



Facultade de Filoloxía

Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa e Alemá

THE ARTHURIAN WORLD OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*: A REASSESSMENT

Laura Gálvez Gómez

Tese de doutoramento dirixida pola Doutora Cristina Mourón Figueroa

Santiago de Compostela, 2017



Facultade de Filloxía

Departamento de Filloxía Inglesa e Alemá

THE ARTHURIAN WORLD OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*: A REASSESSMENT

A doutoranda

Vº e prace da directora

Laura Gálvez Gómez

Cristina Mourón Figueroa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1: TOLKIEN AND <i>THE LORD OF THE RINGS</i> : RECEPTION, INFLUENCE AND SOURCES	9
1.1. A Brief Account of the Author's Life	9
1.2. <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> : its Reception	10
1.3. Tolkien's Contribution to Fantasy Literature	13
1.4. <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> in Cinema and Videogames	20
1.5. Sources of <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	22
1.6. Criticism and Scholarship on Tolkien and <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	24
CHAPTER 2: THE ARTHURIAN THEME OF QUEST	30
2.1. The Quest for the Ring	32
2.2. Aragorn's Quest: the Healing of Men and the Kingdom of Gondor	39
CHAPTER 3: THE ARTHURIAN THEME OF FELLOWSHIP	50
3.1. The Ring and the Round Table	50
3.2. The Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring	51
3.3. The Dissolution of the Round Table and the Company of the Ring	63
3.4. The Knights of the Round Table and the Members of the Company of the Ring	68
CHAPTER 4: <i>THE LORD OF THE RINGS</i> : A REWRITING OF THE GRAIL STORY	73
4.1. The Representations of the Grail in Arthurian Tradition	76
4.2. Chrétien de Troyes's <i>Le Conte du Graal</i>	79
4.3. Wolfram Von Eschenbach's <i>Parzival</i>	85
4.4. Vulgate's <i>Estoire del Saint Graal</i> and <i>Queste del Saint Graal</i>	90

4.5.	Thomas Malory's <i>Le Morte D'Arthure</i>	95
4.6.	The Ring and The Grail	97
4.6.1.	The Story behind the Ring: its Origins, its Forge, its Symbolism and its Role in the Story	98
4.7.	The Quest for the Holy Grail and The Quest for the Ring	110
CHAPTER 5: BILBO AND FRODO'S RELATIONSHIP: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH THE ARTHURIAN UNCLE-NEPHEW RELATIONSHIP		117
5.1.	Uncle-Nephew Relationships in Arthurian Literature	117
5.1.1.	Gawain and King Arthur	122
5.1.2.	Tristan and Mark	127
5.1.3.	Peredur /Perceval and the Fisher King	132
5.2.	Bilbo and Frodo's Relationship as a Rewriting of the Arthurian Uncle-Nephew Relationship	133
CHAPTER 6: ARTHURIAN WOMEN IN <i>THE LORD OF THE RINGS</i>		150
6.1.	Galadriel as Morgan Le Fay, the Lady of the Lake and the Lady of Shalott	152
6.2.	Guenevere and Arwen	177
6.3.	Éowyn and Silence: the Warrior Woman	185
CHAPTER 7: ARAGORN AND ARWEN'S LOVE: ECHOES OF THE TRISTAN AND ISOLDE'S STORY AND LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE'S AFFAIR		195
7.1.	Aragorn and Arwen	196
7.2.	Tristan and Isolde	206
7.3.	Lancelot and Guenevere	211

7.4. Similarities among the Love Relationships of Arwen and Aragorn, Guenevere and Lancelot and Isolde and Tristan	216
CHAPTER 8: ARTHURIAN GEOGRAPHY AND MIDDLE-EARTH SETTINGS AND LANDSCAPES	233
8.1. Criticism on Epic Fantasy Geography: a Brief Overview	234
8.2. The Origins of Middle-earth	237
8.2.1. Middle-earth in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature	239
8.2.2. Middle-earth in Medieval Arthurian Texts	243
8.3. The Myth of the Wasteland in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth	244
8.3.1. Rohan	246
8.3.2. Gondor	251
8.3.3. Mordor	259
8.3.4. The Shire	263
8.4. Camelot and Minas Tirith	264
8.5. Avalon, Valinor and Tol Eressëa	270
8.6. The Valley of No Return and Lothlórien	275
8.7. The Waste City and Minas Morgul	283
CHAPTER 9: MAGICAL AND POWERFUL OBJECTS	287
9.1. Excalibur and Andúril	292
9.2. From Merlin's Mirror in Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> to the Glass of Tennyson's Lady of Shalott and Galadriel's Mirror	304
9.3. Cursed and Deadly Objects: The Palantíri and the Perilous Seat	316
Conclusions	331
Works Cited	339
Appendix	347

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this PhD thesis is to explore the influence and the possible rewritings of Arthurian legends in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55). It is undeniable that Tolkien's work is strongly influenced by Arthurian literature. The Quest for the Ring and the idea of Fellowship echo the Grail Quest and the Order of the Round Table. The Ring as the centre of the plot in *The Lord of the Rings* is a clear allusion to the Grail legend while the Arthurian myth of the Wasteland is represented in Rohan, whose ruler, Theoden, resembles the Fisher King, and in Gondor, which echoes the Arthurian idea of a ruler and his land as one. Arwen and Aragorn's love affair shares some parallelisms with the tragic love of Tristan and Isolde while Frodo and Bilbo's uncle-nephew relationship reminds us of that between King Arthur and Gawain. Galadriel, Arwen or Éowyn share many similarities with the heroines from the Arthurian legend such as the Lady of the Lake or Morgan le Fay.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has been regarded as a modern epic work with medieval resonances. However, criticism on the sources Tolkien used for his work has increased in the last few years.

The methodology used in this paper is based, on the one hand, on a comparative and contrastive analysis between Tolkien's work and some of the most relevant Arthurian texts, such as Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* (1180), Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1485), Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1885) and *The Lady of Shalott* (1833) On the other hand, the methodology followed also consists of a detailed analysis of selected extracts, which constitute our corpus and are taken from Tolkien's work. These extracts may illustrate the presence of Arthurian themes, characters, landscapes,

or objects in *The Lord of the Rings*. The analysis of the corpus also entails a close reading of some of the most important Arthurian texts and other minor ones which are particularly interesting for my research. Apart from this, the different chapters have been classified according to themes, characters, places and finally, objects, which are also the criteria used for the classification of the corpus. These criteria are specified in the titles of each chapter.

The edition of *The Lord of the Rings* used in this dissertation is the last updated version of Tolkien's original text by Douglas A. Anderson (2012). This new edition corrected some mistakes, especially misspellings, and included a more complete index of names and page of references. It provides an improved edition of Tolkien's work in general and adds some appendixes which explain the origins of Middle-earth and the stories of some of the characters. Since its first publication (1954-1955), most editions of *The Lord of the Rings* contained several errors and omissions, especially misspellings. Editors and publishers tended to correct Tolkien's usage of some particular words, such as *elven* to *elfin*. This led Tolkien to make several revisions both for British and American editions, which his son, Christopher¹, continued to revise after the author's death. This revised edition is especially relevant for this study since it provides a more complete (and corrected) version of *The Lord of the Rings*, thereby including appendixes with additional information for a better understanding of Tolkien's work.

This study is also provided with an appendix in alphabetical order (see pp. 347-353) where we have given a brief explanation of the characters, places, and objects from

¹ Christopher Tolkien is J.R.R. Tolkien's third son and has edited and published posthumously most of his father's unpublished and unfinished works. He is the editor of *The Silmarillion*, or *The Fall of Arthur*, among many others.

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. We kindly remind the reader to refer to the appendix for further explanations and clarification.

The main reason for choosing this particular topic -the influence of Arthurian legends on *The Lord of the Rings*- for my PhD resides in the evident Arthurian resonances in Tolkien's influential work. When reading *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time it was evident that Arthurian legends lay beneath Tolkien's work, especially the legend of the Grail but with a darker and more pessimistic atmosphere. In other words, I have chosen to compare *The Lord of the Rings* to Arthurian literature because it is interesting to see how Arthurian legends -an essential component of English and universal culture and mythology- have in turn influenced a literary work which has also had a huge impact on popular culture.

This PhD does not only intend to explore the influence of Arthurian legends in Tolkien's work but also to provide a more in depth and concise study about it. It attempts to find out to what extent Tolkien included Arthurian elements and how he adapted them into his work and with what purpose. This study also seeks to throw light on a topic which has not been analysed in depth and which could be essential for understanding Tolkien's work and its sources.

In general, Arthurian mythology has exerted a huge influence on fantasy literature. King Arthur's world has paved the way for the development of a literary genre which started to flourish in the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the 20th century, especially after *The Lord of the Rings* was first published. Clute & Grant (1999: 57) argue that King Arthur's "mythical adventures have formed the basis for the largest single subcategory of fantastic literature." Considered a masterpiece within the

fantasy genre, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* follows the same patterns as many Arthurian legends.

At first, the link between Arthurian literature and *The Lord of the Rings* may seem unlikely. However, as a medievalist, Tolkien was perfectly aware of the importance of the Arthurian myths and, if we take into account that he wanted to create a mythology for England, one should expect that he added Arthurian elements to his work. This connection between Tolkien's work and Arthurian literature can be especially perceived in the fact that Tolkien translated the anonymous poem of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (14th century) and that he wrote his own version of the downfall of King Arthur in *The Fall of Arthur*, an unfinished poem published posthumously in 2013. The link between *The Lord of the Rings* itself and Arthurian literature is especially clear in the titles of the first and third books, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Return of the Ring*. This, at least, suggests that Tolkien took into consideration some Arthurian ideas as those of fellowship and the return of the legitimate king. However, as this study will show, these Arthurian resonances in *The Lord of the Rings* are not only present in the titles, but also in the characters, places, objects, or themes.

The influence of Arthurian literature on *The Lord of the Rings* has not been studied much in depth by critics and scholars, who have just explained the presence of Arthurian elements very briefly while in other cases the Arthurian influence has been ignored or at least critics have not shown the same interest in it as in the Christian or the Germanic elements. In other words, the idea of Arthurian legends as a main source for *The Lord of the Rings* has been somehow relegated to an unimportant role in comparison to other possible sources. Despite this, and paradoxically enough, critics

have not denied the presence of Arthurian elements. Even so, scholarship on the Arthurian influence of Tolkien's work is still scarce.

The structure of this work has been divided into an introductory chapter about the figure of the author, themes, characters, places and objects. The first chapter is an introduction to the figure of the author while chapters two and three focus on the presence of Arthurian themes -such as those of Quest and Fellowship- in Tolkien's work. Chapter four explains the Grail influence in *The Lord of the Rings* and analyses it as a sort of rewriting of the Grail legend. Chapter five, chapter six and chapter seven centre upon Tolkien's characters and their similarities with the heroes and heroines from Arthurian legends as well as the relationships among them. Finally, chapter eight studies the geography of Middle-earth and its Arthurian resonances while chapter nine explains the role of the objects of power in Tolkien's work and their Arthurian echoes. Here is a more detailed description of the chapters:

The first chapter in this dissertation provides a brief introduction to Tolkien's life and the impact of *The Lord of the Rings* on popular cultural in general and particularly on literature, videogames and cinema. In this chapter, we will also discuss scholarship on Tolkien and analyse the possible sources for *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the different approaches or theories used to study Tolkien's work.

The second chapter and the third one focus on two Arthurian themes: the ideas of Quest and Fellowship. The Quest for the Ring is indeed a clear allusion to the Grail Quest since Tolkien presents it in a similar way: a search that must be undertaken in order to restore peace and save a land. The idea of Fellowship in Tolkien's work has much in common with the Arthurian Order of the Round Table and its values of friendship, loyalty and unity. Like the Grail Quest and the Order of the Round Table,

the Quest for the Ring involves a “fellowship,” a group of heroes who must carry out the quest and save the land. In the third section, we will also discuss the curious parallels between Tolkien’s members of the Company of the Ring and the heroes from Arthurian legends.

The fourth chapter studies to what extent *The Lord of the Rings* is influenced by the Grail legend and how Tolkien used the elements from it to create his work. Tolkien changes the Grail motif and portrays his own Grail, the Ring, as an object of evil and destruction. However, the Ring has similar properties traditionally associated with the Grail such as those of exclusivity -only a chosen hero can bear the Ring and the Grail-, or prolonging life, among others.

Chapter five analyses the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo, focusing on the influence of the medieval motif of the uncle-nephew relationship. It also examines the similarities and differences of Bilbo and Frodo’s close relationship with some of the most prominent examples of relationships between an uncle and his nephew from Arthurian literature.

The sixth chapter focuses on the analysis of Tolkien’s heroines and their resemblances with Arthurian women. Galadriel, in her role as keeper of Lothlórien and bearer of the Ring of Waters, reminds us of Morgan Le Fay and of the Lady of the Lake. Arwen mirrors Guenevere and Isolde since she does not only act as the lover of the main hero but also as his helper. Like Guenevere and Isolde, Arwen inspires Aragorn and encourages him to achieve his quest to become King of Gondor. Éowyn represents the role of the woman warrior and has many resemblances with a heroine from an Arthurian minor text: Silence. Both Éowyn and Silence disguise themselves in order to

do what they wish. They also fulfil a quest which no man could achieve: to kill the Witch King and to find Merlin respectively.

The seventh chapter studies the love relationship between Arwen and Aragorn and its Arthurian resonances. The tragic love between Arwen and Aragorn has many features in common with those of Lancelot and Guenevere and Tristan and Isolde. Like Lancelot and Guenevere or Tristan and Isolde, Arwen and Aragorn undergo several hardships because of their forbidden love; the tragic end of Arwen and Aragorn (explained by Tolkien in an appendix in *The Lord of the Rings*) reinforces the influence of the tragic love of Guenevere and Lancelot and Isolde and Tristan.

In chapter eight, we will discuss the role of geography and landscapes in Tolkien's work and how Arthurian legends contributed to the shaping of Tolkien's Middle-earth. For instance, the Arthurian concept of the Wasteland, a land laid waste because of decline and evil is present in Tolkien's work, especially in Rohan, Gondor, the Shire or Mordor. Tolkien's Minas Tirith can be compared to Camelot in the sense that they are cities of royal and ancient splendour, impossible to destroy, whose fates are intimately linked with their respective rulers, Aragorn and King Arthur. Tolkien's Valinor and Tol Eressëa echo the idyllic island of Avalon while Lothlórien can be compared to the Valley of No Return. Tolkien's landscapes of evil and horror also seem to have Arthurian roots. Minas Morgul parallels the Waste City in the sense that their darkness and gloominess represent the moral corruption of their respective rulers and inhabitants.

In chapter nine we will discuss the role of magical items and objects of power in Tolkien's work and in Arthurian legends. For this, we will especially compare Aragorn's sword to King Arthur's Excalibur and Galadriel's Mirror to the looking glass

of Merlin from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* or the one used by the Lady of Shalott in Tennyson's homonymous poem. Like in the Grail legends in which there is a seat reserved for the Grail Knight in the Round Table, Tolkien includes objects which symbolize royal authority and legitimacy and can only be used by a particular hero: the Palantíri or Seeing Stones.



CHAPTER 1

TOLKIEN AND *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*: RECEPTION, INFLUENCE AND SOURCES

1.1. A Brief Account of the Author's Life

J.R.R. Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, in 1892. When he was only three years old, he moved to England with his family, to the West Midlands. Since he was a child, Tolkien showed a particular interest in creating new languages, especially those which resembled the ancient ones. As James (2012: 62) explains, "Tolkien was fascinated by the languages of the past, and by what language revealed of the way in which medieval people thought." At school, Tolkien learned Finnish, Welsh and Gothic and he started to develop some of his invented language: Sindarin, Quenya or Dwarvish². In 1915, he achieved a first-class degree. By this time, Tolkien had already started to work on writing some poems and creating new languages. After this, a young Tolkien enlisted as a second lieutenant and was sent to fight in the trenches during the First World War. However, he had to return to England after suffering from a typhus-like infection. When the war was over and he was completely recovered from his illness, Tolkien tried to find an academic job. At Oxford, he was one of the scholars who collaborated in the writing of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1928). Meanwhile, he had already written some of his *Lost Tales*, such as *The Fall of Gondolin* (*The Book of Lost Tales*, Part III, 1984). After this, he taught at Leeds University for one year.

² Quenya was the ancient language spoken by the High Elves during the First and Second Age. The Sindarin was another Elvish language, specially spoken by those Elves who dwelt Middle-earth during the Third Age. The Dwarvish language, also called Khuzdul, was the language spoken by the dwarves who kept it in secret (Tolkien in Tolkien, 1987: 208).

Both Tolkien himself and E.V. Gordon³ collaborated in the well-known edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*⁴ (1925) However, Tolkien soon returned to Oxford where he founded a group of Oxford friends -called the Inklings- formed by other scholars such as C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, among others. He devoted his academic career to teach Old and Middle English. In the meantime, Tolkien continued to develop his Elvish languages and mythology. He was also interested in storytelling. The stories which he told to his children, e.g. *Roverandom* (1998) were posthumously published. One of Tolkien's best-known works, *The Hobbit* (1937), was intended as a tale for his children. Tolkien himself said that the beginning of his book, "In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit", came to his mind while correcting examination papers. This is the origin of *The Hobbit* and of the later work *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien retired from academic life in 1959 and died in September 1973. His writing includes both scholarly essays (e.g. those collected in *The Monsters and The Critics and Other Essays*, 1983) and fictional works. Although his most famous works are related to his world of Middle-earth, Tolkien also wrote about Germanic mythology (e.g. *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, 2009 and *The Story of Kullervo*, 2015) and the figure of King Arthur in *The Fall of Arthur*, an unfinished work published posthumously in 2013.

1.2. *The Lord of the Rings*: its Reception

Tolkien is mainly known due to his epic narrative, *The Lord of the Rings*. It is generally agreed that he conceived his work after writing *The Hobbit*, which was first published in 1937. *The Lord of the Rings* was published not as a whole work -as Tolkien wished- but

³ Eric Valentine Gordon (1896-1938) was a Canadian philologist who collaborated with J.R.R. Tolkien in several academic works. He taught at Leeds University (1922-1931) and Manchester University (1932-1938) (Carpenter, 2011: 111).

⁴ Professors Tolkien and Gordon's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was the first edition of a 14th century manuscript which collected one of the most important medieval romances about Sir Gawain. This publication enabled a deeper study of the figure of Sir Gawain (Carpenter, 2011: 145).

in parts. The first volume, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was published in 1954. *The Two Towers* also appeared that same year while the third volume, *The Return of the King*, was not published until 1955. *The Fellowship of the Ring* tells the story of a young hobbit who receives a mysterious golden ring as an heirloom from his uncle, Bilbo. The ring, however, is more dangerous than it seems. It belongs to the Dark Lord, Sauron, who loses it. After discovering this, Frodo must embark on a dangerous journey which will lead him to Mordor, the heart of evil. However, he will not be alone in his Quest: a Fellowship is created in order to destroy the Ring and save Middle-earth. This first volume finishes with the fragmentation of the Company of the Ring. In *The Two Towers*, the fragmented fellowship will follow different paths. While Frodo and Sam aim at arriving to Mordor, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli go to Rohan to gather warriors in order to defeat Sauron. Finally, *The Return of the King* narrates Frodo and Sam's last adventures at the Mount Doom and the destruction of the Ring. As its title shows, the third volume focuses on Aragorn's rising as the new King of Gondor and Sauron's defeat.

After its publication, *The Lord of the Rings* rapidly became one of the most widely read novels during the fifties. Indeed, it seemed to attract a mass readership. There started to be many admirers and detractors of Tolkien's work. While some scholars -W.H.Auden or C.S. Lewis- regarded *The Lord of the Rings* as a masterpiece and praised it, others -E. Wilson or E. Muir- criticized it, considering it poor literature. Hughes (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 1) regarded *The Lord of the Rings* as "a remarkable achievement" while, for example, Wilson described it as "juvenile trash" (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 1). Blisset said that Tolkien's work was "perhaps the last literary masterpiece of the Middle Ages." (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 1). However, the immediate success of *The Lord of the Rings* and the increasing public interest for it even led the

BBC to create a radio adaptation which comprised twelve chapters. This implies that *The Lord of the Rings* became a cult, which in turn triggered a revival of fantasy literature and influenced many future fantasy writers. Moorcock (qtd. in Bloom, 2008: 4) criticized not only Tolkien's style but the epic fantasy in general:

The sort of prose most often identified with "high" fantasy is the prose of the nursery-room. It is a lullaby; it is meant to soothe and console. It is mouth-music. It is frequently enjoyed not for its tensions but for its lack of tensions. It coo-les; it makes friends with you: it tells you comforting lies.

Also, Zimmer Bradley commented on the fact that love appeared to become the dominant emotion in *The Lord of the Rings* but, "not only love of honour and country, but Gandalf and Goldberry and Galadriel's maternal love" (qtd. in Carter, 2011: 193). Stimpson argued that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* shows "subtle contempt and hostility toward women" (qtd. in Carter, 2011: 193). In the 1970s *The Lord of the Rings* continued to be highly praised by many writers. For instance, Irwin (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 1) regarded *The Lord of the Rings* as "the most impressive literary work in the twentieth century. In the 1980s, Le Guin (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 1) claimed that Tolkien's prose was really outstanding. The interest for Tolkien's work still continued to be present in the 1990s. For instance, Sullivan (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 2) regarded *The Lord of the Rings* as a "Tolkien's eminently successful attempt to create a traditional narrative." Apart from its influence on literature, even since its publication *The Lord of the Rings* became rather profitable and beat some classic literary works such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. *The Lord of the Rings* is considered the best book of the century by many readers. As Horne (2011: 120) notes, in 1997 *The Lord of the Rings* was voted the best book of the twentieth century by the British bookstore chain Waterstone, ahead of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Orwell's *1984* or Harper Lee's *To Kill a*

Mockingbird. In 2004, Tolkien's work was voted the best book in Australia and Germany.

Since then, the popularity of Tolkien and his work have continued to increase. More than fifty years after its publication, *The Lord of the Rings* is still one of the most best-selling fantasy novels.

1.3. Tolkien's Contribution to Fantasy Literature

The Lord of the Rings has been traditionally ascribed to the subgenre of epic fantasy inside the genre of fantasy literature. Tolkien himself claimed that "My work is not a novel, but a heroic romance, a much older and quite different variety of literature" (Carpenter, 2012: 452). The publication of Tolkien's work and its huge impact on literature involved the revitalization of the fantasy genre, thereby creating a subgenre: epic fantasy. Brooks (qtd. in Timmons, 2000: 120), a writer of fantasy fiction, points out that:

I don't know if we can measure Tolkien's impact. Every writer of modern fantasy was influenced by Tolkien to some degree. He was the premiere fantasy writer of the last century, and all of us writing today owe him a huge debt.

After the publishing of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954-55 and the increasing interest for fantasy literature (not only for Tolkien's works but also for those of his friend C.S. Lewis), publishers started to realize the commercial potential of fantasy literature. In the later 1960s *The Lord of the Rings* had already become a sort of cult for many readers. By the 1970s many of those who read Tolkien began to write similar works, i.e. there seemed to be an explosion of fantasy novels which were highly influenced by Tolkien. As James (2012: 62) explains:

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* looms over all the fantasy written in English – and in many other languages- since its publication; most subsequent writers of fantasy are either imitating or else desperately trying to escape his influence.

It is difficult to define the term 'fantasy' but it is even more challenging to define fantasy literature. This literary genre comprises a lot of subgenres which are usually overlapped because the limits of fantasy fiction and its subgenres are sometimes unclear and hard to determine. Traditionally, fantasy fiction has been described as having a particular structure. Clute & Grant (1999: 338) explain the difficulties to define the term 'fantasy' so they mention some elements of fantasy fiction such as the concepts of bondage, recognition and eucatastrophe. Bondage means wrongness, that is, when a land or realm is plunged into chaos, darkness, war and destruction. This leads to the idea of thinning, which involves the decline and disappearance of a whole land, realm, or race caused by evil. Then the concept of recognition appears when the main characters or heroes of the story confront the reality of that world in danger and have a choice to make: to wage war, to destroy or to find a powerful object, etc. After recognition, there is a healing, a process in which the land is eventually saved from evil and healed. The last thing is consolation or, as Tolkien (Anderson, 2006: 153) himself pointed out, eucatastrophe, which means an unexpected turn in the plot -normally a positive one.

However, recent criticism on fantasy fiction has provided four different subgenres of fantasy: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusion and the liminal.

James & Mendlesohn (2012: 2) explain this as follows:

In the portal-quest, the protagonist enters a new world; in the immersive, the protagonist is part of the fantastic world; in the intrusion, the fantastic breaks into the primary world (which might or might not be our own); and in the liminal, magic might or might not be happening.

Other scholars have coined these terms to define the subgenres within the fantastic literature. Ekman (2013: 7) provides a more concise definition for them:

The *portal-quest fantasy* introduces the point-of-view character into a fantasy world, either from a version of our own world (through, for instance, a wardrobe) or from a place in the fantasy world that, like the reader's world, is "small, safe and understood" (such as the noneventful, comprehensible Shire). The story is told from this point of origin, and the reader learns about the alien world along with the main character(s). In *immersive fantasy*, the characters, unlike the reader, are at home in the strange world, and the world is described as if totally familiar; the reader has to puzzle out how it works from the clues that are given. *Intrusive fantasy* is set in a world (often our own) into which the fantastic intrudes, causing chaos and confusion. Neither protagonist nor reader is familiar with the fantastic intrusion, and the story is a process of coming to terms with it. The ghost story is a typical intrusion fantasy. In the final category, *liminal fantasy*, the reader's expectations are used to create worlds where the commonplace comes across as strange and wonderful, and the alien is portrayed with an everyday triteness bordering on the blasé. These fantasies are stories in which stylistic manipulation is central to the experience of the fantastic.

This classification may help us understand the different types of 'fantasies' which comprise the genre of fantasy literature but it is not conclusive. Indeed, it is possible that some fantasy novels are a combination of these subgenres mentioned above:

These four categories, although helpful in understanding and discussing some basic structures of fantasy stories, do not provide a set of hard and fast rules to which all works in the genre adhere; nor do they offer a comprehensive description of fantasy literature. They are, in themselves, fuzzy sets, each with its own prototypes, and it is quite for a work to slip from one category to another, or to combine categories (Ekman, 2013: 8).

Some other scholars have used the terms 'epic fantasy', 'heroic fantasy,' 'quest fantasy', or 'sword and sorcery' to define a fantasy subgenre which *The Lord of the Rings* could belong to. However, there may be some differences among them. Epic fantasy is, as Clute & Grant (1999: 319) argue:

Any fantasy tale written to a large scale which deals with the founding or definitive and lasting defence of a land may fairly be called an Epic Fantasy.

Heroic fantasy centers upon the deeds of a particular hero in a primary or secondary world. Heroes are also found in epic fantasy so sometimes it is difficult to distinguish from heroic or epic fantasy. As its name indicates, the main feature of the quest fantasy lies in the presence of quest, a stepped journey which a group of heroes embark on. The heroes will confront many dangers in their adventures which become more and more threatening as the adventures progress:

The structuring characteristic of quest fantasy is the stepped journey: a series of adventures experienced by the hero and his or her companions that begins with the simplest confrontations and dangers and escalates through more threatening and perilous encounters. The narrative begins as a single thread but often becomes polysemous, as individuals or small groups pursue minor quests within the overall framework. Quest fantasies conventionally start in a place of security and stability, and then a disruption from the outside world occurs. The protagonist, generally an average person with hidden abilities, receives a call to action and reluctantly embarks on the first adventure. Choice is crucial in quest fantasy, so protagonists face several cruxes where their choices determine the fate of many. After the hero and company pass the first tests and receive rewards such as magic items, a respite, often characterized by feasting and music in a haven under the protection of a wisdom figure, occurs during which the members of the company receive aid and knowledge (Senior, 2012: 190).

In quest fantasy it is also frequent to find a Dark Lord, a mortal enemy and the main threat, since he destroys and tyrannizes the land. The Dark Lord dwells in an infertile, dark, realm and in the final stage of the quest. The heroes confront him for good or evil although the Dark Lord is normally defeated:

The menace frequently comes from a Dark Lord, a satanic figure of colossal but warped power, who wishes to enslave and denature the world

and its denizens and who lives in a dead land, often in the east or north, surrounded by a range of forbidding mountains and deserts. During the quest, the pattern of an organic, moral world with directive purpose emerges. The final stage of the quest brings the hero into direct confrontation with the Dark Lord, whose defeat is a result of some action or decision by the hero. The conclusion reveals a recovery from the devastating losses that characterizes this genre. However, quest fantasies also posit a cyclical history so that the possibility of the reappearance of the Dark Lord, or of another, in the future remains (Senior, 2012: 190).

