

Spring 2022

The value hierarchies of J.R.R. Tolkien and his legacy: a reimagining of fantasy fiction and the propagation of colonial racism

Alexander Richburg

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.ewu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

THE VALUE HIERARCHIES OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND HIS LEGACY: A REIMAGINING
OF FANTASY FICTION AND THE PROPAGATION OF COLONIAL RACISM

A Thesis

Presented To

Eastern Washington University

Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

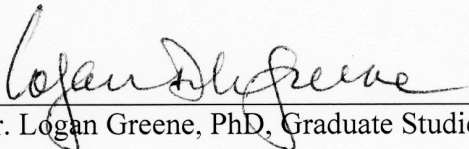
Master of Arts in English with an Emphasis in Literature and Writing

By

Alexander Richburg

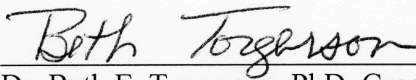
Spring 2022

THESIS OF ALEXANDER RICHBURG APPROVED BY



Dr. Logan Greene, PhD, Graduate Studies Committee

DATE May 31, 2022



Dr. Beth E. Torgerson, PhD, Graduate Studies Committee

DATE 5/31/2022

ABSTRACT

THE VALUE HIERARCHIES OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND HIS LEGACY: A REIMAGINING
OF FANTASY FICTION AND THE PROPAGATION OF COLONIAL RACISM

by

Alexander Richburg

Spring 2022

J.R.R. Tolkien's impact on modern fantasy fiction is remarkable. However, while some of the changes to the genre ushered in by Tolkien's work are positive, other aspects of his legacy are more problematic. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion* are based on his colonial worldview. They are biographical in that Tolkien draws heavily from his life experience to tell his stories. The biographical influence manifests in a hierarchical representation of everything from trees and their ancestry to the elves, humans, dwarves, hobbits, and orcs that populate his fiction. The hierarchies are value structures and the nearer to the top of the value structure, the more agency is attributed to the character. The hierarchy of people is particularly problematic because it is built on nineteenth and early twentieth century ideologies of race inequality. The popularity of Tolkien's fantasy fiction and its impact on the genre have allowed these ideologies to become embedded in fantasy fiction and propagate colonial racist ideas in the fantasy fiction genre.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the graduate studies committee. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Logan Greene for her willingness to be my thesis advisor, and for her patience, guidance, and encouragement throughout this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Beth Torgerson for her insight and guidance during the courses I was privileged to take with her and throughout my time studying at Eastern Washington University. Finally, I am grateful to my family for supporting my work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	Introduction	1
II	Tolkien's Life and Its Impact on His Fiction	14
III	The Power of Tolkien's Trees and Representations of Nature	33
IV	Tolkien's Hierarchies of Race	50
V	Tolkien's Impact on Fantasy Fiction	71
	Works Cited	87
	Vita	91

I. Introduction

The publication of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings (LOTR)* forever changed fantasy fiction. J.R.R. Tolkien set did not intend to revise the fantasy fiction model, he did not intend to redefine the way epic fantasy fiction stories are told, and it is unlikely that he intended to perpetuate colonial racist ideologies as foundational ideas in fantasy fiction. Yet, that is what happened. Tolkien was born into a colonial system built on late Victorian values and he created an extremely immersive fantasy world that was heavily influenced by his own life experiences. He built his world on ideas of hierarchy based on what he valued, and these value structures are embedded in everything from his depictions of nature to his depictions of race. The popularity of his work was instrumental in the explosion of fantasy fiction's popularity in the mid-twentieth century and became a foundational document for both the ways fantasy fiction stories are told and for the ways the people that populate fantasy fiction are categorized and defined by race.

The 1937 publication of *The Hobbit* was immediately received positively and created the impetus for *The Lord of The Rings*, which was published twenty years later. Tolkien did not anticipate his work would be so well received or that it would become the largest project of his lifetime. Both texts became the audience-facing creative work that rested on a much deeper, more expansive, and more complex foundation of work not published during Tolkien's lifetime. He did, however, give the readers of *The Lord of the Rings* hints that the story rested on deeper, older folklore and legends. For example, the Balrog that Gandalf battles in Moria is referred to as a "a balrog of Morgoth," but the extent of Morgoth's role and power is only revealed in vague references to legends that predate Sauron, the archvillain of the story (Tolkien, *LOTR* 355). While there is some explanation of Sauron's origin, many of the details remain shrouded in mystery, but it is enough to give the reader the impression they are stepping into a fully realized,

complete fantasy setting. It serves as an on-ramp for immersion. The reader is invited into a completely realized world full of languages, legends, heroes, and landscapes, in a way that had never been done before. This was and remains its power.

An analysis of Tolkien's work is challenging because it is difficult to categorize. Tolkien's output is vast, and "by sheer virtue of its material size, presents a near-impossible challenge for any type of critical or revisionist imagining. . . . It occupies several different literary modes—epic, romance, pastoral, and fantasy—without firmly attaching itself to any of them" (Battis 908-09). It is, however, possible to examine Tolkien's work critically when looking at it in the context of his lived experience. Tolkien's work was deeply biographical, and he believed his creative work was an act of faith. Motivated by this belief, he created a fantasy world unrivaled in its depth and scale. Tolkien's writing is also deeply imbued with his worldview. Tolkien fought in World War I, and his sons fought in World War II. He witnessed the increased impact of industrialization and lamented the destruction of the landscape and forests in the name of progress. His work, in many ways, is a rebuttal—an act of resistance—to these forces. He was also an educated man and influenced by the commonly held beliefs and science of the time; therefore, his work perpetuates racist and elitist late Victorian and colonial ideologies that are embedded in his work. The people of Tolkien's world—the elves, dwarves, hobbits, orcs, and men—are defined by monolithic, race-based depictions informed by colonial racial hierarchies. The popularity of Tolkien's writing created a paradigm of race-based fantasy entertainment. Its categorization as fantasy fiction has long relegated it to the margins of literature unworthy of literary criticism, giving nineteenth-century ideologies enough time to form the basis for twenty-first-century fantasy entertainment.

Tolkien's fantasy novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, are consistently ranked near the top of the best-selling books of all time. Peter Jackson's films based on Tolkien's novels have, in the twenty years since the release of the first in the series, grossed nearly six billion dollars.¹ The 2019 film *Tolkien*, directed by Dome Karukoski, about Tolkien's formative years grossed a comparatively insignificant nine million dollars, but the making of the film forty-six years after the author's death points to the popularity and the endurance of Tolkien's work. Tolkien began what would become his life's work while hospitalized with trench fever after his combat tour at the Somme. A scholar of Norse mythology, he lamented England's lack of its own mythology, Arthurian tales of chivalry notwithstanding, and wanted to create one himself. The work he began while hospitalized would become *The Silmarillion*, which would not be published until after his death. *The Silmarillion* contained the creation stories and legends of Tolkien's mythology; it is a prequel to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. While Tolkien set out to create a mythology for England, what he accomplished had a much larger and more far-reaching impact. He created a fantasy world with full-fledged histories, origin stories of its people and creatures, a pantheon of gods, and volumes of legendary tales to support them. The way Tolkien grounded his fantasy in real history and mythology did not exist before and became the template for modern fantasy fiction. His work has been copied, imitated, and has inspired entire sub-genres of fantasy writing. His creations, the elves, hobbits, and orcs have become defining representations central to fantasy themes across many forms of fantasy entertainment, spanning novels, table-top games, and on-line video games with millions of subscribers.

Tolkien's impact is significant for more than its commercial success and the cult status his work enjoys. His life experiences permeate his work, but this is not in itself unusual for

¹ *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*, 2001; *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, 2002; *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, 2003.

fiction authors. What is unusual is the breadth and depth, the incredible detail, and the sheer volume of work he produced to codify and define the world in which his stories take place. His ideology, his worldview, his faith, and his values are the marrow in the bones of his texts. The combination of depth, rigor, and epic storytelling in Tolkien's work has much to do with its longevity and reach. Tolkien's world is built on a strong sense of nostalgia and longing for simpler, more pastoral times; it is infused with the formative experiences of his youth, his time at Oxford as a student, and his experiences as a signals officer in World War I, and, although not overt, is rooted deeply in his faith and in late Victorian values.

Before I proceed, it is important to clarify some of the way I use "postcolonial" and "pastoral" in my argument. The terms colonialism and postcolonialism, for example, have no agreed-upon definition. Routledge defines colonialism as a form of imperialism, while Ania Loomba argues that colonialism and imperialism are distinctly different stages of conquest (*Routledge* 20). She argues that colonialism should be broken into stages defined by time period while Imperialism is a matter of scale. An example of early colonialism is the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and modern colonialism is exemplified by the expansion of Western European powers in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The intent of conquest and the integration of conquered and conqueror are central to Loomba's argument. Early colonialism is "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods (20). Modern colonialism, on the other hand, "did more than extract tribute, goods, and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries" (21). The main difference is modern colonialism's capitalist exploitation that created vastly different outcomes than the earlier conquest model. Loomba argues imperialism is

“the highest stage of colonialism” and operates on a global scale. (28). For my purposes, I will adapt Loomba’s definition of modern colonialism this way: Colonialism is the expansion, colonization, conquest, exploitation, governance, and cultural subjugation of peoples as practiced from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries by Western European nations.

The complexity of defining colonialism and imperialism can also complicate our understanding of postcolonialism. While the nineteenth and twentieth century colonies belonging to Western European nations are in large part defunct, the impact of imperialist powers remains. Discussions of postcolonial criticism, writing, and research often revolve around the centrality of the colonial culture and the decentering of the indigenous culture or the effort of the colonized to reclaim the center and to decolonize. For the purposes of my argument, I will use the definition of postcolonial presented by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Davies, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back*: Postcolonial refers to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). Given this broad perspective on postcolonialism, the critical view I present identifies the colonial ideology of Tolkien’s worldview and the manifestations of that worldview in his writing. The postcolonial perspective is necessary to identify the impact of colonial ideologies on Tolkien and his work.

Tolkien’s relationship with nature plays a large role in how he perceived the world and how he reacted to industrialization and modernity. These all factor into his writing and his mythology. Nostalgia and a longing for the pastoral, idealized English countryside of his childhood manifest heavily in Tolkien’s writing and world building. The pastoral is often associated with bucolic nature scenes, childhood memories, and peaceful landscapes unspoiled by humans. However, Nancy Lindheim argues that the pastoral also “explores hospitality, community, friendship, and love” (12). Paul Alpers presents a different view on the pastoral. He

argues that the pastoral centers on the lives of shepherds—the shepherd as custodian of the land and as mediating figure between man and nature (Alpers 26-31). For my purposes, the pastoral is all these things. The pastoral includes the unspoiled natural world and the people who engage with it; it captures the complex relationship humans have with the natural world. This complex relationship includes hospitality, community, friendship, love, and the conflicts associated with these themes.

The primary sources for my research are the texts Tolkien published while living and the large amount of his work published posthumously. Tolkien was a prolific writer, having generated enough material for many thousands of pages of supporting material for his mythology. However, much of his work was not published during his lifetime because he rewrote and revised, corrected, and ensured the exactitude of every historical detail, down to the linguistic origin of place names and their accuracy with the fictional languages he created (Mendlesohn and James 100). *The Hobbit*, published in 1937, was a children's book that told the story of the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, a wizard, and thirteen dwarves on an adventure to reclaim an ancient dwarf kingdom from the dragon Smaug. Bilbo, Thorin Oakenshield and his company of dwarves, and Gandalf the wizard experienced adventures and warfare before succeeding in their quest. Due to the book's popularity, publishers asked for a sequel and more material featuring hobbits, and this effort led to the nearly 1000-page text that would become *The Lord of the Rings*, published nearly twenty years later. When it was published, it was split into three volumes: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* (both published in 1954), and *The Return of the King* (published in 1955). *The Lord of the Rings* deviated from *The Hobbit*; it was not written for children. Instead, it featured themes and language that were more adult. This resulted from Tolkien's merging of the *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* with his primary creative

work, *The Silmarillion*. He began working on *The Silmarillion* while recovering from trench fever after serving at the Somme during World War I. *The Silmarillion* served as the foundational mythology for the stories of Middle-earth, but it would not be published until after Tolkien's death. The mythology is a complete account of the creation myth of the world, the creation of the divine Valar, the immortal elves, humans, and the dwarves. It describes the fall from grace of one of the Valar, Melkor, who becomes the primary antagonist during Middle Earth's First and Second Ages and who is the predecessor to Sauron, a servant of Morgoth, who would become the menace of the Third Age. Sauron is the primary adversary pitted against the heroes in *The Lord of the Rings*. It is important to point out that Melkor is also referred to as Morgoth in Tolkien's work. Fëanor begins to name him Morgoth during the War of Wrath, before the First Age. Melkor/Morgoth is a central figure, and I will refer to him as he is referred to in the relevant source text, as appropriate. Tolkien also published several smaller works, including *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962), a collection of poems and stories about Tom Bombadil, a nature spirit that Frodo and the hobbits encounter in *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Christopher, Tolkien's youngest son, published *The Silmarillion* in 1977, four years after the elder Tolkien died in 1973. *The Silmarillion's* publication was the first of a flood of posthumous publications that revealed true scope of Tolkien's Middle-earth. *The Silmarillion* was followed by *Unfinished Tales*, and by the twelve-volumes of *The History of Middle Earth*. The twelve-volume *History* was subsequently collected in a large three-volume set, each volume roughly 2000 pages in mass, and published in 2020. Tolkien's academic writing also saw a renaissance after his death. His translations of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as lectures on mythology, fantasy fiction, and other work, have been published posthumously. One notable source through which to understand Tolkien's intentions,

motivations and worldview is his letters. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, collected and edited by Humphrey Carpenter (Tolkien's biographer) and Christopher Tolkien, collects decades of Tolkien's correspondence.

To better understand Tolkien, I use secondary sources for my research that span biography and literary criticism. Humphrey Carpenter's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* was the first biography of Tolkien, published in 1977, was produced with Tolkien's consent. In fact, Carpenter met with Tolkien on several occasions while writing the biography. He provides a comprehensive look into Tolkien's life from early childhood until his death, and after, in cooperation with Christopher Tolkien. The biography provides significant insight into what Tolkien valued most and where those influences originated, including detailed accounts of Tolkien's process and motivations. In *A Hobbit, a Wardrobe and a Great War*, Joseph Loconte provides a more focused look at the relationship between Tolkien and C.S. Lewis and their experiences at war, at Oxford, and as members of the Inklings, all of which were very influential on Tolkien's life.

Because the pastoral plays an important role in Tolkien's work. I refer to several texts to define and clarify the pastoral and how it relates to Tolkien. Nancy Lindheim's *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition* examines Virgil's eclogues as the source of pastoral influence and contrasts political concerns as motivations and themes in the pastoral and the work it produces. This inclusion of political motivations contrasts with the idea that the pastoral represents, or operates only within, the relationship of man to nature and/or a return to childhood. Paul Alpers also engages with the origin and purpose of the pastoral theme in *What is Pastoral*. He, however, argues that a central component of the pastoral is the idea of the shepherd as custodian of the land and mediating figure between man and nature. Alpers argues that Virgil's Eclogues provide

a “representative anecdote” of the pastoral and that it “means that pastoral works are representations of shepherds ... who are felt to be representative of some or all men and/or women” (26). This representation is central to the pastoral which centers on “the problem of man’s relation to nature” (Alpers 31).

Race and ideology are central to Tolkien’s worldview. To describe the impact of Tolkien’s colonialist worldview on his work, I draw on several authors’ work about both colonialism and postcolonialism. Postcolonialism offers a way of looking back and understanding colonialism’s impact. Ania Loomba’s *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* is a comprehensive text about colonialism, imperialism, postcolonialism, and the discourse that surrounds these topics. Loomba engages with the historical events, the cultural and economic forces, and the ideologies of colonization from a pre-capitalist through present-day perspective. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Davies, and Helen Tiffin tackle the experience and fallout of colonialization in *The Empire Writes Back*. Their text provides thoughtful analysis of what it is to be colonized, how colonizer culture merges, twists, and modifies the culture of the colonized and whether decolonization is possible. Their work complements Loomba’s work to help understand how a postcolonial lens might work in critical analysis of work generated by colonizers and the colonized as well as how the centrality of the colonizer’s culture impact worldview and identity.

Several authors offer a view of colonialism and the West that provides an essential non-western perspective. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* takes a critical look at the western view of the Arab and how the perception and categorization of the near east, the modern Middle East, is shaped, formed and the way in which it creates an “other” that serves as a reflection against which western perceived superiority is measured and reinforced. Apollo Amoko’s “Race and

Postcoloniality” engages with the connections between race and postcoloniality before engaging with the implications of those connections and challenging the foundation of English literature; he decenters English literature and the belief that western culture is the apex of human civilization (Amoko 136). Dimitra Fimi offers a more focused look at Tolkien’s cultural influences and their manifestation in his work. Fimi’s *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History* explores Tolkien’s life and the evolution and impact of folkloric tales on Tolkien both as a reader and author, his linguistic aesthetic and the languages that influenced the languages he created, and the influences of his time and culture and how they manifested in Tolkien’s writing. She considers the issue of race and racial anthropology, Naziism, the mixing of races and the creation and depiction of the evil races and peoples in Tolkien’s work. From the cultural perspective, Fimi approaches Tolkien’s depictions of Gondor and other fantastic places as reflections of Tolkien’s reaction to the industrial revolution and how it manifested in his work.

