23: 23).

Existence, art, and society will be inextricably intertwined, according to Morris's

vision. In "Dawn of a New Epoch" (1886) he furthermore writes that:

> This ideal and hope of a new society founded on industrial peace and
>
> forethought, bearing with it its own ethics, aiming at a new and higher
>
> life for all men, has received the general name of Socialism, and it is my
>
> firm belief that it is destined to supersede the old order of things founded
>
> on industrial war, and to be the next step in the progress of humanity.
>
> (123)

Morris remarks here indicate some fundamental aspects of his thinking. Humanity is

progressing from a lower to a higher state. This progress is inevitable, since a new

society is "destined" to happen. And the new society will bring along a new system of

morality. Ethics are determined by society, not by God or any religious institution.

In contrast, Tolkien's beliefs about these issues are completely different.

Humans are tainted with original sin, the consequences of the Fall. As Chester N.

Scoville has observed, "For Tolkien, no . . . earthly paradise could exist, at least not

after the Fall of Man" (100). But even political systems with less lofty aspirations

ultimately become corrupt and fail. If anything, humans through time become more, not

less fallen. Humans cannot find satisfaction simply in living a material existence.

Furthermore, and morality is determined by God, not by decisions made by an

assembly. In *The Lord of the Rings*, speaking of a world that is "all gone strange,"

Éomer asks Aragorn,

> 'How shall a man judge what to do in such times?'
>
> 'As he ever has judged,' said Aragorn. 'Good and ill have not
>
> changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and
>
> Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them. . .'
>
> (438)

In other words, what is good or evil, moral or immoral, reflects eternal values and does

not change with the whims of society. These fundamental differences in beliefs have

important repercussions for Morris's and Tolkien's fictional works.

AN IRREPLACEABLE LOSS?: THE FALL

Morris's and Tolkien's differing beliefs shape how they deal in their works with fundamental human questions of loss. Both Morris's and Tolkien's sense of loss probably owes something to the loss that they experienced in their own personal lives. Morris, for instance, spent the preponderance of his adult life in a marriage that most observers believe was intensely unhappy. Tolkien lost his father at age four and mother at age twelve, and most of his close friends died during the Great War. But their fictional reactions to loss were ultimately shaped by their conception of the Fall. Morris, like the Romantic poets who preceded him, recasts the Christian conception of the Fall into secular terms; in his case, he conceives it as a social and artistic fall into capitalism. Tolkien, on the other hand, holds to the Christian paradigm of the Fall.

For Morris the Fall coincided with the end of the Middle Ages. In a March 1882 speech that he gave in Birmingham, he declared that "the slavery [was] imposed on us first by the Italian Renaissance." This "slavery"

> was at first but little felt in the arts; but as time went on, the mediaeval traditions of work died out, . . . and the genius of individual artists was buried in their graves, or flickered feebly in certain narrow circles, and all that was left us of that wonderful and much-behymned[141] new birth was a *caput mortuum* of academic pedantry, which, looking down on the world from the serene heights of cultivated stupidity, despised all

---

[141]*Behymned* further illustrates Morris's habits of using words with the *be-* prefix, although in general he avoids archaic words and constructions in his public speeches and political writings.

genuine and sincere attempts at the expression of the thought of man by means of art, and above all despised the people, the true source of all art, as of all wealth, as base mechanical drudges, and brute beasts just good enough to wait upon their fellows for the hire of dog's wages. ("The Gothic Revival [I]" 54-55).

This speech, given a few months before he joined the socialist Democratic Federation, demonstrates his burgeoning socialist convictions. He already connects the decline he perceives in art to the growth of capitalism, which has reduced "the true source of all art" to "mechanical drudges" and "brute beasts." His vehement language here expresses the depth of his emotions and indignity, but also exposes a contradiction in his thought that he apparently never resolved. From a strictly Marxist standpoint, capitalism marks a great advance over feudalism, a concept he admittedly expresses elsewhere. However, Morris, influenced by his Christian upbringing, tends to frame the rise of capitalism within the Christian paradigm of the Fall. The poetry and language of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in English history therefore, in Morris's viewpoint, was fallen as well, paralleling the decline of art in the West. This explains his negative attitude toward "sycophantic verse makers" and "the elaborate trifler Pope," as mentioned above. The Fall becomes partly reversed by the Romantic poets and their followers, who breathe fresh air into a poetry that has become degraded. Still, according to Morris's perspective, the position of art in capitalist society is tenuous at best. A socialist revolution becomes necessary for art to truly flourish.

The Roots of the Mountains depicts a society, that has not yet fallen in an artistic

and social sense. In fact, its society is in the process of coalescing from several smaller

ones into a larger body, a process necessary for the ensuing development of feudalism,

according to Marxist thought. Morris takes the paradigm of the Fall and uses it in *Roots*

in the sense of a separation of peoples or a political fall in power, thereby removing the

its undertones. His occasional use of the term "the fall" demonstrates its social and

political connotations it has for him. For example, we are told that the Burgdalers

welcome visiting merchants "because of the tales they told them of the Plain and its

cities, and the manslayings therein, and the fall of Kings and Dukes, and the uprising of

Captains" (11). At the spring market "the head man of the merchants" relates news from

the Plain, where "there had been battles down there, and the fall of kings, and

destruction of people, as oft befalleth in the guileful Cities" (234).

However, the three chief instances of a social fall all pertain to the Children of

the Wolf's separation from kindred and loss of native land. The first one occurs when

the they are separated from their relatives while being pursued by enemies, as the Sun-

beam relates:

> Time long ago came the kindred of the Wolf to these Mountains of the
>
> World; and they were in a pass in the stony maze and the utter
>
> wilderness of the Mountains, and the foe was behind them in numbers
>
> not to be borne up against. And so it befell that the pass forked, and
>
> there were two ways before our Folk; and one part of them would take
>
> the way to the north and the other the way to the south; and they could
>
> not agree which way the whole Folk should take. So they sundered into

two companies, and one took one way and one another. Now as to those

who fared by the southern road, we knew not what befell them, nor for

long and long had we any tale of them.

The Sun-beam's people establish themselves in Shadowy Vale. However, due to

population pressure, they go in search of a new home, finding it in Silverdale. That land

was "wide . . . plenteous of grass and trees, well watered full of all things that man can

desire" (110). But they intermarry with its "weak" and "feeble" inhabitants and, as the

Sun-beam explains,

Therein they did amiss; for the blended Folk as the generations passed

became softer than our blood, and many were untrusty and greedy and

tyrannous, and the days of the whoredom fell upon us, and when we

deemed ourselves the mightiest then were we the nearest to our fall.

(111).

This intermarriage therefore leads to a decline and decadence upon their people.

They cannot effectively resist the Dusky Men who eventually invade that dale: "the

most part of us were of that mingled blood, or of the generations of the Dalesmen whom

we had conquered long ago, and stout as they were of body their hearts failed them, and

they gave themselves up to the aliens to be as their oxen and asses" (112). The second

separation, then, occurs when they lose their land. Those who refuse to accept slavery

slip away back to Shadowy Vale, where they successfully stay hidden for several years.

The third separation occurs when a leader of that remnant of people, Stone-wolf,

convinces most of the men to accompany him to the Cities of the Plain, where they

hope to enlist themselves as mercenaries and eventually become rulers over the people there (113-14).

As is not always the case with the *The Lord of the Rings*, however, the narrative of *Roots* ensures that these losses are not permanent. The surviving men, including the Sun-beam's brother Folk-might, eventually return from the Cities of the Plain and reunite with their kindred in Shadowy Vale (115). They encounter the Woodlanders and Shepherd-folk and discover that they are descendants of their lost kindred, those who took the southern road. At the Great Folk-mote they are reunited, and a Woodlander, Red-wolf, sings that "Grown whole is the broken, found that which was hid" (289).[142] Along with the Burgdalers, these reunited peoples defeat the Dusky Men and reoccupy their former home, Silverdale. At the end of *Roots* the narrator tells us that these people "were friends henceforth, and became as one Folk" (411).