The sword-and-sorcery fantasy has been regarded as a synonym for heroic fantasy. Slightly old-fashioned, this term refers to a kind of fantasy fiction in which there is a hero who needs to fight some villains -normally witches, wizards, evil spirits and other supernatural creatures.

These four subgenres of fantasy literature -epic fantasy, heroic fantasy, quest fantasy, and sword-and-sorcery- can be easily confused and the limits among them are not clear enough. Indeed, they share many aspects in common: the presence of the hero, the stepped journey or adventures, the healing of a land, the villain with supernatural powers, etc. Apart from these four subtypes of fantasy, there are others such as Dark Fantasy or Urban Fantasy, which combine both supernatural and Gothic elements.

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* follows these characteristics established by Clute and Grant in their *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1999). The idea of thinning refers to the decline of Middle-earth from its previous state due to the evil deeds of Sauron while wrongness refers to the need of healing Middle-earth, i.e. freeing it from evil. For this purpose the heroes need to embark on a journey or quest. Through the quest, the heroes achieve recognition -they become aware of their roles in the story. Lastly, the heroes reach eucatastrophe. This term means "the final turn in the plot" to use James' own words (2012: 64). Summing up, eucatastrophe is the sudden joy produced by a happy ending. However, if we pay attention to more recent scholarship, Tolkien's work could

be classified as ‘portal-quest fantasy,’ or just ‘quest fantasy’. Mendlesohn (2008:2-3) argues that:

Despite its reputation as a “full secondary world,” the most familiar quest fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, follows the structure outlined: Frodo moves from a small, safe, and *understood* world into the wild, unfamiliar world of Middle-Earth. It is *The Silmarillion*, the book told from within the world, about people who know their world, that is the immersive fantasy.

One of Tolkien’s main innovations was the creation of another world with its own places, peoples and languages different from our own. James (2012: 64) states that:

Middle-earth is a separate creation, operating totally outside the world of our experience. This has become so standard in modern fantasy that it is not easy to realize how unusual it was before Tolkien.

Before Tolkien fantasy writers explained the presence of their invented worlds by regarding them as dreams or connecting them with our world. James (2012: 65) also adds that:

After 1955, fantasy writers no longer had to explain away their worlds by framing them as dreams or travellers’ tales, or by providing them with any fictional link to our own world at all.

As for examples of novels influenced by Tolkien, the earliest one is that of Carol Kendall entitled *The Gammage Cup*, published in 1959 and highly influenced by Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*:

Kendall tells of a Hobbit-like race of little people dwelling in quaint houses in a rural valley surrounded and protected by high mountains. In these mountains dwell their ancient foes –repulsive, goblinish beings, from whom the little folk escaped to find refuge in the valley. An expedition of the Five Heroes goes into these mountains, for the goblin-like foes are stirring anew. The heroes are armed with charmed swords which glow with fierce light when the foe is near –all very like Tolkien (Carter, 2011: 193).

The expedition which appears in Kendall’s novel may mirror Tolkien’s the Fellowship of the Ring or the company of dwarves from *The Hobbit* while the Goblin-like creatures

resemble the Orcs. Moreover, it is quite obvious that the glowing swords allude to Bilbo's sword Sting, which Frodo carries in *The Lord of the Rings*. In Kendall's sequel, *The Whisper of Glocken* (1965), the writer portrays a companion whose quest is to find an ancient treasure and the heroes have to fight against an orc-like race in order to fulfil their quest. Alan Garner's book, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) also shows influence from *The Lord of the Rings*. This novel tells the story of the epic, heroic struggle between an old and wise wizard, Cadellin, and a Dark Lord, Nastrond; an obvious reference to Tolkien's novel. Cadellin echoes Gandalf and Nastrond, Sauron. Gandalf's main task was to defeat Sauron while Cadellin must kill Nastrond.

One of the most important post-Tolkien fantasy books is Ursula K. LeGuin's trilogy *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968). From Tolkien LeGuin does not only borrow the figure of the wizard but also the idea of nominalization, i.e. something exists when it is given a name. Tolkien said that:

The invention of language is the foundation. The "stories" were made rather to provide a world for the languages than the reverse. To me a name comes first and the story follows (James, 2012: 63).

Like Tolkien, LeGuin also creates different languages. In Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weiss' *The Dragonlance Chronicles* trilogy (1984), Tolkien's influence can be also appreciated. There are some companions that must embark on a journey quest in order to save Krynn from Takhisis, the Queen of Darkness, and the evil dragons. Krynn, like Tolkien's Middle-earth, needs to be healed. For this it is necessary that they find the dragonlance -an ancient weapon to kill evil dragons- and a mysterious hero: Berem, the Everman.

Other fantasy writers influenced by Tolkien are Orson Scott Card, Terri Windling, Raymond Feist, Michael Swanbick, Poul Anderson or Terry Pratchett, among

others. Indeed, some of these authors and others contributed to the publishing of an anthology called *After the King: Stories in honor of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Greenberg, 1992). Tolkien's influence can sometimes be perceived in the titles of some fantasy novels such as Simak's *The Fellowship of the Talisman* (1978) -an allusion to the Fellowship of the Ring-, Salvatores's *The Halfling's Gem* (1990) - Tolkien also called the hobbits 'halflings'- or Blaylock's *The Elfin Ship* (1982).

When talking about modern fantasy in the last years, we cannot forget the impact of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga on fantasy literature. Martin himself recognizes the influence of Tolkien on his works: "Most contemporary fantasists happily admit their debt to their master (among that number I definitely include myself)" (Haber, 2002: 3).

Martin also explained that Tolkien's contribution to the fantasy genre was so strong that it should be called 'Tolkienesque fantasy.' Tolkien did not only renew a literary genre but he elevated the fantasy to the category of mainstream literature:

Tolkien *changed* fantasy; he elevated and redefined it, to such an extent that it will never be the same again. Many different flavors of fantasy continue to be written and published, certainly, but one variety has come to dominate both bookstore shelves and bestseller lists. It is sometimes called epic fantasy, sometimes high fantasy, but it ought to be called Tolkienesque fantasy.

The hallmarks of Tolkienesque fantasy are legion, but to my mind one stands high above all the rest: J.R.R. Tolkien was the first to create a fully realized secondary universe, an entire world with its own geography and histories and legends, wholly unconnected to our own, yet somehow just as real (Haber, 2002: 3).

1.4. *The Lord of the Rings* in Cinema and Videogames

The influence of *The Lord of the Rings* can be perceived not only in literature but also in movies and even role-playing-games⁵ (hence RPG). Peter Jackson's famous film

⁵ RPG games refer to a sort of game in which players assume the role of a particular character within an imaginary setting. There may be different forms of RPG games: tabletop RPG, LARP (live action role playing) and virtual RPGs (videogames) (Bowman, 2010:3).

adaptation of Tolkien's work has served to increase its popularity even more. The films *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003) brilliantly portrayed Tolkien's world, bringing the epic fantasy to the screen. It is also considered one of the most profitable book adaptations in cinema history. James (2012: 62) argues that:

Film director Peter Jackson's loving re-creation of Tolkien's world is the most profitable trilogy in cinema history, grossing nearly three billion American dollars.

However, Tolkien's influence was also strong in RPG games. The earliest RPG was *Dragons and Dungeons* which was launched in 1974. This game used some concepts from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* such as the Quest or the idea of Fellowship. Also, the development of computer industry -especially videogames- contributed to the expansion of Tolkien's work. In other words, most epic fantasy games are somehow influenced by him. One example of this may be the videogame *Sacred*, launched in 2004. In this videogame we have a quest in which the character, i.e. the player, needs to gather some elements in order to achieve the sacred weapon which will destroy the Sakkara demon, which resembles Tolkien's Balrog. Also, various characters in the game echo some from *The Lord of the Rings*. For example, we find a ranger who is curiously called Arogarn, a wood-elf named Galadoriel, and the Necromancer resembles Sauron, who was also known as such. Moreover, the portal runes used to transport the hero from one place to another one are marked with J.R.R. Tolkien's initials.

1.5.Sources of *The Lord of the Rings*

When talking about the sources of his work, Tolkien himself recognized that criticism would focus on trying to find the different roots of *The Lord of the Rings*:

I fear you may be right that the search for the sources of *The Lord of the Rings* is going to occupy academics for a generation or two. I wish this need not be so. To my mind it is the particular use in a particular situation of any motive, whether invented, deliberately borrowed, or unconsciously remembered that is the most interesting thing to consider (Carpenter, 2012: 460).

It is not easy to determine the sources of *The Lord of the Rings*. Many critics have discussed this problem for quite a long time. Some argue that the work is influenced by Germanic sagas while others consider it a Christian epic. Chance (2001: 143) explains that:

As a synthesis of Tolkienian ideas, both Germanic heroic or medieval and Christian, *The Lord of the Rings* reconciles value systems over which its critics have debated incessantly and single-mindedly. Some critics have explored its major medieval literary sources, influences, and parallels, particularly in relation to northern saga and Old and Middle English literature, language, and culture, chiefly *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*.

Traditionally, *Beowulf* has been considered the main source used by Tolkien to write *The Lord of the Rings*:

Tolkien did, of course, bring to the composition of LOTR his profound knowledge of medieval literature. Of all the medieval texts that inspired Tolkien, the Old English poem *Beowulf* is the most important (James, 2007: 68).

Also, it is important to emphasize the influence of Nordic medieval mythology, especially the *Eddas*⁶. According to Carter (2011: 212), Tolkien borrowed names, especially from the *Elder Eddas*, and included them in his own mythology, for instance, Gandalf's own name. But what is even more important is the influence of the legend of

⁶ The *Eddas* are collections of epic poems from Nordic mythology (13th century) (Carter, 2011: 159).

Sigfried⁷. In this Nordic legend, we find some similarities with Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. There is a cursed golden ring which provides its bearer with immense power. Like Sauron's Master Ring, this one possesses its own will and corrupts all those who try to carry it. Another important similarity is the broken sword which is re-forged, like Andúril in *The Lord of the Rings*. In *The Legend of Siegfried* the dwarf who owns the magical ring becomes mad and is corrupt, just like Tolkien's goblin-like creature Gollum.

Moreover, some other critics argue that *The Lord of the Rings* is a clear example of Christian epic. Lynch (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44) explains that the celebration feasts present in the book (Bilbo's birthday party or the banquets at Rivendell and Lothlórien) represent the Christian idea of Eucharist. These feast scenes may also be regarded as sorts of Last Supper or Holy Communion, since they are focused on "a departure and a greater errand" to use Kerry's own words (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44). Filmer (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44) argued that some Catholic sacraments are present in *The Lord of the Rings* and are used as restoring sanctifying grace. This may be appreciated in the lembas -the Elvish bread-, and the miruvor -the Elvish wine-. However, Fornet-Ponse (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44) rejected this idea, explaining that:

For the Eucharist instituted by Christ... has to be received in a service...it is intended for all Men and not restricted to the Elves and few exceptions; and in some cases confession is necessary before receiving communion.

Other scholars such as Petty (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44) argue that, although Catholicism is present, it may be not relevant for the development of the action or the characters:

His Catholicism underlies the foundations of Middle-earth, but it doesn't directly dictate the actions of his characters or the myths by which they live.

⁷ The *Legend of Siegfried* is one of the legends included in the *Eddas*, specifically in the *Volsunga saga*. It tells the deeds of Sigfried (also named Sigurd) who achieves the treasure of the Nibelungs by killing the Dragon which protected it (Carter, 2011: 165).

In examining more parallelisms with Catholicism, Longenecker explains that Frodo may resemble not only the image of the Christian hero but also that of the Christian saint:

Tolkien presents us with a Christian hero and type of the Christian saint, because Frodo, in his faithful obedience and humility lives out the way of sacrificial love (qtd in Kerry, 2011: 44).

Boyle believes that Frodo's salvation of Middle-earth echoes the Catholic idea of redemption. He also gives prominence to the Catholic background in *The Lord of the Rings*, i.e. he sees Catholicism as an essential source to understand Tolkien's work. In Boyle's own words (qtd. in Kerry, 2011: 44):

The success of Frodo's mission is a salvation which only a Catholic view of life can explain. To interpret the quest, and its end, without reference to Tolkien's Catholicism is to lose a whole dimension of its significance.

Besides Frodo, some other characters from Tolkien's work have been considered a representation of Catholic ideas. For instance, Galadriel, in her role of a nourishing mother, embodies the figure of the Virgin Mary while Aragorn, Frodo or Gandalf have many aspects in common with Christ:

With regard to Christological applicability, it can be seen that other characters in the story, besides Frodo, emerge as Christ figures at certain *applicable* moments. Gandalf clearly reminds us of Christ in his "death," "resurrection," and "transfiguration," especially in the way that Tolkien's description of Gandalf's resurrection resonates unmistakably with the Gospel accounts of Christ's Transfiguration. Aragorn's descent to the Paths of the Dead reminds us of Christ's descent into hell following the Crucifixion. Aragorn, like Christ, is "King of the Dead" who has the power to set the suffering souls free of the death curse. Similarly, Aragorn is a Christ figure in his role as healer (Drout, 2007: 98).

1.6. Criticism and Scholarship on Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*

Much has been written about Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* since it was published in 1954 and 1955. Tolkien's work was initially rejected by scholars and critics because it was considered poor literature. Eaglestone (2005:1) explains:

Writing critical work on Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* often involves drawing battle lines, between, for example, advocates of the popular and guardians of high culture, between academic scholarship and ‘fan’ writing, between admiration for a text and a fear of murdering it by dissection, between Old English experts and critics of modern writing.

Another conflict in Tolkienian criticism was to provide a theoretical framework for *The Lord of the Rings* since this poses a question on which literary theoretical approach fits best when studying Tolkien’s work. The use of a theoretical approach to understand *The Lord of the Rings*, however, has been fruitless and useless because of its complexities. Curry (2004: 8) claimed that “I have too much respect for Tolkien’s work, in all its richness, to sacrifice it on the altar of theory”.

The Lord of the Rings has been studied from different points of view. Some scholars have studied the language used by Tolkien in his work while others have focused on its sources as well as the social, moral and psychological background behind it. One of the most important Tolkien critics is Shippey, whose academic work, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2014), has become essential in Tolkien studies. Shippey (2014: 213) explains that *The Lord of the Rings* is “a mediator between, on the one hand, a Christian belief and the literature of the pre-Christian heroic world to which Tolkien was so much attached, and on the other, between Christian belief and the post-Christian world in which Tolkien thought himself increasingly to be living”. Other scholars, such as Casey (2012: 114-115) have noted that *The Lord of the Rings* and the fantasy literature have several writing techniques in common with modernism:

For more than fifty years, Tolkien’s work has been one of the most powerful models for (post)modern fantastic literature. As a result, most works of fantasy, even those written during the heyday of modernism resist the appellative designation of modernist literature because they are Tolkienesque rather than modernist, although they may share common attributes with modernist texts. For example, although fantasy, like modernism, rejects the restrictions imposed upon the narrative by

Realism, fantastic works do not always reject the Romantic subjectivity of experience. Moreover, fantastic works may feature modernist techniques such as stream of consciousness, parallax (differing narrative points of view) or metafictional experimentation but they rarely embrace modernism's avid rejection of tradition. Tolkien and other fantasy writers drew heavily on myth, history and fairy tale, and the formal considerations of these earlier narratives helped to shape the face of the genre.

However, Rosebury (2003:163) argues that the sense of modernity in Tolkien's work resides in the fact that his fictional Middle-earth represents some of the author's own experiences and thoughts:

The modernity of Tolkien's work, from the point of view of its content, lies not in coded reference to specific contemporary events or phenomena, but in the absorption into the invented world –no doubt a partly unconscious absorption- of experiences and attitudes which Tolkien would scarcely had acquired had he not been a man of twentieth century. Some are obvious enough. *The Lord of the Rings* describes a continental war, in which the survival of whole peoples and cultures is at stake.

Santoyo & Santamaría's *John R.R. Tolkien* (1983) was the first critical work devoted to Tolkien and his work published in Spain. It provides a deep and general insight into his main works. This study analyses Tolkien's concepts of good and evil, among other themes and aspects. Tolkien describes evil as the result of corruption and not as a primary force like good. Indeed, evil in *The Lord of the Rings* is caused when someone or something is corrupted: "El mundo del mal no es en Tolkien malo por esencia sino por corrupción de la naturaleza primera" (Santoyo & Santamaría, 1983: 61). Connected with the themes of good and evil is the idea of dualism. This can be appreciated in the landscapes -the idyllic, green and peaceful landscapes from the Shire, Rivendell and Lothlórien contrast with the darkness and desolation of Mordor or Minas Morgul-or in the characters -such as Aragorn who in his role as a ruler differs from Sauron who intends to destroy and subdue Middle-earth. To use Santoyo and Santamaría's own words: "Frente a Gandalf, Saruman. Frente a la tierra baldía de Mordor, las flores

campiñas y cascadas de Ithilien. La mano de Aragorn, que devuelve la salud, frente a la mano de Sauron. El dualismo es perenne”.

Another critical approach used to study *The Lord of the Rings* is that of trauma studies which focus on the study of a literary work considering its author's own traumas or negative experiences during his/her life. *The Lord of the Rings* might be an example of this perspective. The horror reflected in Tolkien's work -Mordor, Sauron, the Ringwraiths, etc. - comes from the author's own experience when fighting during the First World War. Shippey (2014: 329) says that “*The Lord of the Rings* in particular is a war book, also a post-war book, framed by and responding to the crisis of Western civilization, 1914-1945”. Eaglestone (2006: 3-4) also supports the idea that Tolkien's work epitomizes the author's own experience in war:

However, attention to the text of *The Lord of the Rings*, and recent work in trauma theory might offer an insight into this, and into its importance as a novel and success in British and Anglophone cultural life. One of the unusual things about *The Lord of the Rings*, and something that certainly sets it apart from much twentieth-century British literature, while tying it into the cultural fabric of the century as remembered more broadly, is that it reflects the experience of both World Wars.

Criticism on Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* has attempted to make two main distinctions -Tolkien studies and Middle-earth studies- in order to somehow establish a series of theoretical patterns for Tolkien's works as well as to separate Tolkien's identity as a writer from his vast work about Middle-earth. These two boundaries in Tolkien scholarship have to do with two different kinds of readership -scholars properly speaking and Tolkien fandom- which may overlap each other. In Drout's words (2012: 15):

Even within the specialization of Tolkien criticism there is a significant divide between ‘Tolkien Studies’ (scholarship about Tolkien the author and his works of literature) and, to use John Ellison and Patricia Reynolds' terminology, ‘Middle-earth Studies’ (analysis of Tolkien's invented worlds, histories, languages, creatures, etc.), a disjunction that to

some degree mirrors the separation between the scholarship and Tolkien fandom. The boundaries between each of these interpretative communities –mainstream literary scholars, Tolkien scholars, Tolkien fans – are porous, poorly marked and difficult to negotiate, with many individual scholars and works of criticism not fitting neatly into any one category. Furthermore, although critics do not always acknowledge the fact, each category is to a great extent dependent upon the others.

Most critics have focused on the sources used by Tolkien, but in the last few years other approaches have arisen. For instance, Tolkien's work may have Gothic elements.

Zlosnik (2006: 49- 50) states that:

In shoring up an illusion of reality created by his fantasy world in this way, Tolkien's work seems to indulge in a practice that has been characteristic of Gothic texts since Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*. The preface to the first edition of this text claimed that it had been found in 'the library of an ancient Catholic family in the North of England.'

Another Gothic convention is the characterization of the enigmatic figure of Aragorn, Strider, as a wanderer. The concept of uncanny⁸ is also present in the world of Middle-earth as Zlonik (2006: 52) explains:

Hardly out of the Shire, Frodo and his companions are imprisoned by a Barrow-wight, the undead inhabitant of a burial site, 'a tall dark figure like a shadow against the stars' with 'two eyes, very cold though lit with a pale light that seemed to come from a remote distance.'

Scholarship on environmentalism and ecology has also paid attention to *The Lord of the Rings*. The idea of technology and industrialization as evil in Tolkien's work is present in places such as Mordor, Isengard, or the Shire, the latter described at the end of the story as a place corrupted by Saruman. In contrast, Tolkien seems to support the idea of ecology when describing some places such as the idyllic Shire or the Elven kingdoms, Lothlórien and Rivendell. Similarly, the Ents and their struggle against Saruman reflect Tolkien's environmentalist ideas and his rejection of industrialization:

⁸ The term 'uncanny' refers to "anything strange and unusual...something outside our knowledge. Because the uncanny is beyond our understanding it brings with it obvious connotations of fear, and the term is thus frequently used in relation to both Horror and Supernatural fiction" (Clute & Grant, 1999: 973).

Though Tolkien's life predated the modern environmental movement and he was not known as a "nature writer," we can nonetheless discern in his writings a strong trace of environmentalism, and an expression of many of the ideas suggested by environmental writers and thinkers of the past four decades. The practical applications of his environmentalism can be seen in several places in *The Lord of the Rings*, most notably in the threefold vision of environmental degradation in Mordor, Isengard, and Sharkey's Shire, as well as in positive visions in Lothlórien, the Shire's positive agrarianism, and the Ents' restoration of Isengard (Vaccaro, 2011: 71).

Frodo's trip to Valinor reminds us of Arthur's journey to heal his wounds in Avalon (Barron & Weinberg, 2001: 252-255) while the character of Gandalf shares many similarities with the wizard Merlin. The appearance of the legitimate heir, Aragorn, with a powerful sword, echoes King Arthur and his Excalibur (Hamilton, 2010: 10). Flieger (2005: 35) explains that the presence of Arthurian elements in Tolkien's masterpiece is very clear:

Tolkien's own fantasy has been subjected to the very same kinds of condemnation by the scoffers. A case could be made that his faerie is so less lavish or fantastical than is Arthur's. Both make use of wizards, little people, dragons, mysterious queens, enchanted fountains, shape changers, time warps, and magical talismans. The magic fountain in Chrétien's *Yvain* is no more fantastical than the Mirror of Galadriel, while one has only to range Gandalf against Merlin, hobbits against Morgan Le Fay, or the Silmarils and the Ring against the Grail to see the similarities.

There is no doubt that the increasing interest of literary and cultural studies on Tolkien's work has contributed not only to a better understanding of his work, but also to elevate it to the literary canon.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARTHURIAN THEME OF QUEST

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* follows the same internal structure as some Arthurian tales. One of the archetypal elements is the Quest, which normally implies a stepped journey. This comprises a series of adventures that the hero needs to confront together with his companions. These adventures have a particular purpose: to test the hero's worth and to destroy or to find a powerful weapon. All the dangers that the Companions will face escalate from the insignificant ones to the most terrible and threatening. This occurs in some Arthurian texts, especially those about the Holy Grail. Arthur instructs his knights to embark on a journey in order to find the Grail and restore peace and order to King Arthur's world. This Quest, of a high spiritual significance, was particularly dangerous. For Chrétien de Troyes, Perceval was the Grail Knight, i.e. the knight who would achieve the Holy Grail in *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal*. However, according to other writers, Malory included, Galahad was the main Grail Knight. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is the knight -the Ring-bearer- chosen to destroy the Ruling Ring at Mount Doom.

When analysing the idea of Quest in Tolkien's work, one should take into account that there may be two sorts of Quest. The first one is that of "external quest". This involves the hero needing to embark on a journey or search for something which is essential for the survival of the land. In *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo leaves the Shire in order to go to Rivendell, and once there, he decides to carry the Ring⁹ to Mount Doom

⁹ Frodo's ring is the Master Ring forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord at Mount Doom. There were many other Rings of Power: the three Rings of the Elves: Narya, Vilya and Narya (whose keepers were Galadriel, Elrond, and Gandalf respectively), nine Rings for the kings of men and seven for the dwarves (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 49).

so as to destroy it since the fate of all the Middle-earth and its peoples mainly depend upon Frodo's own decisions. This also occurs in Arthurian literature, such as in Chrétien's *Perceval* or Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. After King Arthur and his court falls in decay, Perceval is instructed to search for the Grail in order to restore splendour and prosperity to King Arthur's world. In his way to achieve the Grail, Perceval confronts many dangers and threats. Implied in these adventures which comprise the Quest, there is an internal Quest. This means that "the protagonist, whose goal is (broadly) self knowledge, embarks upon an internal search, engages upon a rite of passage and returns to the world as an integrated person" (Clute & Grant, 1999: 796). However, after destroying the Ring in the Orodruin, Frodo does not return as an "integrated person" to use Clute & Grant's words (1999: 796). In fact, he leaves the Shire again in order to heal his wounds in Valinor. Frodo's Quest joins both the achievement of an external task and self-recognition. Clute & Grant (1999: 796) claim that:

There are also quests which consciously join both elements, fantasies where full self-recognition combines with the gaining of an external goal in a tale whose various elements interweave, generating sense of full story. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo's quest is double in this sense.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the idea of Quest is connected with the Arthurian motif of wound-wholeness-healing. Like in the Grail legends, the Quest for the Ring entails a process of healing the Wasteland affected by evil. Middle-earth may embody this idea of Wasteland. Several processes of healing can be seen in *The Lord of the Rings*: Aragorn -advised by Gandalf- needs to heal both Gondor and Rohan, and Frodo -apart from destroying the Ring- must heal the Shire from evil. The threat is the increasing power of Sauron and his hosts as well as Saruman's treason. The task of the Fellowship of the Ring is that of destroying Sauron's Ring -the embodiment of evil- and also

bringing peace to all Middle-earth, i.e. “healing” it. As a matter of fact, like King Arthur, Aragorn represents the role of the healing king, the once and future king who will restore the peace to Gondor and to all Middle-earth. In Gardner’s (1999: 4) words: “In its own way, the story is reminiscent of the central precept of Grail lore, which determines that only when the wound of the Fisher King is healed can the wasteland be returned to fertility.”

In examining more parallels between the Quest for the Ring and the Quest for the Grail, Gardner (1999: 6) also explains that:

The contested ownership of the One Ring, as related in *The Lord of the Rings*, is little different to the enduring quest for the Holy Grail; they are both quests for the maintenance of sovereignty. But, both in fact and fiction, the Ring and the Grail are each seen to be misappropriated by those who perceive them as weapons of power. Hence, it has been imperative (in the respective stories) that access to the Grail is protected by difficult questions, just as it was essential to keep the One Ring from the evil Sauron of Mordor.

In *The Lord of the Rings* we can distinguish two main Quests: the first one is that of Frodo analysed in the following section. The Hobbit must go to Mordor to destroy the Ring. This implies not only a physical journey but also a spiritual one, a process of maturity of the hero. The second one, which will be analysed in section 3.2., is connected with Aragorn. As Isildur’s heir, he needs to restore his authority and power. For this, Aragorn must unify the whole race of men.

2.1. The Quest for the Ring

Frodo’s Quest to throw the One Ring into the fires of Mount Doom represents the idea of a stepped journey and a spiritual progress. Indeed, his Quest may be considered not only a physical journey to destroy a powerful, evil object but also a rite of passage, i.e. a process in which the Hobbit will have to learn to fight against evil and overcome it. Gandalf first advises Frodo to leave the Shire and to go to Rivendell, not using the Ring

if possible and, of course, he must also try to hide his identity. Once there, it would be decided what to do with the Ring. However, the unexpected presence of Samwise Gangee during the conversation between Frodo and Gandalf changes the course of Frodo's Quest. In fact, Gandalf recommends Frodo not to go alone in such a dangerous adventure:

(1)

But I don't think you need go alone. Not if you know of anyone you would trust, and who would be willing to go by your side –and that you would be willing to take into unknown perils. But if you look for a companion, be careful in choosing! And be careful of what you say, even to your closest friends! The enemy has many spies and many ways of hearing (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 61).

Although accidentally, Sam is the first companion in Frodo's Quest and will eventually become the most loyal and faithful one. Without Sam, the Quest for the Ring would probably have failed. In fact, the close relationship between Frodo and Sam will be essential for the development and success of the Quest. This friendship and companionship possess some Arthurian resonances since the deep tie which binds them resembles the relationship of a lord and his knight (Sam calls Frodo 'master'), more specifically that of King Arthur and Bedivere, as we will see later on. Nevertheless, at some stages of his Quest, Frodo will decide to go alone to destroy the Ring since he thinks this task only concerns him. For instance, when he arrives in Crickhollow, and after being pursued by the Black Riders, Frodo wants to leave the Shire so as not to endanger the lives of his beloved friends. The other Hobbit will reject this idea. As Merry says:

(2)

You are miserable, because you don't know how to say good-bye. You meant to leave the Shire, of course. But danger has come on you sooner than you expected, and now you are making up your mind to go at once.

And you don't want to. We are very sorry for you (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 101).

Even so, the Hobbits will not allow Frodo to go alone since they think that he will need their help. Pippin says:

(3)

You must go –and therefore we must, too. Merry and I are coming with you. Sam is an excellent fellow, and would jump down a dragon's throat to save you, if he did not trip over his own feet; but you will need more than one companion in your dangerous adventure (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 102).