The fantasy genre grew rapidly in the past fifty years, and several texts provide insight on the growth, development, and influences of fantasy fiction. In *A Short History of Fantasy*, Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James provide a history of the fantasy genre, discussing writings as early as the circa 1300 BCE *Epic of Gilgamesh*, to fantasy fiction and its popularity in the early twenty-first century. Mendlesohn and James discuss the transformation of fantasy fiction during the twentieth century in detail, devoting an entire chapter to the impact of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis and how, from the 1950s forward, they influenced both the development and the form of fantasy fiction. In *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, a variety of scholars offer other voices that discuss a myriad of aspects of fantasy literature. Topics range from the psychology of fantasy, its evolution, genres and subgenres, and a comprehensive discussion of critical approaches to fantasy. Tolkien is heavily discussed and described as the source of the

“classic fantasy form” (Butler 229). In *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Farah Mendlesohn aims to classify fantasy writing—not for the purpose of creating rules that must be followed, but to identify the “skeletons and exoskeletons” of the genre (front matter).

My thesis scaffolds ideas organized into chapters. I examine Tolkien’s life and influences, connect those influences with his fiction, and I analyze the manifestation of his world view and value hierarchies in depictions of monsters, nature, and people. Then, I discuss the impact of Tolkien’s work on fantasy fiction and popular culture. Chapter Two describes Tolkien’s life from childhood until his death and provide evidence how the experiences of his life, his values, and his desires were deeply influential in his writing. In many ways, Tolkien’s mythology presents an ideal world populated and reflective of Tolkien’s values and deeply resonant of Tolkien’s lived experience. The experiences and places from his childhood, student life at Oxford, the brutality and trauma of fighting at the Somme during The Great War, the rampant modernization and industrialization of the early twentieth century, and the destruction of the landscape, forests, and green places of his youth were all central influences in his work. His relationships with his friends and family were also very influential. These reveal much about the author and how he chose to present the characters in his stories. Friendships, particularly male friendships, and boys’ clubs centered on discussion, debate, writing, and the camaraderie formed therein, are reflected heavily in his writing and the relationships the characters make and experience.

Chapter Three explores Tolkien’s rebellion against modernism, and his love of nature. Tolkien creates a vision of primordial nature, free of man’s impact in his mythology, and brings to life his own pastoral mediators in the form of Treebeard, the ent, and Tom Bombadil, the nature spirit. Treebeard is of particular significance, as are all trees in Tolkien’s work because of

their centrality. The ancient trees of the Valar, the ents, and Old Man Willow, are all powerful manifestations of Tolkien's desire for a world not impacted by modernity and industrialization. Tolkien's hierarchical representation of trees reflects his construction of the bloodlines of the people in his world and echo Victorian and colonial ideas about lineage, hierarchy, and class—a pattern that is present of all of Tolkien's constructions.

Chapter Four is about the people of Middle Earth, both good and evil, and the way Tolkien represents them. Tolkien was born in the late Victorian era as a child of colonial England. His, and the popular understanding, of race is crucial to understanding how coloniality and the ideas about race and genetics of the time influenced the Tolkien's work. The representation the people in his world follow a similar pattern to his organization of natural things. They are classified and hierarchically organized by race and bloodline. Where the forces of good are depicted as tall, fair, heroic, white people, the forces of evil (both human and orc) are described in ways that indicate inferiority, savagery, and brutality that is derived from colonial ideologies about racial superiority common in the West at the time.

Chapter Five, the conclusion of my thesis, describes the colossal impact Tolkien had on fantasy fiction. *The Hobbit* opened doors for *The Lord of the Rings* and the new availability of fantasy fiction in paperback allowed the popularity to spread rapidly. *The Lord of the Rings* completely redefined the Quest form of fantasy fiction. Tolkien's work also became the template for the rhythm of fantasy texts published as trilogies and how the events the characters experienced would flow and culminate. The races, and the importance of racial distinction in Tolkien's work, also became the model for the fantasy genre. Concepts such as hierarchical class structures, languages defined by race, behaviors attributed to races depicted as monolithic,

homogenous carbon copies, continue to perpetuate colonial and Victorian beliefs in fantasy novels, video games, films, and more.

The impact of Tolkien's work, eighty-five years after the publication of *The Hobbit* remains profound. The rapid expansion of fantasy fiction and the appetite for quest fantasy stories have created conditions for Tolkien's ideas to reach an even larger audience. Tolkien's popularity became a movement that has created countless imitations that riff off his ideas. His work became the template for quest fantasy fiction, and, like many templates, it has been accepted and copied without challenge for many years, allowing harmful ideas to embed themselves in the genre.

II. Tolkien's Life and Its Impact on His Fiction

Tolkien was born into a colonial system with late Victorian values and a society with a prevalent class structure. These influences, combined with specific experiences during his life, are clear in his fiction and they form the basis for the way he assigns hierarchical value to everything from monsters to heroes in his fiction. His early life and its manifestation in the pastoral, adolescence and college years in which he built friendships and camaraderie, experiences in war, professional life as an Oxford professor and the influence of his philological and literary studies all manifest tangibly in his work. Tolkien created a great many fantasy creatures, gods, men, lineages, languages, entire epochs of history and infused them with his experiences and beliefs. However, to Tolkien, his work was more than simply drawing from experience to create believable fiction; it was both a coping mechanism for the traumas of his life and an act of faith to support what he called his act of “sub-creation” (quoted in Carpenter 114). This chapter attempts to weave together the biographical thread of Tolkien's life with his writing to reveal how his lived experience and value system manifests in his writing.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on January 3rd, 1892, to Mabel (Suffield) and Arthur Reuel Tolkien, in the Orange Free State—one of the Boer Republics—city of Blomfontein, South Africa. It was a rugged land Mabel described as “‘Owlin’ Wilderness” and a “horrid waste” where “wolves, wild dogs, and jackals roamed and menaced the flocks and where after dark a post-rider might be attacked by a marauding lion (quoted in Carpenter 19). The region was treeless, windswept, and rugged. Arthur Tolkien was a banker set on making his fortune in South Africa and determined to live there for the long term, despite Mabel's dislike of the area. The couple and their sons (a second son, Hilary, was born in 1894) lived comfortably and had native servants. However, during Mabel's first trip back to England with her sons, Arthur Tolkien died of illness—he had remained behind with the intent to follow later due to

business commitments—and the young boys and their mother remained in England. Details are scant about these early years, but the colonial environment and the impressions of landscape stand out. Blomfontein, with its treeless, windswept expanse and dangerous animals—marauding monkeys that chewed up baby clothes, venomous snakes in the shed, and venomous spiders—was the antithesis of England. Tolkien denied any significant impact of these recollections, but one encounter with a venomous spider is notable. After he began to walk, he “stumbled on a tarantula. It bit him, and he ran in terror across the garden until the nurse snatched him up and sucked out the poison” (quoted in Carpenter 21). Tolkien in his later years only claimed to recall “running in fear through long, dead grass, but the memory of the tarantula itself faded... [leaving him] with no especial dislike of spiders” (Carpenter 21). While Tolkien may not have felt any “especial dislike” for spiders, he did cast them as central villains in his work. It is interesting that at an age where he was barely walking, he can recall the flight from the spider after having been bitten. What is more interesting is that he casts spiders as vile, dark monsters and is thereby revealing a value judgement. Stephen T. Asma, in his text *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears*, claims, “Arachnophobia, or fear of spiders, seems to be a universal human dread, especially in children,” and this fear may connect to early human encounters with venomous spiders (3-4). However it manifested, Tolkien’s characterization of spiders differs greatly from other monsters in his texts. A comparison the depiction of spiders and dragons provides useful insight into Tolkien’s value hierarchy.

In both *The Hobbit* and in *The Lord of the Rings*, spiders serve as the antagonists that create confrontations that transform the protagonists. The transformations serve as a rite of passage. In each case, spiders serve as powerful adversaries and obstacles that must be overcome before the protagonist can grow and find new strength. By casting them this way, Tolkien creates

entities of great power. He, however, denies them the sense of awe and wonder he grants monsters he values more, like dragons, for example.

The first appearance of spiders as villains in Tolkien's published work occurs when, in *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins gets lost in Mirkwood at night and is separated from the group. He decides to wait for morning rather than making things worse by traipsing around in the dark when he is set upon by a "great spider, who had been busy tying him up while he dozed, came from behind him and came at him ... could only see its eyes but feel its hairy legs ... it was trying to poison him" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 143). Bilbo draws his sword and "[stabs] it in the eyes ... [kills] it with another stroke." (144). After slaying this first spider, Bilbo continues on and discovers that there are more of the giant spiders and that they have ensnared all the dwarves. With his ring, his sword, his wit and newfound confidence, Bilbo taunts and tricks the spiders before freeing his companions, killing many more spiders in the process. Later in the novel, Bilbo goes on to free the dwarves from the wood elves and, of course, sneaks into the dragon Smaug's lair under the mountain. He does show fear in many cases, but his newfound confidence remains for the rest of the story: "Somehow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder" (144). This is also the moment that Bilbo names his sword "Sting" in honor of his victory over the spider.

The Lord of the Rings reveals the second time a spider serves as a major obstacle to Tolkien's characters. Shelob is an ancient spider and figure in the mythology of Middle-earth, the last child of Ungoliant, the primordial spider that helped Melkor destroy the elven trees of Valinor. She is "an evil thing, in spider form" dating back to the earliest days of Middle-earth's

creation stories; “she was there before Sauron, and before the first stone of Bard-dûr; and she served none but herself, drinking the blood of Elves and Men, bloated and grown fat with endless brooding on her feasts, weaving webs of shadow; for all living things were her food, and her vomit darkness” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 720).

Gollum is responsible for Shelob’s encounter with Frodo and Sam, having led them to her tunnels promising a shortcut into Mordor that is unwatched by orcs. Shelob’s “gurgling, bubbling noise, and a long venomous hiss” are their first sign that something is amiss (719). Then “a creaking as of some great jointed thing that moved with slow purpose in the dark. A reek came before it” (720). Shelob advances and Frodo uses the Phial of Galadriel to ward off the evil thing, but it was no help.

... other potencies there are in Middle-earth, powers of night, and they are old and strong. And she that walked in the darkness had heard the Elves cry that cry far back in the deeps of time, and she had not heeded it, and it did not daunt her now... a great malice bent upon him, and a deadly regard considering him ... a flame kindled in some deep pit of evil thought. Monstrous and abominable eyes ... bestial and yet filled with hideous delight, gloating over their prey trapped beyond all hope of escape. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 720)

Shelob is much more developed than the spiders of Mirkwood. This shift is in large part due to Tolkien’s connection of the *Lord of the Rings* to his Mythology, which brought with it a change in audience and in depth. Shelob shares her venom, her desire to wrap her victims in webbing, and her evil, malicious nature with the spiders of Mirkwood. Her scale and her background, a child of Ungoliant—the last child of Ungoliant—connects her to the most ancient parts of Tolkien’s mythology.

The Silmarillion reveals the most powerful spider in Tolkien's mythology: Ungoliant. She was the first spider in the hierarchy of powerful, evil creatures and she aided Melkor in his destruction of the trees of Valinor, an act which precipitated his fall from grace as well as ended The Age of Trees, which preceded The First Age of Middle-earth. Tolkien wrote, "In a ravine she lived, and took the shape of a spider of monstrous form, weaving her black webs in a cleft of the mountains. There she sucked up all the light that she could find, and spun it forth again in dark nets of strangling gloom, until no light more could come to her abode; and she was famished" (73). Melkor approached Ungoliant and asked her to aid him in his attack on the Valar, his brethren, the divine creatures formed by the creator, Ilúvatar, who also created the Maiar, Elves, and Men. Together they attacked the Valar during a festival, aiming to destroy the sacred Trees of Valinor, the sources of light and bliss of Valinor. Tolkien describes the moment Melkor and Ungoliant attack:

Then the Unlight of Ungoliant rose up even to the roots of the trees, and Melkor sprang upon the mound; and with his black spear he smote each tree to its core, wounded them deep and their sap poured forth as it were their blood, and was spilled upon the ground. But Ungoliant sucked it up, and going then from Tree to Tree she set here black beak to their wounds, til they were drained; and the poison of Death that was in her went into their tissues and withered them, root, branch, and leaf; and they died. (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 76)

While the machinations of these events are designed by Melkor, Ungoliant's role is critical. She is the enabler and, of the two, the far more powerful actor. Melkor damages the trees with his spear, but it is the draining and poisoning of the trees that kills them in the end. After draining the trees of life, Ungoliant also drains the Wells of Varda and grows powerful. "Ungoliant

belched forth black vapours as she drank, and swelled to a shape so vast and so hideous that Melkor was afraid” (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 76). Her immense power allows her to claim all the promised treasure from Melkor and when he refuses to surrender the silmarils, she binds him and causes him great pain. He survives only because his balrogs rescue him. Ungoliant’s end is unclear.

As with the spiders in Mirkwood, and with Shelob, Ungoliant is pivotal to the transformation of the characters involved. In Ungoliant’s case, her actions are so powerful, so destructive, they become the catalyst for the rest of the mythology. The death of the trees ends their light. The only place any of the light of the Trees of Valinor remain are in the three jewels, the Silmarils, that Fëanor created, and the battle over possession of the Silmarils sets into motion all the future events through the Third Age, which ends after Sauron is defeated at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien may not have specifically remembered the spider that stung his foot when he was two, but spiders certainly play powerful, dark roles in his fiction. None of the other powerful, evil creatures that feature in the stories, Morgoth’s balrogs, or his dragons, for example, play as pivotal a role in the transformations of the world or the characters. Even Smaug lacks the power and lasting impact of the spiders. However, dragons occupy a far higher rank in Tolkien’s value structure because of his love for dragons in mythology and while he depicts them as evil and villainous, he also presents them with an accompanying sense of awe.

If an encounter with a spider when he was a toddler significantly impacted Tolkien, then the remainder of Tolkien’s childhood also served as a shaping force for his ideas. After Arthur Tolkien died, Mabel spent time with her family in Birmingham, eventually moving to Sarehole, a small hamlet about a mile outside the city (Carpenter 28). Mabel and her sons would live there

for four years before Mabel moved them again in 1900, so they could attend King Edward's school in Birmingham. Tolkien considered these four years "the longest-seeming and most formative part of [his] life" (quoted in Carpenter 32). Sarehole was rural and felt like it was much farther away from the city than it was. The experience of living at Sarehole would form the foundation of Tolkien's nostalgic desire for the pastoral, idyllic landscapes of his youth. The depiction of nature in both the Shire and in the living trees, the Ents, can be traced back to these years of his life.

Life at Sarehole was full of outdoor play for Tolkien, and these early experiences served to strengthen his lifelong love of nature and trees. He and his younger brother, Hilary, spent their days roaming the hills, exploring the River Cole, hunting for mushrooms and picking blackberries. Mabel began educating her children early and taught them Latin, botany, and art. Tolkien was a quick study and a good artist. Carpenter describes how Tolkien often drew plants and landscapes and developed a special affinity for trees, becoming more interested in the shape and feel of plants more than their scientific aspects. Carpenter notes, "this was especially true of trees. And though he liked drawing trees he liked most of all to be *with* trees. He would climb them, lean against them, even talk to them. It saddened him to discover that not everyone shared his feelings toward them" (emphasis in original, 30). Tolkien, many decades after the event, describes his feelings when a tree he climbed was cut down seemingly without purpose: "There was a willow hanging over the mill-pool and I learned to climb it. It belonged to a butcher on the Stratford Road, I think. One day they cut it down. They didn't do anything with it: the log just lay there. I never forgot that" (quoted in Carpenter 30). Tolkien's love of nature and of trees manifested itself in his writing not unlike the spiders. The trees, which he cherished and loved are central to the mythology he would go on to write. From the first Trees of Valinor to the trees

of Lothlorien and the tree of Gondor, individual, special, named trees are central characters in Tolkien's work. Ents, the tree shepherds, the most famous (and ancient) of which is Fangorn, also called Treebeard, are manifestations of Tolkien's love for trees. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Old Man Willow nearly eats the hobbits before they are rescued by Tom Bombadil. That the old, cantankerous, and carnivorous tree is a willow tree does not feel like a coincidence when one considers the lasting impression on Tolkien of the apparently pointless felling of the old willow near the mill-pond.

When not outside in the fields and forests, young Tolkien and his brother had access to many books. George MacDonald's "Curdie" books "set in a remote kingdom where misshapen and malevolent goblins lurked beneath mountains," Arthurian tales, and *The Red Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang were among Tolkien's Favorites (Carpenter 30). He particularly appreciated *The Red Fairy Book* because it introduced him to the story of Sigurd's slaying of Fafnir, the dragon, set in the North (Carpenter 30). These stories kindled what would become a deep interest in fantasy, folklore, legends, and mythology—and a desire to create his own stories to fulfill his desires. "I desired dragons with a profound desire," he said long afterwards. "Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighborhood. But the world that contained even the imagination of Fafnir was richer and more beautiful, at whatever cost of peril" (Carpenter 30). Tolkien drew on his own these feelings when he wrote *The Hobbit* for his own children. It featured the bucolic, quiet landscapes of his youth and the primary villain of the story was the dragon, Smaug.

The stories that inspired Tolkien when he was young became the foundation Tolkien's creative writing. Tolkien's fiction conjured the landscapes of his youth, the quiet hamlet that is the Shire, dwarves straight out of Grimm's fairy tales, MacDonald's goblins under mountains,

and a powerful, evil Fafnir of Tolkien's own. The merger of this early, unconnected work with *The Silmarillion* by way of *The Lord of the Rings* reinforces the power of Tolkien's childhood experiences. Instead of nullifying or discarding these fairy tale themes in a more serious work, they are amplified. The power of trees and nature has already been established and will be described further in Chapter Three, but dragons also play a key role in the mythology.