Morris's interpretation of the pattern of the Fall in *Roots* therefore demonstrates Morris's faith in the idea that people working collectively have the ability to create a better world. The allied peoples, by harmoniously working together, are able to defeat their enemies and restore their social unity that once existed. This society, by extending itself to allied peoples, strengthens not only the security of itself but its prosperity as well. Those who live in this "true" society will naturally be good: thus questions of

---

[142]These Woodlanders or Woodland-Carles had suffered a social fall of their own, considering their relation to the Burgdalers: "though they were freemen, yet as regards the Dalesmen were they well-nigh their servants; for they were but poor in goods, and had to lean upon them somewhat" (4). After the Burgdalers discover that the Woodlanders are related to the Children of the Wolf, their attitude toward them changes somewhat: "the Woodlanders were well beloved of all the Dalesmen; and now that they had gotten to know that they were come of so noble a kindred, they were better beloved yet, and more looked on" (292).

morality, sin, and forgiveness ultimately become unimportant. Morris fantasizes about

his ideal society by showing such a society in *The Roots of the Mountains,* which is

ultimately a utopian work: it depicts a pagan's view of utopia, complete with the glories

of battle and the practical worship of "the folk."

       Tolkien, on the other hand, although he undoubtedly was influenced by

Romantic reconstructions of the Fall, actually believed in the Fall in a Christian sense.

The concept seems to haunt him and permeates all his writings. In his published letters

he repeatedly alludes the Fall and the fallen world. For instance, in a 1941 letter to his

son Michael, discussing the question of possible relationships between the sexes,

Tolkien declares:

> This is a fallen world. The dislocation of sex-instinct is one of the chief
>
> symptoms of the Fall. The world has been 'going to the bad' all down
>
> the ages. . . . [T]he 'hard spirit of concupiscence' has walked down every
>
> street, and sat leering in every house, since Adam fell. . . . In this fallen
>
> world the 'friendship' that should be possible between all human beings,
>
> is virtually impossible between man and woman. (*Letters* 48)

His comments here reveal that not only does he believe in a literal Adam who literally

fell, he also sees the consequences of that Fall affecting the most basic relationships

between humans.[143]

---

    [143]In the same letter he declares that women "are instinctively, when uncorrupt, monogamous. . . . Men just ain't, not by their animal nature. . . . Each of us could healthily beget, in our 30 odd years of full manhood, a few hundred children, and enjoy the process. Brigham Young (I believe) was a healthy and happy man. It is a fallen world, and there is no consonance between our bodies, minds, and souls" (51).

They also even have the potential to influence an author, as Tolkien warns. In a 1954 letter to a Catholic correspondent who had voice concerns about some of the theological implications of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien replied, "The right to 'freedom' of the sub-creator is no guarantee among fallen men that it will not be used as wickedly as is Free Will. I am comforted by the fact that some, more pious and learned than I, have found nothing harmful in this Tale. . . ." (*Letters* 195). The concept of the Fall in fact is omnipresent in "On Fairy-Stories." There he observes that "the fantasies of fallen Man" are not always "beautiful or even wholesome" (122). Later in the essay he broaches the subject again: "Fantasy can, of course, be carried to excess. It can be put to evil uses. It may even delude the minds out of which it came. But of what human thing in this fallen world is that not true?" (144). He also declares that "the desire to converse with other living things" that manifests itself in fairy tales is "as ancient as the Fall" (152). And Tolkien ends his essay with these words: "All tales may come true; and yet, at the last, redeemed, they may be as like and as unlike the forms that we give them as Man, finally redeemed, will be like and unlike the fallen that we know" (156-57).

Not only do we find the concept of the Fall in Tolkien's own beliefs, we find it as well in the mythology he created. Explaining the origins of the earth in his own mythology, he writes that "the rebellion of created free-will precedes creation of the World (Eä); and Eä has in it, subcreatively introduced, evil, rebellions, discordant elements of its own nature already when the *Let it Be* was spoken. The Fall or corruption, therefore, of all things in it and all inhabitants of it, was a possibility if not

inevitable" (*Letters* 286-87). Thus, unlike our world, according to Tolkien, his world

intrinsically has evil woven into its structure.[144] The section of *The Silmarillion* called

the *Ainulindalë* (*The Music of the Ainur*) tells how this happens through the agency of

one of the Ainur, Melkor.[145] During the creation of the world, "it came into the heart of

Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the

theme of Ilúvatar [God]; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the

part assigned to himself" (16).[146] Tolkien also comments that another of the Valar[147],

Aulë, "in a sense 'fell'" because he wanted to create sentient beings. However, he

repents of his act and God refrains from punishing him because he had done this act

"*not* out of evil desire" but "out of impatient love" (*Letters* 287).[148]

However, there is another fall in *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien writes that

[t]he main body of the tale, the *Silmarillion* proper, is about the fall of

---

[144]Tolkien explains that in "Christian mythology . . . the Fall of Man . . . is a consequence (though not a necessary consequence) of the 'Fall of the Angels'. . . , but it is not clearly held (and in many versions is not held at all) that this affected the 'World' in its nature: evil was brought in from outside, by Satan (*Letters* 286).

[145]The original text appears in *The Lost Road and Other Writings*.

[146]In *The Silmarillion*, Melkor "wished himself to have subjects and servants, and to be called Lord, and to be a master over other wills" (18). He desired to rule the world and strove with the other Valar, seeking to "undo" or "corrupt" their work (21-22). He afterward became known as Morgoth, "the Dark Enemy of the World" (31). The efforts of the other Valar in Arda (the world) prevent him from establishing complete dominion. Ilúvatar clearly has more power than him, and "naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion" (50).

[147]The Valar are those of the Ainur who come to earth "at the beginning of Time, and assumed the function of guarding and governing" the world (*The Silmarillion* 353).

[148]Aulë's description in *The Silmarillion* seems almost Morrisian: "the delight and pride of Aulë is in the deed of making, and in the thing made, and neither in possession nor in his own mastery; wherefore he gives and hoards not, and is free from care, passing ever on to some new work" (19). The beings he created were "the Seven Fathers of the Dwarves" (43).

the most gifted kindred of the Elves, their exile from Valinor (a kind of

Paradise, the home of the Gods) in the furthest West, their re-entry into

Middle-earth, the land of their birth but long under the rule of the

Enemy, and their strife with him. . . . The fall of the Elves comes about

through the possessive attitude of Fëanor[149] and his seven sons to these

gems [the three Silmarilli that contain the Light of Valinor, which have

been captured by Melkor]. . . . The sons of Fëanor take a terrible and

blasphemous oath of enmity and vengeance against all or any, even of

the gods, who dare to claim any part or right in the Silmarilli. They

pervert the greater part of their kindred, who rebel against the gods, and

depart from paradise, and go to make hopeless war upon the Enemy. The

first fruit of their fall is war in Paradise, the slaying of Elves by Elves,

and this and their evil oath dogs all their later heroism, generating

treacheries and undoing all victories.[150] (*Letters* 148).

Thus, the entire concept of *The Silmarillion* revolves around the two falls: the first,

involving Melkor, which leads to the presence of evil in the structure of the world, and

the second, of the Elves, as its tragic consequences are played out.

However, there is yet another type of fall present in Tolkien's early

---

[149]Fëanor is characterized in *The Silmarillion* as the "greatest of the Noldor" (329). The Noldor are one of the "three kindreds" of the Elves that came to Valinor (53). Fëanor made the three Silmarils in order to preserve the light of the Two Trees of Valinor (67).

[150]Melkor continuously seeks to corrupt Elves and Men, much like Satan does Adam and Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Anne C. Petty discusses the "Luciferian" dimensions, "the pattern whereby a heavenly being falls from grace and becomes a personification of evil" (106), of Tolkien's fiction in *Tolkien in the Land of Heroes* (106-14).

mythological and legendary material. Tolkien calls it "[t]he *Downfall of Númenor*, the

Second Fall of Man (or Man rehabilitated but still mortal)" that

> brings on the catastrophic end, not only of the Second Age, but of the
>
> Old World. . . . After which the Third Age began, a Twilight Age, a
>
> Medium Aevum, the first of the broken and changed world. This
>
> *Downfall* is partly the result of an inner weakness in Men–consequent, if
>
> you will, upon the first Fall (unrecorded in these tales). . ."[151] (*Letters*
>
> 155)

Tolkien with these remarks makes clear the connection between the Fall in his own

fictional material and the Fall as understood in the Christian sense. The Fall seems

occur again and again, repeating itself in different permutations in Tolkien's work. In

all three cases, the Fall leads from a former and better condition to a later and worse

state. [152]

This series of Falls form the background to the narrative of *The Lord of the*

Rings. Even though that work is set in a time period much later than these falls, their

effects still echo in the story. We find that Tolkien has a propensity for using the words

"the fall" in connections that suggest a decline in or sudden loss of glory.[153] For

---

[151]This story appears as the text entitled *Akallabêth* in *The Silmarillion*. Two earlier versions of "The Fall of Númenor" appear in *The Lost Road and Other Writings*, and another appears in *Sauron Defeated*.