The idea of companionship is very important for the success of the Quest and in *The Lord of the Rings* friendship is essential for its fulfilment. Indeed, Sam's loyalty towards Frodo contributes to the accomplishment of the destruction of the Ring because he keeps the Ring until he finds Frodo. If Sam had not insisted, the Ring would have been found. Like in Arthurian tradition, the Quest entails some moral values which will enable the hero (in this case Frodo) to be successful in his task. Frodo does not kill Gollum when he meets him and this act of kindness and pity towards the gangrel-like creature will eventually lead him to accomplish his Quest. An important passage concerning Frodo's Quest is that of the Company's visit to Lothlórien. By looking into Galadriel's Mirror, the Hobbit will be shown that every little detail would be extremely important for achieving his Quest. Galadriel points out:

(4)

'You may learn something, and whether what you see be fair or evil, that may be profitable, and yet it may not. Seeing is good and perilous. Yet I think, Frodo, that you have courage and wisdom enough for the venture or I would not have brought you' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 354).

Looking into the Mirror represents Frodo's internal Quest: his personal dilemma between good and evil, between struggle and surrender. Indeed, after this, Frodo offers the Ring to Galadriel, claiming that she is "wise," "fearless" and "fair" and that the

Quest for the Ring is too overwhelming for him: “It is too great for me” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 356). Frodo needs to move from the sense of solitude and frailty to that of courage and companionship. Frodo must learn to accept the help from others if he really intends to succeed in destroying the Ring. This idea will be reinforced in *The Two Towers* when both Frodo and Sam find Gollum, who helps them to enter Mordor. The two Hobbits feel frustrated since they cannot find the path which leads to the Dark Land as Frodo says in the following example:

(5)

It’s my doom, I think, to go to that Shadow yonder, so that a way will be found. But will good or evil show it to me? What hope we had was in speed. Delay plays into the Enemy’s hands –and here I am: delayed. Is it the will of the Dark Tower that steers us? All my choices have proved ill. I should have left the Company long before, and come down from the North, east of the River and of the Eryn Muil, and so over the hard of Battle Plain to the passes of Mordor. But now it isn’t possible for you and me alone to find a way back, and the Orcs are prowling on the east bank. Every day that passes is a precious day lost. I am tired, Sam. I don’t know what is to be done (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 590).

As we have just seen, Frodo feels lost but not only geographically speaking. The previous example reinforces his own doubts about himself and his Quest. He does not know how to act and struggles between good and evil: “but will good or evil show it to me?” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 590). However, Gollum will lead Frodo and Sam to Mordor by crossing the marshes and entering Shelob’s lair in which Frodo will be trapped. Gollum’s treachery will trigger Frodo and Sam’s separation. However, Sam’s loyalty will finally save Frodo and the Quest will be fulfilled.

In Arthurian tradition we also find the hero’s progress as a Quest. This may be perceived in Chrétien’s *Perceval or Le Conte du Graal*. Perceval’s task does not only imply to find the Grail but also Perceval’s evolution from selfishness to concern for others. In the beginning, he only thinks about becoming a knight without taking into

account that he must combine both chivalric and spiritual values for this purpose. Lupack (2007: 217) explains that “Perceval must learn the spiritual values, especially charity, that will allow him to put others before himself.” We notice this when Perceval shows a lack of compassion towards the Fisher King¹⁰, who has been wounded. His failure to achieve the Grail may be a clear example of what happens if a hero forgets his duties towards those in need. Nevertheless, Perceval will eventually be able to redeem himself and become a true knight, which implies a balance between chivalric and spiritual values:

The knights he meets on Good Friday direct him to a hermit who will begin his spiritual instruction. Just as Perceval had to learn to put on his armour and acquire knightly skills and virtues, so now, as part of the pattern of subjugating his own desires to the needs of others, he must learn to take off his armour and thus to render service to God (Lupack, 2007: 465).

Similarly, Frodo’s Quest for the Ring is a process of personal development through which the Hobbit will have to struggle against evil and temptation. In order to fulfil his Quest, like Perceval, Frodo needs to learn a moral lesson, i.e. he must accept help from others; he cannot destroy the Ring alone without the help of the Companions, especially that of Sam. Therefore, Frodo needs to understand that the achievement of the Ring Quest does not exclusively depend upon him; he has to learn that collaboration with others is essential (even mischievous Gollum helps Frodo and Sam to enter Mordor). Without this unexpected help, the Ring would have been found and carried to Sauron. Wiggins (2007: 105) points out that “without this strange three-way relationship, the Quest would not have been achieved”. After the Ring is destroyed, Frodo feels happy that Sam is with him:

¹⁰ In Arthurian tradition, the Fisher King was the Guardian of the Grail.

(6)

I am glad that you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 929).

However, Frodo's Quest does not finish with the destruction of the Ring at Mount Doom. Still, he has to return to the Shire and heal it from evil. When the Hobbits arrive there, they realize that their peaceful, quiet and almost boring homeland has changed as Sam says in the following example:

(7)

This is worse than Mordor! Much worse in a way. It comes home with you, as they say, because it is home, and you remember it before it was all ruined (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 994).

The ruin of the Shire is caused by Saruman, who wanted to take revenge against the Hobbits. In his encounter with the wizard, Frodo will face another moral dilemma: to kill him or to leave him alive. Saruman threatens Frodo to curse the Shire if he is killed, emphasizing that their home will never be healed:

(8)

And if my blood stains the Shire, it shall wither and never again be healed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 995).

Here we can notice that Frodo's maturity process has concluded. He has learned that he must be compassionate towards others, although these may be evil. For instance, in *The Fellowship of the Ring* Frodo regrets that Bilbo had not killed Gollum. However, later, he will feel pity for the ill-fated creature. This also happens when Frodo faces Saruman and, instead of killing him, he decides to leave the wizard alive:

(9)

I pity you. It will be a pleasure of memory only, I fear. Go at once and never return! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 995).

Nevertheless, the other Hobbits want Frodo to kill Saruman since he has been a tyrant.

Frodo refuses since he does not want revenge but to bring peace back to the Shire:

(10)

But I will not have him slain. It is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing. Go, Saruman, by the speediest way (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 995).

Unlike Perceval, who learns how to rule his life, Frodo is unable to continue his own. His appearance is changed after his adventure. He is depicted as “looking like very strange”. “He was very pale and his eyes seemed to see things far away” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1002). The Hobbit does not forget the torment that he has suffered in his Quest. He has helped to heal Middle-earth and the Shire, but he is still wounded as he acknowledges in the following example:

(11)

I am wounded, wounded; it will never really heal (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1003).

Frodo's Quest is a sacrificial one since he has destroyed the Ring and saved Middle-earth but his wounds (both physical and spiritual ones) are so deeply rooted that Frodo is not the same. For this reason, he is given the chance to leave the Shire forever and to go to Valinor in order to be healed. In Frodo's words:

(12)

I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1006).

Frodo's departure to Valinor echoes King Arthur's, who left England to heal his wounds in Avalon. Like Arthur, who was taken to Avalon on a barge, Frodo leaves Middle-earth to sail towards Valinor.

2.2. Aragorn's Quest: The Healing of Men and the Kingdom of Gondor

In *The Lord of the Rings* it is possible to distinguish different Quests within the Quest for the Ring. One of the most important, besides that of Frodo, is Aragorn's own Quest. He is described as a healing king and, as a descendant of the Númenorean Kings, he has to restore his authority and power to the whole Middle-earth but more specifically to the race of men (Rohan and Gondor). In so doing, his Quest resembles the Arthurian myth of the Wasteland. In the Arthurian texts about the Grail, the Wasteland was "a land laid waste, often because of a wound inflicted upon its king. The wound can only be healed - and thus the land restored-by the chosen Grail knight" (Lupack, 2007:475). Aragorn intends to heal not only all Middle-earth but also unify the race of men, whose main realms, Rohan and Gondor, are in decline. Indeed, Ioreth, a servant at Denethor's court says that:

- (13) The Hands of the King are hands of healing. And so the rightful king could ever be known (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 842).

To reinforce his role as healer, when he, Legolas and Gimli meet the Rohirrim, Aragorn says:

- (14) I am Aragorn son of Arathorn, and am called Elessar, the Elfstone, Dúnadan, the heir of Isildur, Elendil's son of Gondor. Here is the Sword that was Broken and is forged again! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 423).

In some plays about King Arthur, such as John Thelwall's *The Fairy of the Lake* (1801) or Ralph Adams' *Excalibur*¹¹(1909), the loss of Excalibur meant trouble or decadence. This also happens when Sauron breaks Narsil into pieces and, consequently, the reign of the Kings of Gondor starts to weaken and eventually disappears. Another parallelism

¹¹ John Thelwall's *The Fairy of the Lake* (1801) narrates the love story of Arthur, the British warrior and Guinevere, Vortigern's daughter. The Lady of the Lake helps Arthur to recover his sword from the hands of the sorceress Rowenna. Ralph Adams' *Excalibur* (1909) portrays the love triangle of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere. Merlin tries to intercede to solve the situation but Arthur blinds Merlin and the king loses his sword, Excalibur.

between King Arthur and Aragorn concerning their swords is the fact that they are the only ones who can wield them. Thus, Arthur is the only man who removes the sword from the stone while Aragorn is the only one capable to bear Andúril since he is Isildur's heir. In fact, it is said that Andúril cannot be wielded by anyone who is not the rightful heir. If someone dares to do so, he dies. In Aragorn's words:

(15)

In this elvish sheath dwells that Blade that was Broken and has been made again. Telchar first wrought it in the deeps of time. Death shall come to any man that draws Elendil's sword save Elendil's heir (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 500).

The first stage of Aragorn's Quest entails the protection of Frodo from the Ringwraiths and carrying him alive to Rivendell. At the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* Aragorn calls himself 'Strider', which is a clear allusion to what he is: a ranger. This is also connected with the idea of the king without land and a land without its king since Aragorn is a wanderer. In fact, he arouses suspicions among the Hobbits, who regard him as a spy from the enemy. Aragorn explains that he has the task to search for Frodo Baggins and find him:

(16)

I was looking for a Hobbit called Frodo Baggins. I wanted to find him quickly. I had learned that he was carrying out of the Shire, well, a secret that concerned me and my friends (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 161).

Even so, the Hobbits are reluctant that Strider should guide them to Rivendell. Nevertheless, in Gandalf's letter to Frodo, the wizard makes an allusion to Aragorn and advises Frodo to trust him in a very subtle way:

(17)

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,

A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless king again shall be King.
(Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 167).

In the lines above, Gandalf, like Merlin, prophesies the return of the true king, Aragorn, who will restore the peace and the glory of Gondor. Once in Rivendell, Aragorn is introduced not as Strider but as Aragorn, the heir of Isildur. This surprises Frodo, who has considered Aragorn as a simple Ranger from the north:

(18)

Do you really mean that Strider is one of the people of the old Kings? I thought they had all vanished long time ago (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 215).

Gandalf tells Frodo that Strider is Aragorn, who belongs to the lineage of the old Kings of Númenor and will become King of Gondor if Sauron is defeated:

(19)

But there are few left in Middle-earth like Aragorn, son of Arathorn. The race of kings from over the Sea is nearly at an end (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 215).

Dúnadan is another name given to Aragorn, which means “man of the West, Númenorean” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 226) as Bilbo indicates when Frodo meets him in Rivendell. Frodo is not the only one who is surprised by Aragorn’s true identity. Boromir rejects Aragorn as Isildur’s heir since he is a simple ranger. When the Company of the Ring is formed, Narsil is forged again and given a new name, Andúril, which means ‘Flame of the West.’ The reforging of the sword is the beginning of Aragorn’s process of recovering his authority as Tolkien writes:

(20)

The Sword of Elendil was forged anew by Elvish smiths, and 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; for Aragorn son of Arathorn was going to war upon the marches of Mordor. Very bright was that sword when it was made whole again; the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold, and its edge was hard and

keen. And Aragorn gave it a new name and called it Andúril, Flame of the West (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 269).

After Gandalf's disappearance in Khazad-Dûm, after the fight with the Balrog, Aragorn becomes the leader and the guide of the Fellowship until its dissolution at Amon Hen. Aragorn needs to do this in order to restore peace and his authority as Isildur's heir. He is tested in order to prove that he deserves to become king:

(21)

I fear that the burden is laid upon you. You are the Bearer appointed by the Council. Your own way you alone can choose. In this matter I cannot advise you. I am not Gandalf, and though I have tried, I do not know how what design or hope he had for this hour, if indeed he had any. Most likely it seems that if he were here now the choice would still wait on you. Such is your fate (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 387).

Although the Company is dissolved -Boromir dies, Frodo and Sam leave for Mordor and Merry and Pippin are taken as hostages by the Orcs- the three remaining Companions decide to continue with the Quest.

The second stage of Aragorn's Quest implies marching towards Rohan. When they arrive at Edoras, Theoden's court is portrayed in the following manner:

(22)

There stands aloft a great hall of Men. And it seems to my eyes that that it is thatched with gold. The light of it shines far over the land. Golden, too, are the posts of its doors. There men in bright mail stand; but all else within the courts are yet asleep (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 496).

However, we learn that Theoden's court is corrupt and is in a state of total decay due to Wormtongue and Saruman's tricks. When the Companions enter Meduseld, the King is depicted as a powerless, decrepit old man rather than a wise, warrior king:

(23)

At the far end of the house, beyond the hearth and facing north towards the door, was a dais with three steps; and in the middle of the dais was a great gilded chair. Upon it sat a man so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf, but his white hair was long and thick and fell in great braids from beneath a thin golden circlet set upon his brow. In the centre upon his forehead shone a single white diamond. His beard was laid like snow upon his knees; but his eyes still burned with a bright light, glinting as he gazed at the strangers (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 501).

Theoden's physical appearance embodies the corruption and decline of his kingdom despite the glorious past of Rohan. In fact, Gandalf himself -who also redeems and heals himself in his fight against the Balrog in the bridge of Khazad-Dûm- will heal Theoden by releasing him from Wormtongue's spell:

(24)

He lifted his staff and pointed to a high window. There the darkness seemed to clear, and through the opening could be seen, high and far, a patch of shining sky. 'Not all is dark. Take courage, Lord of the Mark; for better help you will not find. No counsel have I to give to those that despair. Yet counsel I could give, and words I could speak to you. Will you hear them? They are not for all ears. I bid you come out before your doors and look abroad. Too long have you sat in shadows and trusted to twisted tales and crooked promptings (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 503).

After this, Theoden changes; in fact he is not the same as before, not only physically but also spiritually. Tolkien says:

(25)

Open! The Lord of the Mark comes forth (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 503).

Then Gandalf replies:

(26)

Look out upon your land! Breathe the free air again (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 504).

Theoden is recovered from a sort of amnesia, caused by one of Wormtongue's spells. This awakening is the first step in the process of healing Rohan and the House of Eorl. After Gandalf's words, the King of Rohan immediately realizes that something has kept him prisoner in his own fortress:

(27)

Dark have been my dreams of late, he said, but I feel as one new awakened. I would now that you had come before, Gandalf. For I fear that already you have come too late, only to see the last days of my house. Not long now shall stand the high hall which Brego son of Eorl built. Fire shall devour the high seat. What is to be done? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 504).

Although his power and authority have been restored, King Theoden and his warriors will have to fight against Sauron and Saruman's hosts. He manages to defeat Saruman at the battle of Helm's Deep but he later dies at the siege of Minas Tirith. The restoration of Rohan is the first step to unify the race of Men in order to destroy Sauron.

Aragorn's task was mainly to achieve the unity between all men of Middle-earth. In order to do, Gandalf's help will be essential. Despite being a ranger, a king with no land, Aragorn represents the values of loyalty, friendship and companionship. For example, we see this when the Companions are talking to Theoden about what to do next and Aragorn says:

(28)

There is no rest yet for the weary. The men of Rohan must ride forth today, and we will ride with them, axe, sword, and bow. We did not bring them to rest against your wall, Lord of the Mark. And I promised Éomer that my sword and his should be drawn together (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 507).

Another important passage in which Aragorn is presented as the legitimate King of Gondor is when Saruman's Palantír is discovered. As Isildur's heir Aragorn is the only one capable of looking into the stone without becoming mad. As Aragorn explains:

(29)

I am the lawful master of the Stone, and I had both the right and the strength to use it, or so I judged. The right cannot be doubted (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 763).

Like Frodo with Galadriel's Mirror, Aragorn is tested when he looks into it. He manages to control the stone since he shows himself to Sauron, who ignored the existence of Isildur's heir and that his sword had been forged again. Aragorn's legitimacy is once again reinforced when he summons the Oathbreakers -cursed by Isildur due to treason- at the Paths of the Dead. Isildur also predicted Aragorn's fate as the returning king:

(30)

For this war will last through years uncounted, and you shall be summoned once again ere the end (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 765).

As for Sauron himself, his strength is declining and starts to feel more threatened, still ignoring where his Ring is. In Gandalf's own words:

(31)

He is watching. He sees much and hears much. His Nâzgul are still abroad. They passed over this field ere the sunrise, though few of the weary and sleeping were aware of them. He studies the signs: the Sword that robbed him of his treasure re-made; the winds of fortune turning in our favour, and the defeat unlooked-for of his first assault; the fall of his great Captain (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 860).

After this, Aragorn will have to wage a war against Sauron at the Black Gate in order to distract Sauron's attention and in turn to give Frodo the chance to go to Mount Doom and destroy the Ring.

In examining parallels with Arthurian literature, King Arthur and Aragorn need to heal their respective lands. After Uther's death -Arthur's father- Britain was plunged into a period of chaos in which the unity and peace achieved by Uther were destroyed. When Arthur draws the sword from the stone, he proves that he is the true king of Britain. This same idea is echoed in *The Lord of the Rings*. Like Uther, Isildur was the last king of the Númenoreans before his land was plunged into chaos and decay. After Isildur's death, the Kingdom of Gondor and the lineage of the Old Kings disappear. As

Arthur does -his ruling was considered the most glorious one in Britain- Aragorn will restore not only the kingship of Gondor but also the peace to the realm. He will succeed in healing Gondor. Reinforcing the idea of Aragorn as a healer, the Warden says while talking to Éowyn:

(32)

A great lord is that, and a healer; and it is a thing passing strange to me that the healing hand should also wield the sword. It is not thus in Gondor now, though once it was so, if old tales be true (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 937).

Also, the relationship between Aragorn and Arwen may be somehow considered a sort of quest with resonances from the Grail legends since it represents heroic love. Vander Ploeg (2007: 8) explains that Aragorn and Arwen's Quest is "a romantic tale of forbidden love. It is the tale of Arwen, daughter of an Elf-Lord, who is forbidden to marry her childhood sweetheart, prince Aragorn." The Ring -which was taken by Isildur, who wanted his heirs to possess it,- represents royal blood. As for the Grail, some texts refer to it as Sang Real or Royal Blood. As Vander Ploeg (2007:8) explains:

The Grail in this context does not refer to the cup Jesus drank from at the last supper, but rather to the interpretation found in ancient texts that refer to the Sang Realm, or Royal Blood. The Ring has always been emblematic of kingship and is interchangeable with the Grail referring to kingship and the royal blood.

Tolkien tells us that Arwen belongs to the Noldorin, one of the races of Elves. As such, she is immortal and carries royal blood, like Aragorn who is a descendant of Isildur, the last King of Gondor. In Arthurian legends, Arthur and Morgan's incestuous sexual intercourse is one of the causes for the decline of Arthur's reign. When all hope seems to have faded, Arthur sends his knights to search for the Grail. It will be Perceval or Galahad who will succeed in the Quest for the Grail, since to the question of "Who does the Grail serve?" he replies, "the Grail serves the King." Then the secret is revealed: the king and the land are one. After this, Perceval returns to Camelot and delivers the Grail

to Arthur, who drinks from it. His reign flourishes again. This idea of the land and the king as one is present in *The Lord of the Rings*. When Aragorn enters Minas Tirith, he sees the White Tree of Gondor withering due to the evil caused by Sauron. Like in the Arthurian legend, his people are suffering since their steward is ‘withering’, like the tree. Consequently, the rightful king -Aragorn- must return in order to save his kingdom, Gondor. Vander Ploeg (2007:8) argues:

Aragorn is faced with a similar dilemma. The White Tree of Gondor, the symbol of Gondor, is withering and dying as a result of Sauron’s evil influence over Middle-earth. Likewise, the people of Gondor are suffering because a steward, having no king, is ruling them. As Percival discovered in his Grail quest, the land and king are one. As a result Gondor cannot be saved or reborn until it has a rightful king.

After Sauron’s defeat, an Eagle sent from Valinor arrives at Minas Tirith to celebrate the return of the King of Gondor and the destruction of Sauron. The inhabitants of Gondor sing the following poem:

(33)

Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor,
For the realm of Sauron is ended for ever,
And the Dark Tower is thrown down.

Sing and rejoice, ye people of the Tower of Guard,
For your watch hath not been in vain,
And the Black Gate is broken,
And your King hath passed through
And he is victorious.

Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West,
For your King shall come again,
And he shall dwell among you
All the days of your life.

And the Tree that was withered shall be renewed,
And he shall plant it in the high places,
And the City shall be blessed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 942)

In this song Aragorn is depicted as the ‘once and future king’ as King Arthur was also known: “for your King shall come again” (see poem above, line 10). In fact, King

Arthur was thought to return in case of need as Aragorn does in *The Lord of the Rings*.

After his coronation, Aragorn is no longer described as a ranger but as a true king:

(34)

But when Aragorn arose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 947).

Like that of Frodo, Aragorn's Quest implied a process of development in order to become king. Hence, he needed to show that he really deserved the throne of Gondor by fighting valiantly against his foes and being loyal and good to his friends. For Tolkien the ideal monarch was one who serves his people. Thus, when Aragorn is about to be crowned, he, instead of putting the crown upon his head, gives it to Faramir, who in turn gives it to Frodo. The, the Hobbit bears the crown to Gandalf, who puts it upon Aragorn's head. This is a sign of humility and gratitude towards those who have helped him to become King of Gondor. In Aragorn's own words:

(35)

By the labour and valour of many I have come into my inheritance. In token of this I would have the Ring-bearer bring the crown to me, and let Mithrandir set it upon my head, if he will; for he has been the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 946).

Aragorn is here portrayed as a humble king who serves his people rather than ruling them. Also, after his ascension to the throne, Aragorn is named Elessar (elf-stone). This means that his identity and authority as heir of the Kings of Gondor have been restored. Aragorn's Quest is at an end when he marries Arwen as we can see in the following example:

(36)

And Aragorn the King Elessar wedded Arwen Undómiel in the City of the Kings upon the day of Midsummer, and the tale of their long waiting and labours was come to fulfillment (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 951).

This passage shows that Aragorn is no longer Aragorn the Ranger or Strider but the King of Gondor, who eventually manages to fulfil his fate.

The love between Aragorn and Arwen depends upon Aragorn's main Quest as healer and renewer. Therefore, he needs to show that he deserves Arwen's love. The sacrifice she makes for her love for Aragorn means that she rejects the gift of immortality given to the race of Elves. For this reason, Aragorn must also sacrifice himself in order to win not only Arwen's love but to prove his worth as a knight and man. Flieger (2004: 133) explains that:

A full understanding of Aragorn as a medieval hero must encompass knowledge of his love story as well as his epic characteristics. Aragorn is not simply a political or national or even a personal epic trial. It is also a trial of love, and in the light of the love story, which we come to know only at the end, the struggle and the battles take on a more specific and personal meaning.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARTHURIAN THEME OF FELLOWSHIP

Tolkien's the Fellowship of the Ring presents some parallelisms with the Order of the Round Table, especially the one depicted in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The Company of the Ring is created for a particular purpose: the destruction of Sauron's Ring and the restoration of peace in Middle-earth. Likewise, King Arthur gathered his best knights to find the Holy Grail and bring peace and prosperity back to his kingdom. This company was called the Order of the Round Table. As we will see later on, there are some similarities between Tolkien's characters and Arthur's knights.

3.1. The Ring and the Round Table

First of all, we must consider the symbols associated with both Fellowships: the Ring and the Round Table. It is likely that Tolkien intended his Company of the Ring to be a version of the Arthurian fellowship of the Round Table since The Round Table symbolized equality between King Arthur and his knights. The idea of the Round Table is mentioned for the first time in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155). In this work the author says that "Arthur had made so that all of the noble barons whom he attracted to his court would be equally placed and served and none could boast that he had a higher position at the table than the others" (Lupack, 2007: 48). The Ring stands as a unifying element not only because of its evil power to control everything as described in Tolkien's work:

(37)

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 49).

but also because it unifies all the peoples of Middle-earth, accordingly represented in the Company, which is formed by four Hobbits, two men, one elf, a dwarf and a wizard. Roberts (2006: 60) suggests that “The Fellowship of the Ring, the nine companions who take the Ring south, echo an Arthurian circle of knights (a round table).” The Round Table, itself a circle, symbolizes the chivalric values of equality, loyalty and friendship between a king and his knights. Hence, King Arthur is represented as a peer to his knights by means of the Round Table. Something very similar happens in *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn, who is the legitimate heir to the throne of Gondor and whose return many legends predicted, treats his companions as his fellow friends. For him they are not only his companions but also his friends. Moreover, the name given to the Company in Tolkien’s work is not a simple coincidence. Despite the fragmentation of the Fellowship, at the end of the story, all its members, except for Boromir who is dead, meet again in Minas Tirith. Like the circle, the Ring may be seen as a symbol for unity. True loyalty and friendship will help to fulfil the achievement of the Quest as O’Day (2004: 272) explains:

Friendship and loyalty play a central role among those in the Fellowship. Especially significant were the close relationship among the hobbits – between Merry, Pippin and Frodo, between Bilbo and Frodo, and between Sam and Frodo. Equally noteworthy, however, were the friendships between Legolas and Gimli, Gandalf and Aragorn, Faramir and Frodo, and Aragorn and Éomer.

3.2. The Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring

The ideal of Fellowship which is present in *The Lord of the Rings* is highly influenced by Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*. The Company of the Ring is also based on the values of loyalty, friendship and equality among all its members:

At least two senses of fellowship are very important in his work: the powerful camaraderie and bonding of individual knights and the organized and permanent chivalric order of the Round Table. Fellowship,

in the Morte, is the ideal of cohesion: it encapsulates loyal relationships, both horizontal and hierarchical (Leitch, 2010: 114).

The Company of the Ring echoes this very same idea as it incarnates these same ideals: friendship, loyalty and equality. Aragorn himself represents knightly loyalty. Although he is the heir to the throne of Gondor, he is humble and loyal to his companions, whom he calls his friends rather than servants. However, there may be a difference between the Order of the Round Table and the Company of the Ring. While Tolkien's heroes form a temporary fellowship, Arthur's knights belong to a stable society since they swear an oath every year: "Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost" (Malory in Moore, 2000: 87, b. iii, ch. xv).

The Order of the Round Table is mainly created to restore the peace in Arthur's kingdom by finding the Grail. If the Grail is found, prosperity and peace will return to England. For this King Arthur gathers his best knights: Kay, Bedivere, Lancelot, Perceval, Gawain, Galahad, Bors, Tristan, Mordred, etc. Arthur called this Company the Order of the Round Table, which was the meeting point for all of them in Camelot. In Malory's text one hundred knights sat at the Round Table. The values of this Order were those of loyalty, comradeship and equality. The knights were loyal not only to their king but also to one another. Arthur wanted his knights to give him advice when necessary. This also happens in *The Lord of the Rings* when the Company is formed after the Council. There Elrond claims that it is not enough to be a warrior in order to fight against evil but unity and friendship are also necessary:

(38)

The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must,

while the eyes of the great are elsewhere (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 262).

In the Grail legends, instead of the King there is a knight called the Grail Knight, who is the chosen one to find the Grail. In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* Galahad is the main Grail Knight, although in Chrétien's work Perceval or Bors are the ones to achieve the Grail. The first knight who pursued the magical vessel was Gawain. He had to embark on a journey full of dangers. However, he was unsuccessful. One night Gawain has a dream in which one hundred and fifty bulls appear to him. Most of them starved to death while three white ones remained untouched. An old hermit explained to Gawain that this dream meant that only three knights would succeed in their quests for the Holy Grail and Gawain was none of them. Disappointed, he abandoned his quest. When he returned to Camelot, he realized that many of his fellow knights had also failed in the Quest; some had given up while others had died. Another knight who tried to find the Grail was Lancelot, considered the greatest champion at Arthur's court. Like Gawain, Lancelot fails due to bad luck, mainly due to the loss of his sword and horse. He meets his son, Galahad, who carried a mysterious shield which is supposed to lead its bearer to the place where the Grail is. After arriving at a strange island, Lancelot sees the Grail castle. Once inside, he finds a chalice on a table in the hall. Then, Lancelot tries to get hold of the Grail but he faints because of a sudden intense pain. After this, he is healed by the Fisher King, who tells him that he will never achieve the Grail because he is not pure enough. His son Galahad continues with the quest. On his way to find the Grail, Galahad meets Perceval and Bors. The three knights ride together to the Grail Castle where they meet the Maimed King. Both Perceval and Bors are expelled from the room where the Grail is. So Galahad is the only knight of the Round Table left to achieve the chalice. He clutches the Grail, disappearing with it and becoming its guardian. Nobody will see Galahad or the Grail again. Then, Bors is the only knight to return to Camelot

to communicate the fates of the Grail and Galahad. Although the Grail had been found, the Quest failed since the chalice had not been given to Arthur.