Like spiders, dragons play an important role in Tolkien's writing. The way Tolkien presents dragons reveals a hierarchy of value that runs through his work. In *The Silmarillion*, dragons are among the beasts and monsters Morgoth has under his dominion. Among them was "Ancalagon the Black, the mightiest of [Morgoth's] dragon host" that Eärendil, father of Elrond Half-Elven, slew (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 252). And Glaurung, the Father of Dragons, the first of the dragons of Morgoth, who like Smaug, was of wicked intellect as he displayed in his conversation with Túrin who sought to slay him. Having restrained Túrin with the power of his gaze, Glaurung says:

Evil have been all thy ways, son of Húrin. Thankless fosterling, outlaw, slayer of thy friend, thief of love, usurper of Nargothrond, captain foolhardy, and deserter of thy kin. As thralls thy mother and thy sister live in Dor-lómin, in misery and want. Thou art arrayed as a prince, but they go in rags; and for thee they yearn, but thou carest not for that. Glad may thy father be to learn that he hath such a son; as learn he shall." (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 213-14)

This scene between the hero Túrin and Glaurung is markedly different from the confrontation between Bilbo and Smaug in *The Hobbit* or even the rant Smaug delivers before he attacks Lake-town after Bilbo steals the golden cup. What the dragons have in common, however, is a wicked intellect. Tolkien's dragons are powerful, malevolent, wicked, and extremely intelligent. The

contrast between the representation of the spiders, also minions of Morgoth, and dragons, reflects Tolkien's personal feelings about each. Tolkien's spiders are powerful, grotesque, and dark. Dragons, however, were favored monsters associated with questing knights, and are as intelligent as they are powerful and majestic despite their evil nature. Tolkien was introduced to dragons in fairy tales during his youth, and he would go on to study dragon-related writings in earnest as a professor as an adult, translating *Beowulf* and changing the perception of the epic poem from obscure language exercise to literary treasure when he presented his lecture, "*Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics*," in 1936 (*An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism* 51).

The joyful life at Sarehole, playing in the fields and forests and reading books, ended abruptly when Tolkien was twelve years old, and it would affect Tolkien's worldview. Tolkien's mother, a diabetic, died on 14 November 1904 and her death would mark a turning point for Tolkien. Her death forced her sons to live with an aunt, Beatrice Suffield. The combination of these experiences created in Tolkien a deep sense of pessimism and robbed him further of a link to nature. Carpenter claims he was "capable of bouts of profound despair . . . related to his mother's death . . . had a deep sense of impending loss. Nothing was safe. Nothing would last. No battle would be won forever" (39). And the heavily industrialized neighborhood in the district of Edgbaston offered little in the way of nature. Instead, the view from his room consisted of "unbroken rooftops with factory chimneys beyond." The countryside could be seen in the far distance, but it "belonged to a remote past that could not be regained" (Carpenter 40). The next years would be difficult, but he found his way into a love of language. While a pupil at King Edward's school, he learned about the "bones" of language and became interested not only in learning languages, but also in how they were constructed. He discovered Old English and Middle English poetry, *Beowulf*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, respectively. Much like

his affinity for trees, Tolkien's affinity for language was less about scientific detail and more about "a deep *love* for the look and sound of words" (emphasis in original; Carpenter 43). This love of words set him to a project of creating languages he worked on for the rest of his life. One of the most remarkable things about Tolkien's mythology is not just the obsessive depth and attention to detail, but the languages serve as the basis for everything from character names to place names grounded in their linguistic (if fictitious) origins.

Tolkien's fascination with language is ultimately responsible for his creative work. He created his Middle-earth and the mythology of *The Silmarillion* to provide a world in which his languages would have existed. In a 1956 letter to a reader, Tolkien describes the link between language and legend: "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; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition. . . . I began with language, I found myself involved with inventing legends of the same 'taste.'" (Tolkien, *Letters* 231). The legends he invented were spawned by his desire as a philologist to experiment with and create languages. The detail and dedication that were the staple of his linguistic study manifested in an equal desire for detail and integrity in the legends that grew out of the work. The legends needed a landscape in which to exist and needed people to be actors in the stories. Each subsequent layer of Tolkien's world building contributed to the immersive nature and detail of Middle-earth.

During these years, Tolkien developed, in addition to his love of languages, another mainstay of his life: the value of male friendships; Carpenter states, "he came to associate male company with much that was good in life" (53). The King Edward's school library allowed select senior boys to be granted the title of Librarian, responsible for some administrative functions of the library, under the overall control of an assistant master. Tolkien, R. Q. Gilson,

Christopher Wiseman, and G.B. Smith, as Librarians, formed “an unofficial group called the Tea Club” (Carpenter 54). The Tea Club initially met at the library, but eventually also at Barrow’s Stores and thus the name became abbreviated T.C.B.S. Name aside, what was most important was the camaraderie of the young men and what Carpenter describes as a shared purpose of intellectual discovery (52-55). The friendships the men formed during these years would be foundational and lifelong. It is no coincidence that Tolkien’s fiction features a band of male protagonists, among which are four hobbits that, first and foremost, are great friends. They represent adolescent, youthful enthusiasm, curiosity, and a spirit of adventure at the beginning of the journey. Frodo, Merry, Pippin are effectively the fictional depictions of young men in a position like Tolkien at this early stage of his life. Sam, who becomes Frodo’s greatest and most trusted companion, is more complex, as according to Tolkien: “My ‘Sam Gamgee’ is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognized as far superior to myself” (quoted in Carpenter 89). The personalities of the four hobbits reflect both a nostalgic longing for his early and best friends and a deep respect for the men he fought beside during the Great War.

After King Edward’s, Tolkien earned a scholarship to Oxford. Unfortunately, World War I broke out during his time as a student at Oxford. He felt pressure to join the men doing the fighting and joined the fusiliers, but also opted to finish his degree, training for combat and deployment until he, as an officer of the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, was deployed to the front in June of 1916. He traveled from London across the English Channel to France and, by the middle of July, experienced combat firsthand. His company was attached to the 7th Infantry Brigade; his work as a signals officer was reduced to communicating with “lights, flags, and at the last resort runners or even carrier pigeons” because of the unreliable field phones, the mess of wired

communication in trench warfare, and the threat of German interception of messages (Carpenter 91). The trenches left an indelible mark on Tolkien. The trench warfare of WWI was brutal, industrialized, and catastrophic. Carpenter describes Tolkien's first days in combat this way:

Dead men . . . corpses lay in every corner . . . those that still had faces stared with dreadful eyes [and] beyond the trenches no-man's land was littered with bloated and decaying bodies . . . desolation . . . trees, stripped of leaf and branch, stood as mere mutilated and blackened trunks. Tolkien never forgot what he called the 'animal horror of trench warfare. (91)

Tolkien's first day of combat was during a failed assault on German positions. The battle lasted 48 hours before his unit was pulled back. After that first engagement, Tolkien learned that his good friend and T.C.B.S. member, Rob Gilson, had been killed on the first day of battle at La Boisselle. That first day on the Somme, nearly 20,000 British soldiers were killed and another 37,000 wounded. This epic cycle of failed assaults and slaughter would repeat itself many times.

In August, Tolkien was diagnosed with "trench fever" and pulled out of combat, finally making it back to England by December. While recovering, he learned that G.B. Smith had been killed on December 3rd, 1916 (Carpenter 93). In his final letter to Tolkien, Smith had written about Gilson's death: "For the death of one of its members cannot, I am determined, dissolve the T.C.B.S. Death can make us loathsome and helpless as individuals, but it cannot put an end to the immortal four!" and closed the letter with, "May you say the things I have tried to say long after I am not here to say them, if such be my lot" (quoted in Carpenter 94). One member's death could not dissolve the T.C.B.S., but the death of a second certainly had a destructive impact. The loss of two great friends in such a short period, and Tolkien's own combat experiences influenced his writing for the rest of his life.

The bond between Tolkien, Gilson, Smith, and Wiseman was an extraordinarily close friendship. Male friendships are significant in *The Hobbit*. The camaraderie between Bilbo and the dwarves starts out rocky, but by the end of the text, Thorin, on his deathbed describes his deep friendship and gratitude to Bilbo. The other dwarves also swear lifelong friendship to Bilbo as he makes his way back to the Shire. However, the bonds of friendship between the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* are orders of magnitude more powerful and well developed. The relationship between Frodo, Samwise, Merry and Pippin are rooted in the close-knit friendship of Tolkien and the other members of the T.C.B.S. It is not a coincidence that there are four hobbits thrust into the great affairs and adventures of a world dealing with great events and potential cataclysmic outcomes. The hobbits' experiences are a reflection of the T.C.B.S. being thrust into The Great War and experiencing the horror of the first truly industrialized war. Friendship is also central to all the characters that are part of the Fellowship, but particularly Gimli's and Legolas's friendship is worth mentioning since it transcends race, culture, and the hatred between elves and dwarves that is rooted in the earliest mythology of Middle-earth, a topic that developed further in Chapter Four.

Tolkien's early friendships and experiences during the war were the catalyst for his writing. The last lines of Smith's last letter, particularly, were a call to action that motivated him to begin writing while hospitalized, and Christopher Wiseman also urged him to "start the epic" (quoted in Carpenter 98). The work he began would become *The Silmarillion* and he described the goal for his mythology during a conversation with Carpenter this way:

A body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy story—the larger founded on the lesser and in contact with the earth—the lesser drawing splendor from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate

simply: To England; to my country. It should possess the tone and quality 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), and while possessing (could I achieve it) the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic (this it is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things), and it should be “high”, purged of the gross, and fit for the more adult mind of a land long steeped in poetry. I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and drama. Absurd. (quoted in Carpenter 97-98)

This statement is revealing because it describes a sense of national pride, a regional grounding for his work, a purposeful romanticism, and a grand scope. The desire for this mythology was born out of the experiences of his earliest years, the relationships he built in his adolescence and young adulthood, and his war experience. In a matter of one year (1916), Tolkien had to leave his wife and his beloved England behind as he went off to war, fought in one of WWI’s most catastrophic battles, and lost two of his closest friends. These experiences were deeply burned into him, and the letters testify that, in some ways, he was writing *for* his dead friends, doing the work they had set out to do as members of the T.C.B.S. and as intellectual peers; he was honoring their memories.

At the time, there was no diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder. Freud had yet to come up with his Shell Shock theory and any discussion of combat trauma carried with it a stigma of cowardice or weakness. Tolkien’s writing was a way to process his combat experience. Years later, in 1944, Tolkien described it as such in a letter to his son, Christopher, who was

deployed during World War II. Tolkien wrote: “Well, there you are: a hobbit amongst the Urukhai. . . . I sense amongst all your pains (some merely physical) the desire to express your *feeling* about good, evil, fair, foul in some way: to rationalize it, and prevent it from festering In my case it generated Morgoth” (emphasis in original; Tolkien, *Letters* 78). Tolkien, processing his war experience, wrote scenes of it into his fiction. The killing fields of the Somme became the Dead Marshes that Gollum leads Sam and Frodo across. He confirmed the connection in a letter to L. W. Forster in 1960: “The Dead Marshes and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after the Battle of the Somme” (Tolkien, *Letters* 303). He was also interviewed at Oxford by Martin Gilbert, a war historian, who confirmed the veracity of the description of the Dead Marshes and described what Tolkien’s experienced this way: “Many soldiers on the Somme had been confronted by corpses, often decaying in the mud, that had lain undisturbed, except by the bombardment, for days, weeks, and even months” (quoted in Loconte 74). The war Tolkien and his friends endured certainly left a lifelong impression on those who survived, but Tolkien did reintegrate into life after the war, becoming a professor at Oxford.

Except for his writing, the life Tolkien led after the war was a rather mundane affair, unremarkable in most ways. He and his wife, Edith, had four children, and he moved through the academic ranks, lectured, wrote, and earned money by grading examinations. He often wrote while traveling to grade examinations, frequently scribbling in the margins or on blank sections of the examinations themselves (Carpenter 175). He served on the staff of the New English Dictionary, became a professor of English Language at Leeds University, and in 1925 he earned a position as professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford (Loconte 109). He could not escape the trauma of the war, however. Oxford was also a reminder of the killing fields. Loconte states, “Oxford

university lost nearly one in five servicemen in the conflict . . . from Exeter college, Tolkien's college, 141 men had perished" (109). His children would later describe the impact of the losses as "a lifelong sadness" in Tolkien (quoted in Loconte 109).

Despite the trauma of the war, Tolkien's social life took on renewed normalcy, and as he had in his youth, he created a social club with friends and peers. This time they called themselves the Inklings. It was during this period that he met C.S. Lewis; the two men would inspire one another to write and to publish. Their bond was not only because of their interest in mythology and literature and their work in academia, but also because they were both veterans of The Great War. The fruit of this relationship was a lifelong partnership, although sometimes strained, in writing and in processing the trauma of the war through their stories. Both men created stories that pitted small people, hobbits in Tolkien's case and young children in C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, against often existential threats. Tolkien described his feelings when he said, "I have always been impressed that we are here, surviving, because of the indomitable courage of quite small people against impossible odds" (quoted in Loconte 76).

Tolkien brought more than creativity and a love of languages to his fiction. His faith heavily influenced his approach to writing. He had always been a deeply religious man and part of the reason his work is so incredibly detailed, obsessively intricate, is that he felt he was honoring God with his work. Maria Del Rincón Yohn, describes what Tolkien referred to as sub-creation: "For Tolkien, the literary sub-creator is . . . a reflection of God the Creator, who possesses the creative capacity because of being created and, more specifically, because of being created in the image of the Creator" (18-19). As mentioned previously, it is precisely the intricacy and believability of his world that gives Tolkien's fiction its immense power. Tolkien wanted to create a world that would suspend disbelief, that would invite readers to get lost in it;

he wanted to get lost in it. The immense rigor applied to world building was completely new and it struck a nerve with the reading audience. As Tolkien mentioned in “On Fairy Stories,” a level of immersion and suspension of disbelief, to escape from their reality, was something many people desired, and these desires fueled the popularity of his work.

C.S. Lewis, however, was not as easily convinced about the divinity of creative work. Instead, he characterized pagan myths as simple lies “breathed through silver,” which Tolkien vehemently disagreed with; he felt myths originated with God (Loconte 132-133). He wrote a letter to Lewis in response for which he composed “Mythopoeia,” a poem about the act of subcreation, and addressed it “To one who said that myths were lies and therefore worthless, even though ‘breathed through silver’” (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 85). In the poem, “Mythopoeia,” the following lines are particularly revealing: “Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme / of things not found within recorded time ... I will not tread your dusty path and flat, / denoting this and that by this and that, / your world immutable wherein no part / the little maker has with maker’s art” (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 88-89). In these few lines, Tolkien describes the value creativity has for Tolkien and how he considers it work that honors God. In many ways, this belief is responsible for the vast amount of content Tolkien created for his world. Unlike many fiction authors, he was not creating a story, plot, and setting, for its own sake. He was creating a world in the same way he believed God created—completely. Understanding Tolkien’s view of creative work as an act of subcreation provides some insight into the reason and motivation for the immense quantity of background material and notes he produced.

While “Mythopoeia” indicates the belief and dedication Tolkien invested in his work, he also constructed his work to be an alternate reality—a place he might rather be. The best evidence for this aspect of his work is “Leaf by Niggle,” a tale that he admitted was an allegory

for his own life. Niggle is a painter working on a large painting of a tree, but he gets distracted by the beautiful details of each leaf, and it seems as though his painting will never be finished. He is waylaid running errands for his neighbor, but eventually returns to his home to find his tree finished and alive. He steps into the painting; into the world he had imagined: “He went on looking at the Tree. All the leaves he had ever laboured at were there, as he had imagined them rather than as he had made them; and there were others that had only budded in his mind, and many that might have budded, if only he had had the time” (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 110). That Tolkien chose to identify his life’s work with a painting of a tree should, by now, be no surprise. His love of nature and trees, specifically, manifests in his creative work repeatedly. Understanding that Tolkien’s Niggle was creating a painting of a tree that became a living scene into which Niggle could step provides insight into Tolkien’s other writing: he was writing a world in which he might have wanted to wander, populated with elves, ents, hobbits, and others he admired and with monsters that reflected his fears.

Tolkien’s lived experiences are embedded so deeply in his mythology because it is very much an alternate reality in which he lived. Tolkien created his fiction with a desire for a reality that served his own desires and values. The immersive nature of it gave the work power for both Tolkien and his readers; the infusion of Tolkien’s authentic beliefs gave the work a level of credibility and tangibility. It also gave these beliefs and values a vehicle for transmission to readers and nascent fantasy fiction popular culture.

III. The Power of Tolkien's Trees and Representations of Nature

Tolkien built his own desires and values into his fiction. One of the most significant ways he did this was through his descriptions of nature in his writing, particularly the power and agency given to trees and the treelike beings, the ents. Nature is also embodied in characters like Tom Bombadil and, in a broader way, in the Shire itself because it is representative of the comfort and sanctuary of home and safety. As with his depictions of monsters in the previous chapter, the presence of a value hierarchy is clear in the depictions of nature and helps to further establish Tolkien's value system pattern; higher value ascribes more power, significance, agency, and beauty, while lower value reveals an absence of the aforementioned qualities.

The understanding of Tolkien's approach to creation as described in the previous chapter is essential to analyzing his work in more detail. It gives us a lens through which we see how Tolkien's lived experience manifests in his writing and how his values are encapsulated in his work. A close examination of Tolkien's representations of nature requires a look at the role of trees in his work. Trees are critical because of his intense affinity for them, and because the source of his affection is rooted in his childhood. Like the previous discussion of spiders and dragons, a study of Tolkien's trees reveals hierarchical organization. Digging at the roots of Tolkien's trees reveals how Tolkien structures and values living things. This understanding will clarify and support the analysis of how Tolkien represents people in his work.