[152]Anne C. Petty in *Tolkien in the Land of Heroes* discusses Tolkien's mythology within the context of the Fall, remarking that "The Fall as envisioned by Tolkien casts its shadow over his entire mythology," and observing that it affects dwarves and hobbits as well (94).

[153]Illustrating his preoccupation with the concept, he began but never finished (during the 1930s) an "Arthurian poem" entitled "The Fall of Arthur," written in the meter of *Beowulf* (Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien* 171).

instance, at the dell near Weathertop, Sam recites some verses that Aragorn reveals are a translation of "the lay that is called *The Fall of Gil-galad*" (185-86). At Rivendell Frodo is surprised to hear that Elrond has memories of that event and says, "I thought that the fall of Gil-galad was a long age ago" (243). Later, in the Mines of Moria, Gimli chants a song, one stanza of which goes:

> *The world was fair, the mountains tall,*
>
> *In Elder Days before the fall*
>
> *Of mighty kings in Nargothrond*
>
> *And Gondolin, who now beyond*
>
> *The Western Seas have passed away:*
>
> *The world was fair in Durin's Day.* (316)

Later, at Lothlórien, Galadriel echoes Gimli's thoughts, saying of Moria that "fair were the many-pillared halls of Khazad-dûm in Elder Days before the fall of mighty kings beneath the stone" (356). She also mentions that "ere the fall of Nargothrond or Gondolin"[154] that she "passed over the mountains" (357). Tolkien makes the idea of a fallen order concrete with the Cross-roads of the Fallen King (882), where a vine with white flowers twines "across the brows" of the decapitated head of a monarch, "as if in reverence for the fallen king" (702). In addition to "the fall of Gil-galad" (1034), the appendices mention "the fall of Ondoher" (1039), "the fall of Sauron" (1045 n., 1062, 1080, 1112), "the fall of Minas Ithil" (1056), "the fall of Thorin" (1078), "the fall of the

---

[154]As mentioned in chapter one, "The Fall of Gondolin" was one of Tolkien's earliest stories. First begun during the 1916-17 period., it is included in *The Book of Lost Tales Part II.*

Dark Tower" (1094), and "the fall of Barad-Dûr" (1095).

In most of these cases, the fall is from a better to a worse condition[155]. The result is that the characters of Middle-earth are linked to their past by a series of falls. The impression is that the past is one that was much better, where men were greater and had closer links to the gods (the Valar). Examples of this abound in the narrative. Praising Prince Imrahil, Legolas says, "If Gondor has such men still in these days of fading, great must have been its glory in the days of its rising." Gimli replies, "And doubtless the good stone-work is the older and was wrought in the first building. . . . It is ever so with the things that Men begin: there is a frost in Spring, or a blight in Summer, and they fail of their promise" (873). When Aragorn tells Éomer of the loss of Gandalf, he says "when the great fall, the less must lead" (436). Indeed, the sense of loss and decline is continuously referenced in the narrative. At Lothlórien Haldir tells the company, "I do not believe that the world about us will ever again be as it was of old, or the light of the Sun as it was aforetime" (349). On the road to Isengard, Théoden sadly asks Gandalf, "however the fortune of war shall go, may it not so end that much that was fair and beautiful shall pass for ever out of Middle-earth?" Gandalf replies that "It may" and "to such days are we doomed" (550). In Lothlórien Galadriel asks Frodo,

> Do you not see now wherefore your coming is to us as the footstep of
> Doom? For if you fail, the we are laid bare to the Enemy. Yet if you
> succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the

[155]The exception is "the fall of Sauron" (which is equivalent to "the fall of Barad-dûr"), which leads to the end of the Dark Lord's power in Middle-earth. This event is so joyous that the new calendar of the Shire commemorates it by beginning the New Year on that date (1112).

> tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or
> dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be
> forgotten. (365).

The Elves therefore are fated to leave Middle-earth or diminish, regardless of the outcome of Frodo's quest. The Ents likewise seem fated to die out, since, because of the loss of the Entwives, there are no Entings (475). There is thus a sense of loss that is only partly compensated by the fall of Sauron. It also strongly suggests that Tolkien realizes that any attempt to re-enchant the world through fiction ultimately has its limitations. Tolkien's sense of the Fall, however, ultimately has both Christian and Romantic connotations. While the various falls in his work are caused by the moral failures of individuals, they suggest that we must in the end look to the past to see glimpses of a better world.

Tolkien, however, because of his Christian views of the Fall and the sinful nature of humans, cannot believe that any type of society or government can negate the effects of the Fall. Humans by their nature are prone to error and moral failure, and will be so not matter what type of government they have. Tolkien, therefore, never translated his dislike for bourgeois democracy into any type of support of socialism. Unlike Morris, he lived to see the rise of Stalinism and, unlike Morris, never viewed socialism as being a better system: he specifically criticizes it in his letters. Several of the events in *The Lord of the Rings* seem shaped by the rise of Stalinism and fascism (especially the portrayal of the Orcs and the threat of world domination), although, as the last chapter discussed, Tolkien always denied any allegorical interpretation of these events.

In a 1945 letter to Christopher he suggests that there may literally come to pass a "thousand-year rule of the Saints" for those Christians who "never finally bowed heart and will to the world or the evil spirit (in modern but not universal terms: mechanism, 'scientific' materialism, Socialism in either of its factions now at war)" (*Letters* 110). With this comment he not only casts doubt upon the scientific nature of materialism but also equates the self-proclaimed socialism of Russian with the National Socialism of Hitler and links both systems with mechanism. In 1956 he writes in a draft to a correspondent that "I am not a 'socialist' in any sense—being averse to 'planning' (as must be plain) most of all because the 'planners', when they acquire power, become so bad. . ." (*Letters* 235).[156] Tolkien also makes jokes about Stalin, bemoaning in a 1943 letter to Christopher the situation of "the unlucky little Samoyedes [who], I suspect, have tinned food and the village loudspeaker telling Stalin's bed-time stories about Democracy and the wicked Fascists who eat babies and steal sledge-dogs" (*Letters* 64). Here Tolkien in a comical manner not only ridicules the intellectual nature of Soviet propaganda, but also subtly, and perhaps unconsciously, manages to put democracy and fascism within the same category.[157] In a letter written about a month later he tells Christopher his reaction to the Teheran Conference:

> . . . I must admit that I smiled a kind of sickly smile and 'nearly curled

---

[156]In the same letter he criticizes a Tory government official for backing moves that would lead to "destroying Oxford in order to accommodate motor-cars" (235).

[157] His statement is made in the context of globalization. He precedes the words quoted above with these: "But the special horror of the present world is that the whole damned thing is in one bag. There is nowhere to fly to." Thus geographical isolation can no longer protect individuals from the evils, as he perceives them, of the modern world.

up on the floor, and the subsequent proceedings interested me no more',

when I heard of that bloodthirsty old murderer Josef Stalin inviting all

nations to join a happy family of folks devoted to the abolition of

tyranny & intolerance. But I must also admit that in the photograph our

little cherub W. S. C. [Winston Churchill] actually *looked* the biggest

ruffian present. Humph, well![158] I wonder (if we survive this war) if there

will be any niche, even of sufferance, left for reactionary back numbers

like me (and you). (*Letters* 65).

Here Tolkien manages to ridicule Stalin at the same time he connotes the word *ruffian*

with Churchill.

He also refers to himself as a reactionary. It also demonstrates the fact that

Tolkien disliked bourgeous capitalism just as much as Morris, but lacked the faith in

socialism that Morris had.[159] Tolkien describes his own political opinions thus:

My political opinions lean more and more to Anarchy (philosophically

understood, meaning abolition of control not whiskered men with

bombs)—or to 'unconstitutional' Monarchy. I would arrest anybody who

uses the word State (in any sense other than the inanimate realm of

England and its inhabitants) . . . and after a chance of recantation,

execute them if they remained obstinate! Government is an abstract noun

---

[158] This expression seems to echo Treebeard in *The Two Towers*.

[159] To be fair to Morris, he never experienced socialism in power during his lifetime, except for the brief experience of the Paris Commune. He disliked authoritarianism and almost certainly would have been horrified at many of the things done in the name of socialism in the twentieth century.

meaning the art and process of governing and it should be an offence to

write it with a capital G or so as to refer to people. If people were in the

habit of referring to 'King George's council, Winston and his gang', it

would go a long way to clearing thought, and reducing the frightful

landslide into Theyocracy. (63).