Frodo, like the Grail Knight, undertakes many dangers and risks in his Quest journey. However, his task is to return the Ring to the place where it was forged, while the Grail Knight follows a reverse process: to find the cup and give it to Arthur so as to restore the peace of his reign.

The story of the Quest for the Holy Grail is of the utmost importance to understand the Fellowship of the Ring. Like the Grail Knight, in *The Lord of the Rings* there is a character appointed as the chosen one in order to carry out the main Quest- Frodo- who is named the Ring-bearer as Elrond indicates:

(39)

The Ring-bearer is setting out on the Quest of Mount Doom. On him alone is any charge laid: neither to cast away the Ring, nor to deliver it to any servant of the Enemy nor indeed to let any handle it, save members of the Company and the Council, and only them in gravest need. The others go with him as free companions, to help him on his way (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 274).

The Ring can only be carried by Frodo. Likewise, only the purest knight would be able to find the Holy Grail. Like Galahad, who finally achieves the Grail (in other legends Perceval is the Grail Knight, such as in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* (1180), Frodo carries the Ring because of his spiritual purity. Therefore, he is the only one able to carry the Ring to Mount Doom. Unlike Galahad, the Hobbit first receives the Ring as an heirloom although he shows no apparent signs of being of the spiritual kind. Frodo is not portrayed as an idealized hero, rather the opposite. As we shall see, he is tempted to put the Ring on his finger several times as the narrator explains in the following example:

(40)

A sudden unreasoning fear of discovery laid hold of Frodo, and the thought of the Ring. He hardly dared to breathe, and yet the desire to get

it out of his pocket became so strong that he began slowly to move his hand. He felt that he had only to slip it on, and then he would be safe. The advice of Gandalf seemed absurd. Bilbo had used the Ring (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 73).

However, at the Prancing Poney Frodo uses the Ring, although accidentally, when Pippin unveils his real identity. More important is the fact that Frodo is stabbed at Weathertop by the Witch King. When he puts the Ring on his finger -influenced by the Ring's own will- Frodo sees the Nine Riders in the dark. They are not shadows, but they seem real and can see Frodo:

(41)

He shut his eyes and struggled for a while; but resistance became unbearable, and at last he slowly drew out the chain, and slipped the Ring on the forefinger of his left hand. Immediately, though everything else remained as before, dim and dark, the shapes became terribly clear. He was able to see beneath their black wrappings (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 191).

Frodo, like the Grail Knight, undertakes many dangers and risks in his quest journey. However, his task is to give the Ring back to Mount Doom, where it was forged, while the Grail Knight has to follow a reverse process: to find the Grail and deliver it to Arthur to restore peace in his realm.

The Fellowship of the Ring was instated to destroy the Master Ring and to defeat Sauron. For this purpose, Frodo will not be alone. From the very beginning of the story, Gandalf advises the young Hobbit to leave the Shire with a trustworthy companion:

(42)

But I don't think you need go alone. Not if you know of anyone you can trust, and who would be willing to go by your side –and that you would be willing to take into unknown perils. But if you look for a companion, be careful in choosing! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 61).

Then Sam happens to be listening to the conversation between Frodo and Gandalf very carefully and finally he becomes Frodo's companion. Both Merry and Pippin will join

Frodo and Sam when they leave Crickhollow. Indeed, Frodo intends to abandon his beloved friends and to depart towards Rivendell alone. However, the other three hobbits are determined not to leave Frodo alone in his Quest for the Ring. As Merry points out:

(43)

You are miserable, because you don't know how to say good-bye. You meant to leave the Shire, of course. But danger has come on you sooner than you expected, and now you are making in your mind to go at once. And you don't want to. We are very sorry for you (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 101).

The three Hobbits are determined to accompany Frodo, who is reluctant to this idea. The deep tie which binds them makes them be willing to go on the journey with Frodo as Pippin explains in the following example:

(44)

You must go –and therefore we must, too. Merry and I are coming with you. Sam is an excellent fellow and would jump down dragon's throat to save you, if he did not trip over his own feet; but you will need more than one companion in your dangerous adventure (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 102).

The Company is officially created at the Council of Elrond in which the main leaders of all the peoples of Middle-earth are summoned. Apparently, the main purpose of this meeting is that of providing a solution to what to do with the Ring and how to confront Sauron's increasing power. For this reason, Elrond summons all those who may be helpful in the struggle against evil:

(45)

And I will choose you companions to go with you, as far as they will or fortune allows. The number must be few, since your hope is in speed and secrecy. Had I a host of Elves in armor of the Elder Days, it would avail little, save to arouse the power of Mordor. The Company of the Ring shall be Nine; and the Nine Walkers shall be set against the Nine Riders that are evil. With you and your faithful servant, Gandalf will go; for this shall be his great task, and maybe the end of his labours. For the rest, they shall represent the other Free Peoples of the World: Elves, Dwarves, and Men. Legolas shall be for the Elves; and Gimli son of Glóin for the Dwarves. They are willing to go at least to the passes of the Mountains, and maybe

beyond. For men you shall have Aragorn son of Arathorn, for the Ring of Isildur concerns him closely (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 268).

Boromir also joins the Company. There are still two remaining companions to be found. Elrond intends to send some of his own folk. However, Merry and Pippin argue that they want to join the Fellowship and to go with Frodo. Elrond rejects this idea because he thinks that the Hobbits are not aware of the dangers they will have to confront to succeed in the Quest. Unexpectedly, Gandalf supports Pippin, claiming that:

(46)

I think, Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom. Even if you choose for us an elf-lord, such as Glorfindel, he could not storm the Dark Tower, nor open the road to the Fire by the power that is in him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 269).

The initial aims of the Company are those of protecting Frodo and carrying the Ring safely to Mordor rather than waging a war against Sauron and, for this reason, they do not carry weapons:

(47)

The Company took little gear of war, for their hope was in secrecy, not in battle. Aragorn had Andúril but no other weapon, and he went forth clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness. Boromir had a long sword, in fashion like Andúril but of less lineage, and he bore also shield and his war-horn (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 40).

In the first stage of their journey they travel through the mountains until they get to the land of Hollin where they do not find any difficulty. Merry asks a question to Gandalf about the direction they must take and Gandalf answers:

(48)

We cannot look too far ahead. Let us be glad that the first stage is safely over. I think we will rest here, not only today but tonight as well (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 276).

However, problems start when some ravens fly over their heads. Aragorn identifies these birds as spies of the enemy when he suspects something may be going wrong in Hollin since there is an awkward silence:

(49)

Yet now all things but you are silent. I can feel it. There is no sound for miles about us, and your voices seem to make the ground echo. I do not understand it (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 277).

The appearance of the ravens anticipates difficulties for the Company. Indeed, the black birds turn up more frequently as they progress and they need to hide. At night, Frodo sees a shadow in the sky, moving quickly. This means that evil and dangers are approaching and that they are being carefully watched. Aragorn thinks that the Quest for the Ring might be doomed to fail:

(50)

I think no good of our course from beginning to end, as you know well, Gandalf. And perils known and unknown will grow as we go on. But we must go on; and it is no good our delaying the passage of the mountains. Further south there are no passes, till one comes to the Gap of Rohan (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 279).

After this, the Companions must decide where to go. Therefore, this increasing danger, embodied in the ravens, compels them to make a sudden decision regarding which direction to take: the pass of Caradhras or the Mines of Moria. Eventually, the Companions decide to go through Caradhras since the other possible directions are under Sauron and Saruman's control. However, the road is not going to be free of trouble. Fallen stones block the path while the wind becomes more intense and the storm is caused by Saruman himself since:

(51)

The sounds were those of shrill cries, and wild howls of laughter (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 281).

After leaving the pass of Caradhras, the Company faces an important dilemma: to go back to Rivendell -which would mean to admit defeat- or to take another path. The only possible one is the Mines of Moria, where Gandalf disappears into the abyss. The Fellowship is left without their guide.

As the journey progresses, perils grow and the presence of evil is clearer. For instance, the Companions are attacked by a host of wargs. Later on, at Moria's gates, when they are about to enter, a monster from the pool seizes Frodo by his ankle, trying to take him under the water. Frodo is finally rescued from the tentacles of the creature:

(52)

I felt that something horrible was near from the moment that my foot first touched the water (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 301).

It is significant that all the Companions are reluctant to go through Moria. The Company's entry in Moria represents their first incursion in the very heart of darkness:

(53)

The Company spent that night in the great cavernous hall, huddled close together in a corner to escape the draught: there seemed to be a steady inflow of chill air through the eastern archway. All about them as they lay hung in darkness, hollow and immense, and they were oppressed by the loneliness and vastness of the dolven halls and endlessly branching stairs and passages. The wildest imaginings that dark rumour had ever suggested to the hobbits fell altogether short of the actual dread and wonder of Moria (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 307).

The Companions try to find their way in the middle of the darkness although with great difficulty. For the first time, they will be obliged to fight; in this case, against the orcs. But danger is not over as they will need to confront a more dreadful and dangerous threat: a Balrog, a Morgoth's demon. Although Aragorn and Boromir try to help him, Gandalf finally falls into the dark after the fight with the Balrog.

Once Gandalf has disappeared, Aragorn will lead the rest of the Company out of Moria. Gandalf's disappearance may be considered not only a symptom of the breaking

up of the Fellowship but also a sign of hopelessness since the Companions have lost their most powerful member and leader. His ‘death’¹² causes the despair and grief of the Companions who see themselves vulnerable without the help and advice of the old wizard. The dark powers have apparently proved to be stronger than good. However, Aragorn, who now has to become the guide of the Fellowship, encourages his friends to continue with their Quest although there seems to be no hope:

(54)

We must do without hope. At least we may yet be avenged. Let us gird ourselves and weep no more! Come! We have long road, and much to do (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 324).

Aragorn leads his Companions to Lothlórien as Gandalf intended. However, Boromir is reluctant to go there, arguing that all the roads that the Fellowship has taken have brought misfortunes:

(55)

By strange paths has this Company been led, and so far to evil fortune. Against my will we passed under the shades of Moria, to our loss. And now we must enter the Golden Wood, you say. But of that perilous land we have heard in Gondor, and it is said that few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 329).

Boromir rebels against Aragorn¹³, who replies saying that:

(56)

Lore wanes in Gondor, Boromir, if in the city of those who once were wise they now speak evil of Lothlórien (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 349).

When the Company arrives in Lothlórien, all its members are blindfolded by Aragorn’s request despite Legolas’s refusal:

¹² Although he is thought to have died in his fight against the Balrog, Gandalf appears again in *The Two Towers* when he meets Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli at Fangorn Forest. It is likely that he had survived because he possessed one of the Rings of the Elves, Narya, the Ring of Fire: “Frodo saw that Gandalf now wore more openly on his hand the Third Ring, Narya the Great and the stone upon it was red as fire (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1007).

¹³ Boromir and Aragorn can be regarded as rivals since Boromir is the son of Denethor, Stewart of Gondor, and Aragorn is the legitimate heir of Isildur, last king of Gondor.

(57)

We will be all blindfold, even Legolas. That will be best, though it will make the journey slow and dull (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 338).

Once again, the Fellowship of the Ring represents unity and equality, the same virtues embodied in the Round Table of King Arthur and his knights. When Galadriel and Celeborn receive the Companions, she misses Gandalf's presence. Celeborn sees this news as:

(58)

The most evil that have been spoken here in long years full of grievous deeds (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 346).

When they are about to leave Lothlórien, Celeborn advises the Company to do what they wish for, i.e. to continue their journey or to return although he also points out that time has come and the War for the Ring is about to start:

(59)

Now is the time, when those who wish to continue the Quest must harden their hearts to leave this land. Those who no longer wish to go forward may remain here, for a while. But whether they stay or go, none can be sure of peace. For we are come now to the edge of doom. Here those who wish may await the oncoming of the hour till either the ways of the world lie open again, or we summon them to the last need of Lórien. Then they may return to their own lands, or else go to the long home of those that fall in battle (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 358).

The Companions continue with their journey although they have not decided yet where to go after Lothlórien since Gandalf's loss implies a new direction in the Quest for the Ring. Even Aragorn, the leader of the Fellowship, is "doubtful" and "troubled" (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 358). He is afraid of the future of the Company. Aragorn also fears that the increasing power of Sauron and his hosts, whose presence has chased them since they left Rivendell, will threaten their Quest:

(60)

His own plan, while Gandalf remained with them, had been to go with Boromir, and with his sword help to deliver Gondor. For he believed that the message of the dreams was a summons, and that the hour had come at last when the heir of Elendil should come forth and strive with Sauron for the mastery. But in Moria the burden of Gandalf had been laid on him; and he knew that he could not now forsake the Ring, if Frodo refused in the end. And yet what help could he or any of the Company give to Frodo, save to walk blindly with him into darkness? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 359).

However, while Aragorn is not sure about what to do next, Boromir wants the Company to go to Minas Tirith. That was his proposal at the Council in Rivendell. He was the only one who did not want to destroy the Ring but to use it as a weapon against Sauron. Moreover, he is the only member of the Company who does not accept Aragorn's authority as Isildur's heir. Before their departure from Lothlórien, Boromir behaves in a selfish way. For instance, he wants to go to Minas Tirith -alone, if necessary, since he considers that his duty is to go there- rather than to protect Frodo. He also claims that destroying the Ring is useless if Sauron is to be defeated. Frodo notices Boromir's strange attitude:

(61)

Frodo caught something new and strange in Boromir's glance, and he looked hard at him. Plainly Boromir's thought was different from his final words. It would be folly to throw away: what? The Ring of Power? He had said something like this at the Council but then he had accepted the correction of Elrond (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 360).

As Elrond had pointed out, evil could come from within the Fellowship, Boromir's pride and his craving for power -he intends to take the Ring from Frodo- represent the idea of evil within the Company. We will comment on this topic when dealing with the episode at Parth Galen where the Company is dissolved.

3.3. The Dissolution of the Round Table and the Company of the Ring

Another important similarity between the Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring relates to the main hero: the Grail Knight and the Ring-bearer respectively. Both have to go through several hardships throughout their journey quests and they also must deal with many threats, even from within their own fellowships. As we shall see, an act of treason will trigger the breaking up of both the Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring. They become fragmented due to treason since evil lives within them. While in Malory's work the Fellowship of the Round table is broken up by Mordred and Agravaine, who reveal Lancelot's affair with Guenevere, similarly, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Company is dissolved when Boromir tries to seize the Ring from Frodo's hands, betraying the Fellowship's principle of protecting the Ring-bearer.

In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, treason, hatred, jealousy and envy trigger the downfall of the Order of the Round Table. All this evil exists also within the Fellowship. Leitch (2012: 104) explains that "in the *Morte*, treasonous ideas and actions are the ever present opposites to fellowship and community. Traitor figures are situated at and are therefore used to test the boundaries of community definition of inclusion and exclusion". In Malory's text, Mordred -Arthur's incestuous son- and Agravaine stand out for their villainy and moral corruption. Agravaine is depicted as a knight who is "arrogant and jealous and ready to speak evil words" (Lupack, 2007: 429). Mordred and Agravaine conspire to unveil Lancelot and Guenevere's adulterous relationship:

But thus as they were together, there came Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, with twelve knights with them of the Round Table, and they said with crying voice: Traitor-knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, now art thou taken. And thus they cried with a loud voice, that all the court might hear it (Malory in Moore, 2000: 745, b. xx, ch. iii).

After this, Guenevere is sentenced to be burnt at the stake despite the fact that there has been no trial to prove her innocence or guilt. Arthur's decision is questioned and Lancelot attributes Arthur's wrong decision to the influence of wicked counsellors:

The slander and strife produced by Agravain and Mordred's persistence in revealing Lancelot and Guinevere's affairs results in King Arthur's decision to have Guinevere burnt. At the same time Lancelot's repeated appeal to King Arthur against 'evyl conceile' only formally excuses the King for his decisions and blames his advisers. In fact the King's governance of the realm is questioned. Listening to the wrong advisers is ultimately the King's fault, since it may be interpreted as his unwise choice to listen to bad counselors in the first place (Radulescu, 2003: 131).

This situation causes disruption among some knights of the Round Table. Arthur makes war on Lancelot to take revenge for his offence. Lancelot, in turn, attempts to remain loyal to his king by trying to stop the battle and to prevent some fellow knights from fighting each other. Thus, Lancelot prevents Bors from killing Arthur: "Upon pain of thy head, that thou touch him no more, for I will never see that most noble king that made me knight neither slain ne shamed" (Malory in Moore, 2000: 763, b. xxi, ch. xiii). However, Mordred is not satisfied with his failed attempt to destroy the friendship between Lancelot and Arthur and usurps Arthur's throne claiming that the king is dead and he -as Arthur's son- has the right to become the new king. He also tries to marry Guinevere to reinforce his kinship.

As we have seen, evil within the Fellowship of the Round Table -especially embodied in Mordred and Agravain and the adulterous love between Lancelot, Arthur's best warrior, and his wife Guenevere- is the cause of the fragmentation of the Order of the Round Table. This also happens in *The Lord of the Rings*. If Mordred is represented as a greedy, ambitious, proud character, Tolkien's Boromir may be somehow his counterpart since he is the only member of the Company who refuses to destroy the Ring and wants to use it against Sauron. In fact, he is always trying to convince the

others to bring the Ring to Gondor. The most significant scene which shows Boromir's treason is the one at Amon Hen. Sam notices that Boromir is always watching Frodo very carefully:

(62)

Presently Frodo got up and walked away; and Sam saw that while the others restrained themselves and did not stare at him; the eyes of Boromir followed Frodo intently, until he passed out of sight in the trees at the foot of Amon Hen (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 387).

For Boromir the Ring represents the power he has always yearned for. His greed and ambition do not allow him to see the dangers of using the Ring. When he follows Frodo upon the hill, Boromir has the clear intention to take the Ring from him. Boromir is obviously tempted by what the Ring itself represents i.e. absolute power over everyone and everything in Middle-earth:

(63)

It is a gift, I say; a gift to the foes of Mordor. It is not mad to use it, to use the power of the Enemy against him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 389).

His pride corrupts him and he cannot understand why a simple Hobbit is the chosen one to carry the Ring to Mordor and not a warrior like him, who is also the son of the Steward of Gondor. Consequently, he doubts whether Frodo will be able to carry out the task of destroying the Ring:

(64)

What could not a warrior do in this hour, a great leader? What could not Aragorn do? Or if he refuses, why not Boromir? The Ring would give me power of command. How I would drive the hosts of Mordor, and all men would flock to my banner! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 389).

These words show Boromir's jealousy towards Frodo. He also considers the plan of the Company to send Frodo to Mount Doom ridiculous and impossible to do:

(65)

I do not say *destroy* it. That might be well, if reason could show any hope of doing so. It does not. The only plan that is proposed to us is that a Halfling should walk blindly into Mordor and offer the Enemy every

chance of recapturing it for himself. Folly! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 389).

At the same time Boromir is tempting Frodo into giving the Ring to him. He becomes increasingly violent, almost mad. Boromir argues that, as the Steward of Gondor's son, he has more right to possess the Ring than Frodo, who has it by chance. He also thinks that he is worthy of it and not Frodo:

(66)

How it angers me! Fool! Obstinate fool! Running willfully to death and ruining our cause. If any mortals have any claim to the Ring, it is the men of Númenor, and not Halflings. It is not yours save by unhappy chance. It might have been mine. It should be mine. Give it to me! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 390).

After these words, Boromir attacks Frodo, who -afraid of him- decides to put the Ring on his finger and escape from him. For the first time, Frodo has confronted evil and the corruptive power of the Ring. He realizes that the Company has failed and that evil lies within it:

(67)

I will do now what I must. This at least is plain: the evil of the Ring is already at work even in the Company, and the Ring must leave them before it does more harm. I will go alone. Some I cannot trust, and those I can trust are too dear to me: poor old Sam, and Merry and Pippin. Strider, too: his heart yearns for Minas Tirith and he will be needed there, now Boromir has fallen into evil. I will go alone. At once (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 392).

When Boromir returns to the place where the other Companions are waiting for them, they realize that something has happened between Boromir and Frodo. They set on to look for the Hobbit but unsuccessfully. Boromir's attitude towards Frodo causes the dissolution of the Fellowship of the Ring. Indeed, Boromir betrays the Company since he does not help to fulfil the task which they had been entrusted to: to protect the Ring-bearer and take him safely to Mordor. After Frodo's disappearance and Boromir's reappearance, the other Companions are attacked by the Orcs. In his attempt to redeem

himself and save Merry and Pippin, Boromir is deadly wounded by an arrow. It is then when he acknowledges that he tried to take the Ring from Frodo:

(68)

I tried to take the Ring from Frodo. I am sorry. I have paid (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 404).

Boromir's dead body is put into a barge. Aragorn feels that the Company has failed and that he -as the leader- is the main responsible one for this end: Boromir is dead, Merry and Pippin have been taken as hostages by the Orcs, and Frodo and Sam's whereabouts is unknown:

(69)

This is a bitter end. Now the Company is all in ruin. It is I that have failed. Vain was Gandalf's trust in me. What shall I do now? Boromir has laid on me to go to Minas Tirith, and my heart desires it; but where are the Ring and the Bearer? How shall I find them and save the Quest from disaster? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 404).

Although the Company is finally dissolved, the Quest has not failed yet. The name of the Fellowship and its symbol -the Ring- mean communion and unity among its members. The Companions will follow different paths: while Frodo and Sam go to Mordor, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli intend to go to Minas Tirith in order to gather more warriors for war. As for Merry and Pippin, they will be rescued from the orcs and they eventually become a sort of knights at Theoden and Denethor's courts respectively. Not everything seems to be lost: the loyalty and friendship of the members of the Fellowship will make them meet again after the destruction of the Ring when the Quest is completely fulfilled.

3.4. The Knights of the Round Table and the Members of the Company of the Ring

When creating his Fellowship of the Ring, Tolkien probably took as referent the Arthurian knights of the Round Table. Some of Tolkien's characters, especially the companions, share some similarities with King Arthur and his knights. The most obvious one is the character of Aragorn, whose main task, as we have seen, was to heal Middle-earth, like King Arthur does with his own kingdom. Aragorn is also depicted as the 'once and future king'. In fact, the very title of the last volume, *The Return of the King*, is a clear allusion to Arthur, who was thought to return in case of need. In Layamon's *Brut* (1155) it is said that Arthur was brought up among fairies. Aragorn was also raised among the Noldorin Elves in Rivendell. Like Arthur, Aragorn grew up ignoring his royal lineage. Similar to Excalibur, Aragorn's sword, Andúril, represents royal power and authority.

Another archetypal character is Frodo, who embodies the Arthurian prototype of the Grail knight -Galahad or Perceval- since he is the chosen one to carry out a dangerous Quest: to destroy the Master Ring. In some aspects Frodo resembles Perceval since his Quest implies a spiritual journey. What is even more important is the fact that Frodo cannot heal his own wounds and has to leave Middle-earth to be healed in Valinor. This echoes King Arthur's departure to Avalon after his final battle at Camlann in order for his wounds to be healed.

Gandalf may also be considered another prototypical Arthurian character. Like Merlin to Arthur, Gandalf is Aragorn's adviser, the one who helps him to succeed to the throne of Gondor. The resemblance between the original names given to both wizards is more than obvious: Myrddin -Merlin- and Mithrandir -Gandalf- which means 'grey wanderer' (Tyler, 2012: 430). Both Merlin and Gandalf are prophets; Merlin, especially in Malory's work, foretells the love between Lancelot and Guenevere: "But Merlin

warned the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Lanuncelot should love her, and she him again” (Malory in Moore, 2000: 69, b. iii, ch. i). Similarly, Gandalf predicts the role of Gollum in the story of the Ring:

(70)

I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many –yours not least (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 58).

Although these are the characters with most obvious resonances from Arthurian literature, there are others. For instance, Sam might be compared to Arthur’s loyal knight, Bedivere. The name of Boromir is also significant because it resembles that of Bors. As for Merry and Pippin, they can be associated with Perceval. Like him, they are both rejected in the battlefield because they are Hobbits and they are thought not to be able to confront a foe. However, Merry and Pippin show that they are worthy of fighting in a war, especially Merry, who helps Éowyn to kill the Witch King.

From the very beginning of the story, we notice that the relationship between Frodo and Sam is an unusual one since, although they are close friends, their friendship resembles a relationship between a lord and his vassal, or an idealized one between a king and his knight. Elrond describes Sam as Frodo’s “faithful servant” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 268) and Sam himself calls Frodo his ‘master.’ Sam’s extraordinary loyalty to Frodo will be essential in the success of the Quest for the Ring. The friendship between Frodo and Sam echoes the relationship between King Arthur and Bedivere in Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*. Sam, like Bedivere, stands as the image of the faithful vassal who fights for his king. At the end of his Quest -like Arthur, who

commands Bedivere to throw Excalibur into the sea- Frodo tells Sam to finish the Red Book and stay in the Shire:

(71)

Your hands and your wits will be needed everywhere. You will be the Mayor, of course, as long as you want to be, and the most famous gardener in history; and you will read things out of the Red Book, and keep alive the memory of the age that is gone, so that people will remember the Great Danger and so love their beloved land all the more. And that will keep you as busy and as happy as anyone can be, as long as your part of the Story goes on (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1006).

Another parallelism between Sam and Bedivere can be found in an episode of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1885) that is also present in *The Lord of the Rings*. After throwing Excalibur into the lake, Bedivere watches Arthur's departure on a barge towards Avalon. This has clear resonances with the passage of the Grey Havens in which Sam, Merry and Pippin watch Frodo leaving Middle-earth to Valinor in order to have his wounds healed:

(72)

Then Frodo kissed Merry and Pippin, and last of all Sam, and went aboard; and the sails were drawn up, and the wind blew, and slowly the ship slipped away down the long grey firth; and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost. And the ship went out into the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1007).

As said before, Merry and Pippin can also be compared to Perceval who was the only Arthurian knight who did not possess courtly manners. When he arrives to the court of Camelot, Perceval is presented as "unmannered and untutored in the ways of courtly life" (Leeming, 2005: 311). However, in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, Perceval is in charge of finding the Grail and eventually becomes a hero, a knight as he wanted to.

Merry and Pippin undergo a similar process. Once the Company is created, Elrond is reluctant to allow the Hobbits to be included, since he thinks that the mission is too dangerous for people like them:

(73)

You do not understand and cannot imagine what lies ahead (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 269).

Like Perceval, Merry and Pippin are determined to serve as knights, to do something useful to help the others, i.e. to prove their worth. This may be seen when Gandalf and Pippin come to form part of Denethor's court. Following the chivalric code of morality, Pippin becomes Denethor's knight since Boromir dies for him as is explained in the following example:

(74)

The old man laid the sword along his lap, and Pippin put his hand to the hilt, and said slowly after Denethor: 'Here do I swear fealty and service to Gondor, and to the Lord and Steward of the realm, to speak and to be silent, to do and to let be, to come and to go, in need or plenty, in peace or in war, in living or dying, from this hour henceforth, until my lord release me, or death take me, or the world end. So say I, Peregrin Tuk, son of Paladin of the Shire of the Halflings.' 'And this do I hear, Denethor son of Ecthelion, Lord of Gondor, Steward of the High King, and I will not forget it, nor fail to reward that which is given: fealty with love, valour with honour, oath-breaking with vengeance.' Then Pippin received back his sword and put it in its sheath (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 740).

This example portrays Pippin being ordered a knight of the Steward of Gondor. After this, Beregon is sent to instruct the hobbit in his new role as Denethor's soldier.

Merry -whose name, Meriadoc, is the title of an anonymous Arthurian text which narrates the exploits of the hero, Meriadoc, son of the King of Wales, Caradoc, and who carries out a series of adventures and receives lands from the King of Gaul (Bruce, 1999: 358)- also becomes a knight by serving Theoden, the King of Rohan. When the battle is about to start, Theoden decides to release the Hobbit from his service because he also believes, like Elrond, that Merry is not fit for war:

(75)

I am going to war, Master Meriadoc. In a little while I shall take the road. I release you from my service, but not from my friendship. You shall abide here, and if you will, you shall serve the Lady Éowyn, who will govern the folk in my stead (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 784).

The Hobbit tries to complain, saying that he would be ashamed if he is not allowed to go to war since all his Companions have gone to fight:

(76)

I offered you my sword. I do not want to be parted from you like this, Theoden King. And as all my friends have gone to the battle, I should be ashamed to stay behind (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 784).