Tolkien's life spanned a period of great industrialization. He lived through the advent of assembly lines, mass automation on factory floors, and both world wars. The impact of industrialization could easily be seen in the countryside and in cities: roads cut into the landscape, factories belched smoke and waste, and craftsmanship was replaced by low-quality mass production. In Tolkien's lecture, "On Fairy Stories," he reveals a very bleak view of industrialization and modernity when, in defense of escapism, he argues:

I do not think that the reader or the maker of fairy-stories need even be ashamed of the ‘escape’ of archaism . . . for it is after all possible for a rational man, after reflection . . . to arrive at the condemnation, implicit at least in the mere silence of ‘escapist’ literature, of progressive things like factories, or the machine guns and bombs that appear to be their most natural and inevitable, dare we say ‘inexorable’ products . . . It is indeed an age of ‘improved means to deteriorated ends.’ It is part of the essential malady of such days—producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present time and self-made misery—that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil. So that to us evil and ugliness seem indissolubly allied . . . Many stories out of the past have only become escapist in their appeal through surviving from a time when men were as a rule delighted with the work of their hands into our time when many men feel disgust with man-made things. (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 63-65)

In these remarks Tolkien reveals a deep contempt for what society considers progress and a belief that the price of such progress is untenable. He resisted modern conveniences, owned one car briefly before World War II, but afterward never owned another. The destruction of the countryside to build roads and motorways to support an increasing amount of vehicle traffic disappointed him. He hated “the noise, stench, ruthlessness, and extravagance of the internal-combustion engine” (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 66). However, he explains that modernization and industrializations are not the only reasons fantasy and escapism might be appealing:

There are profounder wishes: Such as the desire to converse with other living things. On this desire, as ancient as the Fall, is largely founded the talking of beasts and creatures in fairy-tales, and especially the magical understanding of their proper speech. This is the root, and not the ‘confusion’ attributed to the minds of men of the unrecorded past an

alleged ‘absence of the sense of separation of ourselves from beasts.’ (Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* 66)

Here, Tolkien’s view and support for fantasy stories—both their necessity and their utility—reveals his value hierarchy and the motivation to create the stories he wrote. More than the mythology, Tolkien’s act of subcreation is, as he describes in the allegorical tale of “Leaf by Niggle” an effort to create an alternate reality. One that through collaboration between the author’s and readers’ imaginations, can be entered and experienced.

The aspects of nature that Tolkien creates are born of a nostalgic longing for his youth and the bucolic landscapes of Sarehole described previously, and his contempt for industrialization and its impact on the landscape. These sympathies manifest early in Tolkien’s work. In “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil,” published in *Oxford Magazine* in 1934, the comingling of Tolkien’s lived experience and value of nature is immediately evident (Tolkien, *Adventures* 10).² Chris Brawley argues Tom represents the experience of the numinous [that which is holy and the core of all religious experiences] which defies language's ability to express. Furthermore, Tom reflects Tolkien's own views of nature (Brawley 293-96). Tom Bombadil, down to his feathered cap, blue coat, and yellow boots was created in the image of a childhood doll (Carpenter 165). His incarnation as a singing, rhyming nature spirit, entangled with Old Man Willow, brings together two childhood memories—the cut down willow tree in a neighbor’s yard and the childhood doll—in a pastoral combination of song and fantasy. Tom, having chased away Goldberry, the river woman’s daughter (a nature spirit), rests on the riverbank sitting on old willow roots when “up woke Willow-man, began upon his singing, / sang Tom fast asleep under branches swinging; / in a crack caught him tight: snick! it closed

² “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil” was first published as an independent poem. In 1962 it was collected with other works and the collection was published under the same title.

together, / trapped Tom Bombadil, coat and hat and feather” (Tolkien, *Adventures* 36). In response, Tom Bombadil commands, “You let me out again Old Man Willow!” and “Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking” (Tolkien, *Adventures* 37). In this poem, Tolkien combines the desire to speak to nature, to exist alongside the spirit of nature and as he mentioned in his lecture, and the desire to converse with other living things. It, in addition to being written in verse, features the centrality of song in Tolkien’s writing about nature. Music, natural things, and the communion of them harkens to a simpler, more beautiful engagement with nature that is absent of mechanical intrusions, all of which point to a nostalgic, pastoral yearning. The imagery Tolkien uses here is drawn from his youth and the experiences during his life at Sarehole.

Tolkien drew from his youthful nostalgia again decades later, returning to Old Man Willow and Tom Bombadil in *The Lord of the Rings*. Old Man Willow traps Merry and Pippin in his trunk before Tom Bombadil rescues them. In the more robust narrative text of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tom Bombadil is significantly more developed, but the trappings of the childhood doll and his incarnation as nature spirit remain. Yet, Tom has become a type of guardian of the natural world, full of knowledge. At Tom and Goldberry’s home, the hobbits ask Tom about Old Man Willow. Tolkien writes:

Tom’s words laid bare the hearts of trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers. It was not called the Old Forest without reason, for it was indeed ancient, a survivor of vast forgotten woods; an in it there lived yet, ageing no quicker than the hills, the fathers of the fathers of trees . . . none were more dangerous than the Great Willow: his heart was rotten, but his strength was

green; and he was cunning, and a master of winds, and his song and thought ran through the woods on both sides of the river. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 128)

The story of the trees as described by Tom Bombadil places Tom in the position of mediator between nature's creature and the hobbits. Tolkien has Tom become the voice for nature, describing its origin, history, and motivations. Old Man Willow becomes the first tree in Tolkien's published stories to have a type of sentience and an air of menace. Old Man Willow and the ancient "fathers of fathers of trees" rebel against the destruction caused by men, of "things that go free upon the earth," implying people more than animals through the actions of "hacking" and "burning." These sentiments run through the full text of *The Lord of The Rings*. Trees and forests are personified; they have lineages, attitudes, grudges; trees have agency and power and are capable of *feeling*. They live, not as plants, but as essential characters that affect the way the world turns. They are present, often central, to the largest moments of birth and death of ages, peoples, and wars. Their centrality is an indication of Tolkien's own values not unlike the representations of spiders and dragons previously discussed.

The landscape of Tolkien's youth influenced his writing in many ways, but the transformed landscape of his later life was also influential. In one case, the destruction of the landscape Tolkien loved so much prevented him from pursuing a story for which the countryside he had grown up in was the inspiration. In 1945, Tolkien briefly considered writing a sequel to *Farmer Giles*, a story about a boy and a dragon (accepted for publication in 1938, but not published as an illustrated edition until 1949). The sequel was to be set in the same landscape as *Farmer Giles*. However, after revisiting the places that inspired *Farmer Giles* and witnessing the damage to the landscape from World War II, Tolkien wrote to his publishers, "the heart has gone out of the little kingdom, and the woods and plains are aerodromes and bomb-practice targets"

(quoted in Carpenter 169). He never wrote the sequel to *Farmer Giles*. The loss of the fields, forests, and countryside of his youth was traumatic to Tolkien. Trees manifest themselves in his writing as a vehicle to return to pre-industrialized, pre-war conditions.

Trees reveal a lot about Tolkien's ideology because he personifies them and gives them attributes like the ones he writes into his heroes, like heroic bloodlines. One significant tree that makes a quiet, early entrance in the epic *The Lord of the Rings* but has great significance is the Party Tree that stands in the Party Field. The Shire's Party Tree makes its first humble appearance at Bilbo and Frodo's birthday party: "There was a specially large pavilion, so big that the tree that grew in the field was right inside it, and stood proudly near one end, at the head of the chief table" (Tolkien, *LOTR* 26). What is notable about the inclusion of the large tree in the party field of the Shire is that Tolkien personifies the tree. It stands "proudly" at the head of the chief table, an honored guest and participant in the evening's festivities. "Lanterns were hung on all its branches" (Tolkien, *LOTR* 26). It may seem a utilitarian inclusion to have the tree inside the pavilion hung with lanterns to provide light, but a closer look will reveal that the party tree and its lanterns serve as a symbolic reminder of the Trees of Valinor, trees central to Middle-earth's creation story. Like many of the named trees in Tolkien's work, the Party Tree signals a transition—Bilbo announces his departure on the evening of the party, which triggers Frodo's inheritance of the ring just as larger events are beginning to unfold; just as Sauron's Nazgûl are nearing the Shire in their search for the One Ring. The long, epic adventure effectively begins under the Party Tree. The centrality of the tree gives it value and centers nature, subliminally as the point of departure for the adventure.

At the conclusion of the epic story, after Sauron is vanquished and the hobbits return home to find the Shire scoured by the evil henchmen of Saruman, the Party Tree is again the

symbolic fulcrum of change—it has been destroyed. Tolkien writes, “‘They’ve cut it down!’ cried Sam. ‘They’ve cut down the Party Tree!’ ... it was lying lopped and dead in the field.” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 993). The chopping down of the Party Tree signals the depths of the destruction caused by Saruman’s scouring of the shire and the end of innocence for the Shire and its hobbit inhabitants. It also recalls the senseless felling of the willow tree from Tolkien’s youth discussed previously. Tolkien chooses the condition of the wooded areas as imagery to convey the depth of the devastation Saruman and his minions inflicted on the shire. “The trees were the worst loss and damage, for . . . they had been cut down recklessly far and wide over the Shire; and Sam grieved at this more than anything else. For one thing, this hurt would take long to heal, and only his great-grandchildren, he thought, would see the Shire as it ought to be” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 999). It is through images of felled trees that Tolkien impresses the gravity and scale of the destruction on the readers. The hobbits who remained in the Shire are themselves in some part complicit, serving as sheriffs for the “boss” and enforcing oppressive rules on one another until the heroic Merry, Pippin, Sam, and Frodo return to challenge the usurpers and drive them out.

The destruction of trees is significant, but so is the birth of new trees. The party tree also becomes symbolic of the Shire’s rebirth after it is freed of Saruman’s minions. Sam uses the gift of Galadriel to restore the forests of the shire and to plant a new Party Tree: “Sam planted saplings in all the places where specially beautiful or beloved trees had been destroyed ... the little silver nut he planted in the Party Field where the tree had once been ... In the Party Field a beautiful young sapling leaped up: it had silver bark and long leaves and burst into golden flowers in April” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 1000). The new party tree is a rare, golden-leaved *mallorn* tree found only in *Lothlorien*, the forest in which Galadriel and Celeborn lived. The trees that make up that forest, however, go much farther back into Middle-earth’s antiquity, much like the elves

themselves. And it is the examination of the role of trees in *The Silmarillion* that reveals the centrality of trees to all of Tolkien's work. The White Tree of Gondor featured in the *Lord of the Rings* clearly has symbolic significance to the readers when they digest the story, but unless they are familiar with the vast mythology Tolkien created around *The Lord of the Rings*, the true significance of the White Tree is not revealed.

Trees are central to Tolkien's mythology and reflect his values including the importance of nature in relation to people. As we will see, race and people play significant roles, but trees are central to everything in Tolkien's writing. This centrality, again, is an expression of his yearning for the pastoral landscape of his childhood. Because *The Silmarillion* is the mythology of Middle-earth, it serves as the creation story of the world and contains significant legends of the ancient peoples, heroes, wars, monsters, and legends of Middle-earth. The War of the Ring takes place in the Third Age, but there were two ages before the First Age. They were the Age of Lamps and the Age of Trees.

Tolkien writes, "In the beginning Eru, the One, who in the Elvish tongue is named Ilúvatar, made the Ainur of his thought; and they made a great Music before him. In this music the World was begun" (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 25). The Ainur are the gods that will go on to create the world. Ilúvatar would make the elves and men, giving elves eternal life and men the gift of death. The Ainur would become known as the Valar and serve as gods to men and elves. They built great lamps on the north and south ends of Middle Earth, called Illuin and Ormal, and in their light "there arose a multitude of growing things great and small, mosses and grasses and great ferns, and trees whose tops were crowned with cloud as they were living mountains, but whose feet were wrapped in green twilight" (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 35). This important passage indicates the primacy of music and nature in Tolkien's hierarchical value structure. The

placement of music and grasses and mosses and trees at the beginning of creation represents his nostalgic desire for an unspoiled nature. But Melkor, who would become known as Morgoth, always drawn to evil deeds and darkness, cast down the lights and thus ended the age of lamps. This cycle of good and evil struggling for power may be rooted in Tolkien's faith, but it may also reflect his sense of loss triggered by the loss of his parents and the melancholy his family described. In any case, it describes Tolkien's yearning for nature.

Trees are an integral component of the creation stories in Tolkien's mythology, and they arrive before any of the races of people. In response to the casting down of lamps and the fire that scarred the world, the Valar rebuilt, and Yavanna, Giver of Fruits, planted two trees upon the great green mound called Ezellohar before the western gate city of the Valar. Tolkien describes the creation of the Trees of Valinor:

Yavanna hallowed [Ezellohar], and she sat there long upon the green and sang a song of power, in which was set all her thought of things that grow in the earth ... upon the mound, there came forth two slender shoots; and silence was over all the world in that hour, nor was there any other sound save the chanting of Yavanna. Under her song the saplings grew and became fair and tall, and came to flower; and thus there awoke in the world the Two Trees of Valinor. Of all things which Yavanna made they have the most renown, and about their fate all the tales of the Elder Days are Woven" (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 38)

Of all the trees in Tolkien's work, Telperion and Laurelin are the most significant; they create the measure of time and the concept of day and night. They shed their own light, silver, and golden light respectively. They each shed light for seven hours, and overlapped by one hour, creating twilight and a twelve-hour day. The trees also shed water as "the dews of Telperion and

the rain that fell from Laurelin Varda hoarded in great vats like shining lakes, that were to all the land of the Valar as wells of water and of light. Thus began the days of Bliss of Valinor; and thus began also the Count of Time” (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 39). These are the Trees of Valinor that Melkor destroyed with the aid of Ungoliant. However, Yavanna, unable to save the trees after the attack, saved their last fruit and made of them “lamps of heaven, outshining the ancient stars ... set them to voyage upon appointed courses above the girdle of the earth from West unto the East and to return,” thus creating the sun and moon (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 99).

This series of creation stories establishes the centrality of both music and of nature in Tolkien’s mythology. Music and nature are often linked in pastoral depictions and connect to the idea of beauty. The intention of appealing music and beautiful landscapes elevates the people in those scenes. Evil creatures are associated with harsh sounds and unattractive appearance in Tolkien’s writing. The elevation of beauty and music is another value representation in his ideology and his creative work. The significance of the association with trees is that it differs from earlier fantasy stories and their fairy-tale foci of the people and their actions. Tolkien very deliberately centers trees as representatives of the natural order. The sun and moon are the fruit of trees born from music, and they shed light to illuminate the darkness. That the sun and moon are the fruit of Telperion and Laurelin subordinates them to the trees and speaks to the power Tolkien ascribed to trees in his work. The light of Telperion and Laurelin was lost when Melkor and Ungoliant destroyed them, but not before Fëanor had crafted three jewels, the Silmarils, his masterworks, that contained in them the light of the Trees of Valinor. These jewels, and the light they contain, are the triggers for Melkor’s greed—he steals them from Fëanor and fractures the elven people, setting into motion the wars that would define the First, Second, and Third Ages. The Age of Trees, ended, of course, with the destruction of Telperion and Laurelin.

The analysis of the legacy and ancestry of Tolkien's trees is important because it reveals a template of descendancy that Tolkien uses to inscribe value and hierarchy. The legacy of the Trees of Valinor is made of more than the Silmarils and the sun and moon. The ancestral lineage of the trees is an important hierarchy Tolkien builds his world upon. Telperion was the older of the two trees and his line of trees continues.³ There is a second tree created in the image of Telperion, named Galathilion. Galathilion did not shed light, but its seedlings were notable, one was planted at Tol Eresëa and was named Celeborn. One of Celeborn's seedlings would become a gift to the Númenóreans, and would be named Nimloth, the White Tree of Númenor. Nimloth was destroyed because of Sauron's machinations, but not before Isildur, the ancestor of Aragorn, stole one of Nimloth's fruits. That fruit became the White Tree of Gondor. Each of these trees was planted at the birth or founding of a city or a people or an age and the death of each tree was concurrent and symbolic of their end. Thus, ages and life cycles, and all momentous markers in Tolkien's work can be connected to nature through the trees that are the characters through which much of the story is told. At the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf takes Aragorn to Mount Mindolluin. Tolkien writes:

Then Aragorn cried: 'Yé! utívienyes! I have found it! Lo! here is a scion of the Eldest of Trees! But how comes it here? For it is not itself yet seven years old.' And Gandalf coming looked at it, and said: 'Verily this is a sapling of the line of Nimloth the fair; and that was a seedling of Galathilion, and that a fruit of Telperion of many names, Eldest of Trees... Aragorn planted the new tree in the court by the fountain, and swiftly and gladly

³ Note also that Telperion is referred to as masculine while Laurelin is referenced as feminine. This gendered representation reflects the personified way Tolkien represents trees, and it also mirrors the immense value of bloodlines Tolkien ascribes to people in his work.

it began to grow; and when the month of June entered in it was laden with blossom
(Tolkien, *LOTR* 971).

The discovery of the sapling and its blossoming is the symbol of renewal, of nature's and perhaps the Valar's approval of Aragorn's reign and the recovery of Gondor by the heir of Isildur.

Any discussion of Tolkien's vision of nature and the role of trees in his work, and the agency they exhibit, would be incomplete without discussion of Treebeard and the ents. It is one thing to personify trees, to place them in pavilions at the heads of tables reserved for leaders and to string them with lanterns reminiscent of the trees that birthed the sun and moon. It is another thing entirely to let them walk, talk, and march to war. Alpers argues that shepherds are the human mediators between man and nature in his definition of the pastoral; however, I argue that Tolkien, in creating Treebeard, created his own ideal mediator between man and the natural world.