Tolkien here not only parodies the practices of totalitarian regimes who execute

those who say the wrong things but also reveals a political standpoint that sounds

antiauthoritarian and much like the one outlined in Morris's *News from Nowhere*[160]. But

his stated desire for "unconstitutional monarchy" in the next breath seems somewhat

incongruous. He also implies that it is hypocritical to claim that any government is in

fact "of the people." A sharp dichotomy lies between the governors and the governed.

As the war draws to an end, he will also bemoan the ruin of the German people,

implying that they do not bear the blame for what their government has done (*Letters*

111).

In fact, this incongruity illustrates how Tolkien distrusted any type of modern

government. The ultimate problem with government is that those who are to govern are

also the inhabitants of a fallen world:

[T]he proper study of Man is anything but Man; and the most improper

job of any man, even saints (who at any rate were at least unwilling to

---

[160]This standpoint holds true for *Roots* as well, although the people of that society have
more ties of kinship, are less mobile, and seem to have fewer individual opportunities for artistic
and intellectual advancement than those in *News from Nowhere*. This reflects the fact that *Roots*
represents a much earlier model of society that, from a Marxist point of view, is less technically
and socially advanced.

take it on), is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and

least of all those who seek the opportunity. . . . The medievals were only

too right in taking *nolo episcopari* as the best reason a man could give to

others for making him a bishop. [161]

But the traditional way of picking rulers cannot work anymore, for the invention

of mass weapons of destruction has ensured that megalomaniacs in control of "ant-

communities" can procure a vast amount of power. "We are all trying to do the

Alexander-touch": but Alexander himself became tainted and died ignominimously

(*Letters* 64). Power, like the One Ring in *The Lord of the Rings* corrupts everything.[162]

His attitude toward politics, along with his dislike for modern life and

conception of the Fall, help explain some of the pessimism in *The Lord of the Rings*.

But much optimism occurs in that work as well. Sauron's evil reign, after all, is

destroyed. At the Cross-roads of the Fallen King, when the sunlight suddenly glints on

---

[161] Compare C. S. Lewis's 1943 thoughts about democracy: "I am a democrat because I believe in the Fall of Man. . . . A great deal of democratic enthusiasm descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau, who believed in democracy because they thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in government. The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they're not true.. . . . I don't deserve a share in governing a hen-roost, much less a nation. Nor do most people. . . . The real reason for democracy is just the reverse. Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows.. . . . I don't think the old authority in kings, priests, husbands, or fathers, and the old obedience in subjects, laymen, wives, and sons, was in itself a degrading or evil thing at all. I think it was intrinsically as good and beautiful as the nakedness of Adam and Eve. It was rightly taken away because men became bad and abused it. To attempt to restore it now would be the same error as that of the Nudists. Legal and economic equality are absolutely necessary remedies for the Fall, and protection against cruelty" ("Equality" 666).

[162]Perhaps that is why Tolkien does not call for a theocracy, at least in his letters that have been published. He only seems to mention theocracy in the context of evil. In a letter probably written in 1956, he summarizes the history of his mythological cycle to Milton Waldman, mentioning the "evil theocracy" of Sauron, who is "also the god of his slaves" (*Letters* 154).

the flowers on the head of the statue of the king, that had been decapitated and marred

by those in the service of evil, Frodo declares, "They cannot conquer for ever!" (702).

And even though the sun sets at that moment, his words turn out to be prophetic.

Gandalf's words to the council after the Battle of the Pelennor Fields may

embody Tolkien's thoughts about evil. Defeating Sauron will not end the existence of

evil in Middle-earth:

> Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant
>
> or emissary. Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but
>
> to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set,
>
> uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after
>
> may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to
>
> rule. (879).

Thus, the battle against evil in Middle-earth is worth fighting, even though it will not

end evil entirely, because it is the duty of the characters to their contemporary times as

well as to future generations. Tolkien seems to say here that in a Fallen world there can

be no end to evil, but the efforts of humans in opposition to it can limit it and keep it

from establishing dominion. The past can give us glimpses of a time when evil was

even more restricted, and thus can inspire us to continue working for a better world,

even if it is not attainable in this lifetime. One cannot, however, depend upon any single

type of political system to bring about this world, because ultimately they are all

machinery.

LOSS, RECOVERY, AND TRANSFORMATION

Morris's optimistic viewpoint about society means that recovery of loss becomes possible. Thus there is a pattern of separation and reuniting, of loss and regaining in *Roots*: that which is lost is restored. This is especially epitomized by Morris's use of the Romantic theme of marriage to symbolize reintegration. Thus, Face-of-god loses one potential bride only to find another. The Bride consequently loses a potential husband only to find another. She even absolves Face-of-god of any blame in the matter (384). The Sun-beam "hath an inward sorrow at leaving the fair Dale wherein her Fathers dwelt, and where her mother's ashes lie in earth" (383), but her sorrow is consoled by thoughts of her new husband and new home. The decision of the Silverdalers and the Burgdalers to hold a reunion every three years in Shadowy Vale (409) means that she will periodically get to return to her former home. Bow-may's loss of status as a warrior is (at least partly) compensated by her marriage and children: "all that hath befallen me is good," she tells Folk-might and the Bride (410). In both a fairy-tale and strictly materialist sense, *Roots* truly has a lot of happy endings.

In contrast, falls in condition in *The Lord of the Rings* often represent a fall in a moral sense, and recovery and compensation do not always occur. Saruman the White, the most powerful of the wizards, loses both his power and his life due to corruption. Denethor, the powerful Steward of Gondor, loses his life as a result of pride and a desire to use the *palantír* that he secretly has. Gollum becomes depraved due to his lust for the Ring. A constant theme in *The Lord of the Rings* is that evil undermines itself, and those under the influence of evil often contribute to their own undoing.

However, even the "good" characters in *The Lord of the Rings* have moral failures. The Ents, at least until the arrival of Merry and Pippin, seem paralyzed by indecision and inaction. Pippin finds himself unable to resist his curiosity to look into the *palantír*. Boromir becomes seduced by the Ring and ultimately tries to take it by force from Frodo. Frodo himself in the end is not able to resist the allure of the Ring and, at the last minute, fails in his quest.

These characters, however, have the ability to realize their own failures. Treebeard recognizes the consequences of his inaction when he cries, "I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop!" (474). Pippin realizes the consequences of his action and cries, "Gandalf! Forgive me!" (593). Boromir confesses to Aragorn, "I tried to take the Ring from Frodo . . . . I am sorry. I have paid" (414). Frodo tells Sam that without Gollum, "I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him!" (947).

According to the Christian paradigm, recognition of one's moral failures is necessary in order to effect a spiritual transformation. Because Morris rejects this paradigm, his characters in *Roots* do not undergo any moral or spiritual transformation. While Face-of-god through his actions and his bravery proves his suitability to lead his people and marry the Sun-beam, his moral condition remains pretty much the same throughout the narrative. He ends up being brave, generous, and kind, which is how he began in the first place. While Folk-might claims that Face-of-god has matured and that "wisdom hath waxed" within him (387), the reader actually gets little sense of this maturation from the narrative. Face-of-god seems to learn nothing from the dilemma

and suffering of the love triangle. Although he feels great guilt because it has happened, and very much concerned with the Bride's feelings, he seems almost totally unreflective as to how he could almost immediately fall in love with a woman he had just met (and who had refused to tell him her real name) and simultaneously lose interest in the Bride, with whom he had a long-term relationship and planned betrothal. As the ending turns out with everyone happily married and social harmony once more in balance, he has no need to learn lessons of any kind, however.[163]

This strongly contrasts with the examples of Frodo and Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*. As many observers have noted, Frodo is greatly transformed through the narrative. Before he even starts out on his journey, he declares that he does "not feel any pity" for Gollum and that the creature "deserves death." Gandalf rebukes him, saying: "Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends" (59). During the course of the narrative, however, Frodo comes to pity Gollum and keeps others, including Sam and Faramir's men, from slaying him. After Gollum commits the desperate and malevolent act that paradoxically saves Middle-earth, Frodo tells Sam, as mentioned above, that they should forgive him, even though he had tried to cause their very deaths.