Although their role in the War of the Ring is insignificant in comparison to that of Aragorn, Gimli or Legolas, Merry and Pippin also contribute to the defeat of evil. The two Hobbits escape from the Orcs and convince the Ents to go to battle. Moreover, while Pippin saves both Faramir and Beregon from death, Merry does the same with Éowyn, who kills the Witch King. After their return to the Shire, both Hobbits are described as knights. Like Perceval after winning the Grail, Merry and Pippin become heroes and their deeds are praised:

By the time they return to the Shire to free their homeland of evil, they have grown princely indeed; as Gandalf says, they are ‘among the great.’ In later days they become literally the hereditary rulers of the Shire, as near to Princes as their democratic world can boast. While they remain soldiers of Rohan and Gondor, the king’s representatives in the Shire, Merry also becomes the Master of Buckland and Pippin the Took the Thain (Wiggins, 2007: 99).

CHAPTER 4

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: A REWRITING OF THE GRAIL STORY

The Lord of the Rings has some similarities with the Arthurian legend of the Grail. The Ring and the Quest for the Ring echo the Arthurian Grail and the search for it. If in the Grail legends the plot focuses on the Grail and the development of the quest for it, in Tolkien's work the main actions and events are connected with the Ring and the mission that the heroes must embark on. The Grail legend comprises, among others, some main features also present in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as an object of absolute power, the quest, a fellowship or a hero who carries the burden of the quest. This chapter will examine to what extent *The Lord of the Rings* is influenced by the Arthurian legend of the Grail, paying special attention to the different representations of the Grail and the Quest for the Holy Grail in some of the most important Arthurian medieval works.

In Arthurian tradition, King Arthur is said to gather his knights and entrust them to carry out the Quest for the Holy Grail in order to save his realm from its decline and corruption. This Quest for achieving the Grail is normally presented as a dangerous journey in which Arthur's knights must confront a series of adventures so that their prowess and morality are tested. In fact, many of Arthur's knights, Lancelot, for instance, even die in their attempt to get the holy vessel or fail in fulfilling the task they have been entrusted. The importance of the Quest for the Holy Grail does not reside exclusively in its end but also in the development of the Quest itself. Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal* tells the story of Perceval who, although he does not succeed in achieving the Grail, manages to progress spiritually and morally

through his adventures. He moves from selfishness and ignorance to humility and wisdom. This change in Perceval's mind enables him to heal the Fisher King and puts an end to his long quest. In Wolfram Von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the Quest for the Grail is represented in a similar way: the spiritual journey of Parzival implies a moral progress rather than a simple journey to get a particular object. In Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthure*, the Grail is seen by many of Arthur's knights before the Quest for the Grail starts. When the Quest begins, many knights fail to get the vessel -including Lancelot- and those who succeed in the Quest have unhappy endings. Galahad, Bors and Perceval witness the Grail procession and go to Sarras, the spiritual city. Once there, they live for a long time until Galahad gets the Grail and finally dies. After this, Perceval becomes a hermit and he eventually dies, too. Bors decides to return to Camelot and tell the news about the Quest for the Grail. So in Malory's work, instead of saving Camelot and restoring the peace and prosperity to Arthur's kingdom, the Grail Quest brings about the final downfall of King Arthur and the Fellowship of the Round Table. It seems likely to think that the point of the quest was not necessarily to obtain the vessel, but the moral progress of Arthur's knights. As said before, the grail appeared to some of them but they could not touch it -this represents their moral inability to reach spiritual purity- except for Galahad, who actually touches the grail, only to die shortly after. As we shall see, Tolkien probably borrowed some elements from the Grail stories and this influence seems to be quite evident. Morgan (2011: 100) explains that:

It was the desire to produce a great fictional saga that was to culminate in *The Lord of the Rings*. Nonetheless, there are many undeniable parallels between the Arthurian romances and his fantasy trilogy, which is underpinned by the central theme of quest. Like the Grail romances the quest which is undertaken is perilous and difficult and ultimately can only be achieved by one special individual. But where the Grail is a beneficent, healing, heavenly talisman, the ring of power, which Frodo the hobbit bears, is powerful, corrupting and malevolent. His quest is to destroy the ring in the fires of Mount Doom where it was created by the evil Lord Sauron. Echoes of the Grail romances still emerge in this context, as the

ultimate destination of the questers in both instances is an otherworldly mountain.

The presence of elements from the Grail stories may be appreciated in the titles of the first and third volumes of Tolkien's trilogy. The first part of *The Lord of the Rings -The Fellowship of the Ring-* clearly reminds us of the Arthurian Order of the Round Table. Likewise, the third volume, *The Return of the King*, alludes to the Arthurian idea of Arthur as a king who will return when Britain needs him, which is also embodied in the character of Aragorn, last and only heir of the Numénorean Kings. In Morgan's own words (2011: 100):

The Arthurian influence is also pronounced in the titles of two of the three books. *The Fellowship of the Ring* echoes the equality and sense of hope of the Fellowship of the Round Table and *The Return of the King* evokes the legend of Arthur's promised resurrection. Like Arthur, the king in question, Aragorn, son of Arathorn, is an heir to a kingdom who is revealed to his people by a mysterious wizard, Gandalf the Grey. He most obviously resembles the wizard Merlin and also acts as advisor, magician and prophet. Aragorn must pursue a personal Grail in recovering his kingship and in the absence of a rightful sovereign the land is laid waste by a marauding army of Orcs.

Similarly, the journeys that follow both the Quest for the Grail and the Quest for the Ring, as we shall see later on, are ill-fated or damned to failure. In the case of the Grail, its power and the search that Arthur's knights carry out serve to destroy the Order of the Round Table while the evil and corruptive power of Sauron's Ring cause the fragmentation of the Fellowship of the Ring and the death of one of its members, Boromir. Both the Grail and the Ring have a destructive power for different reasons. Despite its beneficial power, the Grail triggers the dissolution and separation of the Order of the Round Table through a series of adventures in which some of Arthur's knights are killed while the Ring -representing evil itself- corrupts and destroys its

bearers and the Quest for the Ring. As Morgan (2011:101) argues, “As the fellowship of the Round Table is effectively destroyed by the Grail quest, the fellowship of the Ring is ultimately torn apart by the journey to destroy the Ring”.

Furthermore, the similarities between the Grail stories and *The Lord of the Rings* reinforce the importance of the Grail legends and its influence in popular culture and, of course, in literature. Indeed, the Grail legends have become so important in literature that most of epic fantasy novels -also undoubtedly influenced by Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*- have features from the Arthurian stories about the Grail, which have become prototypical and sometimes almost essential for the epic fantasy.

4.1. The Representations of the Grail in Arthurian Tradition

The Grail has been traditionally associated with the cup that Jesus Christ used in the Last Supper or the vessel that Joseph of Arimathea used to keep Christ’s blood dripping from the cross. However, the Grail that appears in many of Arthurian medieval texts may have its roots in ancient cultures, such as in the Celtic one, as we shall see. As for its representation, the Grail has been represented in many varied ways although keeping the same symbolism or meaning: a sacred object with healing and nurturing properties.

Lupack (2007: 213) argues that:

The Grail of medieval legend, however, has a more specific connotation: it is usually said to signify the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper or the cup which caught his blood as he hung on the cross, though this is not the only or even the earliest form the Grail takes.

The Grail from the Arthurian legends has some similarities with magical cauldrons from Celtic mythology and is sometimes associated with fertility and femininity. Examples of magical cauldrons may be Dagda’s cauldron, Bran’s magical cauldron or the cauldron

of Ceridwen¹⁴, among others. All these cauldrons represent the image of the Cauldron of Plenty or Rebirth, which in turn was one of the most sacred and powerful objects in Celtic mythology along with the Spear of Lugh, the Stone of Destiny and the Sword of Nuada¹⁵. In *Preiddeu Annwfn* (The Spoils of Annwfn)¹⁶, an early Celtic Arthurian text, a magical cauldron is mentioned. In the text, Arthur and his knights go to the Underworld in order to get the cauldron which is said to nurture and protect its bearer.

Clute & Grant (1999: 427) explain that:

In an early Celtic Arthurian story, *Preiddeu Annwfn* ("The Spoils of Annwn") (? 900), Arthur and his men steal a cauldron of plenty from the Irish underworld. Such stories may reflect a folk memory from a time in the early years of Arthur's reign of plenty and good harvest, but which was followed in the later years by the plague and pestilence that seemingly scythed through Europe in the mid-6th century. The Cauldron of Plenty, sometimes called the Cauldron of Rebirth, was one of four objects of power in Celtic mythology, along with the sword Fragarach the Defender, the Stone of Destiny and the Spear of Lugh.

Curiously, when talking about the Holy Grail, it is normally said that there were Grail Hallows - which resemble the Celtic objects of power: the cauldron of Dagda, Lia Fail (the stone of Destiny), the Spear of Lugh, and the Sword of Nuada-. This means that the Holy Grail was not simply a single object but more than one. The Grail Hallows would comprise the grail itself -a vessel-, a lance -used in Christ's crucifixion-, a sword and a dish. To use Morgan's words (2011: 18):

In Ireland mythology tells of four magical objects that included the Cauldron of the Dagda. Brought to Ireland by a conquering race of

¹⁴Dagda is a god from Celtic mythology. Also known as the good god, Dagda was "an artisan and a diviner, a husbandman and a warrior and a wise king, all at once." (Monaghan, 2004: 113) Bran is a Welsh hero or god who is described as a giant and rescues his sister Branwen (Monaghan, 2004: 55-56) while Ceridwen is another Celtic goddess who is also described as a witch or sorceress. (Monaghan, 2004: 83)

¹⁵ The Celtic Hallows comprised the Cauldron of Dagda, the Lia Fail or the Stone of Destiny, the Spear of Lugh, and the Sword of Nuada, called Fragarach the Defender. These four objects may be the basis for the Grail Hallows (Morgan, 2011: 18) and symbols for the four elements (Matthews, 2011:32).

¹⁶ "The Spoils of Annwn" is a fourteenth-century Welsh text which tells the trip of King Arthur and some of his knights to the Otherworld to find a magical cauldron (Lupack, 2007: 19-20).

Otherworld faery people called the Tuatha de Danaan, they served a symbolic function in Celtic culture. The other three items were the Stone of Destiny, the Spear of Lugh and the Sword of the Nuada. These magical items form the basis for the symbols of the Cup, Spear, Stone and Dish, or the four hallows as they are called in the Grail stories.

As for the magical cauldrons mentioned above, we must say that all of them appear to be predecessors of the Grail from Arthurian literature. Morgan (2011: 18) explains that: “In many ways the Celtic Cauldron as a cultural, physical and mythical object is the direct and immediate precursor to the Christian Grail”. This scholar (2011: 3) also points out that the image of the cauldron in Celtic myths is very strong, finding several examples of cauldrons whose nourishing and healing properties resemble those of the Christian Grail. Morgan (2011: 18) explains this characteristic as follows:

The cauldron is a common and important motif in Celtic storytelling. Indeed the Dagda, father of the Irish gods, has a cauldron of plenty that serves food to heroic warriors but which will not provide food for a coward. The cauldron as an image of re-birth, renewal, fertility and nourishment has strong links with water cults and examples of real Celtic cauldrons have been found in aquatic settings where it is believed they were placed as votive offerings.

Dagda’s cauldron was thought to have the food-giving property. It served to provide food to all those who needed to eat while Bran’s cauldron was supposed to have the power to bring people back to life. As Squire (2003: 366) suggests:

In the later romances, the Holy Grail is a Christian relic of marvelous potency. It had held the Paschal Lamb eaten at the Last Supper; and, after the death of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea had filled it with the Saviour’s blood. But before it received this colouring it had been the magic cauldron of all the Celtic mythologies – the Dagda’s “Undry” which fed all who came to it, and from which none went away unsatisfied; Bran’s cauldron of Renovation, which brought the dead back to life.

As for the cauldron of Ceridwen, it is connected with the Celtic goddess of the same name. The Celtic tradition says that the goddess Ceridwen created a cauldron which provided its bearer with knowledge and wisdom so that she could somehow compensate

her son's ugliness with wisdom and in this way he could not be so much feared. However, while preparing an elixir, one of her servants drank three drops from the cauldron accidentally since some of the elixir popped out when the cauldron was boiling, causing Ceridwen's anger. Immediately, he the servant became a hare and tried to flee from the goddess. Drinking from Ceridwen's cauldron implies the acquisition of sudden knowledge, which is symbolized in the servant's shape-shifting ability. Matthews (2011:16) says that:

Of all the God or Goddess-owned cauldrons mentioned within Celtic tradition, one of the earliest and most important is that of the Goddess Ceridwen, one of the most important Celtic deities. The story goes that Ceridwen had a son named Avagddu, which means 'utter darkness' or 'black crow,' who was of such a terrible hideousness that no-one could bear to look upon him. So the goddess decided to brew an elixir of pure wisdom and knowledge, which would equip her offspring to fare better in the world. She set out to gather the ingredients that would go into the brew, and she set her servants, an old blind man named Morda and a boy named Gwion, to boil her great Cauldron. The ingredients were gathered and the Cauldron heated. Then Ceridwen went out again, leaving Gwion to stir the mixture. While she was away however, three drops flew out of the Cauldron and scalded Gwion's finger. Automatically, he thrust the finger into his mouth and thereby gained all knowledge –for the three drops were the distillation of Ceridwen's brew.

All these properties of the cauldrons from Celtic stories (rebirth, healing or food-giving) are likely to have shaped the later stories about the Grail:

In Celtic mythology the Grail has parallels with other magical vessels, like the magic cauldron which makes many appearances in tales such as 'The Spoils of Annwn', collected in the Mabinogion. Significantly, it can bring the dead back to life and provide limitless food, echoing many of the properties later said to be possessed by the Grail (Morgan, 2011: 3).

4.2. Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Conte du Graal*

One of the earliest Arthurian texts which mentioned the Grail was Chrétien's unfinished work *Le Conte du Graal* -also called *Perceval*- written in the 1180s. Its relevance for Arthurian studies resides in the author's introduction of the Grail motif, which will

become an archetypal element in Arthurian literature. Also, Chrétien presents the search for the Grail as a series of adventures which involves spiritual and moral progress.

This text tells the story of Perceval, a young boy who wants to become one of Arthur's knights. What is important here is that the plot is focused not only on the adventures themselves -especially those concerning the Fisher King and the Grail- but also Perceval's spiritual and moral progress. At the beginning, Perceval is described as an ignorant boy who wants to become a knight although he does not know anything about chivalric values or what knighthood really implies. In fact, Perceval's decision of becoming a knight is said to cause his mother's death and, as the story unfolds, he is constantly reproached for his attitude towards his mother. Lupack (2007: 217) argues that:

Perceval must learn the spiritual values, especially charity that will allow him to put others before himself. After he is berated by the loathly damsel at Arthur's court, he wanders for five years gaining honour by sending 'as prisoners fifty thousand esteemed knights to King Arthur's court' (415) but forgetting God and failing to do anything to win God's mercy.

When Perceval visits the Grail Castle for the first time and he witnesses the Grail procession, he fails in his quest to get the Grail and in turn to heal the Fisher King and save the Wasteland. This failure involves selfishness and immaturity, since Perceval shows that he is not ready to become a knight yet. In Chrétien's work, the Grail Quest does not only depend on overcoming a series of adventures in order to get a sacred, powerful object but also on the spiritual evolution of the hero. In Perceval we may distinguish two stages or levels. The first stage is connected with the character's psychology since he moves from selfishness and pride to altruism and humility. As Frappier (2014: 184) explains:

In the first stage of Perceval's growth he serves an apprenticeship as the young fool. The treatment is racy and supple, though its natural acceleration cannot conceal the gradually concerted tableaux bundled in narrative segments, to mark turning points in the life of the hero.

Perceval's attitude seems to be changing, especially after his failure to ask the question to the Fisher King. Frappier (2014: 184) also argues that:

The first level, then, is psychological, during which Perceval's 'naivety' explains his error of judgment in failing to ask the fateful question at the castle of the Fisher King.

This means that all the mistakes that Perceval makes along his adventures -especially that of not asking the question to the Fisher King- are because of his ignorance and youth. Perceval's cousin warns him about the consequences of not asking:

Ah, how unlucky you are / For had you asked those questions / You could have completely cured / The good king of all his wounds: / He would have become entirely / Whole, and ruled as he should. / How much good you'd have done! / Believe me, miseries will come, / Instead for you and for others. / You're being punished for the sin / You committed against your mother / Who died, sorrowing for you. / I know you better than you / Know me. You don't know who I am, / But for many years I lived / In your mother's house, with you, / For I'm your first cousin / And you are mine. I regret it / All equally -the fact / That you never asked what the grail was, and to whom / It was brought (Duggan, 1999:114, ll. 3585-3606).

However, these mistakes are necessary in his moral evolution, i.e. failure is the first step for the fulfillment of the quest since the hero -in this case, Perceval- starts to realize that he has made several mistakes and he has failed in his task. Perceval's awareness of his failure will lead him to another stage in his progress.

In the next stage, Perceval starts to become aware not only of his mistakes but also of his duties. He realizes that he must do something to amend his mistakes in order to progress in his quest and eventually succeed in it. In Frappier's words (2014: 184):

A moral drama is revealed when the progressive development of the adventures reaches a climax. It is characterized by a problem of continual interest to Chrétien, that of the hero's awareness of his duties and inner freedom.

Testing the hero -not only through a physical journey or a series of adventures- becomes the goal of Perceval's quest. Indeed, the young boy is constantly tested by means of

characters who remind him of his failure as a knight and of her mother's death caused by his craving for becoming a knight like his older brothers. In this stage, Perceval is changing; he is no longer an ignorant and selfish boy but he becomes more mature as his adventures progress. We could say that this stage in Perceval's morality implies a process of self-recognition in which the character realizes his mistakes and tries to amend them. Finally, there is a third stage in Perceval's personal evolution which involves a complete awareness of his duties and the final achievement of his quest: that of becoming a humble, altruistic knight despite the fact that he has not got the Grail:

The third is a spiritual experience, depicted as a slowly dawning consciousness of his mother's suffering and death. This is the cause of Perceval's muteness. Previously uncommitted to grace or repentance, he is finally redeemed on Good Friday (Frappier, 2014: 184).

Although the Quest for the Grail is not depicted in a very clear way in Chrétien's work, the Grail is not simply a physical object but a symbol. The Grail itself in Chrétien's work represents the spiritual wholeness of Perceval, the result of a process in which Perceval is tested and must show his prowess. So the goal of the Grail resides in the moral progress of Perceval rather than in obtaining the vessel itself. Also, the Grail procession, which appears when Perceval visits the Grail castle, probably epitomizes the evolution that Perceval undergoes: from his ignorance at the beginning to his self-awareness at the end:

Understood as a symbol, the Grail corresponds to each of these stages. The passing of the cortege illustrated Perceval's amusing but tragic naiveté (niceté) as well as his fervor, completely spent on the enjoyment of prestigious marvels found in chivalry. Then he undergoes a glimmering awareness of his own inner freedom roused by the vision of the Grail. And finally the image of the Eucharistic Grail brings a full illumination and purification of the hero (Frappier, 2014: 184).

As for the Quest of the Grail in Chrétien's *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal*, Perceval's task of getting the holy vessel is depicted as an individual process rather than a mission carried out by several knights or a fellowship of knights or warriors. Likewise, it is not

mentioned a specific quest for the Holy Grail followed by some particular adventures connected to the Grail itself which lead the hero to the final achievement of the quest. Indeed, Perceval follows some apparently meaningless adventures which in turn lead him to the complete achievement of his quest by showing his eventual spiritual and moral progress, which is portrayed in Perceval's recognition of all his mistakes and repentance. Thus, Perceval admits his own mistakes:

And Perceval, deeply afraid / Of having offended God, / Clapsed the hermit's feet / And, bending low, his hands / Joined in supplication, / Begged for help, for his need / Was great. The good man instructed / Him to make his confession, / For sins could not be forgiven / Before confession and repentance. / "Sir," said Perceval, "for five / Full years I haven't known / Where I was, or believed in God, / Or loved Him. All I have done / Was evil." "Good friend," said the hermit, / "Tell me why this happened, / And pray God to have mercy / On your sinful soul." "Sir," / Once I was at the Fisher King's / Castle, and I saw –without / Any question –the bleeding lance, / And seeing that drop of blood / On the bright white of its point, / I never asked what or why. / There are no amends I can make. / And when I saw a holy / Grail, I had no idea / For whom it was meant, and said nothing / And ever since I've felt / Such sadness that I wished to die; / I forgot about God and never / Prayed for his grace and mercy" (Duggan, 1999: 201-202, ll. 6355-6386).

Furthermore, the Grail in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* is not still depicted as the vessel which Christ drank from in the Last Supper or the cup that contains Jesus Christ's blood. Indeed, Chrétien was the first who introduced the term 'grail' considered a translation for 'grail'. Chrétien's Grail is an object shrouded in mystery since it is not clearly said what kind of object it is. However, Chrétien gives prominence to the symbolism of the Grail and its spiritual connotations rather than to the object itself.

Morgan (2011: 24) explains that:

In the work of the French medieval romance writer Chrétien de Troyes we find the first surviving literary reference to the Grail or Graal. At this point the Grail appears in a Christian context but is not yet specifically described as the cup of the Last Supper. His story *Conte del Graal*, 'story of the Grail', also known as *Perceval*, combines the popular Celtic folk stories of King Arthur with the concepts of the chivalric knight and courtly love.

Chrétien introduces the concept of Grail for the very first time, although it is not fully shaped yet. He uses some elements from Celtic stories, such as the idea of spiritual and moral evolution as well as the hero's process of being tested in a normally perilous journey. The importance of the idea of the quest both in Chrétien's story or some earlier Celtic stories connected with King Arthur such as *Preiddeu Annwfn* (The Spoils of Annwfn) is not only to obtain a particular object -a chalice or a cauldron- but also the journey that the heroes must confront in order to achieve a spiritual task rather than a simple item.

In conclusion, Chrétien's *Conte del Graal* provides us with an early and incomplete view of the Arthurian concept of the Grail and the quest for it. Shrouded in mystery, the Grail is given much symbolism and is the result of Perceval's evolution at a moral level. Therefore, he moves from innocence, ignorance and selfishness to recognition, humility, and repentance. Perceval's psychological changes are represented in the Grail procession; the appearance of the grail at the end of the procession -glimmering as a light- embodies Perceval's final spiritual wholeness and redemption from all his mistakes. As for the Quest for the Grail, it is described as an individual search (rather than as a task carried out by many knights as in later Arthurian texts) which comprises some adventures in which the hero can be tested. Finally, the representation of the Grail is not precisely concise; Chrétien does not provide a clear portrayal of the Grail as in later Arthurian literature. However, this may have intentionally been done to reinforce the spiritual nature of the Grail.

4.3. Wolfram Von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

Another important Arthurian account that narrates the story of the Grail is *Parzival*, a German thirteenth-century text written by the poet Wolfram Von Eschenbach. *Parzival*, which is a retelling of Chrétien's text *Perceval* or *Conte du Graal*, provides a very interesting and different version of the Grail story. Normally portrayed as a dish or as a goblet or chalice, here the Grail is represented as a stone with nourishing powers, among other properties. Morgan (2011: 29) argues that:

Of all the different versions of the Grail story, perhaps the most unusual and individual interpretation is that provided by the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach. Written between 1210 and 1220, his romance *Parzival* offers the greatest representational departure in its depiction of the form that the Grail takes. In previous descriptions it has been described sometimes as a shallow dish but mainly as a cup, goblet, chalice or bowl.

In other words, Eschenbach's representation of the Grail is totally unusual and original, especially because the Grail is almost described as the philosopher's stone - a magical stone which was said to provide its bearer with eternal life and youth-. Sauron's Master Ring somehow echoes this representation of the Grail as we shall see later on. Morgan also suggests that the Grail could have different properties apart from providing nourishment to its bearer:

The Grail in stone form can provide nourishment with limitless food and drink and creates a feast that Parzival partakes of at Munsalvaesche. It also has the power to bestow youthfulness and prolong life on those who see it. There is a suggestion that it can bring physical resurrection as it is described as having had the power to restore the Phoenix back to life after it has been burnt to ashes (Morgan, 2011: 29-30).

So as we can see here, Eschenbach offers a more complex view of the Grail. The Grail stone has many different properties; it does not only provide its bearer with food, a motif also found in other Arthurian tales about the Holy Grail. Most important for our study are the Grail's properties of providing eternal youthfulness and long life since it is

likely that Tolkien based Sauron's Ring on Eschenbach's concept of Grail. *Parzival* starts narrating the story of Gahmuret, Parzival's father, and his deeds, which provides a sort of context for his son Parzival and his future heroic exploits. Eschenbach also focuses on the spiritual and moral progress of Parzival, who embarks on different quests and visits the Grail castle as Chrétien's Perceval. Like Perceval, Parzival is brought up in solitude by his mother, Herzeloide. One day, Parzival meets a knight called KarnahKarnanz. Then, the young boy decides to become a knight so he decides to embark on a journey where he will have to learn about life, the world and the Grail so that he can fulfil his quest. Lupack (2007:237) explains that Parzival's quest is more a spiritual one rather than just finding the Grail. In other words, if he wants to achieve the Grail and in turn fulfill his quest, Parzival must undergo a journey in which his morality and his prowess as a knight will be tested. This process of learning at different levels is the goal of Parzival's quest. For this, he will be instructed by Gurnemanz -his mentor and prince of Graharz- who recommends him not to ask many questions in his adventures, and the hermit Trevrizent:

Parzival learns about the Fisher King, as he must learn of spiritual matters, from the hermit Trevrizent (brother of Parzival's mother and of Anfortas), who teaches him what he needs to know to complete his quest. Trevrizent's instruction balances that given by Gurnemanz in worldly and chivalric matters. That Parzival needs such instruction is made clear first of all by his failure to ask the question that will heal the wounded king (Lupack, 2007: 237).

Parzival arrives in the Grail Castle -here named Munsalvaesche- where the Fisher King lives. Once there, Parzival decides not to ask a question to his uncle Anfortas following Gurnemanz's bad advice. As a result of this, Parzival is heavily criticized and even insulted. As Lupack (2007: 237) explains:

Parzival surely has the innate qualities necessary to achieve the quest. A knight cannot fight his way to the Grail castle; he must be called there by heaven, and Parzival is the chosen knight. Yet on his first visit to the castle, he does not ask the question and as a result is subjected to much

criticism and even abuse, particularly from Cundrie, who is the messenger or spokesperson for the Grail.

Then, Parzival gets to King Arthur's court where he is mocked by a lady and challenged by Kay. Parzival leaves the king's court and embarks on a new quest so that he can improve his skills and prowess as a knight. When he returns to Arthur's court again, the lady, named Cundrie, accuses Parzival of not being worthy of becoming a knight and tells that his fame is false. Then, again, he takes another quest so that he can finally redeem himself. After confronting several hardships and difficulties, he finally asks the question and saves the Fisher King. Indeed, Parzival becomes the Grail king:

Parzival swept. 'Tell me where the Grail is,' he said. 'If the goodness of God triumphs in me, this Company here shall witness it!' Thrice did he genuflect in its direction to the glory of the Trinity, praying that the affliction of this man of sorrows be taken from him. Then, rising to his full height, he added: 'Dear uncle, what ails you?' (Eschenbach in Hatto, 2004: 394).

After Parzival's question, Anfortas is immediately healed and in turn Parzival becomes the Grail King. To use Eschenbach's own words:

No other Election was made than of the man the Grail inscription had named to be their lord. Parzival was recognized forthwith as Sovereign and King (Hatto, 2004: 395).

Traditionally, the Grail has been represented as a cup or vessel which contained Jesus Christ's blood, the chalice used in the Last Supper or in rarer cases, a dish which provided its bearer with food. However, in *Parzival* the Grail is a precious stone with several properties such as nourishing and life-giving. This stone is named as "lapsit exillis" whose meaning may have different origins or interpretations. Eschenbach writes about the Grail that:

It is called "lapsit exillis." By virtue of this Stone the Phoenix is burned to ashes, in which he is reborn. –Thus does the Phoenix moult its feathers! Which done, it shines dazzling bright and lovely as before! Further: however ill a mortal may be, from the day on which he sees the Stone he

cannot die for that week, nor does he lose his colour. For if anyone, maid or man, were to look at the Grail for two hundred years, you would have to admit that his colour is as fresh as in his early prime, except that his hair would grey! –Such powers does the Stone confer on mortal men that their flesh and bones are soon made young again. This Stone is also called “The Grail” (Hatto, 2004: 239).

So this stone could be defined as a sort of divine stone which can only be used or touched by a chaste person:

The miraculous stone, which is so heavy that it can be carried only by a completely chaste person, dispenses unlimited food and prolongs life for those who view it. Its strength is renewed every Good Friday when a dove descends from heaven to lay the host on it (Mahoney, 2000: 82).