They found that they were looking at a most extraordinary face. It belonged to a large Man-like, almost Troll-like, figure, at least fourteen foot high, very sturdy, with a tall head, and hardly any neck. Whether it was clad in stuff like green and grey bark, or whether that was its hide was difficult to say . . . the arms, at a short distance from the trunk, were not wrinkled, but covered with a brown smooth skin. The large feet had seven toes each. The lower part of the long face was covered with a sweeping grey beard, bush, almost twiggy at the roots, thin and mossy at the ends. . . . deep eyes were now surveying them, slow and solemn, but very penetrating. They were brown, shot with a green light. Often afterwards Pippin tried to describe his first impression of them. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 464)

Treebeard is the living, walking, talking tree that Tolkien wished he could speak to when he was a child roaming the forest near Sarehole. He is the embodiment of nature and, as the oldest living thing in Middle-earth, has immense authority as a character in the story and the mythology of Tolkien's world. Treebeard is the personification of humans' desire to communicate with the other living things Tolkien mentions in his "On Fairy-Stories" lecture (Jensen 46). Pippin recalls Treebeard's eyes:

One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with the ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present; like sun shimmering on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake. . . . it felt as if something that grew in the ground—asleep, you might say, or just feeling itself as something between root-tip and leaf-tip, between deep earth and sky had suddenly waked up, and was considering you with the same slow care that hit had given its own inside affairs for endless years (Tolkien, *LOTR* 463).

It does not take much to imagine that as Tolkien wrote Pippin's description of Treebeard's eyes, he was drawing from his own imagination and the dreams of his youth. Tolkien's choice to create living, breathing, walking, talking tree-like beings responsible for the herding and protection of the trees is significant. It reflects his value judgement on the role of men, so often destructive that only trees, empowered with language and might and longevity, can suitably nurture and protect the forests. Treebeard, particularly gains significance not only because he interacts with Merry and Pippin, but also because he is the oldest and most powerful of the surviving Ents. He is referred to as the oldest living thing in Middle-earth, making him ancient indeed, considering the immortality of the elves. It is also notable that Tom Bombadil seems to have less agency than Treebeard. Bombadil is confined to the forest near the Shire and the

Barrow Downs, making him less powerful an agent than Treebeard who is free to travel great distances.

Treebeard and the ents, and the trees themselves, march to war on two fronts: they attack Isengard and Saruman's forges and foundries where orcs are building weapons of war, and they march to Helm's Deep and destroy the orc army that has the Rohirrim pinned down and nearly defeated. Given Tolkien's resentment for industrialization and the mechanization and automation of industry over craft, it is not farfetched to see his vengeance on the destructive forces of industrialization realized in his fiction. When the ents march to war to destroy the forges and workshops of Isengard by flooding them and killing the orcs at whose axes the trees have suffered for so long, it is, literally, nature fighting back against man's quest for progress. The ents destroy Saruman's factories and his minions. Nature, led by ancient tree shepherds rises up and destroys the forces of industrialization that are destroying the countryside.

Tolkien's pastoral yearnings manifested, as discussed, in nature spirits, forests and trees, and ents conjured from his imagination as great, walking, talking tree shepherds as old as time, and in the bucolic landscapes of Hobbiton and the Shire. His pastoral desires are anchored in his mythology by the Trees of Valinor and their descendants. However, there is more, and it is not overstated, fantastic, grand, or dramatic. Instead, arguably the clearest, most definitive creation that reflects Tolkien's values surrounds that very first hobbit hole we are introduced to, the Shire. When Tolkien wrote and published *The Hobbit*, he did not intend to connect it to his mythology, and he had not begun to write any part of *The Lord of the Rings*. It was a story conceived and developed for his children. The germ of the story began with a single line written on examination paper while grading (Carpenter 175). This line—"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit"—would turn into an epic set of adventures connected by a deep and detailed mythology. When he

wrote those words, Tolkien had no idea what a hobbit was. However, once he did flesh out hobbits and the place they lived, it became a deep reflection of English values, the old English countryside and a bucolic, peaceful depiction of life undisturbed by industrialization or warfare. The Shire would become an arcadian ideal rooted in Tolkien's youth.

The Shire is never named in *The Hobbit*. The town itself is only referred to as Hobbiton, or more frequently simply as "home" and appears to be a "a novelistic polity, in that it resembles [a] half-genteel, half-bourgeois world" of comfort and leisure (Birns 86). When Bilbo is struggling through tough times, terrible weather, and frightening adventures, he often dreams of home and safety. "I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 30). It is in these longings for home that Tolkien reveals the pastoral nature of the "home" that would later, in *The Lord of The Rings*, come to be known as the Shire. There are more than half a dozen times that Bilbo wishes for or longs for home and this gives us a glimpse into its value and meaning for both Bilbo and for Tolkien. Those meanings and values originate in Tolkien's youth. "Bag End," the name of Bilbo's little hole in the ground, was "what the local people called his Aunt's Worcestershire farm" in West Midland where he spent a pleasurable part of his childhood (Carpenter 180). He places Bilbo's Bag End as "long ago in the quiet of the world, when there was less noise and more green" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 5). The hobbits themselves were imagined as "just rustic English people, small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imagination—to the small reach of their courage or latent power" (quoted in Carpenter 180). It is significant that *The Hobbit*, when originally written, was not at all connected to his greater mythology; it is an unconscious series of choices and value judgements that did not connect to the greater mythology until Tolkien began writing his sequel, *The Lord of the Rings*. Carpenter confirms that the *The Hobbit* was

written, at least begun, in 1930 or 1931 and told to Tolkien's children with no connection to the greater mythology. Tolkien himself provided some basis for this assertion when he said, "One writes such a story out of the leaf-mould of the mind" (quoted in Carpenter 182). To which Carpenter adds, "We can still detect the shape of a few of the leaves—[Tolkien's] Alpine trek of 1911, the goblins of the 'Curdie' books . . . *Beowulf* when a cup is stolen from a sleeping dragon . . ." (182). If the leaf-mould of the mind reflects the author's values, then the pastoral and romantic yearning Tolkien experienced in his life is centrally woven into his writing and the Shire is the bucolic, arcadian, depiction of the perfect, safe place; the place he would like to call home "with woods and fields and little rivers" (Tolkien, *LOTR* 32). It is not unlike the landscape where he spent the best four years of his childhood in West Midland.

The Shire takes on added significance in *The Lord of the Rings*; Tolkien names the place, expands the description of it, and places it in the larger setting. He also preserves the importance of the Shire as a refuge and safe place central to the hobbits. Frodo echoes Bilbo's longing for home and safety, but because in *The Lord of the Rings* the Shire is more developed and the story has a much more serious, adult tone and Frodo's musings about the Shire take on additional gravity:

I should like to save the Shire, if I could – though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 61)

For Frodo, the Shire offers a “firm foothold,” a safe place in a cruel and dangerous world filled with menace and evil. These words confirm and reinforce Tolkien’s original vision of the unimaginative people that inspired hobbits in the author’s mind, and they confirm the centrality of the Shire as a safe place, a refuge from the great world with all its wickedness.

Nature, specifically the pre-industrialized nature of Tolkien’s childhood, most frequently represented by trees, is a central component of all of Tolkien’s writing. From “Leaf by Niggle” to *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, the foundation and central themes of the work are represented through nature and trees. This centrality, not unlike Tolkien’s characterization of monsters as seen with the different characterizations of dragons and spiders, provides indications of deeply held beliefs and values. As mentioned previously, the detail and completeness of Tolkien’s writing is where it derives its power. Unlike fantasy work published previously, Tolkien’s work offered the reader a fully realized world where even the trees had legends and heroes and the landscape was an actor with some agency to impact the story. Embedded in the representations of trees and their exercise of agency, through the guidance of Treebeard and other events, are Tolkien’s sentiments toward industrialization and modernity and the value he places on natural things. Because of the power Tolkien’s writing has and its subsequent popularity, these are all propagated and become recurring staples in fantasy fiction.

IV. Tolkien's Hierarchies of Race

Race and ancestry are central to all of Tolkien's characters. Elven and human divinity as the children of Ilúvatar is at the top of Tolkien's value structure and all others, including subgroups of humans, dwarves, orcs, and hobbits, are categorized in a descending hierarchical value structure. This structure is heavily influenced by racist ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This chapter focuses on how Tolkien's racial hierarchies are constructed and reveals the categorical way the people that populate Tolkien's fiction are fitted into the hierarchy and defined with corresponding capacity, good or evil behavior, and the nature of their power to affect the narrative.

The previous chapter's discussion of the landscape and nature's role in his mythology is essential to understanding Tolkien's work and the context in which his writing developed. It is equally imperative to understand the peoples that populate Tolkien's stories—the elves, men, hobbits, dwarves, and orcs—and how Tolkien's life and his culture helped to shape the fiction he created. Tolkien's work is reflective of Victorian stereotypes and is further complicated by the debates about race, eugenics, and the hierarchy of races that took place from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century after World War II (Fimi 153). An examination of the discourse about race is necessary to provide the context necessary to examine what Tolkien wrote. Understanding the predominant beliefs of Tolkien's culture and milieu is necessary to analyze how the Victorian era, the colonial period, and Tolkien's opinions manifested in his writing. Then we can, through a postcolonial lens, examine Tolkien's characterization and treatment of the people, cultures, and races in his work.

The western understanding of race and culture has changed significantly since Tolkien began writing. According to Dimitra Fimi, "When Tolkien started composing his mythology, it was still entirely legitimate and scientifically acceptable to divide humankind into races with

fixed physical characteristics and mental abilities” (133). Placing Tolkien’s worldview in its milieu is a critical point because Tolkien’s people and races are very clearly hierarchical and, in many ways, depicted as monolithic blocks rather than individuals based on racist ideologies. This two-dimensional depiction of race and culture echoes views on human capacity and race made popular at the time. Fimi reminds us that Joseph Arthur Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of Races*, James Hunt’s “On the Negro’s Place in Nature,” and Herbert Spencer’s *The Study of Sociology* were popular nineteenth century works spread and helped to establish the idea that race and physiology were indicators of capacity and capability and that some races were superior to others (145). They contributed to the rise of physical anthropology as a scientific discipline. Combined with the advent of Social Darwinism, this ideology legitimized, through perceived scientific rigor, that “the survival of the fittest” (a phrase simplifying Charles Darwin’s theory) applied to human beings in a demonstrable way, and, therefore, classification of peoples based on physiognomy was valid and accurate. Further, if capacity and capability could be defined by race and physical characteristics, the concept of racial purity became one of increasing concern (Fimi 132-36). To protect racial purity, then, extreme measures were enacted to prevent the “degradation” of races through comingling or reproduction with “inferior” races. This led to *eugenics*. The term, Greek for “good birth,” was coined by Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton (Loconte 16). Galton argued, “the tools of evolutionary science could be used to better the human race,” writing:

What nature does blindly, slowly, ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly...as it lies within his power, so it becomes his duty to work in that direction...If a twentieth part of the cost and pains were spent in measures for the improvement of the breed of horses and cattle, what a galaxy of genius might we not create! We might

introduce prophets and high priests of civilization into the world, as surely as we can propagate idiots by mating cretins. (quoted in Loconte 15)

Galton's words resonated in western Europe and the United States. These beliefs, combined with other stereotypical perceptions of white, Western superiority, created and solidified ideas of race and racial purity in much of Western thought and science (Fimi 132-33). The eugenics movement led to the creation of the Eugenics Education Society in Britain and the American Genetic Association in 1907 and 1913, respectively, and both organizations were created to "promote the doctrines of racial purity" (Loconte 16). The United States went so far as to legalize and implement compulsory sterilization and, caught up in the fervor, many religious institutions actively engaged in promoting and spreading the eugenics gospel; they held national "eugenics sermon contests"—literally preaching racial inequality (Loconte 19). In the United States, this pattern of race-based differentiation created a movement to preserve the "purity of the American Race," which originated in Virginia and led to the passing of Virginia's Eugenic Sterilization Act of 1924 (Wong). The Act legalized the sterilization of those deemed unfit or inferior for various reasons. The law was contested but upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1927. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes voted to uphold the law. He wrote: "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind ... Three generations of imbeciles are enough" (quoted in Loconte 19). After the Supreme Court upheld the law, more than 7000 people were forcibly sterilized in Virginia between 1927 and 1929 (Wong). Given the widespread and prominent nature of these ideas, and the depth of their impact on social, legal, governmental, and cultural events in Europe and the United States, it is unlikely that Tolkien, very educated and surrounded by scholars who frequently debated issues

during meetings of the Inklings would not have been aware of the thought and the science of the time. In some instances, his descriptions of races in his stories echo exactly these ideas about the role of physiology and race and capacity.

Fimi brings attention to evidence of Tolkien's buy-in to these concepts through his description of Orcs in a June 1958 letter to Forrest J. Ackerman: "The Orcs are definitely stated to be corruptions of the 'human' form seen in Elves and Men. They are (or were) squat, broad, flat-nosed, sallow-skinned, with wide mouths and slant eyes: in fact degraded and repulsive versions of the (to Europeans) least lovely Mongol types" (Tolkien, *Letters* 274). Mongoloid, at the time was one of three major anthropological subdivisions of humans: Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid (Fimi 156). The biases associated with these subdivisions of humans and ideas of superiority of the white race and the West manifested in his creation of the Orc race. Fimi states:

Tolkien seems to identify himself with the 'European' race, usually associated with the Caucasoid, and chooses for his villains the physical characteristics in extreme of the so-called Mongoloid race, traditionally seen as inferior from a western European perspective. At the same time the identification of Orcs with the mongoloid race evokes popular ideas on racial degeneration and mental disability. For many years—officially until 1961—the medical condition today known as 'Down's Syndrome' was referred to as 'Mongolian idiocy' or 'Mongolism.' (156)

Given Tolkien's reference to the repulsive perception of the "least lovely Mongol types," it becomes clear that Tolkien in some ways subscribed to the ideas of race and appearance popular at the time. However, he disagreed with *racialist*—what we would call racist today—views. In numerous letters, he denies or argues against racist views. He denies the Nazi regime's request for evidence of his Aryan descent, a question asked as the Third Reich was considering a

German translation of *The Hobbit* just prior to World War II (Tolkien, *Letters* 37-38); he discusses the lamentable “treatment of color” by Europeans in South Africa (Tolkien, *Letters* 73); he calls Hitler an “ignorant little cad” Goebbels a “besotted fanatic,” (Tolkien, *Letters* 93), and he refutes an interview transcript that describes his work as having *Nordic* origins: “Not *Nordic*, please! A word I personally dislike; it is associated, though of French origin, with racialist theories. Geographically *Northern* is better” (Tolkien, *Letters* 375). These refusals to be identified as racialist, or racist, force us to consider the nature of Tolkien’s views on race. Is he associating the racialist label with the violent actions taking place in Hitler’s Third Reich when he rails against Hitler and Goebbels, and is it largely offensive because of World War II and its ramifications as he writes letters to his son, Christopher, who is fighting in that war? Is he resisting the racialist label because of race-based violence taking place on a massive scale? Clearly, race and a hierarchical perception of race and patterns consistent with eugenic ideas run rampant in his work. It is possible that Tolkien did not connect these two aspects of his ideology. It is possible that the race-based manifestation of his mythology is the result of what we would today call implicit bias, so deeply baked into Tolkien’s worldview that he simply takes it for granted and does not connect it with overtly racist rhetoric and violence. It is possible he believed racial hierarchy and biology were simply facts, and one should not act in violence based on them. These suggestions may appear highly speculative, but his writing reinforces this perception.

Despite his denials and dislike of *racialist* views, Tolkien’s work is built on racial division, monolithic representations, and inequality. The hierarchical nature of Tolkien’s mythological people and races manifests immediately in his work. He divides peoples into

categories reminiscent of William Ripley's *The Races of Europe* published in 1899 and Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*, published in 1916 (Fimi 145). Fimi writes:

According to Ripley there were three main 'racial' distinctions amongst the people of modern Europe: the Nordic, the Alpine and Mediterranean. The Nordic Race was described as tall with fair hair and blue eyes, the Mediterranean race as rather short, slender and agile, with dark hair and eyes, while the Alpine was of medium stature, stocky build and with hair and eye color intermediate between the other two 'races'.

Grant's elaboration of this scheme added 'racial aptitudes' . . . portraying the Nordics as a race of 'soldiers, sailors, adventurers, and explorers, but above all, of rulers, organizers, and aristocrats,' while the Alpines are attributed an 'essentially peasant character.' The Mediterraneans are 'inferior in bodily stamina' to the other two races, but superior in the field of art.' (quoted in Fimi 145)

This model of race-based capacity and the tripartite division is evident in Tolkien's work and spans both men and elves—both in physical description based on three divisions and in capacity and capability. The elves fracture into three distinct groups: the Vanyar (the fair elves), the Noldor (deep elves, sometimes called "dark" elves), and the Teleri. Humans of the First Age are subdivided into three groups: the houses of Hador, Haleth, and Bëor. Each of the three houses is among the human "elf friends," while Easterlings and other humans of darker complexion are from the beginning under the influence of Morgoth (Fimi 145). The hobbits fall under the tripartite division scheme: "the Harfoots, Stoors and Fallowhides are distinguished by their skin colour, skeletal structure, and respective skills and abilities that seem to be associated to these bodily characteristics" (Fimi 145). So, despite Tolkien's anti-*racialist* sentiments, race and physical features played a central and essential role in his mythology. Each major group of

people is described by race, physical features, bloodline, and subsequently arranged in a hierarchy that assigns value and position in his world. Within the racial hierarchy, class structures not unlike those embedded in Victorian England—servants, lords and ladies, aristocratic structures—provide the structure to the society Tolkien creates, although beyond succession, heroics, and warfare, his work offers slim description of other societal or material considerations.