Frodo's attitude toward violence changes as well during the quest. Near Weathertop he tries to fight the Black Riders with his sword Sting, striking at the feet of

---

[163]Referring to the "infidelities" of *Roots* and *Jason and the Argonauts,* C. S. Lewis declares that Morris does not "understand the Christian and sacramental view of such things. He is the most irreligious of all our poets—*anima naturaliter pagana* ("William Morris" 222-23).

their leader. In the Mines of Moria he uses his sword Sting stab the foot of a cave-troll,

giving the battle cry, "The Shire!" (324). But during the course of the quest he comes to

renounce violence. As Frodo and Sam travel through the land of Mordor, after deciding

they must discard as much as possible of what they are carrying in order to have the

energy to complete the quest, Frodo throws away his Orc clothing, sword, and shield:

"There, I'll be an orc no more," he cried, "and I'll bear no weapon fair or foul. Let them

take me if they will" (937). Thereafter he refuses to fight his enemies. At the Battle of

Bywater, "Frodo had not drawn sword, and his chief part had been to prevent the

hobbits in their wrath . . . from slaying those of their enemies who threw down their

weapons" (1016). After Saruman tries to stab him later, he asks his friends to spare his

life (1019).

Sam, too, undergoes a transformation of a sort. Although he first desires to kill

Gollum and even pursues him to do so at Cirith Ungol, when he gets his chance, he

finds himself unable to kill the creature, who begs for his life. He refrains from killing

him even though his mercy seems totally irrational, since there cannot be any doubt at

that point about Gollum's malicious intent. Like Frodo, Sam effects a transformation

that is clearly Christian in character, even though they ostensibly live thousands of

years before Christ.

Their transformations revolve around the power of forgiveness. The characters

of *Roots* do engage in a certain kind of forgiveness. For example, speaking of the day in

which they first met and fought each other, Face-of-god asks Folk-might, after the

victory over the Dusky Men,

"Is all forgiven now, since the day when we first felt each other's arms?"

"Yea, all," said Folk-might; "now hath befallen what I foretold

thee in Shadowy Vale, that thou mightest pay for all that had come and

gone, if thou wouldest but look to it" (387).

In other words, Folk-might has forgiven Face-of-god because he has helped his people

defeat the Dusky Men and regain their former home at Silverdale. Moral repentance has

nothing to do with his forgiveness. Likewise, the Bride forgives Face-of-god as well:

when he guiltily asks her,

"Dost thou deem that I wrought that sundering?"

She smiled kindly upon him and said: "Gold-mane, my playmate,

thou art become a mighty warrior and a great chief; but thou art not so

mighty as that. Many things lay behind the sundering which were neither

thou nor I." (384).

In other words, Face-of-god's change of passions was just something that happened,

and no one is to blame for it. Forgiveness here, as with Folk-might, does not involve

any sense of moral failure. It also signifies a necessary social act: to restore social

harmony, characters must forgive one another. Furthermore, this forgiveness does not at

all extend to enemies, for the victorious kindreds extend no mercy to the Dusky Men

but completely annihilate them.

But in Tolkien's Middle-earth, even enemies and immoral characters can receive

forgiveness. After the battle at Helm's Deep, the men of Rohan spare the lives of the

men of Dunland that they have captured:

'Help now to repair the evil in which you have joined,' said Erkenbrand;

'and afterwards you shall take an oath never again to pass the Fords of

Isen in arms, nor to march with the enemies of Men; and then you shall

go free back to your land. For you have been deluded by Saruman. (545)

Instead of enslaving their enemies, as Saruman or Sauron would have done, the men of

Rohan merely order them to make restitution and vow to be peaceable. Similarly, mercy

is offered to other characters, although they do not always accept it. Denethor, for

example, refuses the help of Gandalf, who tries to save his life, but instead kills himself

rather than give up his power and serve Aragorn, who is the rightful heir to the throne

of Gondor (854). Saruman, too, refuses mercy when it is offered to him. After the Ents

take over Isengard and besiege the Tower of Orthanc, Gandalf offers to allow Saruman

to leave and even to protect him if he will turn over the Key of Orthanc. Saruman

haughtily refuses this offer (582-83). Later, after the Battle of Bywater, when Frodo

encounters Saruman in the Shire, he offers to let him go. While the hobbits of Bag End

cry, "Kill him!", Frodo replies, "I will not have him slain. It is useless to meet revenge

with revenge: it will heal nothing. Go, Saruman, by the speediest way!" On the way

Saruman attempts to stab Frodo and is overpowered by other hobbits. When Sam draws

his sword, Frodo begs him not to kill him: "He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I

would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it." Saruman, however, remains

unrepentant and soon loses his life. (1019-20).

The most notable case of forgiveness, of course, concerns Gollum. Despite

being forgiven, Gollum does not reform, but the sparing of his life paradoxically

ensures that, despite his evil intentions, the quest will be achieved and the Ring

destroyed. In discussing this point, Tolkien tells Michael Straight in 1956 that the

climax of *The Lord of the Rings*, the "catastrophe," *"exemplifies* (an aspect of) the

familiar words: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'" He furthermore explains that

> But at this point the 'salvation' of the world and Frodo's own 'salvation'
>
> is achieved by his previous *pity* and forgiveness of injury. At any point
>
> any prudent person would have told Frodo that Gollum would certainly
>
> betray him, and could rob him in the end. To 'pity' him, to forbear to kill
>
> him, was a piece of folly, or a mystical belief in the ultimate value-in-
>
> itself of pity and generosity even if disastrous in the world of time. He
>
> did rob him and injure him in the end–but by a 'grace', that last betrayal
>
> was at a precise juncture when the final evil deed was the most beneficial
>
> thing that any one cd. have done for Frodo! By a situation created by his
>
> 'forgiveness', he was saved himself, and relieved by his burden. He was
>
> very justly accorded the highest honours. . . ." (*Letters* 234).

In a later letter Tolkien further explains that this does not mean that

> one must be merciful, for it may prove useful later–it would not then be
>
> mercy or pity, which are only truly present when contrary to prudence.
>
> Not ours to plan! But we are assured that we must be ourselves
>
> extravagantly generous, if we are to hope for the extravagant generosity
>
> which the slightest easing of, or escape from, the consequences of our

own follies and errors represents. And that mercy does sometimes occur

in this life (*Letters* 253)

Forgiveness and mercy become important, then, not only in a social sense but in a moral and religious sense as well. Redemption from one's own moral failings becomes possible only by living by the Christian paradigm. This redemption makes possible the transformation of key characters in *Lord of the Rings*, and the lack of anything equivalent in *Roots* prevents its characters from undergoing anything similar.

COMPLETELY RE-ENCHANTING?

Its very different tone points to a key contradiction within Morris's thought, one that he never quite resolves during the course of this romance. As mentioned above, Morris has on one hand a Romantic conception of the Fall and on the other a Marxist conception of the social progress of humankind. The reader finds these two conflicting perspectives working at cross-purposes with each other in *Roots*. On the one hand, responding to the Romantic concern with the disenchantment of nature, Morris fills his world with the supernatural beings humans once believed animated nature. For example, Folk-might in Shadowy Veil speaks to the Bride at the Staff-stone, where "tales of the elves had been told concerning it, so that Stone-face had beheld it gladly the day before" (297). These supernatural beings also have a connection with morality, at least in a social sense, as Stone-face warns that the wights will be come angry if Folk-might sends his guests away without giving them gifts (382).

On the other hand, Morris also wants to depict a society in *Roots* that functions

according the ideals that he has. Since he cannot envision that such a society can come into being in any terms other than materialistic ones, the Dale becomes a material Earthly Paradise. Because it conforms to Morris's vision of a "true" society, the inhabitants therefore must be prone to think in materialistic terms. Morris therefore has an artistic agenda in *Roots* that contains contradictory elements; thus the supernatural and material aspects of the romance clash with each other. Some of the inhabitants try to rationalize away the magic, foreseeing, and supernatural beings, but are never quite successful in doing so. Another character, Stone-face, argues for the existence of these beings and even recounts encountering them, but they always remain behind the scenes; the reader never directly sees them. The unity of the romance therefore becomes lost and its magical atmosphere becomes spoiled, as the beings seem merely decorative, like figures on a Morris tapestry.[164]

The romance's problems are acerbated by several contradictions within the plot. Morris in reality had difficulty with the plot: he originally intended for it to have a more tragic ending, with the Bride killing herself after being jilted by Face-of-god. After around two months of drafting he decided to opt for a happier ending, as a March 1889 letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones indicates (*Collected Letters* 3: 42). This caused inconsistencies to arise in the narrative that he never completely ironed out. A particularly glaring one is that Face-of-god seems to dote over the Bride at the beginning of the book and even daydreams about marrying her (25-26), but later Folk-

---

[164]In some of his other late romances, however, Morris more successfully fuses his Romantic and materialist habits of thinking and more effectively infuses magic and the supernatural into his works. E. P. Thompson maintains that in the later romances "the narrative flows . . . from the tricks of magic, wood-goddesses, witches, and weird" (676).

might's reason for attacking him is said to be the fact that Face-of-god "didst take her love but lightly" and "beguileth to her torment the fairest woman that is in the world" (119). While Carole Silver calls the plot "poorly contrived and proportioned" (139), it might be more accurate to characterize it as "hastily contrived." Morris only spent around nine months writing the romance, and, considering its length, this was perhaps not enough time to work out the contradictions in the text. For various reasons, then, the romance falls short in enabling the reader, in Coleridge's words, "to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" (*Biographia Literaria* 2: 6).