The Grail stone, the power of which derives from the wafer left by a dove, serves to sustain the wounded Anfortas not only physically but also spiritually. This can be appreciated when Eschenbach writes:

The King often kept his eyes shut tight for as many as four days on end. Then they carried him to the Grail whether he liked it or not. And with the malady racking him to the point where he had to open his eyes, he was made to live against his will and not die. This was how they proceeded with him until the day when Parzival and particoloured Feirefiz rode joyfully to Munsalvaesche (Hatto, 2004:391-392).

Other features of Wolfram’s stone are that of eternal youthfulness as well as the fact that it can only be used by one individual who stands out for his or her spiritual purity or chastity. Ranke (2000: 368) suggests that:

The Grail also has the power to bestow a blooming youthful appearance on the beholder. Just as, in the Middle-Ages, a person who had received the host during the High Mass was believed to be spared from death that week, a person who saw the Grail would not die the following week. This proves to be a misfortune for the Grail King who, tortured by pain, seeks death in vain. The life-giving power of the Grail is symbolically expressed in the statement that it is also the source of renewal for the phoenix.

Also, the weight of the Grail changes according to the sins of its bearer. Ranke (2000: 368) writes that:

Another miraculous feature of the Grail is its weight. The person who wants to lift it must be of immaculate chastity, as is the case of with Repanse de Schoye, the bearer of the Grail.

Another important point in Wolfram's Grail is that the stone can only be taken or caught by a chosen person who, in turn, must be pure and have a chaste life. The spirituality and the divine nature of the Grail involve chastity, spiritual purity and wholeness.

Ranke (2000: 368) points out that:

Another miraculous feature of the Grail is the fact that it can be "hunted" only by an individual designated by God. The person who is granted this special grace finds his name and kin inscribed on a stone.

Wolfram's *Parzival* gives us an interesting and extraordinarily complex retelling of the story of Perceval and the Grail. The German poet also links the Quest of the Grail to a constant process of learning based on the knowledge of the world, the understanding of knighthood and its values and self-sacrifice. Especially important is the depiction of the Grail itself -represented as a sort of philosopher's stone- which embodies a more complex ideal: youthfulness, spiritual purity, eternal life, resurrection and rebirth. Eschenbach's *Parzival* is, indeed, a very important narration of the Grail story within Arthurian tradition since it does not only provide an exceptional and uncommon representation of the Grail but it retells and completes Chrétien's original tale of Perceval in a very concise way.

4.4. Vulgate's *Estoire del Saint Graal* and *Queste del Saint Graal*

The Vulgate Cycle, a compilation of texts written between 1215 and 1235, is especially relevant for the Arthurian literature since it focuses on three main themes: the story of the Grail quest, the story of Merlin and that of Lancelot. The Vulgate Cycle narrates and develops the idea of the Grail Quest more in depth as well as it narrates the life of Merlin. Its importance also resides in recounting Lancelot's exploits and his forbidden love for Guinevere. The Vulgate Cycle provides a Christian view of the Grail for the first time and is related to Christ himself since it is described as the cup He used to drink in the Last Supper.

This compilation of Arthurian tales comprises two relevant texts for the study of the different representations of the Grail: *Estoire del Saint Graal* (*History of the Holy Grail*) and *Queste del Saint Graal* (*Quest for the Holy Grail*). The first one tells the story of the holy vessel from its origins until it is brought to Britain. It begins when Joseph of Arimathea takes the dish that Christ used in the Last Supper in order to collect Christ's blood while still on the cross. After this, Joseph is imprisoned because of his respect towards Christ. However, he is provided food by the dish containing Christ's blood:

The history of the Grail begins after the Crucifixion when Joseph of Arimathea preserves the dish used by Christ at the Last Supper and collects in it some of the blood of Christ after he is laid in the tomb that Joseph provides for his body. Imprisoned in 'the most hideous and filthy prison ever seen' (10) because of the respect he has shown to Christ's body, Joseph is sustained for forty-two years by the Grail in such a manner that he thought himself incarcerated only from Friday until Sunday (Lupack, 2007: 242).

Once Joseph has been released, Christ appears to him and Joseph is commanded to go to Sarras, the spiritual city, and preach in His own name. Later in the story, Joseph of

Arimathea is said to have traveled to Britain, where the Grail is supposed to be kept. Also, he devotes himself to spread Christ's word all over Britain. Joseph finally dies there and is buried in Scotland. Then his son and his grandson continue to christianize Britain. Joseph of Arimathea's lineage somehow serves to provide a context for the Grail knight, Galahad, and explains why he succeeds in achieving the Grail:

Having prepared for the Grail quest, the romance goes on to explain how the Grail came to Britain. A heavenly voice directed Josephus to spread his under-tunic on the sea. The cloth grew larger as each of 150 Christians stepped on it; and then it carried them over the ocean to Britain. There they continued their proselytizing and Christianized much of Britain, including the city of Camelot. Joseph died in Britain and was buried in the Abbey of the Cross in Scotland. Before his son Joseph died, he used blood from his bleeding nose to paint a red cross on Mordrain's shield, the shield that is destined for 'Galahad, the very good knight, the last in Nascien's line' (157) The history of the Grail before the quest is completed when the sacred vessel is passed on to Alan, who brings it to the Land Beyond, where a castle named Corbenic is built for it, the castle in which the Grail remains until the days of King Arthur (Lupack, 2007: 243).

The *History of the Holy Grail* provides a background for the Grail and its own origins. It also portrays the Grail as a Christian symbol, more specifically as the dish that Christ used in the Last Supper, which Joseph of Arimathea had used before to gather Christ's blood. Like the magical cauldrons from the Celtic tales, and Eschenbach's Grail stone, the Grail is here also depicted as having food-giving properties as a sort of reward for Joseph's faithfulness and loyalty to Christ. What is important here is the originality of the story rather than its representation of the Grail and the quest for it. In other words, the story behind the Grail is explained before the Quest for the Grail takes place. For this reason, the story is linked to Galahad's ancestors who brought the Grail from the Holy Land to Britain. Consequently, the role of Galahad as the Grail knight seems to be

justified because of his lineage. That of the Grail is explained by Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea, as follows:

Then he had the Holy Vessel brought before him and said to Alan, “Alan, I entrust you with this, as Jesu Christ entrusted my father. When you pass from this world, you can invest the person you wish. And henceforth he will be entrusted with it in this kingdom. And you will be the one who will invest him.”

Alan took the Vessel, very happy and joyful about the gift he had received. As soon as Josephus died, Alan left Galafort, taking with him his brothers, who were all married except one called Joshua. He was not yet married, and he was one of the good knights in the world, and he was the one whom Alan loved the most of his brothers (Lacy, 2010: 298).

As a sort of conclusion, the *History of the Grail* provides a most significant view of the Grail. It is already described as a specific object, a dish, which was used both in the Last Supper and as a vessel to collect Christ’s blood, i.e. it serves to establish a prototypical concept of the Holy Grail. This Christian image of the holy vessel still has a reminiscence of earlier representations of the Grail embodied in its nourishing properties. The *History of the Grail* reinforces the lineage of the Grail. It shows how the Grail is given to Joseph of Arimathea, who in turn delivers it to his son, Josephus who passes the Grail to his own son, Alan.

Queste del Saint Graal (The Quest for the Holy Grail)

This text was written in the thirteenth century, probably between 1215 and 1235. It includes several Arthurian tales such as the story of Merlin, Lancelot, his deeds and his forbidden love for Guenevere as well as a cycle devoted to the Quest for the Holy Grail. This work is very similar in themes and structure to the *History of the Holy Grail*. Here, the Quest for the Holy Grail starts when Galahad arrives in Arthur’s court and sits in the Perilous Seat, a place in the Round Table reserved for the true Grail knight. Galahad also shows his prowess when he draws a sword from a stone. In this text, there are other

knights involved in the search for the Holy Grail, such as Gawain, Lancelot and Perceval and Bors, who are the main Grail Knights along with Galahad. The Quest for the Grail, as in Chrétien's story, implies a spiritual progress which will be the goal of the search rather than the Grail itself. The Grail, depicted as a sacred object represents an idea of spiritual purity, effort and repentance. In fact, King Arthur tells his knights that the Quest for the Holy Grail is not a simple search for an object but a spiritual search. To use his words:

Listen to me, all you knights of the Round Table who have sworn to undertake the Quest for the Holy Grail! The hermit Nascien sent me to tell you that anyone taking a lady or a young lady along on the quest will fall into mortal sin. No one should undertake this quest without having confessed his sins and having been absolved, for no one should enter into such a distinguished service until he has been cleansed and purged of all faults and mortal sins. This is not a quest for earthly goods. Rather, it should be understood as the search for the great secrets of Our Lord and the great mysteries that the Almighty will reveal openly to the special knight he has chosen from among all others to be his servant. The Lord will show this knight the great wonders of the Holy Grail and allow him to contemplate what mortal hearts could never imagine nor human tongues describe (Lacy, 1996: 14).

Many of the Grail knights see the Grail or at least they have a vision of it. One of these knights is Lancelot to whom the Grail appears:

After a long time, Lancelot, who had been carefully surveying his surroundings, saw emerging from the chapel the silver candelabrum and candles, which he had previously observed inside. He watched the candelabrum move toward the cross, but to his amazement, no one was carrying it. Then he saw the Holy Vessel approach on a silver table, the same vessel he had seen at the Fisher King's palace. It was the one they called the Holy Grail (Lacy, 1996: 37).

In this text, Lancelot is portrayed as one of the Grail knights for the first time. Despite his ill-fated, adulterous love for Guenevere and other sins, Lancelot is determined not to sin again and this promise will lead him to the vision of the Grail. Lupack (2007: 244-245) explains that:

Lancelot, who does not figure in the earlier Grail stories, becomes a major participant in the quest, his exploits being interlaced with those of the three successful questers. And he is the only knight other than those three who makes a sincere effort at betterment: he confesses his sins, does penance, and even renounces his love for the queen and swears that he will never again 'sin her or any other woman' (24) For keeping that vow for the duration of the quest, he is rewarded with a partial vision of the Grail.

Then, Lancelot witnesses the Grail procession, in which he is hurt because he tries to help one of the priests from falling down and is hit by a mysterious wind. Lancelot is unconscious for twenty-four days, the years which he spent with Guenevere. As for the Grail, it is said to be covered so Lancelot cannot see it well. As Lupack (2007: 245) suggests:

He sees it covered with red silk and 'around it ministering angels' and then witnesses a mass in which he views the miracle of transubstantiation; when the priest raises the host, he observes three men above him, two of them placing the third in the priest's hands. Lancelot, rushing forward to help the priest who seems about to fall under the burden, is blasted by a fiery wind and is unable to hear or see or control his limbs for twenty-four days, which correlate to the twenty-four years he 'had been in the devil's service', that is, had loved the queen (80-I). While Lancelot is rebuked for disobeying the divine injunction against entering the chapel and though he has been and will again be a sinner, he nevertheless has a spiritual adventure unlike that of any other of the knights except the chosen three, two of whom, it is important to remember are his relatives.

The description of the Grail given in the quotation above is focused on its symbolism rather than its physical appearance. This reinforces the idea that the Grail is a divine and miraculous object which is unreachable for most people. Shrouded in mystery and secrecy, the Grail may be perilous for those who see it and are not the chosen ones, such as Lancelot, whose vision of the Grail makes him faint and be unconscious for twenty-four days. The *Quest for the Holy Grail* ends when Bors, Perceval and Galahad arrive in Sarras, the spiritual city. They spend some years there until Galahad's death. Then,

Perceval becomes a hermit and Bors returns to Camelot to let Arthur know the news about the whereabouts of the Grail and Galahad and Perceval's death.

4.5. Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*

Published in 1485, *Le Morte D'Arthur* is probably the most important Arthurian text. It is influenced by the Grail stories from the Vulgate Cycle, in particular as regards the structure of the quest for the Holy Grail. Malory includes the figure of the Grail knight properly speaking and associates this role with Galahad rather than with Perceval, Bors or the three of them. The Grail here represented is a sacred vessel which is said to contain Christ's blood and was previously used in the Last Supper. In Malory's work, the Quest for the Holy Grail (also called Sangreal)¹⁷ is especially relevant because it involves all Arthur's knights and the Grail itself is seen by many of them. The quest for the Grail starts when Galahad manages to sit in the Perilous Seat (or Siege Perilous), a seat where only the Grail knight can sit (others who try die):

So when the king and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the sieges of the Round Table all about, written with golden letters: Here ought to sit he, and he ought to sit here. And thus they went so long till that they came to the Siege Perilous, where they found letters newly written of gold which said: Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled (Malory in Moore, 2000: 564-565, b.xiii, ch.ii).

The Quest for the Grail in Malory's work is a perilous journey, similar to that in the Lancelot-Grail cycle texts. Although Galahad is the main Grail knight, Bors and

¹⁷ The term 'Sangreal' has been associated with the idea that Christ and Mary Magdalene were married and had children. Indeed, 'Sangreal' could mean 'royal blood' in reference to the royal lineage of Christ and Mary Magdalene. The Merovingian Kings claimed to be descendants of Christ and Mary Magdalene (Maisch, 1998: 163).

Perceval play an important role in the Quest. The three knights embark on a journey to find the holy vessel. They see the Grail and are fed by it:

Then looked they and saw a man come out of the Holy Vessel, that had all the signs of the passion of Jesu Christ, bleeding all openly, and said: My knights, and my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of my hidden things: now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired. Then took he himself the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad; and he kneeled down, and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows, and they thought it so sweet that it was marvelous to tell. Then said he to Galahad: Son, wettest thou what I hold betwixt my hands? Nay, said he, but if ye will tell me. This is, said he, the holy dish wherein I ate the lamb on Sheer-Thursday. And now hast thou seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place (Malory in Moore, 2000: 668-669, b. xvii, ch. xx).

Before getting to the spiritual city, the three knights are imprisoned and fed by the Sangreal. When they arrive in Sarras, Galahad is crowned king and after a year he is taken to heaven by Joseph of Arimathea. This is the end of the Quest for the Grail since the vessel disappears when Galahad is carried to heaven:

And therewith he kneeled down to-fore the table and made his prayers, and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven, that the two fellows might well behold it. Also the two fellows saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body. And then it came right to the Vessel, and took it and the spear, and so bare it up to heaven. Sithen was there never man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal (Malory in Moore, 2000: 672, b.xvii,ch. xxii).

With Galahad's death, Perceval and Bors decide to return to Camelot. However, the former dies and the latter goes back to Camelot alone, putting an end to the Grail Quest. Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is, undoubtedly, one the most influential Arthurian texts, especially for the author's concise and descriptive style. In the Victorian era, there was a revival of Arthurian literature (the main contributor being Tennyson with his work

Idylls of the King (1885). Victorian authors who attempted to write about King Arthur used Malory's text as the main source for Arthurian legends.

4.6. The Ring and The Grail

The presence of elements from the Arthurian tales about the Grail and the search for it is very clear in Tolkien's work. The first element in common is the object -the Grail and the Ring- which becomes the central theme of the plot. However, while the Grail is a sacred and powerful object which symbolizes good, rebirth and healing, Tolkien's Master Ring is rather the opposite. Although powerful and somehow divine -it was created by Sauron, which was a sort of fallen angel, a Maiar, an angelic spirit of a lower rank than the Valar-, the One Ring symbolizes death, destruction and evil. However, the Ring and the Grail have some other features in common. For instance, the power of the Ring and the Grail is destructive, although their sources are radically different. While the Grail eventually causes the downfall of the Order of the Round Table -all the knights leave Camelot in search of the Grail and many of them finally die- the Ring forged by Sauron destroys the Fellowship of the Ring and corrupts some of its members.

Another feature in common between *The Lord of the Rings* and the Grail stories is the idea of Quest. In both cases, the Quest -the origin of which is to save the Wasteland- is represented as a stepped journey which a fellowship must carry out so that they can save their lands from evil and decay. However, the Quest itself implies not only a physical journey through several lands and realms but also a spiritual journey in which all the heroes or companions will be tested.

However, Tolkien reverses some prototypical elements. Instead of searching the object which brings the healing and redemption, he conceives his particular 'quest' as a

journey to destroy the object that has brought about the downfall and the decay of Middle-earth. Like the Grail, Sauron's Ring is a powerful, much desired object although it destroys instead of healing.

4.6.1. The Story behind the Ring: its Origins, its Forge, its Symbolism and its Role in the Story

The Master Ring has its roots in the old days of Middle-earth. At that time, many other Rings of Power were created but of less power and malevolence. Nine rings were fashioned for the Kings of Men, seven for the dwarves and three for the Elven Kings made by the Elven smiths. Sauron himself contributed to the creation of the Rings of Power although he could only corrupt the Nine Rings of Men and the Seven of the Dwarves. His intention was evil since he created another Ring of Power which could dominate the other rings:

The greatest feat of craftsmanship performed during the Second Age was the making of the Rings of Power: the Three Rings of the Elves, the Seven Dwarf-rings and the Nine Rings of Mortal Men 'doomed to die'. The most potent of all the Rings of Power was that One Ring wrought by Sauron of Mordor. The Tale of their making is a strange story of thirst for knowledge, combined with a pride in craftsmanship, being turned (albeit unconsciously) to evil purposes: an odd reflection of the tale of the Silmarils. The Elven-smiths of Eregion, the makers of most of the Great Rings, were descended themselves from Fëanor, who had wrought the Silmarils during the Elder Days. They were assisted in the task by Sauron of Mordor, who thus acquired great knowledge while pretending to dispensing it. Together they made the Nine, and the Seven, and the lesser Rings of Power (Tyler, 2012: 543).

The story of the Rings of Power is connected with the story of the Silmarils, which took place in a mythical age before, and is explained in *The Silmarillion* (1977). The Silmarils¹⁸ were gems created by Fëanor, a Noldor Elf and smith. In these jewels Fëanor put the light of the two trees created by the Valar, Telperion and Laurelin. The beauty of

¹⁸ The Silmarils are three jewel stones made by Fëanor. They were made with the light of the two trees of Valinor and one of them was stolen by Morgoth, the Dark Lord, causing a war between the Valar and the Dark Lord. This story is told in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* (Tyler, 2012: 582)

these three Silmarils triggered the envy and hatred of the first dark lord, Morgoth, who seized them, put them into his iron crown and finally corrupted them. Two of them were finally returned but the third one disappeared.

While fashioning the Rings of Power, Sauron deceived the Elven-smiths so that he could learn from their craftsmanship. He also contributed to the fashioning of the Nine and Seven Rings with a clear intention: to condemn the race of men and dwarves to his own will and power. However, Sauron could not take the Three Elven Rings, the power of which was especially strong and depended on the will of the Elven kings. As for the properties of the Rings of Power, the Elven Rings have the power to “make, heal and preserve” (Tyler, 2012: 544) while the other Nine and Seven could provide long life and other powers related to the mind:

Each ring had certain properties which were passed on to the bearer, like the gifts of foresight, protective power, and so on. But the Great Rings, the Nine and the Seven, had other qualities: they gave long life and many different powers of mind and hand. But Sauron’s hand was also on their making (with the exception of the chief Dwarf-ring), and so these inherent powers were distorted far beyond what the Elven-smiths had intended; and they would all prove susceptible to the One Ring which Sauron planned to make (Tyler, 2012: 544).

As we can see, the Rings of Power possessed several properties. While the three Elven Rings -called Narya, NENYA and Vilya- are benevolent since they can heal, protect or foresee, the other Great Rings were more powerful but more devastating because they had been corrupted by Sauron for his own purposes. For this, Sauron deceives the Elven-smiths with a particular purpose: to learn how to forge a ring and pour all his power into it so that the Ring would bring destruction and desolation to Middle-earth, thus making all people slaves. Likewise, the other Nine and Seven rings had the property of corrupting their respective bearers. The Seven rings are said to cause the

dwarves' desire for gold. As for the One Ring, it was so powerful that it could master and control other Great Rings -such as the Nine rings- and put their bearers under his command by transforming them into Ringwraiths:

The nature of the Ruling Ring was such that by its power Sauron was able to dominate and command the bearers of the Nine. With the Seven he was not so fortunate, for the dwarves were 'made from their beginning of a kind to resist most steadfastly any domination... and for the same reason their lives were not affected by any Ring, to live either longer or shorter because of it. Nevertheless, the potential beneficial effects of the Seven were lost to them and indeed their ultimate fall can be said to be due in part to the quality the Rings possessed of inflaming Dwarf-hearts with love of gold and wealth for its own sake –a trait towards which they were always only too partial (Tyler, 2012:544-545).

The fact that the One Ring is forged in Mount Doom is relevant since the dark mountain represents all Sauron's own destructive power and evil. The name of the mountain, Mount Doom, is related to the story and the fate of the Ring. Such is the corruptive and destructive power and the evil of the Ring that it is doomed to be destroyed.

The first time the Rings of Power are mentioned is when Gandalf visits Frodo before leaving the Shire. The wizard warns Frodo about the Ring and its dangers:

(77)

It is far more powerful than I ever dared to think at first, so powerful that in the end it would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it. It would possess him. In Eregion long ago many Elven-rings were made, magic rings as you call them, and they were, of course, of various kinds: some more potent and some less. The lesser rings were only essays in the craft before it was full-grown, and to the Elven-smiths they were but trifles –yet still to my mind dangerous for mortals. But the Great Rings, the Rings of Power, they were perilous. A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself invisible, he fades: he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the Rings. Yes, sooner or later –later if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor

good purpose will last- sooner or later the dark power will devour him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 45-46).

Like the Grail in Arthurian tradition, the Rings of Power -especially that of Sauron- are said to provide an unusually long life. While the Grail gives food and sustenance to its bearer - in the case of the ill-wounded Fisher King, it is said that the Grail gives him a very long life despite his wounds-, the One Ring provides an almost eternal life to its bearer but at the same time this life is cursed. This property of the Grail has positive connotations since it serves to sustain the Grail bearer both physically and spiritually - it has a protective power- whereas the One Ring gives a strangely long but artificial life which ends up devouring and corrupting its bearer physically and morally. This is the case of the creature named Gollum, previously a Hobbit, who succumbs to the dark power of the Master Ring.

The Ring, described as “of pure and solid gold” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 48), has many other peculiarities. For instance, it may change its size and weight as Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 48) describes:

(78)

Frodo took it from his breeches-pocket, where it was clasped to a chain that hung from his belt. He unfastened it and handed it slowly to the wizard. It felt suddenly very heavy, as if either it or Frodo himself was in some way reluctant for Gandalf to touch it.

The change in weight of Frodo’s Ring echoes Eschenbach’s portrayal of the Grail since it is said that its weight changes according to the sins of its bearer. As mentioned above, Ranke (2000: 368) explained that “another miraculous feature of the Grail is its weight. The person who wants to lift it must be of immaculate chastity, as is the case of

Repense de Schoye, the bearer of the Grail”. The fact that the Ring becomes heavier or lighter does not only show that its bearer is the chosen one but also that the Ring has a will of its own -as we shall see, its corruptive power and evil will have negative consequences and effects on some main characters.

Frodo and Gandalf discover that the Ring which Bilbo took from Gollum is Sauron’s Ruling Ring when it is thrown into the fire and some letters can be seen on it:

(79)

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them
all and in the darkness bind them (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 49).

Then, Gandalf explains that Frodo’s Ring is the one forged by the Dark Lord Sauron to command and subdue the folks from Middle-earth. After defeating Sauron, Isildur took the Ring from his hand as a sort of reward. However, the Ring got lost and no one knew its whereabouts. In Gandalf’s own words:

(80)

This is the Master Ring, the One Ring to rule them all. This is the One
Ring that he lost many ages ago, to the great weakening of his power. He
greatly desires it – but he must *not* get it (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 49).

Unlike the Grail whose finding symbolizes restoration, healing and good -indeed, the goal of the quest for the Holy Grail is to find it so that it can bring prosperity and peace and heal King Arthur’s realm-, the discovery of the Ring causes the awakening of Sauron and his dark hosts and ultimately the desolation of Middle-earth. Gandalf argues that the darkness is starting to wake in the east and the whole Middle-earth is threatened by Sauron and the Ruling Ring:

(81)

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us. And already, Frodo, our time is beginning to look black. The Enemy is fast becoming very strong. His plans are far from ripe, I think, but they are ripening. We shall be hard put to it. We should be very hard put to it, even if it were not for this dreadful chance. The Enemy still lacks one thing to give him strength and knowledge to beat down all resistance, break the last defences and cover all the lands in a second darkness. He lacks the One Ring (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 50).

If the Grail symbolizes hope and healing, the Ring represents evil, hopelessness, and a threat to all the realms in Middle-earth. The example above shows the beginning of the Quest for the Ring but in its initial stage. Frodo is advised to leave the Shire and go to Rivendell where he will be safe. Then, it will be decided what to do with the Ring and more specifically who will be in charge of its destruction and how this will be done. However, the danger and treacherous nature of the Ring is present from the very beginning since Frodo and the other three Hobbits are chased and threatened by the Ringwraiths, who in vain try to get the Ring back. Later on, the first sign of the Ring's evil is when Frodo is badly hurt at Weathertop by the Witch King. The Ring itself draws the Nine Riders to it in its intent to be brought back to its master. Then the Hobbits and Aragorn are surrounded by the threatening dark shadows of the Ringwraiths and Frodo is finally attacked and goes into the shadows where he is tempted and uses the Ring as is explained in the following description:

(82)

At that moment Frodo threw himself forward on the ground, and he heard himself crying aloud: *O Elbereth! Gilthoniel*¹⁹ At the same time he struck at the feet of his enemy. A shrill cry rang out in the night; and he felt a

¹⁹ This is a sort of prayer normally used by the High Elves to dispel evil and ask assistance to Elbereth Gilthonial. Also called Varda, she is the queen of the stars –‘star-kindler’- and wife to Manwë, lord of the Ainur, the gods and goddesses of Middle-earth (Tyler, 2012: 182-183).

pain like a dart of poisoned ice pierce his left shoulder (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 191).

The wound that the Hobbit is inflicted represents to what extent the Ring is dangerous and evil since it is made by a Morgul blade, a sword fashioned for the Witch King by black magic. In fact, Frodo's injury will never be cured and it will hurt him even after the Ring is destroyed. This obviously reminds us of the Fisher King and the Grail. The Grail is said to sustain the Fisher King despite having a wound in his testicles. If the Grail can heal, the Ring may be rather harmful not only at a physical level but also at a spiritual one. Frodo's wound epitomizes the first step in his downfall into the evil of the Ring. After being wounded and with the help of Glorfindel, Frodo, Strider (Aragorn) and the other three Hobbits arrive in Rivendell, where Frodo is saved from death and gets over. Once there, there is a meeting -in which all the races of Middle-earth are represented- in order to decide what to do with the Ring. In this council, Gandalf explains the history of the Ring from its forge to Isildur's seizure. During Gandalf's visit to Minas Tirith, the wizard sees a scroll written by Isildur himself, where he explains the nature of the Ring and how it is affecting Isildur's mind:

(83)

It was hot when I first took it, hot as a glede, and my hand was scorched, so that I doubt if ever again I shall be free of the pain of it. Yet even as I write it is cooled, and it seemeth to shrink, though it loseth neither its beauty nor its shape. Already the writing upon it, which at first was as clear as red flame, fadeth and is now only barely to be read. It is fashioned in an elvenscript of Eregion, for they have no letters in Mordor for such subtle work; but the language is unknown to me. I deem it to be a tongue of the Black Land, since it is foul and uncouth. What evil it saith I do not know; but I trace here a copy of it, lest it fade beyond recall. The Ring misseth, maybe, the heat of Sauron's hand, which was black and yet burned like fire, and so Gil-Galad was destroyed; and maybe were the gold made hot again, the writing would be refreshed. But for my part I will risk no hurt to this thing: of all the works of Sauron the only fair. It is

precious to me, though I buy it with great pain (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 246).

Isildur's words and description of the Ring show that Isildur was somehow aware of its harmful nature and that it was evil. However, the last lines in the example above demonstrate that the King of Gondor has succumbed to the evil of the Ring, which has corrupted and seduced Isildur with its beauty and might. In fact, the word 'precious' is also repeated and uttered by Gollum, Bilbo and finally Frodo, a sign that they are possessed and corrupted by the power and strength of the Ruling Ring.

In the Council at Rivendell, Elrond warns that the Ring is evil by nature and it cannot be used on any account. Its destructive power could destroy even the strongest and the wisest in Middle-earth and the only way to stop Sauron's return is by destroying the Ring in the place where it was forged: Mount Doom. Acting like King Arthur, who is said to gather his knights at the beginning of the Quest for the Grail, Elrond tells the others that the only solution is to destroy the Ring since the finding of the Ring would entail terrible consequences for Middle-earth:

(84)

We cannot use the Ruling Ring. That we now know too well. It belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone, and is altogether evil. Its strength, Boromir, is too great for anyone to wield at will, save only those who have already a great power of their own. But for them it holds an even deadlier peril. The very desire of it corrupts the heart. Consider Saruman. If any of the Wise should with this Ring overthrow the Lord of Mordor, using his own arts, he would then set himself on Sauron's throne, and yet another Dark Lord would appear. And that is another reason why the Ring should be destroyed: as long as it is in the world it will be a danger even to the Wise. For nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so. I fear to take the Ring to hide. I will not take the Ring to wield it (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012:261).