Much like the trees discussed in the previous chapter, the creation of the people in Tolkien's world is hierarchical, with ancestry revealing value. The creation of the people in *The Silmarillion* reveals the order of creation, the hierarchy and value assigned to each race, and how ancestry and bloodlines impact power and capability. The first lines of *The Silmarillion* read: "There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the first offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 15). Ilúvatar is the supreme god, the creator of all things. His first creations, the Ainur, are the Valar and the Maiar, with the Valar being superior to the Maiar. The Valar become the gods of Arda, the Earth, which Tolkien calls Middle-earth. The *Silmarillion*'s second chapter, "Valaquenta" describes, through the eyes of the elves, referred to as the Eldar, the Valar, and the Eldar: The Great among these spirits the Elves name the Valar, the Powers of Arda, and Men have often called them gods. . . . With the Valar came other spirits whose being also began before the World, of the same order as the Valar but of less degree. These are the Maiar, the people of the Valar, and their servants and helpers" (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 25-30). The Maiar are below the Valar in Hierarchy and while many of the Valar play important roles in the mythology, both their importance and the order of power is best illustrated in the relationship between Melkor/Morgoth and Sauron. Melkor is the fallen Valar, the evil one who brings so

much ruin to the makings of the other Valar. Sauron, before rising to become the evil overlord presented to us in *The Lord of the Rings* was a Maiar servant of Morgoth (Melkor having been renamed by Fëanor during the War of the Wrath). The master-servant relationship reflects the established class roles of Victorian English society.

The creation of elves and men follows a similar pattern and value is assigned immediately. Ilúvatar goes on to create the Children of Ilúvatar, the “Elves and Men, the firstborn and the followers” (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 18). Again, even among the children of the supreme god figure in his fiction, Tolkien creates an immediate hierarchy. The elves, at their first mentioning are immediately defined as the firstborn and their gifts are many. Men, on the other hand, share a certain status with elves in the eyes of Ilúvatar as his children, but instead of immortality and the talents and knowledge with which the elves are blessed, they receive instead the gift of death. Tolkien writes:

Then he spoke and said: ‘Behold I love the Earth, which shall be a mansion for the Quendi and the Atani! But the Quendi shall be the fairest of all earthly creatures, and they shall have and shall conceive and bring forth more beauty than all my children; and they shall have greater bliss in this world. But to the Atani I will give a new gift.’

Therefore he willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else; and of their operation everything should be, in form and deed, completed, and the world fulfilled until the last and smallest. . . . It is one with this gift of freedom that the children of Men dwell only a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon whither the Elves know not (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 41-42).

Aulë, one of the Valar, desiring to create children of his own the way Ilúvatar made the men and elves, created the dwarves, but because of his own inferiority and subordinate role to Ilúvatar his creations are doomed to be less than Ilúvatar's creations:

For so greatly did Aulë desire the coming of the Children, to have learners to whom he could teach his lore and his crafts, that he was unwilling to await the fulfilment of the designs of Ilúvatar. And Aulë made the Dwarves even as they still are, because to forms of the Children who were to come were unclear to his mind, and because the power of Melkor was yet over the Earth; and he wished therefore that they should be strong and unyielding. (Tolkien, *Silmarillion* 43)

Ilúvatar is not pleased with Aulë's decision to create a race of people because he has not given the Valar the authority to create, but he lets Aulë's children live. He forces them to sleep, however, until the Children of Ilúvatar have populated the earth, reinforcing the racial hierarchy. What is significant here is not the creation story and the debate over the power of creation, but Tolkien's architecture of the order in which each race appears, the access and gifts each race receives, and the monolithic representation of each race defined both through appearance and action. The elves are fair-skinned, tall, elegant, and gifted in every way. Even after the elves fracture into three distinct groups, they are still immortal and more capable in every way than humans. The humans, mortal, gifted with the freedom of choice, lack the obvious definitions that elves have because humans can vary in appearance, but here again Tolkien makes significant choices about the physical characteristics and how they reflect on the capacity, valor, value, and allegiance of human beings. This most significant manifestations of this phenomenon play out in the story of the Númenóreans, of which Aragorn is a key figure in the story of *The Lord of the*

Rings. The humans are also split into three factions or categories, and each category carries with it physical and behavioral traits that Tolkien uses to categorize groups of people.

As the first born, the elves are Ilúvatar's greatest creation in Tolkien's hierarchy and have the longest life and greatest gifts. The elves, frequently described in his texts as tall, with beautiful features, adept in song, music, nature-loving, and versed in all things beautiful exist at the top of his hierarchy, just below the god figures and the fey spirits. Men occupy the second rank because they have the potential to be beautiful. The men of Númenor are tall, handsome, often fair-haired and fair-skinned. The Rohirrim, too, exhibit these features, though they lack the touch of elven blood that the Númenóreans have. They are the best of the common men in Tolkien's fiction. The humans on the side of Sauron are all frequently depicted as being swarthy, dark, slant-eyed, or otherwise exotic—reminiscent of Edward Said's argument of the othering of the people of the Orient which functions as a mirror designed to reinforce the superiority of the west and western features as they are described in the appearance of the Rohirrim, the Númenóreans, and the Elves. This binary is very problematic and categorically sets white, Anglo-Saxon-inspired humans as racially superior to all other humans. Not only does it create a racial superiority binary, but also divides them along lines of good and evil.

Given our understanding of the milieu in which Tolkien wrote and the influence of colonialism and Western ideologies about racial superiority, it is not difficult to identify the bias in Tolkien's constructions of race in his fiction. However, for additional clarity it is valuable to turn to Edward Said's ideas about *Orientalism* and how they manifest themselves throughout Tolkien's work. Said argues that the Orient was “a place of European invention . . . had been since antiquity a place of romance exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes,” and “also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies . . . and most recurring images of

the Other” (1). In addition to serving as a mirror of difference, non-western cultures were also perceived as intellectually inferior. They were the Other against which a light of western, white idealized power shone more brightly (Said 1-8). This ideology is present throughout Tolkien’s writing.

The characterization of non-white people begins as early as the appearance of humans in Tolkien’s work. In the *Silmarillion*, shortly after the first appearance of men, “it is told that at this time the Swarthy Men came first into Beleriand. Some were already secretly under the dominion of Morgoth . . . These men were short and broad, long and strong in the arm; their skins were swart or sallow, and their hair was dark as were their eyes . . . had greater liking for the Dwarves of the mountains than for the elves” (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 157). Tolkien immediately associates skin color, physical features, and non-white bodies with evil. Further, he creates in them disproportionate stature or limbs to give them a more primitive appearance. Their association with dwarves, which in the mythology are often described as evil, greedy, or selfish—as in the legend of the Petty Dwarves that betray Men and Elves—sets them further apart from the good, tall, elegant, and beautiful elves and the early men of noble and heroic nature.

Tolkien creates an anomaly in his representation of dwarf race in his work. In *The Hobbit* the dwarves are not so different from fairy tale dwarves. In *Silmarillion* and *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien develops dwarves further and reveals their willingness to work both with the forces of good and those of evil. However, their development is scant when compared to that of the elves. The reason for this is unclear. What is clear is that much like the negative cast of the men associated with evil, dwarves share stunted bodies and, as with their creation story, have less favor from Ilúvatar. They always straddle the gap between good and evil. During the Fifth Battle

of the First Age, when the sons of Fëanor confront Morgoth and his force of monsters, the Dwarves of Belegost, the Naugrim, confront the dragon Glaurung: “For the Naugrim withstood fire more hardily than either Elves or Men, and it was their custom moreover the wear great masks in battle hideous to look upon; and those stood them in good stead against the dragons. And but for them Glaurung and his brood would have withered all that was left of the Noldor [Elves]” (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 193). This scene casts the dwarves as fierce and powerful. Their masks give the dwarves a demonic or monstrous quality, and the dwarves are able to withstand dragon fire. They are far from the heroic shining, open faced warriors with gleaming eyes and bright swords typical of Tolkien’s heroic characters. What is more, they are unreliable. Tolkien writes:

Glaurung turned and struck down Azaghâl, Lord of Belegost, and crawled over him, with his last stroke Azaghâl drove a knife into his belly, and so wounded him that he fled the field, and the beasts of Angband in dismay followed after him. Then the Dwarves raised up the body of Azaghâl and bore it away; and with slow steps they walked behind singing a dirge in deep voices, as it were a funeral pomp in their country, and gave no heed more to their foes; and none dared to stay them. (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 193)

The dwarves defeated Glaurung and his minions, but at the death of their own leader, they left the field; however, this battle was not over. The western front was “assailed by a tide of foes thrice greater than all the force that was left to them. Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs, high captain of Angband, was come” and the Noldor lost the war with Morgoth (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 193). This mixed representation of divided loyalties, ferocity, and power without resolute nobility as it is depicted in the elves and men casts the status of the dwarves in doubt. The dwarves, although powerful, crafty, and fierce, are always represented as flawed, selfish. Even in *The Hobbit*,

Thorin Oakenshield succumbs to greed and refuses to share his wealth with the people of Laketown. Thorin is willing to go to war and expels Bilbo because the hobbit surrendered the Arkenstone in an attempt to prevent the war. Thorin does not repent until he is on his deathbed after the battle (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 227-37).

Despite being the impetus for Bilbo's adventure, the dwarves have only a minor role in *The Lord of the Rings*, and their absence is likely because of its more adult tone. For his more serious work, he relegated the dwarves to the sidelines, again indicating their lower place in his hierarchy of valuable people. Their sole representative is Gimli, and his function appears to exist mostly to offset Legolas. Gimli's presence amplifies the *elfness* of Legolas, it amplifies everything dwarves are not. This dynamic may be connected to the ancient myths in *The Silmarillion* where, as previously described, the dwarves were created by Aulë, making them subpar creations of a demigod as opposed to the Children of Ilúvatar. What is interesting is the development of the friendship between Legolas and Gimli. Their friendship was so strong that Legolas, when he leaves for the Grey Havens after the Passing of King Elessar. Tolkien writes, "Legolas built a grey ship in Ithilien, and sailed down Anduin and so over the Sea, and with him, it is said, went Gimli the Dwarf" (*Lord* 1097-98). Gimli's departure with Legolas for the Grey Havens and his sole representation of all dwarves in *The Lord of the Rings* makes him, effectively, the token dwarf of the epic, and another race-based declaration of the dwarf's lower value.

The orcs of Tolkien's mythology are the most significant example of "othering" in Tolkien's writing. They are the most inferior race through which we see the superiority of the other races. The elves' beauty and capacity are amplified when viewed next to the orcs. The orcs were created from captured elves by Morgoth, twisted and changed to become the antithesis to

elves (and men). In the many pages of *The Lord of the Rings* there are few descriptions of the orcs. Most are vague references to “dark” figures or “black” figures and some dialogue that gives the readers a glimpse at them. In Moria, before Gandalf falls fighting the balrog, the fellowship stumbles on the remains of the dwarves that made their last stand against invading orcs. Among the detritus, they find crooked “orc-scimitars with blackened blades” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 321). The description of the orc weapons implies both wicked intentions and inferiority. The swords carried by the heroes are starkly different from those of the orcs. Andúril, Flame of the West, Aragorn’s ancient sword is a piece of art: “on its blade was traced a device of seven stars set between the crescent Moon and the rayed Sun, and about them was written many runes... Very bright was that sword ... the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold, and its edge was hard and keen” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 276). Sting, the sword Bilbo gave to Frodo, is not a legendary blade wielded by ancient kings, yet being of elvish make “its polished and well-tended blade glittered . . . cold and bright” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 277). This is to say that everything about the Orcs, or the elves, is reflective of their making, their appearance—elves and all things they create are beautiful, as Ilúvatar intended. Orcs, and everything they possess is crude and inferior. This is notable because, as Fimi describes, Tolkien’s work is nearly devoid of material description (Fimi 160-65). The material descriptions, apart from the descriptions of Gondor and the Rohirim near the end of *The Lord of the Rings* are mostly of objects like weapons and crowns and these objects serve to amplify the description, class, status, or position of the people with which they are associated.

The orcs themselves are not often described in detail, instead being depicted as two-dimensional, black villains. In the few instances they are described, the depictions are physical, such as when the Fellowship is attacked in Moria: “There are orcs, very many of them,”

[Gandalf] said. ‘and some are large and evil: black uruks of Mordor. . . . a huge orc-chieftain, almost man-high, clad in black mail from head to foot, leaped into the chamber . . . His broad flat face was swart, his eyes were like coals, and his tongue was red; he wielded a great spear” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 324). Or shortly after Boromir’s death when Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli examine the corpses near Boromir, Tolkien writes: “There were four goblin-soldiers of greater stature, swart, slant-eyed, with thick legs and hands. They were armed with broad-bladed swords, not with the curved scimitars usual with orcs; and they had bows of yew, in length and shape like the bows of Men” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 415). In each case, Tolkien reminds us of the dark skin, broad and swart faces, and often describes their eyes as animalistic or slanted. During Merry and Pippin’s captivity readers are frequently reminded of crooked legs, hard claws, and “large, swart, slant-eyed orcs with great bows and short-bladed swords” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 451). When Frodo and Sam encounter orcs as they try to make their way into Mordor, Tolkien goes a step further, presenting readers with a description of two variations of orcs:

Presently two orcs came into view. One was clad in ragged brown and armed with a bow of horn; it was of a small breed, black-skinned, with wide and snuffling nostrils: evidently a tracker of some kind. The other was a big fighting orc . . . had a bow at his back and carried a short broad-headed spear. As usual they were quarrelling, and being of different breeds they used the Common Speech after their fashion. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 924)

The description of the nostrils as wide and snuffling in this passage recalls eugenics and the animal parallels in Darwinist theory. It implies that wide nostrils indicate a better sense of smell and reduces the orc to an animal more than to a person. The second orc’s physical size serves as the distinction of his function as a “fighting orc,” again marrying physical form to function. The distinction of the two orcs as being of two *breeds* rather than clans or tribes also reduces them in

stature making them clearly inferior as people and more akin to dogs. Their use of the Common Speech is forced by their being of different “breeds” ties their lineage to their language, rather than any sort of tribal dialect, and is again a physical link to capacity and behavior. Given the origin of orcs as corrupted elves and Tolkien’s likening of their form to the “Mongoloid” classification of races popular in Europe and North America at the time, the characterization of breeds is particularly concerning. By depicting orcs in this way, and the connection to Mongol stereotypes in his letters, we can derive that Tolkien certainly shared some of the biases featured in his work, given the shared biases of the time. Tolkien created a race that is easy to hate and fear by using features of a race considered inferior and degraded when he created the orcs.

Humans fare much better, but they also suffer the hierarchical treatment and the determinism of appearance and physicality being inextricably linked with their potential and station in the world. The dominant humans in the story are the Númenóreans, a fallen people from a fallen kingdom that Fimi argues can be likened to an ancient civilization like that of Rome (166). The key character descended from the Númenóreans is Aragorn, Isildur’s heir, and the rightful king to Gondor.

Tolkien’s readers are introduced to Aragorn as Strider when he meets Frodo and the hobbits in the Prancing Pony. He is rough looking, with “a shaggy head of dark hair, flecked with grey, and in a pale stern face a pair of keen grey eyes (Tolkien, *LOTR* 156). It is not until much later that Tolkien reveals Aragorn’s heritage and his claim to the throne during the council meeting in Rivendell when the Fellowship is formed. Tolkien writes, “‘He is Aragorn son of Arathorn,’ said Elrond; ‘and he is descended through many fathers from Isildur Elendil’s son of Minas Ithil. He is the Chief of the Dúnedain in the North, and few are now left of that folk.’” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 246) With this introduction, Elrond describes the key role Aragorn plays and

reinforces the power of bloodlines. Tolkien goes to great pains to describe the importance of pure Númenórean ancestry throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Elrond describes the failure of the bloodlines as he recites the history at the council meeting: ““But in the wearing of the swift years of Middle-earth the line of Meneldil son of Anárion failed, and the Tree withered, and the blood of the Númenóreans became mingled with that of lesser men” (244); Faramir mentions it to Frodo: “We are not of Elendil, though the blood of Númenor is in us” (669); Tolkien’s narrator describes it as Gandalf approaches Gondor with Perry: “They were reckoned men of Gondor, yet their blood was mingled and there were short and swarthy folk among them whose sires came from the forgotten men who housed in the shadow of the hills in the Dark Years ere the coming of Kings (750); and again in his description of Gondor’s stewardship:

After the return of Eldacar the blood of the kingly houses and other houses of the Dúnedain became more mingled with that of lesser men . . . Now the descendants of kings had become few. Their numbers had been greatly diminished in the Kinstrife; whereas since that time the kings had become jealous and watchful of those near akin. Often those on whom suspicion fell had fled to Umbar . . . while others had renounced their lineage and taken wives not of Númenórean blood. (Tolkien, *LOTR* 1047-1052)

Race, purity of blood, and ancestry were essential components both to Tolkien’s fiction and his thought. He was very proud of his heritage as a person of Northern origin, and in keeping with the eugenic ideology mentioned previously, the Dúnedain are physically superior even to the Anglo-Saxon derived Rohirrim. Gimli describes the thirty rangers that come to Aragorn’s aid, bringing with them the battle standard Arwen made for Aragorn: ““They are a strange company, these newcomers,’ said Gimli. ‘Stout men and lordly they are, and the Riders of Rohan look almost as boys beside them’” (776). The Rohirrim, up to this point are the picture of human

power and ferocity aligned with goodness and nobility. They battle and defeat the orcs that captured Merry and Pippin, and they ride and protect their lands with noble courage. But the Dúnedain, with their superior bloodline are still greater: “No other mortal Men could have endured it, none but the Dúnedain of the North,” Tolkien writes as Aragorn and his thirty rangers, accompanied by Legolas and Gimli press on after having trodden the Paths of the Dead (790). Tolkien consistently reinforces superiority and inferiority in the peoples he created for his story and his mythology.