In comparison, although *The Lord of the Rings* is much longer, Tolkien spent twelve years in the writing of it, enough time to smooth out all but the most minor inconsistencies. *The Lord of the Rings*, then, is a much more unified work from an artistic and literary standpoint. More importantly, though, Tolkien is able to more successfully integrate nature, the supernatural, morality, and society in his work. Magic is not explained away but becomes an integral part of the plot. The supernatural becomes closely associated with morality, as Gandalf uses magic to fight for the forces battling the evil Sauron, Creatures such as the Ents do not serve decorative purposes but rather come alive, not just by associating them with verbs of action, but by presenting them as being actually tangible and mobile. And good triumphs over evil in the end, not due to skill in battle or military stratagems, but because of the rightness of its cause and the proclivity of evil to undermine its own success. In other words, *The Lord of the Rings* is more successful in resolving contradictory elements and enabling the reader to

achieve "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment."

    The Lord of the Rings is also more successful in this because ultimately Middle-earth is more like the world that readers know than the Dale of *Roots*. The ending of Morris's romance seems to usher in an Earthly Paradise for the peoples of the Dale. The defeat of the Dusky Men leads to an era of prosperity, the "Beginning of good days," in which all the characters end up married, satisfied in a material paradise. The former slaves of the Dusky Men in Silver-dale find rehabilitation in their pastoral labors, the reflection of "labor as art," as Ruth Kinna terms Morris's vision of labor under socialism (506). For the inhabitants of *Roots*, as well as for Morris, this is enough, as fulfillment becomes achieved in a material sense. *Roots* has a positive, upbeat ending, with the main characters young, happily married, and with young children.

    In contrast, subsuming one's life through marriage, labor, or even art seems inadequate in a Middle-earth that has irrevocably changed after the defeat of Sauron's forces. While redemption and forgiveness are possible, some things become irretrievably lost. While several of the characters marry at the end–Aragorn with Arwen, Faramir with Éowyn, Sam with Rose--Frodo's wounds are too deep to permit that course of action for himself. The state of the Ents who can no longer reproduce also indicates barrenness. Most of the main characters in *The Lord of the Rings* ultimately have to leave Middle-earth to find solace and healing: Bilbo, Frodo, Gandalf, Sam, Legolas, and Gimli.[165] Those who remain, like Aragorn, Merry, and Pippin, eventually

---

[165]Tolkien explains in a 1971 letter that they pass over the sea to the Undying Lands. Mortals such as Frodo will not gain immortality there but rather will spend a time of "peace and healing." They will eventually die at a time of "their own desire and of free will" and depart for "destinations of which the Elves knew nothing" (*Letters* 410-11).

will have to die, as the chronology of later events in Appendix B indicates (1095-98). Tolkien strongly implies that true satisfaction in a material sense is not possible in a Fallen world, where all individuals have to ultimately face the prospects of their own mortality. His recognition of the fact that not all things that are lost can be recovered, at least in this lifetime, seems much closer to the reality of everyday life than the material and social compensation of *Roots*. Tolkien's recognition of the ultimate inadequacy of society to satisfy all desires and compensate for all loss is probably much closer to the actual beliefs of people in the past than Morris's. His recognition that good people can have serious moral failures means that his characters have the potential to grow and become transformed. This and his infusion of a spiritual vision into *The Lord of the Rings* indicates why that work ultimately is more successful in taking the reader back in time and re-enchanting the past.

However, *Roots* admirably succeeds in many ways. Its language has a grandeur that at times is sweeping, and its archaic words allow the narrative an ability to wrench free a reader, a careful one at least, from the thought patterns of contemporary language. The detailed descriptions of natural and meteorological features impart to the reader a love of nature, and make this land of Morris's imagination seem geographically real. The action verbs and human characteristics he assigns to these features make them come alive and demonstrate the vibrancy of nature. The detailed customs of the inhabitants seem in harmony with nature and their celebrations follow the progress of the seasons. For them, separation from nature has not yet occurred. Their social organization has a great appeal and seems in many ways quite reasonable and workable.

And magic and the supernatural at least have a possibility.

It certainly seems to have been very effective in enchanting at least one reader, Tolkien. He, being a careful reader, would have been impressed by the beauty of natural scenes, the power and majesty of old words, the excitement of heroic battle, and the idea that in romantic affairs, everything can turn out all right in the end and that one should marry a partner for love, even if there are obstacles in the way. This could be a powerful idea for someone who could not see or even write his sweetheart for almost three years.[166] He might also be impressed by the example of two motherless characters, Face-of-god and the Sun-beam, who become betrothed.[167]

In his own efforts to re-enchant the universe, Tolkien goes one step further than Morris in many aspects. His use of archaic language is more judicious, for example; as was mentioned in the last chapter, he tailors it to specific characters and scenes. His impartation of action verbs and living characteristics to natural features is even more intensive and prominent than that in *Roots*: Middle-earth therefore seems even more alive than the Dale and its environs. Forests not only seem alive but actually become alive as they achieve mobility. The prominence of characters such as Ents who are not human helps free *The Lord of the Rings* from anthropocentrism, giving the reader an entirely new slant upon nature. And magic and the supernatural are not merely discussed but are demonstrated, becoming essential parts of the narrative. Most importantly, the supernatural world view that underlies *The Lord of the Rings*, makes it

---

[166]Tolkien wrote to her the night he turned twenty-one and they became engaged five days later (*Letters* 53).

[167]As mentioned previously, both he and his wife Edith were orphans.

more successful both in replicating an enchanted universe as well as appealing to contemporary readers who may be searching for alternatives to a strictly scientific, secular, and materialistic world view. All literary attempts at re-enchanting a disenchanted universe have their limitations, and *Roots* and *The Lord of the Rings* are no exceptions. One truly cannot go back in time, and the best an author can do is create a simulacrum of the past. However, both works represent heroic attempts at doing so. *The Lord of the Rings* ultimately is more successful in allowing the reader to break free, at least for a time, from a disenchanted world, but Tolkien's masterpiece would not have been possible without Morris's pioneering example of *The Roots of the Mountains*.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

While this dissertation has investigated many areas of Morris's influence upon Tolkien, many dimensions of this topic remain unexplored and much more work remains to be accomplished. Much could be done with other works by Morris, especially *The Well at the World's End*. That work contains a Dark Lord and Dark Riders, for example, terms that intriguingly show up in *The Lord of the Rings*. Is Tolkien's emphasis upon fellowship related in any way to its emphasis in the *Well*? Is there a relationship between the wizard of the *Well*, the Sage, and Gandalf? Or between the Lady of Abundance and Galadriel? Does the fact that the inhabitants of the *Well* are Christians point to parallels the two authors take in different directions? These are tantalizing questions that cry out for further exploration. *The Earthly Paradise* also uses many folkloric elements similar to those in Tolkien's work. Do these parallels reflect

any similarities in the ways their authors use them?

Similarities in Morris's and Tolkien's depiction of good and evil suggest further connections. The Dusky Men, like the Orcs, seem evil and unredeemable, worthy only of annihilation. Why are they presented in the same nonhuman terms? What corrupts the Dusky Men and why do their progeny bear their characteristics? How do you judge characters that are nonhuman or seem nonhuman by human values? How do the similarities in their characterizations reflect upon Morris's and Tolkien's very different religious and political values?

While many scholars have discussed Morris's work within the context of nineteenth-century intellectual trends, much more work could be done in exploring these authors' reactions to troubling scientific evidence and changing notions of mythology. In what ways, for example, did the concept of evolution impact their ideas? Did the theories of Social Darwinism influence their conceptions of nonhuman beings? Is there a genetic push toward diversity in Middle-earth? Also, how do Morris and Tolkien fit into the Victorian Sage tradition? And do they continue that tradition in similar or different ways? How may have Ruskin's influence upon Morris shaped Tolkien's antipathy toward the effects of mass production on art? Is Tolkien reacting in some way to Carlyle's influence, through Morris, as he creates his new mythology? Is he trying to re-clothe spirituality for a new age? These intriguing questions suggest that many more dimensions of Morris's influence upon Tolkien still await discovery.