The Ring is so dangerous that even touching it may have terrible and disastrous effects on those who try to wield it. This somehow resembles the Grail. In Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, Galahad dies when he touches the Grail and even its vision may be a peril to those who see it (e.g. Bors and Perceval). Also, Elrond warns them about the risks of keeping the Ring, emphasizing the idea that its simple presence could be harmful for those around.

The first attempt of the Ring itself to destroy the Fellowship can be seen when the Company arrives in Tol Brandir. Frodo decides to flee from his companions and carry out the quest alone. Here the Ring seems to be acting on its own will, although the Hobbit encounters an unexpected person -Boromir- who tries to steal the Ring. Indeed, Boromir's treacherous behaviour shows that something has gone wrong since he has been corrupted by the desire to possess the Ring and to use it as a weapon against its own maker. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 389) writes:

(85)

Frodo looked up. His heart went suddenly cold. He caught the strange gleam in Boromir's eyes, yet his face was still kind and friendly.

Then, Boromir continues to deceive Frodo in order to get the Ring, although unsuccessfully. Finally, Boromir gets very angry and attacks Frodo:

(86)

His hair and pleasant face was hideously changed; a raging fire was in his eyes. Frodo dodged aside and again put the stone between them. There was only one thing he could do: trembling he pulled out the Ring upon its chain and quickly slipped it on his finger, even as Boromir sprang at him again. The Man gasped, stared for a moment amazed, and then ran wildly about, seeking here and there among the rocks and trees (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 390).

Once Frodo manages to flee from Boromir, still wearing the Ring, he has a vision of all Middle-earth plunged into war and then, he sees the Lidless Eye, Sauron. Then, Frodo struggles against the dark power of the Ring while trying not to succumb to Sauron's power:

(87)

And suddenly he felt the Eye. There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him. Very soon it would nail him down, know just exactly where he was. Amon Lhaw he touched. It glanced upon Tol Brandir –he threw himself from the seat, crouching, covering his head with his grey hood. He heard himself crying out: *Never, never!* Or was it: *Verily I come, I come to you?* He could not tell. Then as a flash from some other point of power there came to his mind another thought: *Take it off! Take it off! Fool, take it off! Take off the Ring!*. The two powers strove in him. For a moment perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware of himself again. Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose, and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger. He was kneeling in clear sunlight before the high seat. A black shadow seemed to pass like an arm above him; it missed Amon Hen and groped out west, and faded. Then all the sky was clean and blue and birds sang in every tree (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 392).

Here Frodo faces Sauron and the evil of the Ring for the very first time. Frodo's vision of the Eye implies not only a weakening in his will to fight against the Ring's power but also that Sauron knows who has his Ring and tries to tempt Frodo to fall into the darkness. However, the Hobbit fights against Sauron successfully and finally he takes the Ring off. This is the first encounter between Frodo and the Dark Lord in which the former realizes for the first time to what extent the Ring is so powerful and malevolent and how desperate Sauron is to have the Ring again. Also, Frodo chooses to carry out his Quest alone since the Ring has already corrupted the Fellowship:

(88)

This at least is plain: the evil of the Ring is already at work even in the Company, and the Ring must leave them before it does more harm. I will go alone. Some I cannot trust, and those I can trust are too dear to me: poor dear Sam, and Merry and Pippin. Strider, too: his heart yearns for Minas Tirith, and he will be needed there, now Boromir has fallen into evil. I will go alone. At once (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 392).

Then, Frodo decides to go to Mordor along with his friend Sam. As the story unfolds, the Ring seems to become a heavier burden for Frodo. Also, the closer the Hobbits are to Mordor and the Black Gate, the wearier they feel, especially Frodo:

(89)

I am tired, weary, I haven't a hope left. But I have to go on trying to get to the mountain, as long as I can move. The Ring is enough. This extra weight is killing me (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 897).

The Ring is more and more oppressive for Frodo -both physically and spiritually- since while climbing Mount Doom, Frodo looks like a sort of wraith, blind and mute:

(90)

All this last day Frodo had not spoken, but had walked half-bowed, often stumbling, as if his eyes no longer saw the way before his feet. Sam guessed that among all their pains he bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind. Anxiously Sam had noted how his master's left hand would often be raised as if to ward off a blow, or to screen his shrinking eyes from a dreadful Eye that sought to look in them. And sometimes his right hand would creep to his breast, clutching, and then slowly, as the will recovered mastery, it would be withdrawn (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 914).

Frodo's will and strength weaken as the Ring grows stronger while they get closer to Mount Doom. The Ring feels its master's power and starts to destroy Frodo physically and spiritually. This process of corruption and degradation of the Ring culminates in Frodo's last words in Mount Doom. There the Hobbit decides not to throw the Ring into the fire, showing that he has failed in his task. To use Tolkien's words:

(91)

But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed.
The Ring is mine (Anderson, 2012: 924).

Despite Frodo's failure to destroy the Ring, Gollum takes it from his hands and the creature accidentally falls down, carrying the Ring with himself. The Ring is eventually destroyed and Frodo is saved from its oppression:

(92)

And there was Frodo, pale and worn, and yet himself again; and in his eyes there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear. His burden was taken away. There was the dear master of the sweet days in the Shire (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 926).

In comparing the Ring to the Grail of the Arthurian legends, we must say that both have many features in common, some already mentioned. Both the Ring and the Grail symbolize the ideal of absolute power incarnated in an object. Both also stand out for their impossibility since only a chosen person can bear the Grail and the Ring (the Grail knight and the Ring bearer, respectively). Similarly, the Grail and the Ring may have negative consequences since they cause the dissolution of the companies: the Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring. In the case of the Quest for the Grail, the departure of Arthur's knights implies its fragmentation and an impossible future meeting since many of them will die in the Quest. King Arthur says that:

For when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore the departition of this fellowship: for I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship (Malory in Moore, 2000: 571, b. xiii, ch. vii).

Both the Ring and the Grail disrupt the values of their own societies –represented in the downfall of the two companies- since the fates of the Arthurian world and the Middle-earth depend upon these two objectives: to find the Grail and to destroy the Ring.

Mahoney (2000: 2) explains the disruption and chaos that the Grail causes in Arthurian society:

It may break up a society, destroy the homosocial bonds that held it together, present new values that undermine or challenge those on which the society depends. Alternatively, it may establish a new community, of those who are bonded together by the search.

Also, the Ring and the Grail can give a long life although in different ways. As said before, the Grail provides the Fisher King with a long life even though he is wounded. In the Grail stories about Joseph of Arimathea, the Grail has food-giving properties. Consequently, the Grail can be considered a dangerous but healing vessel while the Ring is the opposite: it gives its bearer a long -almost immortal- life but it is cursed and subdued to its will as it is the case with the Nazgûl or Gollum.

However, the Ring and the Grail differ in some aspects. While the Grail must be found in order to save the Fisher King or in other cases King Arthur's realm, the finding of the Ring causes the awakening and reappearance of evil forces in Middle-earth. In other words, if the Grail is supposed to be the only weapon to destroy evil and bring back peace, prosperity and healing in Arthur's kingdom, Sauron's Ring is the direct cause of the desolation and darkness in which Middle-earth is plunged into.

4.7. The Quest for the Holy Grail and the Quest for the Ring

Previously, we have explained the similarities and differences between the Ring and the Grail. However, another important feature which concerns these two objects is the idea of quest. Both in the Grail stories and in Tolkien's work, the Quest is presented as a stepped journey in which the main characters must confront a series of adventures aimed at testing their prowess and skills. However, this journey implies not only simple adventures but also a spiritual journey. In both cases, the importance of the Quest

resides in its progress rather than in its end. In other words, the development of the search determines its result. Mahoney (2000:1) argues that:

Implied in the usage is the idea of difficulty, exclusivity in the search, even the impossibility of ever attaining it. On some occasions it connotes not the goal of the search, but the search itself, the quest that drives men (for it is traditionally men who search) unstintingly.

The idea of Quest involves not only difficulties but also self-sacrifice and even failure. The concept of failure is relevant for the achievement of the Quest in the Grail stories and in *The Lord of the Rings*. In Mahoney's words (2000: 2):

The search is associated with failure, inaccessibility, disaster, yet the Grail is still the symbol of hope, of healing, of something beyond the mundane, the earthly transcending normal life.

This idea is also present in Tolkien's work. The Quest for the Ring is presented as a difficult task, almost impossible to carry out. Like in the Grail quest in which Galahad - the Grail knight- dies when he sees the holy cup, Frodo -the Ring bearer- suffers along his Quest. Being the Ring-bearer implies self-sacrifice -since the power of the Ring torments him- and at the end of his quest Frodo fails to destroy the Ring at Mount Doom. However, this leads to the final fulfillment of the Quest since Gollum takes the Ring from the Hobbit and destroys it by accident.

Apart from the stepped journey mentioned above, the Quest involves a fellowship formed by several heroes: the Order of the Round Table and The Company of the Ring. In the fellowship there is a main hero who has the hardest role to perform: to find the Grail in the case of the Grail knight and to destroy the Ring in the case of Frodo. Both companies are seemingly doomed and condemned to fragmentation. Acts of treason trigger the dissolution and downfall of both the Order of the Round Table and the Fellowship of the Ring. In the case of King Arthur's fellowship -although not directly related to the Quest for the Holy Grail- treason causes its breakup. It is

Agravain²⁰ and Mordred who unveil Lancelot and Guenevere's forbidden love by ambushing them:

But thus as they were together, there came Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, with twelve knights with them of the Round Table, and they said with crying voice: Traitor-knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, now art thou taken. And thus they cried with a loud voice, that all the court might hear it; and they all fourteen were armed at all points as they should fight in a battle (Malory in Moore, 2000: 743, b. xx, ch. i).

Moved by their hatred and envy of Lancelot, Mordred and Agravain's revelation of the adulterous love between him and Guenevere causes conflicts among King Arthur's knights. Arthur recognizes that this has brought about the downfall of the Order of the Round Table:

Now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold: and now it is fallen so (Malory in Moore, 2000: 752, b. xx, ch. vii).

In fact, Arthur and Gawain wage war against Lancelot, who takes Guenevere from Camelot in order to save her from being burnt. Gawain is killed at the battlefield by Lancelot, who refuses to make war with his companions. Finally, Arthur regrets waging a war against Lancelot since this may contribute to the whole destruction of the Fellowship of the Round Table:

Then when King Arthur was on horseback, he looked upon Sir Launcelot, and then the tears brast out of his eyes, thinking on the great courtesy that was in Sir Launcelot more than in any other man; and therewith the king rode his way and might no longer behold him and said: Alas, that ever this war began (Malory in Moore, 2000: 763, b. xx, ch. xiii).

The Quest for the Grail -especially since Malory's work- is represented as a search carried out by many knights although just a few ones are fortunate to see the Grail and

²⁰ Agravain is one of King Arthur's knights. He is the son of King Lot and Morgause and brother to Gawain. Mordred and Agravain plot to reveal Lancelot and Guenevere's love. Agravain is later killed by Lancelot when he rescues Guenevere from the pyre. (Lupack, 2007: 429)

only one is the chosen hero to achieve the quest. Also, the importance of the Grail lies in the process of the search itself, i.e., in the adventures that the heroes undergo and in their spiritual progress. In most Arthurian texts, Arthur's knights fail in their quest to find the Grail since the cup and Galahad disappear when Bors, Perceval and Galahad himself see it. The goal of the Quest is the moral progress of the hero rather than the finding of the holy vessel. Therefore, the Quest for the Grail represents the ideal of learning some values such as self-sacrifice or humility. The Quest for the Ring is very similar. Like the unexpected and somehow bitter end of the Grail quest - the Grail is not achieved and some of the heroes die- the quest for the Ring is constantly threatened by evil and Frodo finally fails to destroy the Ring in Mount Doom. Like the Order of the Round Table, the Fellowship of the Ring is finally dissolved.

When examining more similarities between the Quest for the Grail and the Quest for the Ring, we must consider their purposes first. Both fellowships share the same objective: the restoration of peace, prosperity and the healing of the 'Wastelands' from darkness and evil. For this, they differ in the way to carry out their respective quests. While Arthur's knights must find the Grail to restore peace and to heal Arthur's realm, the Nine Companions must destroy the Ring. Its appearance implies the need of a quest in order to destroy it as it is the root of all evil in Middle-earth while Arthur's knights must go in search of the Grail, which can bring salvation to King Arthur's realm. Both quests, however, have in common a sense of pessimism, impossibility and hopelessness. Indeed, both Quests bring changes in Arthur's realm and in Middle-earth. The Grail Quest causes the dissolution of the Order of the Round Table and eventually the collapse of Arthurian society since the failure of the quest brings about the absolute decline of King Arthur's splendid and prosperous reign. Lacy (2003:116) explains this as follows:

The very genesis of the Grail quest also prefigures, indeed overtly announces, the destruction of the Round Table and the ultimate ruin of the Arthurian fellowship.

As for the Quest for the Ring, it also symbolizes impossibility, uncertainty, despair and hopelessness. Tolkien presents it as an almost lost battle since the power of the Dark Lord is too strong to defeat. In Elrond's own words:

(92)

The road must be trod, but it will be very hard. And neither strength nor wisdom will carry us far upon it. This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 262).

Elrond mentions the dangers and risks which the Company will have to confront in their quest. This also emphasizes the idea of uncertainty, i.e., the strongest or the wisest may not necessarily be those who will accomplish the task of destroying the Ring. As the Quest progresses and after some disgraceful events such as Gandalf's falling into darkness in Moria or the fragmentation of the Fellowship, the feeling of hopelessness increases. Aragorn expresses his desolation when he says:

(93)

'Alas! I fear we cannot stay here longer,' said Aragorn. He looked towards the mountains and held up his sword. 'Farewell, Gandalf!' he cried. 'Did I not say to you: *if you pass the doors of Moria, beware?* Alas that I spoke true! What hope have without you?' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 324).

When they are in Minas Tirith and they realize that the war against Sauron is coming, Gandalf and Pippin talk about the impossibility of succeeding in destroying the Ring as well as the hopelessness and the difficulties to fulfil the Quest:

(94)

'Tell me,' he said, 'is there any hope? For Frodo, I mean; or at least mostly for Frodo.' Gandalf put his hand on Pippin's head. 'There never

was much hope,' he answered. 'Just a fool's hope, as I have been told. And when I heard of Cirith Ungol...' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 797)

Like in the Grail stories where the weight of the Quest is on the Grail knight-Galahad or Perceval - the burden of the Quest for the Ring lies on Frodo as Ring-bearer. He has to bear the main weight of the Quest. Helped by his friend Samwise Gangee, he must confront several hardships. The two Hobbits are also helped by the dreadful creature, Gollum, who leads them through dark paths. Finally, the Quest for the Ring is fulfilled. However, Frodo fails in his quest because he does not destroy the Ring since its power overcomes the Hobbit and eventually corrupts him. It is Gollum in his desperate attempt to recover his 'precious', the Ring, who finally succeeds in the Quest since both he and the Ring accidentally fall into the fires of Mount Doom. Frodo explains that:

(95)

But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him! For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 926).

If the Quest for the Grail marked the end of Arthurian society, the achievement of the Ring Quest brings the end of the Third Age and the beginning of the Fourth Age -this is appreciated in the departure of the last High Elves from Middle-earth to Valinor and the rising of the race of men due to the restoration of the kingship of Gondor. To use Tolkien's words (Anderson, 2012: 1006):

(96)

For the Third Age was over, and the Days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times. With them went many Elves of the High Kindred who would no longer stay in Middle-earth.

In conclusion, we cannot deny that *The Lord of the Rings* is highly influenced by the Grail legends. The Ruling Ring's portrayal reminds us of the Grail in Arthurian tradition in the sense that they are both dangerous objects of power and divine nature,

unreachable for most characters. Like the Grail in Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the Ring provides long life but with different purposes. While the Grail gives food to its bearer as a protection, all those who bear the Ring or are under its power for a long time have an extremely long life -such as Gollum- which may lead them into the dark and become slaves of the Ring, as it is the case of the Ringwraiths. Like in the Grail stories, there is a Company -the Fellowship of the Ring- formed by a group of heroes who undergo several adventures and must fulfil the Quest. Like the Grail knight in the Order of the Round Table, the Ring-bearer, Frodo, has a similar role since he carries the main and most dangerous burden: to keep the Ring. However, it seems likely to think that Tolkien wanted to reverse the idea of the Grail. While this was a sacred and benevolent object, the Ring is cursed by the evil of its Master, Sauron. If the Grail is to be found, the Ring must be destroyed.

More importantly, the ideas behind the Quest of the Grail and the Quest for the Ring are quite similar. The Grail stories emphasize the values of self-sacrifice, failure and moral progress of the main hero, Galahad or Perceval. The Quest for the Ring symbolizes these same ideas. Indeed, failure is, paradoxically, what leads to the final success and achievement of the Quest of the Fellowship of the Ring. Also, self-sacrifice, an idea specially embodied in Sam, contributes to the accomplishment of the Hobbits' task of destroying the Ring.

CHAPTER 5

BILBO AND FRODO'S RELATIONSHIP: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH THE ARTHURIAN UNCLE-NEPHEW RELATIONSHIP

5.1. Uncle-nephew relationships in Arthurian literature

One of the main features of Arthurian literature is the appraisal of male relationships. Most Arthurian texts reinforce male-to-male bonds, even representing them as the essence of King Arthur's world. Within this male-dominant Arthurian society there is one kind of relationship which is especially appreciated and praised: that of uncle and nephew, which is usually portrayed as a deep and close bond between an uncle and normally his sister's son. In Arthurian literature, uncle-nephew relationships are rather common and in most cases are positively depicted. This tie between an uncle and a nephew in an Arthurian medieval context does not exclusively reside in a social hierarchy or a lord-and-vassal bond since this close bond embodies an idealized view of male attachments based on loyalty, comradeship and finally blood ties. The fact that the nephew is a sister's son is especially relevant since a nephew is a legitimate heir for a king who does not have children or has only bastards. The frequent appearances of uncle-nephew relationships have been regarded as a remainder of a matrilineal society from ancient cultures. Rabine (2013: 60) explains that:

In clanic societies, especially if they have any form of matriliney, men play a significant role not as husbands and fathers but as brothers of the women and uncles to their sister's children. Blood ties are all-important.

It is important to point out that the most famous uncle-nephew relationships from medieval literature, as we shall see, are those on the mother's side, probably as a reminiscent of an ancient matrilineal society. It is not a coincidence that the relationships between an uncle and a nephew from medieval texts emphasize this

maternal link since the nephew is always the sister's son. Despite the fact that there is not much scholarship on this topic, this emphasis on the maternal side somehow entails some remainders from an old society in which a woman, a mother, had a higher social status than women used to have in the Middle Ages.

In Arthurian literature there are several examples of this uncle-nephew relationship which differ from each other in some aspects. For instance, Arthur and Gawain's close friendship and affectionate connection is based on loyalty while Tristan and Mark of Cornwall's relationship is rather the opposite because it is based on treason, vengeance and wickedness. In *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo and Bilbo's deep bond reminds us of the medieval uncle-nephew relationship. Flieger (2005: 137) suggests the existence of the influence of uncle-nephew relationships from old and medieval literature in Tolkien's work:

Frodo, like Aragorn, like Arthur, Galahad, Beowulf, is brought up in a home not his own, Bilbo's home. And here another medieval motif enters, for Frodo is Bilbo's nephew. The relationship of uncle and nephew, specifically uncle and sister's son, is prominent in medieval narrative from *Beowulf* to Malory.

Weston (2011:180) argues that the presence of uncle-nephew relationships in medieval texts is particularly frequent in Arthurian literature, even becoming an essential element:

In fact this relationship was so obviously required by tradition that we find Perceval figuring now as sister's son to Arthur, now to the Grail King, according as the Arthurian, or the Grail, tradition dominates the story.

The uncle-nephew relationship is likely to have its origins in Celtic and Germanic culture. Germanic tribes considerably respected these relationships. The Celts evidently did the same since most of old Irish tales reflected the importance of the ties between an uncle and his nephew. Indeed, this was especially honoured and almost regarded as sacred. Miller (2003: 93) suggests that:

Of all the peoples generating and sustaining themselves on hero tales, the Celts seem to have made most of the mother's brother –sister's son tie, though the ancient Germans, as Tacitus bears witness, were already notable for the respect they gave this connection.

Uncle-nephew relationships are notably frequent in medieval literature. We find examples of this in *Beowulf* with Beowulf and Hygelac, in Irish mythology between two of its most prominent heroes, Cú Chulainn and Conchobar, and Diarmid and Finn or other medieval heroes such as Roland and Charlemagne, among others. In Arthurian tradition, the tie between Arthur and Gawain or the relationship between Tristan and Mark are the clearest examples of the uncle-nephew relationship. However, we may find others of minor relevance such as that of Peredur /Perceval with the Fisher King.

As said before, the idea of uncle-nephew relationship is likely to have arisen in Irish ancient literature. In fact, it seems to be a good example of how this motif developed and how often it appeared. There is a term which reflects this idea of a close tie between an uncle and his sister's son: *gormac*. The word refers to the idea that a son must behave and act properly with his family. Miller (2003:93) argues that "the Old Irish narratives crystallize the mother's brother – sister's son tie in the term *gormac*, which carries the meaning of one, the son (*mac*), who acts correctly toward family". Indeed, a sister's son is expected to behave in a proper way and have an adequate attitude to his mother's family. In Old Irish literature, we have the example of Conchobar and Cú Chuláinn. Miller (2003: 93) explains that:

Specifically, the sister's son must act properly toward his maternal kin. Cu Chuláinn's loyalty and support of king Conchobar (his mother's brother) and the Ulstermen is unquestioned, but fortunately for the beleaguered warriors of Ulster his human father, Sualdam, was an outsider, so neither he nor his extraordinary son-champion was affected by the *ces*, the curse-brought debility that lay so hard on the Ulstermen.

Conchobar and Cu Chulainn are two of the most important heroes in Celtic mythology. According to tradition, Conchobar (also known as Concohar) was a king of the Ulster and was said to have:

Suffered from debilitating pains whenever an invasion threatened, because of a curse put upon the region's warriors by the dying goddess Macha. Concohar may himself have been responsible for that curse, for he demanded that the pregnant goddess race against his fastest horses (Monaghan, 2004: 96).

As for Cú Chuláinn, he is probably the mightiest hero of Celtic mythology and his adventures are usually connected with those of Conchobar, his mother's brother. However, the hero's conception seems to have been caused by a possible incestuous relationship between Conchobar and Cu Chulainn's mother. Morris (1982: 95) explains the earliest uncle-nephew relationships, also emphasizing the likely incestuous component:

Conchobar and Cuchulainn, Finn and Diarmaid, Mark and Tristan, spring to mind as examples; but the first is suspect, it being widely reputed that Cuchulainn was Conchobar's son by incest. The Finn /Diarmaid link is made only in later texts, which may well have been influenced by the Tristan legend rather than vice versa. As for Mark and Tristan, there is no Celtic evidence for the nephewship earlier than the versions of Eilhart and Béroul.

This, of course, leads to another aspect of uncle-nephew relationships: the idea of incest. Many of these relationships are under the suspicion of incest as it is the case of Conchobar and Cu Chulainn. However, the most famous example of incestuous uncle-nephew relationships is that of King Arthur and Mordred, son of Arthur's half-sister Morgan Le Fay. The fact that these relationships are so frequent in old and medieval literature suggests that they may be more important than they seem at first. They do not simply symbolize an ideal fraternal friendship between an uncle and his nephew as his heir. Indeed, the uncle-nephew relationships seem to go beyond this and may play an essential role in their respective stories. In other words, this type of relationship has a particular purpose which is that the nephew must carry out or finish a task that his uncle

has failed to achieve. All the examples of uncle-nephew bonds mentioned above - Cuchulainn and Conchobar, Diarmid and Finn, Mark and Tristan, Gawain and Arthur and Roland and Charlemagne as well as the incestuous ones such as Arthur and Mordred- aim at finishing a quest that was initiated by the uncle. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo and Frodo's close friendship reminds us of the medieval uncle-nephew relationship as we shall see. In fact, there are some characteristics of Bilbo and Frodo's relationship -such as fosterage, or Bilbo's preference and favouritism- that make us think about the influence of the medieval concept of a relationship between an uncle and a nephew. Flieger (2005: 137) explains that:

What all these pairs have in common is that some action initiated by the uncle is brought to its conclusion, whether for good or ill, by the nephew. In any case, the relationship is a well-established and well-recognized literary motif. We may be sure that Tolkien is giving us important information when he makes Frodo Bilbo's nephew.

Although Bilbo and Frodo's relationship is the most prominent example of the medieval uncle-nephew bond in Tolkien's work, it is not the only one in *The Lord of the Rings*. Éomer and Éowyn are nephew and niece respectively to King Theoden. They are also, in fact, his sister's children and heirs to the throne of Rohan, since Theoden's son is killed. In analysing similarities between *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Neville (2006: 102) emphasizes the relevance of this kind of relationship in both works: "They privilege a relationship between maternal uncle and nephew -the 'sister's son'- that is marked in Old English texts: Beowulf, like Éomer, is the son of his king's sister". Éowyn is also the daughter of the king's sister and is empowered since she is ordered to rule Rohan in Théoden and Éomer's absence. She also eventually kills the Witch King.

In Arthurian tradition, male bonds are commonly praised and reinforced by knighthood values. Within these male-to-male relationships, the ties between an uncle and a nephew are given a special prominence. We find several examples of this, both

positive and negative. One of the most well-known examples may be Gawain, who is nephew to King Arthur. In most Arthurian texts, Gawain is presented not only as King Arthur's nephew but also as the best champion in the Arthurian court. Gawain is well-known because of his prowess as a warrior as well as for his ability to increase and wane his strength at noon. He is described as one of Arthur's best warriors in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (1138). In *The Rise of Gawain* (12th-13th centuries) Gawain is said to be taken to Rome by Viamundus and made a knight under the emperor's service. In Chrétien's *Perceval* Gawain is depicted as the bravest and noblest knight of King Arthur, embodying the most important Arthurian values: honesty, honour and courage. In the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* he is depicted as Arthur's greatest knight and he is tested to carry out a series of quests in order to demonstrate not only his worth and valour as a knight but also the solid foundations of Camelot and King Arthur's world.

5.1.1. Gawain and King Arthur

In the thirteenth century the *Vulgate Cycle* relegates Gawain to a minor role while giving more importance to Lancelot in his first appearance in the Arthurian world. Despite this, Gawain is an essential character in most Arthurian texts. In *Estoire del Saint Graal* Gawain is said to be a descendant of Joseph of Arimathea and is described as a benevolent and courteous knight. In *Queste del Saint Graal* Gawain is portrayed as an excellent and powerful knight who, however, cannot achieve the quest for the Grail due to his lack of spiritual values. In *Mortu Artu* Gawain is said to fall in love with the lady of Escalot who in turn loves Lancelot. In this text, we find a fight between Gawain and Lancelot for the very first time. Sorrowful for his brothers' death, Gawain fights against Lancelot and is mortally wounded. However, on his deathbed Gawain admits

Lancelot's prowess, generosity and worth. In Malory's *Morte D'Arthure*, Gawain is presented not only as a courageous and great warrior but also as vindictive and full of hatred and resentment.

King Arthur and Gawain have been traditionally described as an uncle and a nephew. Gawain is said to be the son of Arthur's sister, sometimes called Anna or Morgause. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's text, Anna is Uther and Igraine's daughter and mother to Gawain, Gaheris, Agravain and Mordred. In later Arthurian literature, this role is given to Morgause and Morgan²¹. The role of Gawain in Arthurian literature is more relevant than it may seem at first. Besides an excellent knight, Arthur, a childless king, finds a son and heir in his sister's son, Gawain. This relationship between uncle and nephew is based on loyalty, closeness and deep friendship. Malory's work portrays both the benefits and the conflicts of the uncle-nephew relationship quite clearly. Arthur's preference for Gawain, often seen as Arthur's favourite nephew, breaks up with the ideal of equality and union symbolized by the Round Table. The uncle-nephew relationships present in Arthurian tradition and especially more deeply developed in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthure* are mainly based on loyalty as their main pillar. Refusing to help each other involves treason and misfortune. Kim (2000: 75) argues:

The most basic and primitive unit of political relationship in Malory's work is the inherited tie of kinship, as in the *chanson de geste* and other forms of chivalric fiction. A knight must be loyal to his kin: he is expected to fight on their side both in tournaments and in wars, to shield their interests, and ultimately to avenge their death. Should he alienate them for any reason, he is likely to suffer a dreadful misfortune.