The humans allied with Morgoth and Sauron are consistently depicted as shorter, darker, and more animalistic than any of the heroic people in Tolkien’s work. Tolkien consistently describes Easterlings others by way of skin color or physicality: “Gothmog the lieutenant of Morgul had flung them into the fray ... out of Far Harad black men like half-trolls with white eyes and red tongues” (Tolkien, *LOTR* 846). These humans are effectively little different from orcs and Tolkien describes them as the “other” consistently throughout the narrative. If Tolkien’s work were approached like literary fiction rather than fantasy fiction, Chinua Achebe’s critique of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* would come immediately to mind. As it is, given the role of race as related to power and agency described so far, the presentation of races merits comparison. Achebe wrote: “It is the desire—one might indeed say the need—in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (170). Achebe, like Edward Said, points out that Western culture at the time Tolkien was writing presented non-white races much the same way Tolkien presented the Rohirrim and the Easterlings. The darkness, inferiority, and evil of the Easterlings makes the beauty, superiority, and heroism of the Rohirrim shine that much brighter. Tolkien creates a two

dimensional, lesser “other” in the orcs and villainous humans that serve as both the enemy and the opposite of the northern, idealized, Anglo-Saxon-based archetypes; orcs and Easterlings elevate the Rohirrim to their grandeur.

Another race that reinforces stereotypes about inferiority in *The Lord of the Rings* is that of the wild men. Ghân-buri-Ghân and the wild men are described as:

. . . a strange squat shape of a man, gnarled as an old stone, and the hairs of his scanty beard straggled on his lumpy chin like dry moss. . . . His voice was deep and guttural . . . he spoke the Common Speech, though in a halting fashion, and uncouth words were mingled with it. . . . The old man’s flat face and dark eyes showed nothing, but his voice was sullen with displeasure (Tolkien, *LOTR* 831-832).

This depiction of the wild men is like that of the orcs. The physical stature of Ghân-buri-Ghân, the leader of the wild men, and his clothing of grass conjures colonial images of primitive natives and the broken language reinforces the lack of capacity. The description of the wide, flat face reminds us of Tolkien’s letter about orcs and their origin in “mongoloid” features. The broken language is of particular significance because of Tolkien’s love of languages. Why he chose to depict the wild men as less proficient in the Common Speech than orcs is anyone’s guess, but if considered in context with his other creations and depictions of race, it reinforces the hierarchy of superiority, capability, and capacity linked to physical characteristics.

So, what then of hobbits? Hobbits appear to have been a happy accident. Recall that hobbits were born of a note on scrap paper and eventually formed into a children’s story about adventure and dragons not at all connected to Tolkien’s mythology. Tolkien imagined hobbits as the unimaginative English: small-minded yet capable of great courage—as he witnessed during his experience in The Great War. It wasn’t until he began crafting the sequel editors and

publishers were hungry for that Tolkien began to merge *The Hobbit* with the unpublished papers that would become *The Silmarillion*, which was a much, much more serious undertaking. Hobbits entered the story as a fluke, but once there, they had to remain central to the story. Publishers were clamoring for a sequel about hobbits, after all.

Without *The Hobbit* and the likeable Bilbo Baggins, Tolkien would have been much more likely to cast his heroes in bodies more akin to The Dúnedain or the Rohirim. *The Silmarillion* tells the tale of Beren and Lúthien, a human warrior and an elf maiden and their love. Beren was of the noble House of Bëor in the First Age and for his love, he retrieved a stolen Silmaril from Morgoth. He died in the process but Lúthien's love for him was so great she convinced Mandos, one of the Valar, to restore Beren and in exchange, by choosing a life with Beren, she gave up her immortality. "This doom she chose, forsaking the Blessed Realm, and putting aside all claim to kinship with those that dwell there . . . the fates of Beren and Lúthien might be joined, and their paths lead together beyond the confines of the world" (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* 187). Carpenter explains "Of all his legends, the tale of Beren and Lúthien was the one most loved by Tolkien, not least because at one level he identified the character of Lúthien with his own wife" (105).

The power and nature of the way race is depicted in Tolkien's work echoes the hierarchical nature and the lineages of trees from the previous chapter. However, due to the nature of race and its very real connection to modern struggles for equality, the impact of Tolkien's world and the depiction of the people that populate it, is much more significant. The immersive and comprehensive nature of the world Tolkien presents the readers allows them to suspend disbelief and step into the work much the way Niggle steps into his painting. This is at the core of what Tolkien set out to do to assuage his own creative desires and what underpins his

beliefs about subcreation and the role of fantasy stories in our lives, as described in his lecture
“On Fairy Stories.”

V. Tolkien's Impact on Fantasy Fiction

The popularity of fantasy fiction has seen significant growth since Tolkien published *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The growth and popularity of fantasy fiction is in large part due to the popularity of Tolkien's work and the changes to publishing models that resulted from his work. Further, the rapid adoption of Tolkien's storytelling methodology, the immersive nature of his world building, combined with the accessibility of his work in paperback (a first), contributed to fantasy fiction's growth. However, Tolkien's work also perpetuated the embedded racist ideologies of his colonial and late Victorian value system. The value hierarchies discussed in previous chapters became the defining model for derivative work, and a great deal of modern fantasy fiction is derivative of Tolkien's work. This chapter examines the power and impact of Tolkien's fiction on the craft of fantasy fiction writing, the expansion of Tolkien's creative ideas into other aspects of the genre like online games and role playing, the lasting impact of embedded racist ideologies, and the very recent industry acknowledgement of embedded racist concepts.

Tolkien's published fiction remains influential and relevant more than eighty years after the publication of *The Hobbit*, sixty years after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, and nearly fifty years after his death. *The Lord of the Rings*, which has never been out of print, topped almost every poll of favorite books taken in the UK at the end of the twentieth century and achieved similar results in the United States (Tolkien, *History* 1). In that time, additional volumes of his work have been published by his son, Christopher, and continued to expand and reveal the depth and breadth of Tolkien's background material—further enhancing the power of Tolkien's world and his impact on the genre. In the early 2000s Peter Jackson's films reinvigorated and brought *The Lord of the Rings* to a new audience and were so popular that the first trilogy of films was remastered and re-released in higher resolution Blu-ray disks twenty

years after their first theater release. There was more to Tolkien's fiction than just popular success, however. Tolkien *changed* fantasy writing significantly with his work.

The Hobbit had near immediate impact and received the *New York Herald Tribune* prize for best Children's Book of the Year after its publication in 1937 (Mendlesohn and James 47). The adventure itself was no doubt appealing and the presence of dwarves and dragons doubtlessly appealed to readers of folk and fairytales, but the invention of hobbits was also a major contributor to the fantasy text's popularity:

His master stroke was to invent a new species for Middle-earth, the hobbits. This allowed him to shift the perspective of fantasy; instead of writing about great wizards and warriors whose motives are hard to understand, he introduced us into Middle-earth through the eyes of a very ordinary "little man" from a kind of England still recognizable to most of his readers (Mendlesohn and James 45).

In *A Short History of Fantasy*, the authors focus on the hobbits Tolkien created for Tolkien's fiction and the contribution of Bilbo's character to the success and popularity of *The Hobbit*. Dwarves, dragons, elves, and goblins, had, of course been featured in previous fantasy, folklore, and fairy tales, but not quite in the way Tolkien used and imagined them. The elves, particularly, were new. We will discuss this in more detail shortly, but first, it is important to examine Tolkien's impact on the shape and form of fantasy fiction.

William Morris wrote fantasy fiction in the nineteenth century and is credited with creating the "quest fantasy," and he was the first author to construct "a world as if *it is the only world that exists*" (emphasis in original; Mendlesohn and James 22). In Morris's quest fantasies "heroes ... spend the narrative journeying through the landscape in search of a metaphorical Grail" (Mendlesohn and James 25). Tolkien created his Middle-earth the same way. To create

fully immersive worlds in which the protagonists lived was an unusual approach. Many fantasy authors at the time, like Tolkien's friend C.S. Lewis, wrote fantasies in which characters enter other worlds through portals disguised as magical wardrobes and ponds. Like Morris's fiction, Tolkien's fiction presented a world that was *the* world in which his characters existed and not an alternate reality or foreign place. The popularity of his work reinvigorated the model created by Morris and reshaped it as well. According to Mendlesohn and James, the post-Tolkien classic trajectory of a quest fantasy is as follows: "There is both a personal and cosmic conclusion. It starts small, humble and cozy (like Tolkien's Shire); companions are collected and information gathered; there are many red herrings, but any information found in an ancient text or passed on by an elderly mage with a long beard is likely to be correct" (121). Additionally, the source material, mythology, and background information in Tolkien's world is very deep, included maps (a first), and this would become a template (although one rarely, if ever achieved, in matching detail) for future writers of fantasy fiction (Mendlesohn and James 71).

In addition to redefining the quest fantasy for modern fantasy fiction, Tolkien created a story form that has become a standard for fiction "found in almost all quest fantasies of separating out the characters: for most of the second book their adventures are independent and personal, coalescing into cosmic significance only at the end" (Mendlesohn and James 122). In *The Lord of the Rings*, this is most easily identified in the way the text was originally published as a trilogy. In the *Fellowship of the Ring* the story and characters come together and like the model of the quest narrative, the old wizard and other old wise (mostly) men help create the plan before the main protagonists, of which there are several, head out to get the job done. In the second volume, *The Two Towers*, the characters are separated: Frodo and Sam ran away from the group at the end of the first volume; Merry and Pippin have been abducted by orcs; Gandalf is

thought dead after his battle with the balrog in Moria; Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are hunting for the orcs that abducted Merry and Pippin. They do not all come back together until the third volume, *The Return of the King*, after Sauron has been defeated which signals the end of the Third Age. This structure is powerful because it raises the stakes for the characters. The parallel journeys of several protagonists and the climactic rejoining at the conclusion of the struggles give the readers a lot of suspense and action to care about:

Tolkien married the adventure fantasy with epic: suddenly the journey on which participants embarked had world-shattering consequences. We not only care, we more or less have to care. Second, Tolkien took the companion structure of traditional folk tales and reinvigorated it by marrying it with what Campbell argued was the archetypal hero's journey and complicated it . . . (Mendlesohn and James 48).

Thus, Tolkien, through the depth and breadth of his own mythology, his understanding of medieval literature and mythology, and his love of languages, created a completely new understanding of what the epic fantasy story could be. Readers recognized and responded to the power of Tolkien's combination of mythmaking and storytelling and attempted to replicate it creating new fiction using Tolkien's structures and ideas as a template.

Many of the authors influenced by Tolkien emulated his work and became very successful. Terry Brooks, whose *The Sword of Shannara* was published in 1977 and began an arc that ended with the publication of *The Last Druid* in 2020, makes no bones about the impact of Tolkien's work on him: "... in 1965, I read J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and I thought maybe I had found what I was looking for. I would set my adventure story in an imaginary world, a vast, sprawling, mythical world like that of Tolkien, filled with magic that had replaced science and races that had evolved from Man" (quoted Mendlesohn and James 110). The extent

of the similarity in Brooks's Shannara books is significant and "numerous episodes recall Tolkien: there is a great tentacled monster in a pool watching over caverns of treasure and Allanon [the ancient wizard in the story] fights an evil being over a chasm and they both fall into a pit, although Allanon survives (Mendlesohn and James 110). Brooks was not the only Tolkien imitator. Many authors attempted to replicate Tolkien's work—so many that they would eventually be dubbed "Tolkienistas" (Mendlesohn and James 110). Tom Shippey, in his book *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, wrote: "Many readers developed the taste (the addiction) for heroic fantasy so strongly that if they could not get the real thing they would take any substitute, no matter how diluted" (quoted in Mendlesohn and James 110). Frequent readers of fantasy fiction will no doubt be familiar with the many texts that are reminiscent of Tolkien's writing.

Of course, not all authors loved what Tolkien did and they took an opposite approach to fantasy fiction and the heroic quest. Michael Moorcock was one of these: "Moorcock was very strongly influenced by Tolkien but understood this in a negative fashion: he despised what he termed the consolatory conservatism of Tolkien. . . . Moorcock set out to subvert both the sword-and-sorcery genres and the moral themes set by Tolkien" (Mendlesohn and James 78). Moorcock, "leading light of what was to be called British New Wave" and author of a series of books featuring Elric of Melniboné, an anti-hero with a cursed soul-drinking sword, Stormbringer, served as the antithesis to Tolkien's heroes. Moorcock's Elric, like Tolkien's world and characters, would go on to inspire role-playing games and other materials, but not nearly to the scale of what Tolkien's work inspired (Mendlesohn and James 78).

Evidence of Tolkien's power over fantasy fiction remains readily available. Joe Abercrombie, a *New York Times* best-selling author of what Mendlesohn and James call New

Weird fiction, admits to the influence of *The Lord of the Rings*. In an interview with The Guardian published in 2019 about his books that take place in the world of the First Law—of which Abercrombie has sold more than five million copies—Abercrombie says: “it was my take on *Lord of the Rings*, but bringing in all my weird preoccupations about how people work, the nature of violence. It’s a reaction against the shiny and optimistic heroic fantasy I read as a teenager. In trying to do the opposite it becomes pessimistic and grim” (Flood). Abercrombie’s world in both his first Law trilogy (published 2006-08) and the Age of Madness Trilogy (published 2019-2021), does not deal with elves or dwarves or talking trees. Instead, it is a decidedly European story of intrigue, ambition, and warfare. It does, however, like *The Lord of the Rings*, feature an ancient manipulative wizard, powerful warriors, and a distant evil threat. Both of Abercrombie’s trilogies also followed the pattern set out in Tolkien’s work that sees the characters come together in the first volume, separate for the majority of the second volume, and reunite for the climax. Finally, while Abercrombie sets out to move away from heroic fiction in the Tolkien model, his texts do feature an enemy race called “Shanka,” or by their nickname “Flatheads.” Shanka clearly owe their lineage to Tolkien’s orcs. It is revealed in the first trilogy, by Bayaz, the requisite manipulative wizard pulling the strings had an ancient rival, the Maker, which created the warlike Shanka as a weapon (Abercrombie, *The Blade Itself* 435). They are not as central to the story as Tolkien’s orcs, but the similarities are unavoidable. In the first glimpse the reader gets of the Shanka, they are described as “sitting, eating, grunting to each other in their nasty, dirty tongue, big yellow teeth sticking out everywhere, dressed in lumps of smelly fur and reeking hide and odd bits of rusty armor” (Abercrombie, *The Blade Itself* 175). This occurs after one of the main characters survives a fight with them and escapes. The character’s recollections present the readers with a picture of a violent, savage, and primitive group of humanoids very

reminiscent of Tolkien's orcs. In a later novel, the readers get another view of Shanka that is very reminiscent of Tolkien's orcs:

Clover never saw a Shanka so big nor so covered in iron. They liked to rivet any metal they could find into their skin, but this one was so covered all over with hammered plates. . . . saw one flathead dragging another that had an arrow in its chest . . . almost like something a person might do. . . . Made him wonder if flatheads had feelings like people, as well as blood and screams much the same (Abercrombie, *The Trouble With Peace* 50).

These passages are accompanied by descriptions of grey skin, mishapen limbs that clearly recall the way Tolkien described orcs and links their primitive, violent behavior with their physical description. The Shanka covered in riveted armor is particularly reminiscent of the big orc that charges the Fellowship in Moria. At one point, two of Abercrombie's main characters find themselves in a forge operated by Shanka, like the orcs Saruman used to manufacture weapons (Abercrombie, *The Blade Itself* 435). It is arguable that Tolkien's influence eighty-five years later is so deep that his inventions, and the themes that echo with them, are so common that they do not explicitly recall Tolkien. Instead, they have become standard tropes, so deeply embedded in the genre that they are taken for granted. In the case of Abercrombie's Shanka and, of course, their ancestors, the orcs, they bring with them and perpetuate echoes of colonial and eugenic ideologies and are an example of how the fantasy genre can perpetuate ideologies that would be challenged in writing that draws more critical attention.

Tolkien's popularity was helped by the expansion of paperback publishing to fantasy fiction. Ballantine Books published the first paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings* and the success of the novel(s) encouraged Ballantine to publish more fantasy novels in the paperback format. Ace Books had previously published a bootleg version of *The Lord of the Rings*, but

outcry from fans and a boycott campaign, in some part influenced by letters Tolkien sent to fans himself, halted the sale of Ace's books (Carpenter 230-32). The emergence of a paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings* was "perhaps the most important publishing event of the 1960s in terms of the long-term development of the fantasy market" (Mendlesohn and James 76). The success of the paperback edition *Lord of the Rings* effectively created the paperback fantasy market.

The Silmarillion, published in 1977, also reshaped fantasy fiction because of the way it was assembled: "...the principle of its compilation ... this notion of a 'found text', pieced together from fragments to become 'a truth, becomes one of the classic tropes of the quest fantasy in the next decade. (Mendlesohn and James 98) *The Silmarillion* is difficult reading. It is not a novel. It reads more like a collection of connected mythological stories that span ages. It was the first text to amplify and illuminate the rich and deep background material of a fictional world that was constructed as a found text. Some chapters are presented as narrated by the elves and other peoples of Middle-earth, and this model has also been frequently imitated.

The popularity of Tolkien's work is undeniable. In addition to its commercial success, Tolkien's work has spawned numerous books, role-playing games, miniature wargames, computer games, fan clubs, and literary societies that elevate his work to cult status, copy it and create clone worlds, stories, and concepts, or produce derivative material. This effectively perpetuates Tolkien's ideas and is troublesome. Tolkien's work was embedded with beliefs that have been disproven and are no longer compatible with our more complex understanding of race and culture.

Tolkien's creations have become the standard fare in fantasy fictions. Hobbits have populated countless worlds of fiction and fantasy since Bilbo Baggins made his debut in 1937.

They are often renamed to avoid obvious copyright infringement; “Halflings” is very common, or in the case of the very popular *Dragonlance* books and fantasy game world, “Kender” are a staple and necessity. They share traits with Tolkien’s hobbits, like luck and optimism, and certainly their general size and appearance, although not all copy the hairy feet. But hobbits are probably the least nefarious examples of Tolkien’s legacy of race classification. The publication of *The Lord of the Rings* brought more new races to the world of fantasy fiction. Elves, dwarves, orcs, and goblins were all significantly redefined by Tolkien, and the fantasy genre ran with the Tolkien mold, recreating the races and their depictions, complete with appearance and associated capacity and capability. Their categorization as fantasy fiction allowed this phenomenon to escape critical scrutiny until very recently.