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY WORKS BY MORRIS

The Collected Letters of William Morris. Ed. Norman Kelvin. 4 vols. Princeton: U of

    Princeton, 1984-96.

The Collected Works of William Morris. Ed. May Morris. 24 vols. London: Longmans,

    1910-15.

Political Writings: Contributions to Justice *and* Commonweal 1883-1890. Ed. and

    introd. Nicholas Salmon. Bristol, UK: Thoemmes, 1994.

Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome. By William Morris and E. Belfort Bax. London:

    Swan Sonnenschein, 1893.

The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris. Ed. and comp. Eugene D. LeMire.

    Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1969.

William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist. By May Morris. 2 vols. Oxford: Basil

    Blackwell, 1936.

PRIMARY WORKS BY TOLKIEN

The Adventures of Tom Bombadil. 1962. *The Tolkien Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1966.

The Annotated Hobbit. Ed. Douglas A. Anderson. Rev. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Beowulf and the Critics. Ed. Michael D. C. Drout. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002.

"*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 5-48.

"Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*." *A Tolkien Compass*. Ed. Jared Lobdell. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1975. 153-201.

The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien. Ed. Humphrey Carpenter. 1981. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

The Lord of the Rings: 50ᵗʰ Anniversary Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

"On Fairy-Stories." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 109-61.

"On Translating *Beowulf*." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 49-71.

The Return of the Shadow: The History of The Lord of the Rings Part One. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. The History of Middle-earth 6. 1988. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

Sauron Defeated: The End of the Third Age (The History of The Lord of the Rings Part IV). Ed. Christopher Tolkien. The History of Middle-earth 9. 1992. London: HarperCollins, 1993.

"A Secret Vice." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. 198-223.

The Silmarillion. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

PRIMARY WORKS OF FOLKLORE, LEGEND, AND MYTH

Beowulf: An Edition. Ed. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell,

    1998.

Poems of the Elder Edda. Trans. Patricia Terry. 1969. Rev. ed. Middle Ages Series.

    Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990.

The Saga Library. Trans. and pref. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon. Vol. 1.

    London: Bernard Quaritch, 1891.

The Story of the Volsungs. Trans. William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon. London:

    Walter Scott, 1888.

Sturluson, Snorri. *The Prose Edda*. Trans. Jesse L. Byock. London: Penguin, 2005.

OTHER WORKS

Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: Norton, 1971.

Amison, Anne. "An Unexpected Guest." *Mythlore* 25.1/2 (2006). 127-36.

Beer, J. B. *Coleridge the Visionary*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1959

Birzer, Bradley J. *J. R. R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-earth*. Fwd. Joseph Pearce. Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2002.

Boenig, Robert. "Lewis and Morris." *VII* 21 (2004): 60-81.

Boos, Florence. "Morris's German Romances As Socialist History." *Victorian Studies* 27.3 (1984): 321-42.

Boswell, George W. "Tolkien's Riddles in *The Lord of the Rings.*" *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 35.2 (1969): 44-49.

Bramlett, Perry C. *I Am in Fact a Hobbit: An Introduction to the Life and Work of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 2003.

Bratman, David. "The Literary Value of *The History of Middle-earth*." *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on* The History of Middle-earth. Ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 86. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 69-91.

Buchan, David. "Ballads of Otherworld Beings." *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*. Ed. Peter Narváez. New York: Garland, 1991. Lexington, KY: UP of KY, 1997.

Burns, Marjorie. "Echoes of William Morris's Icelandic Journals in J. R. R. Tolkien."

>   *Studies in Medievalism* 3 (1991): 367-73.

—. *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. Toronto: U of

>   Toronto P, 2005.

Bustin, Dillon. "'The Morrow's Uprising': William Morris and the English Folk

>   Revival." *Folklore Forum* 15.1 (1982): 17-38.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works*. 34 vols. London: Chapman and

>   Hall, 1869-72.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams,*

>   *and their Friends*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978.

—. *J. R. R Tolkien: A Biography*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977.

Carter, Lin. Introd. to *The Wood beyond the World*. New York: Ballantine, 1969.

—. *A Look behind 'The Lord of the Rings*.' New York: Ballantine, 1969.

Chance, Jane. *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky,

>   2001.

Chapman, Raymond. "Carlyle, Thomas." *The Oxford Companion to the English*

>   *Language*. Ed. Tom McArthur. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. 195-96.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My*

>   *Literary Life and Opinions*. 1817. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. *The*

>   *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Vol. 7 pt. 2. Bollingen Series 75.

>   Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1983.

Dawson, Christopher. *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1929.

de Camp, L. Sprague. *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1976.

Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. 1854. Vol. 18. *Complete Works*. Centennial Ed. Geneva: Edito-Service, n.d.

Dorson, Richard M. *The British Folklorists: A History*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968.

Eaton, Anne T. "The Classic Tales of Childhood: A Journey through the Timeless Lands of the Great Storytellers." *New York Times* 10 Nov. 1940: 101+.

—. "New Books [Legend and Fairy Tales]." Rev. of *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien. *The Horn Book* 14 (1938): 94-96.

—. *Reading with Children*. 1940. New York: Viking, 1952.

Engels, Frederick. *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. Ed. C. P. Dutt. New York: International Publishers, 1941.

Evans, Jonathan D. "The Dragon-Lore of Middle-earth: Tolkien and Old English and Old Norse Tradition." *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*. Ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 89. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 21-38. Rpt. of "Medieval Dragon-lore in Middle Earth." *JFA* 9.3 (1998): 27-58.

Evans, Robley. *J. R. R. Tolkien*. Writers for the Seventies. New York: Crowell, 1972.

Faulkner, Peter, ed. *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1973.

Flieger, Verlyn. *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*. Kent, OH:

    Kent State UP, 2005.

Frazer, J[ames] G[eorge]. *Selected Letters of Sir J. G. Frazer*. Ed. Robert Ackerman.

    Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957.

—. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, MA:

    Harvard UP, 1976.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford UP, 1975.

Garth, John. *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle Earth*. London:

    HarperCollins, 2003.

—. "Tolkien, Exeter College and the Great War." *John Garth–Writer*. 2006. 12 Aug.

    2007 <http://www.johngarth.co.uk/index.php>.

Grennan, Margaret R. *William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary*. Morningside

    Heights, NY: Kings Crown P, 1945.

Gribble, Barbara Yvonne. "To Grow to Be a Hero: The Influences of Thomas Carlyle

    upon the Late Prose Romances of William Morris." Diss. U of Tennessee,

    Knoxville, 1981.

Hammond, Wayne G. and Douglas A. Anderson. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Descriptive*

    Bibliography. Winchester Bibliographies of 20th Century Writers. Winchester,

    UK: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1993.

Hammond, Wayne G. and Christina Scull. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Artist & Illustrator*. 1995.

    Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

—. *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*. 2 vols. London: HarperCollins, 2006.

—. The Lord of the Rings: *A Reader's Companion*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Herford, C. H. *Norse Myth in English Poetry.* N.p.: Folcroft, 1970.

Himes, Jonathan. "World's End Imagery: How William Morris and C. S. Lewis Imagined the Medieval North." *Extrapolation* 44 (2003): 304-10.

Hungerford, Edward B. *Shores of Darkness*. 1941. Cleveland, OH: Meridian-World, 1963.

Jones, Leslie Ellen. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood P, 2003.

Kelly, John. *The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of All Time*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Kilby, Clyde S. *Tolkien and The Silmarillion*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1976.

Kinna, Ruth. "William Morris: Art, Work, and Leisure." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.3 (2000): 493-512.

Kirchhoff, Frederick. *William Morris*. Twayne's English Authors Ser. 262. Boston: Twayne, 1979.

Lang, Andrew. *Adventures among Books*. London: Longmans, 1905.

—. *The Red Fairy Book*. London: Longmans, 1891.

Lewis, Alex, and Elizabeth Currie. *The Forsaken Realm of Tolkien: Tolkien and the Medieval Tradition*. N.p.: Medea, 2005.

Lewis, C. S. *All My Road before Me: The Diary of C. S. Lewis, 1922-1927*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Fwd. Owen Barfield. San Diego: Harcourt, 1991.

—. *Collected Letters*. Ed. Walter Hooper. 3 vols. London, HarperCollins, 2004.

—. "The Dethronement of Power." Rev. of *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* by J. R. R. Tolkien. *Time and Tide* 22 Oct. 1955: 1373-74.

—. "Equality." *C. S. Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*. Ed. Lesley Walmsley. London: HarperCollins, 2000. 666-68.

—. "Four-Letter Words." *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1969. 169-74.

—. "The Gods Return to Earth." Rev. of *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien. *Time and Tide* 14 Aug. 1954: 1082-83.

—. "William Morris." *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1969. 219-31.

Lewis, Warren Hamilton. *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis*. Eds. Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1982.

MacCarthy, Fiona. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Knopf, 1995.

MacDonald, George. "The Fantastic Imagination." *A Dish of Orts: Chiefly Papers on the Imagination, and on Shakspere*. London: Sampson, 1895. 313-22.

Mackail, J. W. *The Life of William Morris*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, 1899.

Mathews, Richard. *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*. Studies in Literary Themes and Genres 16. New York: Twayne, 1997.

—. *Lightning from a Clear Sky: Tolkien, The Trilogy, and The Silmarillion*. The Milford Ser.: Popular Writers of Today 15. San Bernardino, CA: Borgo, 1978.

—. "William Morris's *Roots*: History into Metaphor*." Cahiers victoriens et edouardiens* 16 (1982): 69-76.

Mieder, Wolfgang. *Proverbs: A Handbook*. Greenwood Folklore Handbooks. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004.

Moore, Anne Carroll. "The Three Owls' Notebook." Rev. of *The* Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien. *The Horn Book* 14 (1938): 91-92.

Morus, Iwan Rhys. "'Uprooting the Golden Bough': J. R. R. Tolkien's Response to Nineteenth Century Folklore and Comparative Mythology." *Mallorn* 27 (1990) 5-9.

Nelson, Charles W. "The Sins of Middle-earth: Tolkien's Use of Medieval Allegory."*J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*. Ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 89. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 83-94.

Noad, Charles E. "On the Construction of 'The Silmarillion.'" *Tolkien's* Legendarium: *Essays on* The History of Middle-earth. Ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 86. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 31-68.

Oberg, Charlotte H. *A Pagan Prophet: William Morris*. Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 1978.

"The Oxford Solar Myth." *Comparative Mythology*. By Max Müller. Ed. A. Smythe Palmer. London: Routledge, 1909. New York: Arno, 1977. xxxi-xlvii.

Perry, Michael W. Foreword and Introduction. *The House of the Wolfings: A Book that Inspired J. R. R. Tolkien*. By William Morris. Seattle: Inkling, 2003. 7-14.

—. Foreword and Introduction. *The Roots of the Mountains: A Book that Inspired J. R. R. Tolkien*. By William Morris. Seattle: Inkling, 2003. 7-14.

—. Foreword and Introductions. *On the Lines of Morris' Romances: Two Books that Inspired J. R. R. Tolkien*, The Wood beyond the World *and* The Well at the World's End. By William Morris. Seattle, Inkling, 2003. 9-11.

Petty, Anne C. *One Ring to Bind Them All: Tolkien's Mythology*. 1979. New introd. and updated bibliog. Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2002.

—. *Tolkien in The Land of Heroes: Discovering the Human Spirit*. New York: Cold Springs P, 2003.

Propp, V[ladímir]. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Trans. Laurence Scott. Introd. Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson. 1958. Rev., ed., and pref. Louis A Wagner. New introd. Alan American Folklore Society Bibliog. and Spec. Ser. 9/ Indiana Univ. Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics 10. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1968.

Purtill, Richard. *Lord of the Elves and Eldils: Fantasy and Philosophy in C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974.

Rateliff, John D. "*The Lost Road*, *The Dark Tower*, and *The Notion Club Papers*: Tolkien and Lewis's Time Travel Triad." *Tolkien's* Legendarium: *Essays on* The History of Middle-earth. Ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy 86. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 199-218.

Reilly, R. J. "Tolkien and the Fairy Story." *Thought* 38 (1963): 89-105. Rpt. in

    Understanding The Lord of the Rings: *The Best of Tolkien Criticism*. Ed. Rose

    A. Zimbardo and Neil D. Isaacs. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. 93-105.

Reis, Richard H. *George MacDonald*. New York: Twayne, 1972.

Rosebury, Brian. *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon*. Houndmills, Basingstoke,

    Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Ryan, J. S. "Folktale, Fairy Tale, and the Creation of a Story." *Understanding* The Lord

    of the Rings: *The Best of Tolkien Criticism*. Ed. Rose A. Zimbardo and Neil D.

    Isaacs. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. 106-21.

Scheps, Walter. "The Fairy-tale Morality of *The Lord of the Rings*." *A Tolkien*

    Compass. Ed. Jared Lobdell. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1975. 43-56.

Schlau, Stacey. "Modern Romance: A Study of Techniques and Themes." Diss. City U

    of New York, 1975.

Scoville, Chester N. "Pastoralia and Perfectability in William Morris and J. R. R.

    Tolkien." *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*. Ed. Jane Chance and Alfred K.

    Siewers. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 93-103.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defence of Poetry*. *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe*

    Shelley. Ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck. Vol. 7. London: Julian-Ernest

    Benn, 1930. 105-40.

Shippey, T. A. (Tom). "Goths and Huns: The Rediscovery of the Northern Cultures in

    the Nineteenth Century." *The Medieval Legacy: A Symposium* (1982): 51-69.

—. Introduction. *The Wood Beyond the World.* New York: Oxford UP, 1980. v-xix.

—. *The Road to Middle-earth: How J. R. R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology*. Rev. and expanded ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

—. "Tolkien and the Appeal of the Pagan: *Edda* and *Kalevala*." *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth: A Reader*. Ed. Jane Chance. Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 2004. 145-61.

Silver, Carole. *The Romance of William Morris*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1982.

Simpson, Jacqueline and Steve Roud, eds. A Dictionary of English Folklore. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge. *Catalogue of a Portion of the Valuable Collection of Manuscripts, Early Printed Books, &c. of the Late William Morris, of Kelmscott House, Hammersmith*. Auction Catalogue. London: Dryden, 5 Dec. 1898.

Stanton, Michael N. "'Advice Is a Dangerous Gift': (Pseudo) Proverbs in *The Lord of the Rings*." Proverbium 13 (1996) 331-46.

Thompson, E. P. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. 1955. New York: Pantheon, 1977.

Thorpe, Benjamin. *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica: A Selection, in Prose and Verse, from Anglo-Saxon Authors of Various Ages; with a Glossary*. New Edition. London: Smith, Elder, 1846.

Tilling, P. M. "William Morris's Translation of *Beowulf*: Studies in His Vocabulary." *Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching* 8 (August 1981): 163-75.

Tinker, Chauncey B. *The Translations of Beowulf: A Critical Bibliography*. Yale

Studies in English 16. New York: Henry Holt, 1903.

Vallance, Aymer. *William Morris: His Art, His Writings, and His Public Life: A*

Record. London: Bell, 1897.

Wawn, Andrew. *The Vikings and the Victorians*: *Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-*

Century Britain. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000.

Weber, Max. "Science As a Vocation." *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans.,

ed., and introd. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. 1948. The International

Library of Sociology. London: Routledge, 2002.

West, Richard C. "Túrin's *Ofermod*: An Old English Theme in the Development of the

Story of Túrin." *Tolkien's* Legendarium: *Essays on* The History of Middle-earth.

Ed. Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter. Contributions to the Study of Science

Fiction and Fantasy 86. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000. 233-45.

White, Michael. *The Life and Work of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Critical Lives ser. Indianapolis,

IN: Alpha-Pearson, 2002.

Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying." *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*. Ed. Robert

Ross. Vol. 8. 1908. London: Routledge, 1993.

Wilson, William A. "Victorian Philology and the Anxiety of Language in Tennyson's

In Memorium." *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 30.1 (1988): 28-48.

Zipes, Jack. *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk & Fairy Tales*. Rev.

ed. Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 2002.

—. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. New York: Wildman, 1983.

—, ed. *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and the Elves*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

VITA

Kelvin Lee Massey was born in Newport, Tennessee on October 21, 1957. He was raised in Newport and graduated from Cocke County High School in 1975. He received an A.S. in General Studies from Walters State Community College in 1987. From there, he went to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, receiving a B.A. in English in 1993, an M.A. in English in 1998, and a Ph.D. in English in 2007.