The elves, as Tolkien imagined them, were a significant departure from the Victorian depiction of fairy creatures and elves with gossamer wings inhabiting gardens and causing mischief. Tolkien’s elves, tall, elegant, beautiful, and divine, remolded the idea of what an elf was forever. Richard and Wendy Pini’s *Elfquest* graphic novel/comic book series launched in 1978 and is being published. *Elfquest* tells the story of elves, descended from stars, fighting to find their homeland. Their enemies are humans and trolls and, on a few occasions, other elves. Elves patterned after Tolkien’s design became so ubiquitous with fantasy settings that in the 1980s a new game, *Talisanta*, emerged and one of its chief selling points was the lack of elves. Advertisements for the game prominently proclaimed, “No elves!” A brief glimpse the game’s web page today reveals the headline “35 years later, still no elves!” (*Talisanta* 5e—Epic Edition).

Orcs were also new. Today, one can find depictions of orcs in nearly every fantasy genre. They are typically carbon copies of Tolkien’s orcs. British company Games Workshop, founded

in 1975 and producer of table-top miniature war games, role-playing games, and publisher of fantasy novels to support their universe of game worlds features orcs in their fantasy setting, Orks in their science-fiction setting, and hobbits disguised as “halflings” depending on the game. Games Workshop has essentially adapted all the races as Tolkien depicted them and converted them for games they publish. Elves, dwarves, orcs, hobbits/halflings, and others are key races in their games which continue to sell in high numbers. After release of Peter Jackson’s films, Games Workshop also began producing the Middle Earth Strategy Battle Game in which players can collect, build, and paint models to recreate the battles of *The Lord of the Rings*. Games Workshop is only one example of this phenomenon, but they are a significant example because they operate, as they state on their LinkedIn company profile, over 500 retail stores around the globe, as well as trade sales teams selling to over 5000 independent retailers worldwide (*Games Workshop*).

The appearance of role-playing games, specifically *Dungeons & Dragons* in 1974, created an entire new market for fantasy content: the games themselves, the art and accessory products related to the games, and the fiction written in both novel and magazine form to drive sales. *Dungeons & Dragons*, because it created a game mechanic that would allow players to *be* the characters in adventure stories paved the way for Live Action Role Playing (LARP) games and influenced early computer games—a market that has since exploded (Mendlesohn and James 108). *Dungeons and Dragons*, authored by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, offered players four races from which they could create characters: humans, dwarves, elves, and halflings. Humans were the only race that could be any of the three character “classes,” which consisted of fighting-men, magic-users, and clerics. The elves, dwarves, and halflings each had racially defined limitations and ceilings for their capabilities (Gygax and Arneson, *Men & Magic* 6). Orcs were

also part of the game, but they were considered monsters (Gygax and Arneson, *Monsters & Treasure* 7-8). The descriptions in these initial editions of the game are thin. Orcs are given some game rules for encounters but little else: they live in tribes and “do not like full daylight . . . [and] attack Orcs of different tribes on sight unless they are under command of a stronger monster . . .” (Gygax and Arneson, *Monsters & Treasure* 7-8). The clear assumption is that players know exactly what these races describe because they are based on the popular *Lord of the Rings*. By 1974, Tolkien’s fantasy had gained international appeal and no derivative fiction had yet been published. Therefore, Gygax and Arneson could not have drawn their content from anyplace else. These monolithic and simplistic views of the fantasy races would be duplicated across a plethora of games over the next decades. Shannon Appelcline, editor-in-chief of RPGnet and author of *Designers & Dragons*, a four-volume history of the role-playing industry, describes race in the original 1974 edition of the game, writing,

Creating the D&D System: The races. [Original Dungeons & Dragons] has...limited sets of races: dwarves, elves, and hobbits. These demihuman races have severe class restrictions and also level restrictions ... this was because Gygax wanted humans to remain the dominant race in the game, but it would be an issue for play through the ‘80s. (quoted at DrivethruRPG.com)

Although *Dungeons & Dragons* is currently in its fifth edition and now belongs to a new company, Wizards of the Coast, the original edition is still available for purchase both as a deluxe boxed set and digital download. It is important to discuss the impact of *Dungeons & Dragons* and the role-playing game market because, combined with the shifting landscape of fantasy fiction writing, the game industry created an entirely new market for fantasy material consumption, which dramatically increased the demand for fantasy stories and products.

With the advent of computer technology and communication capabilities, pen-and-paper role playing games expanded into globally connected game architectures that featured impressive graphics and near-speed of light communication and opened new possibilities for fantasy content. The wildly successful online role-playing game, *World of Warcraft*, which boasts nearly five million subscribers worldwide (as of October 2021) and shares the elf, dwarf, halfling, orc paradigms so common among fantasy work influenced by Tolkien's writing. That said, the monolithic stereotypes of the races, and the definition of characters by race and class, remain the same.

The trouble with this rapid expansion and adoption of fantasy fiction based implicitly on Tolkien's ideas is that they perpetuate the worldview that existed a century ago and was steeped in the colonial and racist ideology that was dominant in England at the time. *Dungeons & Dragons* allows players to create characters that they role play. The first selection the player makes about their character is the race of the character, which then determines the character's capabilities and defines racial traits and abilities that are presented as monolithic. For example, all elves are agile, and all dwarves have great endurance. This model has not changed significantly from the 1974 edition to the current fifth edition of the game and perpetuates the monolithic thinking about race and class that is evident in Tolkien's work. However, there are revisions in progress that rectify the race representations in the game to some extent.

The popularity of *Dungeons & Dragons* and the spin-off games, as well as the copycat fiction derived from Tolkien's work, has spread the concept of monolithic, race-based ideas and conflicts throughout popular culture. Orcs are warlike and primitive, typically evil, and only out to kill and maim. Elves sing and dance and are nimble and, like Legolas, typically good archers. Dwarves prefer caves and fight mostly with axes, or hammers, and, of course, they all have

beards. These stereotypical concepts reinforce ideas about race and culture and echo ideas put forth by the advocate of eugenics a century ago. The echoes of eugenics and race-based and physical appearance/structure-based capabilities is haunting. In a modern world where race issues have remained contentious and have triggered violence and protest in recent years, people remain immersed in games that perpetuate this old, outmoded, and racist ideology. Of course, much like Tolkien's own blindness to his racial bias, most gamers do not see it that way, come from all walks of life, and are made up of many different kinds of people. The cloak of fantasy enables this critical blindness much in the way it shielded fantasy work from literary criticism. The idea that fantasy fiction could be considered literary did not gain any traction until the 1980s when "there was a growing sense that fantasy could be literature of the kind that could be reviewed by mainstream journals," but it arguably has not progressed very far since then (Mendlesohn and James 130-31).

There does appear to be a reckoning, however. Events in the last few years, such as the killing of George Floyd, have brought intense scrutiny to race issues in nearly every walk of life. Companies have taken on new Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, gone to great lengths to diversify the mix of people in their ad campaigns, and game companies are no exception. In *Appendix N*, an anthology of short fiction that draws its title from Gary Gygax's Appendix N of an early edition of *Dungeons and Dragons* that provided a reading list for inspiration, Ann VanderMeer, a well-known editor in the fantasy publishing industry and recipient of the Hugo and World Fantasy Awards, writes:

At the time of this writing [2020] the current publisher of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Wizards of the Coast, released a statement on diversity in which they addressed how they will

resolve the errors and mistakes of representation in past books and stories, while outlining their commitment to promoting inclusivity in the future. (330)

A major publisher's acknowledgement of the harmful and ignorant tropes built into the fantasy genre is significant and requires further examination. Wizards of the Coast, in their statement "Diversity and Dungeons and Dragons," published June 17, 2020, make great effort to change the message: "Dungeons and Dragons teaches that diversity is strength, for only a diverse group of adventurers can overcome the many challenges a D&D story presents" (Commitment to Diversity: Dungeons & Dragons). The statement goes on to describe the ways in which the Fifth Edition provides "an opportunity to "fix a variety of things, including errors in judgement" from previous editions, as follows:

Throughout the 50-year history of D&D, some of the peoples in the game—orcs and drow [dark elves] being of the prime examples—have been characterized as monstrous and evil, using descriptions that are painfully reminiscent of how real-world ethnic groups have been and continue to be denigrated. That's not right, and it's not something we believe in. (Commitment to Diversity: Dungeons & Dragons)

This statement is simultaneously an acknowledgement of the embedded biases built into the fantasy genre and a Tolkien reference. Tolkien's Noldor, the dark elves, did not have dark skin, but they are derivative the same way the orcs are. The acknowledgement and effort to rectify the biases that are so deeply embedded into the fantasy entertainment genre is a significant move and has been well-received in the press. It was not, however, universally celebrated. There was some backlash as "the announcement of these changes was met with mixed reviews by the fanbase. The world of role-playing games . . . is currently figuring out its role in the broader dialogue about racism" (Limpong). Wizards of the Coast has published one text that revises the rules for

character generation since this statement was published, and another is scheduled for release later this year. Wizards of the Coast's *Dungeons & Dragons*, Blizzard's *World of Warcraft*, and Games Workshop's plethora of games are not the only products that share the legacy of Tolkien's work. They are discussed here because they are some of the largest companies with the largest following and impact, and, in the case of *Dungeons & Dragons* and Games Workshop, they were founded during the mid 1970s when Tolkien's influence was exploding.

Fimi points out there is some evidence that even Tolkien himself became aware of the role of race and racial depictions in his work during the 1960s. She draws attention to a few lines in *The War of the Jewels*, one of the many volumes of *The History of Middle Earth*, published posthumously, in which Tolkien acknowledges the offensive nature of the names one group has for another: the *Moriquendi*, which translates to the "dark elves." According to Tolkien's *History of Middle Earth*, the term fell out of use: "In the period of Exile the Ñoldor modified their use of these term, which was offensive to the Sindar" (Tolkien, *War of the Jewels* 373). Of course, like so much of Tolkien's internal dialogue, this revelation is cloaked in his fantasy writing and we do not know for certain what motivated it. We also do not see any other revision of the depiction of race in Tolkien's work. Therefore, we cannot ascertain whether Tolkien acknowledged his own racial bias. We do know that Tolkien was vehemently against the violent expression of racism that took place in his time. He expressed that in the rejection the Nazi regimes request for evidence of his heritage during the late 1930s and his rebuttal of the contemporary racist label, *Nordic*.

What is certain is that Tolkien's work has had immeasurable impact on the fantasy genre and on popular culture. Tolkien redefined fantasy fiction and the quest fantasy. He pioneered the creation of hugely immersive worlds complete with mythologies, histories, legend, and heroes

that greatly expanded what amounted to a fairy-story prior to his work. His collaboration with his friends helped to influence C.S. Lewis's creation of his wildly successful and influential *Narnia* books, and together they influenced generations of authors and creators and expanded the market for fantasy fiction. These are all things worthy of celebration. It is important, however, to understand the origins and impacts of what we place on a pedestal, especially in the modern world where the complexities of race, diversity, and identity are topics central to the daily lives of many people around the world. I believe Tolkien would welcome the discussion, defend some of his ideas, but—as with the *Moriquendi*—modify others. Tolkien was a Romantic. He yearned for peaceful, pastoral times without troubles. His characters saved the world from evil, and love was always a central theme of his work, whether it was the brotherly love of great, close friends like the men, hobbits, elves, and dwarves in the Fellowship or out to slay the dragon, Smaug, or the love of Beren and Lúthien in *The Silmarillion*. Love was central to the work that Tolkien himself appreciated most, like the story of Beren and Lúthien. It is no coincidence that Beren is an ancient hero of the First Age and that his love is an elven maiden of great beauty. The elves and northern heroes of his work are placed at the top of Tolkien's hierarchy. Carpenter reminds us that Tolkien thought of himself as Beren and his wife as Lúthien and that their grave is marked accordingly: “[describing Edith and J.R.R. Tolkien's tombstone] a grey slab of Cornish granite ... stands out clearly, as does its slightly curious wording: *Edith Mary Tolkien, Lúthien, 1889-1971. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Beren, 1892-1973*” (emphasis in original, 259)

WORKS CITED

- Abercrombie, Joe. *The Blade Itself*. Orbit, 2006
- . *The Trouble with Peace*. Orbit, 2020.
- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart: Authoritative Text, Contexts, and Criticism*. Edited by Francis Abiola Irele. Norton, 2009.
- Alpers, Paul. *What is Pastoral*. U of Chicago P, 1996.
- Amoko, Apollo. "Race and Postcoloniality." *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*. 2nd ed. Edited by Simon Malpas and Paul Wake. Routledge, 2013.
- An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism, Edited by Lewis E. Nicholson. U of Notre Dame P, 1963.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. Routledge, 2002.
- Asma, Stephen T. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Battis, Jes. "Gazing Upon Sauron: Hobbits, Elves, and the Queering of the Postcolonial Optic." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 50, no. 4, The Johns Hopkins UP, 2004, pp. 908–26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26286384>.
- Birns, Nicholas. "'You Have Grown Very Much': The Scouring of the Shire and the Novelistic Aspects of 'The Lord of the Rings.'" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 23, no. 1 (84), 2012, pp. 82–101, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24353150>.
- Brawley, Chris. "The Fading of the World: Tolkien's Ecology and Loss in 'The Lord of the Rings.'" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 18, no. 3 (71), 2007, pp. 292–307, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24351004>.
- Butler, Catherine. "Modern Children's Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge UP, 2012.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. 1977. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

“Commitment to Diversity: Dungeons & Dragons.” *D&D Official | Dungeons & Dragons*, 17 June 2020, <https://dnd.wizards.com/news/diversity-and-dnd>.

Del Rincón Yohn, María. “J.R.R. Tolkien's Sub-Creation Theory: Literary Creativity as Participation in the Divine Creation.” *Church, Communication and Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, Routledge, 2021, pp. 17–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2021.1886860>.

“Talisanta 5e – Epic Edition!” Talislanta, Everything Epic, <http://talislanta.com/>.

Fimi, Dimitra. *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History: From Fairies to Hobbits*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Flood, Alison. “Joe Abercrombie: 'I Think the Combination of Violence and Humour Wasn't an Immediate Easy Sell.'” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 17 Sept. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/17/joe-abercrombie-you-can-get-women-into-any-story-if-you-think-about-it-for-10-seconds>.

Games Workshop Ltd - LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/games-workshop>.

Gygax, Gary and Dave Arneson. *Dungeons & Dragons Book I: Men & Magic*, TSR, 1974.

---. *Dungeons & Dragons Book II: Monsters & Treasure*, TSR, 1974.

James, Edward and Farah Mendlesohn, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Jensen, Rune Tveitstul. *The Role of Trees in Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Atwood*. 2016. U of Oslo, MA Thesis.

Limbong, Andrew. “*Dungeons & Dragons* Tries to Banish Racist Stereotypes.” *NPR*, NPR, 29 June 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/06/29/884824236/dungeons-dragons-tries-to-banish-racist-stereotypes>.

Loconte, Joseph. *A Hobbit A Wardrobe and a Great War: How J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm of 1914-1918*. Nelson, 2015.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring. Directed by Peter Jackson. New Line Cinema, 2001.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers. Directed by Peter Jackson. New Line Cinema, 2002.

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King. Directed by Peter Jackson. New Line Cinema, 2003.

Mendlesohn, Farah and Edward James. *A Short History of Fantasy*. Libri, 2012.

Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Wesleyan UP, 2008.

“OD&D Dungeons & Dragons Original Edition (0E) - Wizards of the Coast: D&D, Original Edition.” DriveThruRPG.com, <https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/28306/ODD-Dungeons--Dragons-Original-Edition-0e>.

The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory. 2nd ed. Edited by Simon Malpas and Paul Wake. Routledge, 2013.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.

Tolkien, John Ronald Ruel. *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*. 1962. Harper Collins, 2014.

---. *Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Mariner Books, [1926] 2015.

---. *The History of Middle Earth, Part One* Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

---. *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*. Mariner Books, [1937] 2012.

- . *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Edited by Humphrey Carpenter (with assistance of Christopher Tolkien), Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- . *The Lord of the Rings*. 1954-56. 50th Anniversary One-Volume Edition. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- . *The Silmarillion*. 1977. Mariner, 2001.
- . *Tree and Leaf: including Mythopoeia and The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*. 1964, 1965, 1988. Harper Collins, 2001.
- . *The War of the Jewels: The Later Silmarillion, Part 2: The Legends of Beleriand*. 1994. edited by . Christopher Tolkien. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- VanderMeer, Ann. "Afterword." *Appendix N: The Eldritch Roots of Dungeons & Dragons*. Edited by Peter Bebergal. MIT P, 2020.
- Wong, Elizabeth. "A Shameful History: Eugenics in Virginia." ACLU of Virginia, 11 Jan. 2013, <https://acluva.org/en/news/shameful-history-eugenics-virginia>.

VITA

Author: Alexander Richburg

Place of Birth: Eschenbach, Germany

Undergraduate Schools Attended: Community College of the Air Force
Wayland Baptist University

Graduate Schools Attended: University of Oklahoma
US Air Force Air Command and Staff College

Degrees Awarded: Associate of Applied Science, 1996, Community College
of the Air Force

Bachelor of Science, 1997, Wayland Baptist University

Master of Arts in Economics, 2005, University of
Oklahoma

Master of Military Operational Art and Science, 2012, U.S.
Air Force Air Command and Staff College

Honors and Awards: Graduate Assistantship, Center for Academic Advising and
Retention, 2021-2022, Eastern Washington University

Professional Experience: U.S. Air Force, 1992-2018

Adjunct Professor of Economics, Park University, 2017-
Present