²¹ In Arthurian tradition Morgause is said to be the daughter of Igraine and Gorlois and is Gawain's mother. In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthure*, Morgause sleeps with Arthur, who ignores that she is his half-sister and they conceive Mordred. Morgan Le Fay is traditionally described as Arthur's half-sister, a benevolent healer who later evolves into a powerful sorceress who plots against her own half-brother, King Arthur (Lupack, 2007: 462-463).

As for Arthur and Gawain, Malory provides a concise and clear portrayal of their relationship. Although he is very fond of all his knights, Arthur has a special bond with his nephew Gawain. This tie is not a simply political one -Arthur asks Gawain for advice- but also an emotional one. Gawain is Arthur's favourite nephew not because of his prowess and deeds -which are in fact surpassed by Gaheris, Gawain's brother and of course Lancelot- but because of his blood ties. Gawain acts as a counsellor and advisor of the king, especially when the love between Lancelot and Guenevere is revealed. Arthur's favourite nephew tries to persuade his uncle not to punish the queen and explains that Guenevere's fondness for Lancelot is due to the several occasions in which he has saved her:

My lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over-hasty. But that ye would put it in respite this judgment of my lady the queen, for many causes. One it is, though it were so that Sir Launcelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for none evil; for ye know my lord, said Sir Gawaine, that the queen is much beholden unto Sir Launcelot, more than unto any other knight, for oftentimes he hath saved her life, and done battle for her when all the court refused the queen, and peradventure she sent for him for goodness and for none evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he had done to her in times past. And peradventure my lady, the queen, sent for him to that intent that Sir Launcelot should come to her good grace privily and secretly, weening to her that it was best so to do, in eschewing and dreading of slander; for oftentimes we do many things that we ween it be for the best, and yet peradventure it turneth to the worst. For I dare say, said Sir Gawain, my lady, your queen, is to you both good and true; and as for Sir Launcelot, said Sir Gawaine, I dare say, he will make it good upon any knight living that will put upon himself villainy or shame, and in like wise he will make good for my lady, Dame Guenever (Malory in Moore, 2000: 753, b. xx, ch. vii).

In this excerpt we can see that Gawain acts not only as a good and loyal knight but as an advisor or counsellor. This fragment is significant because it shows the intimacy and trust between Gawain and Arthur. Despite the fact that Arthur is the king, Gawain is authoritative enough to question him and also to advise him not to act impulsively.

However, Gawain changes his mind when his brothers are killed by Lancelot. Instead of the cautious and quiet knight, we have a Gawain who becomes vindictive when he learns that Lancelot has killed his brothers in a battle. This triggers not only Gawain's anger but also Arthur's. It is Gawain's wrath rather than Arthur's thirst for revenge that causes the war between Lancelot and Arthur. Later on, the king regrets the war between himself and Lancelot. Likewise, Arthur acknowledges that making war against Lancelot, who once was his best warrior, is a complete and terrible mistake for the Arthurian world. In King Arthur's own words:

Alas, said the king, that ever this unhappy war was begun; for ever Sir Launcelot forbearth me in all places, and in likewise my kin, and that is seen well this day by my nephew Sir Gawaine. Then King Arthur fell sick for sorrow of Sir Gawaine, that he was so sore hurt, and because of the war betwixt him and Sir Launcelot. So then they on King Arthur's part kept the siege with little war withoutforth; and they withinforth kept their walls, and defended them when need was (Malory in Moore, 2000: 779, b.xx, ch. xxii).

In the battle, however, Gawain is seriously wounded and on his deathbed, Arthur and his nephew embrace each other and Gawain, as Arthur did before, admits his guilt and mistake in waging a war against Sir Lancelot:

When Sir Arthur wist that Sir Gawaine was laid so low, he went unto him; and there the king made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawaine in his arms, and thrice he there swooned. And then when he awaked, he said: Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest, the man in the world that I loved most; and now is my joy gone, for now, my nephew Sir Gawaine, I will discover me unto your person: in Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy, and mine affianche, and now have I lost my joy of you both; wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me. Mine uncle King Arthur, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well my death-day is come and all is through mine own hastiness and willfulness; for I am smitten upon the old wound the which Sir Launcelot gave me, on the which I feel well I must die; and had Sir Launcelot been with you as he was, this unhappy war had never begun; and of all this am I causer, for Sir Launcelot and his blood, through their prowess, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and daunger (Malory in Moore, 2000: 784-785, b.xxi, ch. ii).

Through Arthur and Gawain's words, we can appreciate that the relationship between them is not a typical lord-and-vassal one. Indeed, the bond between Gawain and Arthur is even deeper than the ties among King Arthur's knights. Gawain has a privileged position within the Round Table society, which is said to be based on equality among its knights, and symbolized by the Round Table itself. The deep affection and devotion between Arthur and Sir Gawain may be explained due to the fact that the former has no heir and the latter, his sister's son, is his closest kin.

Although Gawain eventually dies of his terrible wounds, Arthur's nephew is still present. Gawain's ghost appears to his uncle and warns him of Mordred's dreadful intentions and the fate of Camelot, including King Arthur's own death. This is illustrated by Malory as follows:

So the king seemed verily that there came Sir Gawaine unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. And when King Arthur saw him, then he said: Welcome, my sister's son; I weened thou hadst been dead, and now I see thee alive, much am I beholding unto Almighty Jesu. O fair nephew and my sister's son, what be these ladies that hither be come with you? Sir, said Sir Gawaine, all these be ladies for whom I have foughten when I was man living, and all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel; and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, because I did battle for them, that they should bring me hither unto you: thus much hath God given me leave, for to warn you of your death ; for an ye fight as to-morn with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye must be slain, and the most part of your people on both parties. And for the great grace and goodness that almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you, and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you of his special grace, to give you warning that in nowise ye do battle as to-morn, but that ye take a treaty for a month day; and proffer you largely, so as to-morn to be put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred. And all that ever will hold with him. Then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished (Malory in Moore, 2000: 788, b. xxi, ch. iii).

Once again, Gawain acts as a counsellor for King Arthur. In this case Gawain's ghost appears in a last attempt to save the Arthurian world and prevent Arthur from carrying

out any action -mainly to confront and fight against Mordred- without Lancelot's help. However, Arthur does not pay attention to Gawain's warning and is mortally wounded by Mordred.

5.1.2. Tristan and Mark

Another well-known uncle-nephew relationship in Arthurian tradition is that of Tristan and Mark of Cornwall. This relationship is far from the idealized tie between the uncle and the sister's son which can be appreciated in King Arthur and Sir Gawain. Instead of loyalty and closeness the relationship between Tristan and his uncle, the king of Cornwall, epitomizes treason, evil and tragedy. Unlike Arthur and Gawain who always remain truthful and faithful to each other, the bond between Tristan and his uncle is marked by treason and hatred since Tristan falls in love with Isolde, Mark's wife. It is actually his love for Isolde that breaks this idealized bond between uncle and nephew. Rabine (2013: 60) explains that "Critics have noted that Tristan, by loving his uncle Mark's wife, betrays that most sacred of bonds with his closest kin, after which he becomes an isolated individual". Tristan and Mark's tie disrupts the traditional and idealized view of the bond between an uncle and his sister's son. They are usually depicted as rivals and enemies rather than friends. Mark is presented as a tyrant who seeks revenge and intends to harm his nephew as much as possible. In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* the first time that both Tristan and Mark appear together is in a fight over a lady whose identity is not revealed. This lady falls in love with Tristan and this makes Mark jealous. Malory describes:

And as Sir Tristram came riding upon his way with his spear in his hand, King Mark came hurtling upon him with his two knights suddenly. And all three smote him with their spears, and King Mark hurt Sir Tristram on the breast right sore. And then Sir Tristram feutred his spear, and smote his uncle, King Mark, so sore, that he rashed him to the earth, and bruised

him that he lay still in a swoon, and long it was or ever he might wield himself. And then he ran to the one knight, and eft to the other, and smote them to the cold earth, that they lay still. And therewithal Sir Tristram rode forth sore wounded to the lady, and found her abiding him at a postern (Malory in Moore, 2000: 259, b. viii, ch. xiii).

This example illustrates the rivalry between uncle and nephew and, as we can see, it shows one of many confrontations between them. Indeed, their relationship comprises jealousy, anger and violence. Most encounters between Mark and Tristan stand out because of their violence and Mark's constant desire to take revenge against his own nephew. Another occasion in which we can appreciate Mark's hatred and envy for Tristan is when the two lovers are spied on by a soldier of King Mark, who immediately informs his master of the meeting between Isolde and Tristan. Then, Mark accuses Tristan of treachery and intends to kill his nephew although unsuccessfully:

So upon a day Sir Tristram talked with La Beale Isoud in a window, and that espied Sir Andred, and told it to the King. Then King Mark took a sword in his hand and came to Sir Tristram, and called him false traitor, and would have stricken him. But Sir Tristram was nigh him, and ran under his sword, and took it out of his hand. And then the King cried: Where are my knights and my men? I charge you slay this traitor. But at that time there was not one would move for his words. When Sir Tristram saw that there was not one would be against him, he shook the sword to the king, and made countenance as though he would have stricken him. And then King Mark fled, and Sir Tristram followed him, and smote upon him five or six strokes flatling on the neck (Malory in Moore, 2000: 287, b. viii, ch. xxxii).

As we see, Tristan and Mark's bond is far from the affectionate, friendly and warm relationship between King Arthur and Sir Gawain, the most representative of the uncle-nephew relationships in medieval literature. Here King Mark is portrayed as an aggressive and violent king who is jealous not only of Tristan's love for Isolde but also of his prowess as a knight and warrior. Also, Malory shows a strong contrast between Tristan and Mark and Gawain and Arthur's uncle-nephew relationships. Indeed, we can notice some differences between Mark's court and Arthur's own court. The former is, as

the previous excerpt has shown, empty when the king needs his knights -probably because of the King's cruelty and lack of loyalty- and this affects his relationship with his nephew, whom he hates and intends to destroy and kill. In contrast, Malory presents, as mentioned before, King Arthur and Sir Gawain as positive -if not the best- examples of the medieval uncle-nephew relationship. In other words, loyalty is the essential element in this type of relationship while treason destroys it.

Tristan must endure several hardships due to his uncle's hatred and thirst for revenge. As he cannot kill his nephew, King Mark decides to banish him from Cornwall in such a way that he becomes an outcast. Consequently, he will probably live isolated from his beloved Isolde and the knightly society:

So God me help, said he, my name is Sir Tristram de Liones; now do by me what ye list. Ah, said King Mark, me repenteth of your recovery. And then he let call his barons to judge Sir Tristram to the death. Then many of his barons would not assent thereto, and in especial Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, and Sir Fergus. And so by the advice of them all Sir Tristram was banished out of the country for ten year, and thereupon he took his oath upon a book before the king and his barons. And so he was made to depart out of the country of Cornwall (Malory in Moore, 2000: 334, b. ix, ch. xxii).

This example illustrates the extreme hostility between uncle and nephew since, as it is said, Mark is even disappointed of Tristan's recovery and return -Tristan had left Tintagel and is thought to have died. Instead of welcoming him, Mark plots to get rid of him so that he cannot be near Isolde. For this, he asks for advice to his warriors and they decide to banish Tristan for ten years without providing a clear reason for this. When Mark learns of Tristan's deeds, he feels quite jealous of his nephew's feats as a warrior.

Malory writes that:

And therewithal the king smote down his head, and in his heart he feared sore that Sir Tristram should get him such worship in the realm of Logris wherethrough that he himself should not be able to withstand him (Malory in Moore, 2000: 362, b. ix, ch. xxxviii).

This example reveals that Mark's aversion for Tristan is partly caused by his nephew's extraordinary skills as a knight as well as his integration in King Arthur's society. King Mark is harshly criticized by other knights who regard his attitude to his own nephew as shameful. It is Gaheris -another knight at the Round Table and nephew to King Arthur- who reproaches Mark to have expelled Tristan from Cornwall: "Sir king, ye did a foul shame unto you and your court, when ye banished Sir Tristram out of this country, for ye needed not to have doubted no knight an he had been here" (Malory in Moore, 2000: 363, b. ix, ch.xxxviii).

As the *Morte D'Arthure* unfolds, the relationship between Tristan and his uncle gets worse and worse. In his attempt to destroy Tristan, Mark disguises himself and leaves Cornwall in order to go to Camelot alongside two of his best warriors. Mark's purpose is to discover to what extent Tristan's renown is true and, of course, to kill him. Once in Camelot, Mark learns of Tristan's victories in war and that he has become a knight of the Round Table. This serves to outrage Mark even more and orders one of his knights to kill Tristan:

Now I will tell you my counsel: ye are the men that I trust most to alive, and I will that ye wit my coming hither is to this intent, for to destroy Sir Tristram by wiles or by treason; and it shall be hard if ever he escapes our hands (Malory in Moore, 2000: 385, b. x, ch. vii).

However, one of his knights refuses to kill him and Mark accuses him of treason and kills him.

Despite Mark's deep hatred for Tristan, the king of Cornwall is sometimes presented in a paradoxical way. Mark commands his nephew to return to Cornwall and requires his help since Tintagel is about to be sieged. Although unfriendly and nasty to his nephew, Mark shows himself paradoxically and strangely kind to Tristan. Malory explains that "And when King Mark wist that Sir Tristram was come he was glad of his coming, and so was all the fellowship, and or him they made great joy" (Moore, 2000:

418, b. x, ch. xxviii). Despite this brief state of happiness for Tristan, Mark continues to plot against his nephew in order to try to kill him once again. On this occasion, Tristan is deceived and goes to a tournament in which he is supposed to fight but he is imprisoned by his uncle. In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the story of Tristan is unfinished and the author does not tell what happens with Mark and Tristan. The *Prose Tristan* provides an ending for the Tristan story. Also described as treacherous, murderous and extremely cruel, Mark finally kills his own nephew because of his exploits and the fact that he will inherit his realm. Lupack (2007: 384) argues that:

Another striking feature of the *Prose Tristan* is the character of Mark. His squire knows him to be 'extremely cruel and treacherous' and Mark's actions prove this assessment to be true. He hates Tristan and wishes for his death because he fears that his nephew will 'one day dispossess him of all his lands.'

The uncle-nephew relationship represented between Tristan and Mark derives from treason, jealousy, dishonesty and wickedness. Tristan, however, remains as a loyal knight -even to Mark when he needs him- and is the victim of his uncle's wicked intentions and actions. Mark, who kills many other knights without remorse, intends to murder Tristan because he is envious of his feats as well as of Tristan's own status within King Arthur's court -he had become a knight of the Round Table. However, Tristan and Isolde's mutual love triggers Mark's hatred and wrath and eventually their tempestuous relationship. In other words, the uncle-nephew relationship between Tristan and Mark of Cornwall represents the idea that treason -Tristan's love for his uncle's wife - breeds treason. After learning about the romance between his nephew and his wife, Mark attempts to murder Tristan many times and in some texts, he is finally killed by his uncle.

It seems likely to conclude that the *Tristan* texts have a purpose in common when describing the uncle-nephew relationship between Tristan and Mark: treason destroys

even blood ties (it is especially Tristan the one who suffers) and wrecks havoc in King Mark's court. If King Arthur and Gawain's uncle-nephew relationship stands for deep affection, loyalty and generosity, that of Mark and Tristan is rather the opposite: there is deep hatred, jealousy, envy and cruelty.

5.1.3. Peredur / Perceval and The Fisher King

A minor uncle-nephew relationship present in Arthurian literature is that of Perceval and the Grail King. This is first pointed out in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, which tells the adventures of Perceval, who wants to become a knight and tries to achieve the Grail quest. The importance of the theme of uncle-nephew relationship in *Perceval* resides in the fact that Perceval is unaware and ignorant that he has an uncle who is the Grail King, i.e. the guardian of the Grail. Like in other Arthurian uncle-nephew relationships, the Grail King is the mother's brother so Perceval embodies the role of the sister's son, so recurrent in medieval literature:

Whether or not the Fisher King is Perceval's father, the Grail King is certainly his uncle. There is, then, nothing strange in the role of potential savior assigned to Perceval for his uncle and uncle's son, his first cousin on his mother's side, given the prime importance of uncle-nephew and cousin-cousin relationships in this period (Duggan, 2001:82).

Perceval becomes gradually aware of his own identity during his quest. The young knight meets a lady who happens to be a cousin of his. This woman begins to unveil Perceval's unknown origins and family in an unclear way. She first says that she has been raised with Perceval and she knows him. Chrétien de Troyes (Staines, 1990: 384) writes that: "I know you better than you know me, since you do not know who I am. For a long time I was brought up with you in your mother's house. I am your first cousin, and you are my first cousin".

However, the relationship between Perceval and the Grail King is not developed in more depth almost until the end of the story when Perceval realizes the true nature of knighthood. When he assumes that knighthood must be based on humility and helping those in need, Perceval learns of his blood ties both with the Grail king, who is his mother's brother, and with the Fisher King, his cousin. Unlike other uncle-nephew relationships, Perceval and the Grail King's bond is not known almost until the end of the story and is just a part of Perceval's spiritual evolution and the search for his real identity.

5.2. Bilbo and Frodo's Relationship as a Rewriting of the Arthurian Uncle-Nephew Relationship

In *The Lord of the Rings* the medieval idea of uncle-nephew relationships is portrayed in the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo. Tolkien tells us that Bilbo, who is childless and has no heir, makes up his mind to adopt Frodo, whose parents are dead. As for the blood tie between them, both Frodo and Bilbo are cousins:

(168)

But he had no close friends, until some of his younger cousins began to grow up. The eldest of these, and Bilbo's favourite, was young Frodo Baggins. When Bilbo was ninety-nine he adopted Frodo as his heir, and brought him to live at Bag End; and the hopes of the Sackville-Bagginses were finally dashed. Bilbo and Frodo happened to have the same birthday, September 22nd. 'You had better come and live here, Frodo, my lad,' said Bilbo one day; 'and then we can celebrate our birthday-parties comfortably together' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 21).

This excerpt explains the closeness of the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo and explains the latter's role, since, as we can see, the young hobbit is more than a simple cousin or friend; he is Bilbo's heir and most loyal friend.

Frodo is -and this connects him to the medieval motif of uncle-nephew relationship even more - the son of Bilbo's cousin, Primula Brandybuck. Flieger (2005: 137) says that:

Frodo, like Aragorn, like Arthur, Galahad, Beowulf, is brought up in a home not his own, Bilbo's home. And here another medieval motif enters, for Frodo is Bilbo's nephew. The relationship of uncle and nephew, specifically uncle and sister's son, is prominent in medieval narrative from *Beowulf* to Malory.

Like Arthur and Sir Gawain, the maternal side is emphasized since Prímula -Frodo's mother- is Bilbo's first cousin while Drogo -Frodo's father- is Bilbo's second cousin. In doing so, Tolkien is giving more relevance to the mother's side:

(169)

Miss Primula Brandybuck. She was our Mr. Bilbo's first cousin on the mother's side (her mother being the youngest of the Old Took's daughters); and Mr. Drogo was his second cousin. So Mr. Frodo is his first *and* second cousin, once removed either way, as the saying is, if you follow me (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 23).

As we can see, Tolkien emphasizes the matrilineal bond between Bilbo and Frodo rather than that of the father's side. Therefore, the medieval and Arthurian resonance seems obvious. Flieger (2005:137) argues that "It is noteworthy that Frodo's mother is closest to Bilbo, being his first cousin, while Drogo is his second cousin. The female side is stressed, and the sister's son relationship is thus obliquely alluded to".

Although the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo is mainly described as that of cousins, it seems clear that it echoes the medieval idealized bond between an uncle and his nephew. Tolkien describes Frodo as Bilbo's nephew but very ambiguously:

(170)

Looking in a mirror he was startled to see a much thinner reflection of himself than he remembered: it looked remarkably like the young nephew of Bilbo who used to go tramping with his uncle in the Shire; but the eyes looked out at him thoughtfully (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 219).

As previously said, Tolkien reinforced the mother's side -like in Arthur and Gawain's relationship, for instance- but there is another point in which Bilbo and Frodo coincide with the medieval and Arthurian uncle-nephew relationship: the idea of 'favourite cousin' and fosterage. It is curious that the first mention of Frodo tells us that he is Bilbo's favourite nephew and that Bilbo has allowed Frodo to live with him. It seems likely to think that Tolkien started his work with the story of Bilbo and Frodo in order to emphasize their relationship in the development of the events concerning the Ring which would eventually take place. In other words, if Bilbo found the Ring, Frodo, as his heir, must finish his uncle's task: to destroy the Ring in Mount Doom. Flieger (2005: 138) argues that:

What is clear, then, is that Tolkien is adding something important to his story by so carefully underlining the relationship. Action initiated earlier by Bilbo -the finding of the Ring- will be completed by Frodo, who accepts the responsibility of throwing it away. This is the thematic basis for Elrond's gentle rejection of Bilbo's offer to carry the Ring to Mordor. The task has passed from uncle to nephew. Bilbo cannot complete the action. It is Frodo in the role of nephew who must carry it to an end.

This means that the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo is more important than it may seem at first sight. Tolkien represents the relationship between the two Hobbits in such a way that Frodo must deal with Bilbo's previous actions -the finding of the Ring and Bilbo's decision to let Gollum alive- and put an end to them.

When reading *The Lord of the Rings*, the first characteristic of Bilbo and Frodo's close relationship which draws our attention is the mutual affection and trust between the two Hobbits. Seen as extravagant, Bilbo distrusts and dislikes most of his closest relatives, especially the Sackville-Baggins. However, he deeply relies on Frodo, whom he trusts with all his secrets. This can be appreciated on two occasions. The first one has to do with Bilbo's trip to Erebor and return to the Shire²². Only Frodo knows the truth

²² These adventures are narrated in *The Hobbit* (1937).

about Bilbo's journey to the Lonely Mountain with the dwarves and the discovery of the Ring. In Frodo's own words:

(171)

'Oh, not what he told the dwarves and put in his book,' said Frodo. 'He told me the true story soon after I came to live here. He said you had pestered him till he told you, so I had better know too. "No secrets between us, Frodo," he said; "but they are not to go any further. It's mine anyway"' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 39).

This shows that Bilbo has a strong confidence in Frodo since he lets him know the real story of his adventures and the discovery of the Ring. It can also be appreciated how intimate the relationship between the two Hobbits is. Both Bilbo and Frodo are described as lonely characters with few friends. However, the relationship between them is based on deep affection and loyalty. Although Tolkien does not give a concise or deep description of the bond between the two Hobbits, we know more about them as the story unfolds. When Bilbo leaves, Frodo's adventures start and he must put an end to what Bilbo started. While Bilbo found the Ring and somehow saved it from Sauron and his hosts, Frodo must continue this task and destroy it in Mount Doom. Once Frodo leaves the Shire, we do not know about Bilbo until he arrives in Rivendell. This meeting is far from being a warm one; indeed, Frodo is reluctant to show Bilbo the Ring and takes notice of his uncle's behaviour. In fact, Bilbo insists on seeing the Ring:

(172)

'Have you got it here?' he asked in a whisper. 'I can't help feeling curious, you know, after all I've heard. I should very much like just to peep at it again.'

'Yes, I've got it,' answered Frodo, feeling a strange reluctance. 'It looks just the same as ever it did.'

'Well, I should just like to see it for a moment,' said Bilbo. When he had dressed, Frodo found that while he slept the Ring had been hung about his neck on a new chain, light but strong. Slowly he drew it out. Bilbo put out his hand. But Frodo quickly drew back the Ring. To his distress and amazement he found that he was no longer looking at Bilbo;

a shadow seemed to have fallen between them, and through it he found himself eyeing a little wrinkled creature with a hungry face and bony groping hands. He felt a desire to strike him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 225-226).

Despite their mutual affection and friendship, Bilbo and Frodo's relationship here starts to falter due to the evil influence of the Ring. Frodo's reluctance and Bilbo's desperate desire to see the Ring entail that the evil within it is acting in order to corrupt them and destroy the bond between them. Fortunately, Bilbo recovers himself and realizes that the Ring is trying to corrupt him:

(173)

The music and singing round them seemed to falter, and a silence fell. Bilbo looked quickly at Frodo's face and passed his hand across his eyes. 'I understand now,' he said, 'Put it away! I am sorry; sorry you have come in for this burden: sorry about everything. Don't adventures ever have an end? I suppose not. Someone else always has to carry on the story. Well, it can't be helped' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 226).

After Frodo keeps the Ring away from sight, the tension between Frodo and Bilbo disappears and they start to talk about other things. This meeting at Rivendell is also important because Frodo receives two gifts from Bilbo: the Elvish blade Sting and a coat of mail made of mithril, a sort of heavy silver-like material made by dwarves. Bilbo's delivery of two of his treasures to Frodo will be very important since both the sword -which shines when Orcs approach- and the coat of mail will help Frodo to survive and overcome difficult situations:

(174)

On the morning of the last day Frodo was alone with Bilbo, and the old hobbit pulled out from under his bed a wooden box. He lifted the lid and fumbled inside.

'Here is your sword,' he said, 'But it was broken, you know. I took it to keep it safe but I've forgotten to ask if the smiths could mend it.

No time now. So I thought, perhaps, you would care to have this, don't you know?'

He took from the box a small sword in an old shabby leathern scabbard. Then he drew it, and its polished and well-tended blade glittered suddenly, cold and bright. 'This is Sting,' he said, and thrust it with little effort deep into a wooden beam. 'Take it, if you like. I shan't want it again, I expect.'

Frodo accepted it gratefully.

'Also there is this!' said Bilbo, bringing out a parcel which seemed to be rather heavy for its size. He unwound several folds of old cloth, and held up a small shirt of mail. It was close-woven of many rings, as supple almost as linen, cold as ice, and harder than steel. It shone like moonlit silver, and was studded with white gems. With it was a belt of pearl and crystal (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 270).

Then, Bilbo admonishes Frodo to carry his sword and insists that he should wear the mithril shirt under his clothes, which will probably save him from extremely dangerous and deadly situations. Even more important is the fact that Bilbo wants Frodo to keep the mithril coat of mail as a secret since it is a very valuable and worthy object. Once again, Bilbo trusts a secret to Frodo, who thinks that he is not worthy of such a thing:

(175)

'Just what I said myself,' said Bilbo. 'But never mind about looks. You can wear it under your outer clothes. Come on! You must share this secret with me. Don't tell anybody else! But I should feel happier if I knew you were wearing it. I have a fancy it would turn even the knives of the Black Riders,' he ended in a low voice.

'Very well, I will take it,' said Frodo. Bilbo put it on him, and fastened Sting upon the glittering belt; and then Frodo put over the top his old weather-stained breeches, tunic, and jacket.

'Just a plain hobbit you look,' said Bilbo. 'But there is more about you now than appears on the surface. Good luck to you!' He turned away and looked out of the window, trying to hum a tune.

'I cannot thank you as I should do, Bilbo, for this, and for all your past kindnesses,' said Frodo.

'Don't try!' said the old hobbit, turning round and slapping him on the back. 'Ow!' he cried. 'You are too hard now to slap! But there you are: Hobbits must stick together, and especially Bagginses. All I ask in return is: take as much care of yourself as you can, and bring back all the news you can, and any old songs and tales you can come by' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 270-271)

This example reflects how deep the friendship between Bilbo and Frodo is. Once again, the old Hobbit shows his deep trust to Frodo by delivering two uncommon items. The

sword has the property to shine when enemies, especially Orcs, are near and the mithril shirt gives an unusual strength and protection to its bearer. By means of giving Frodo the sword Sting and ordering him to wear the mithril coat of mail, Bilbo is ‘baptising’ the young Frodo as a sort of knight or warrior who is about to embark on a perilous quest. Indeed, the fact that Bilbo puts the sword’s belt on Frodo may epitomize Frodo’s ‘kighthood ceremony.’ The excerpt above is significant because it reminds us of an important element in medieval courtly life and fiction: the knighthood ceremony.

Bumke (1991: 231) argues that:

The act of knighting was a solemn ritual through which a young nobleman was made a knight. At the center of the ceremony was the girding with the sword, usually in connection with other ceremonial acts. Whoever had gone through the ceremony could call himself a knight, and this was regarded as an honor. Knighting never functioned as an elevation to a particular estate.

This ceremony was known as “accolade” and was especially meaningful for the future knights. This act meant reaching manhood and independence and it was usually done with the delivery of arms. The knighthood ceremony based on the giving of the arms to the future knight is likely to have its roots in ancient times as Bumke (1991: 231) explains:

The knighting ceremony of the courtly age was historically linked to the old aristocratic tradition of the delivery of arms, which probably went back to a Germanic tradition mentioned as early as Tacitus. In the Carolingian period, a young lord who had reached manhood was customarily presented with his weapons in a ceremonial act.

Although the historical development of the knighthood ceremony as the delivery of weapons is difficult to determine, there is an element which lets us know of its presence in medieval culture. At the end of the eleventh century, in France the title of knight was conferred to any noble lord upon receiving a sword. In *The History of Anjou*, written in

1096, his author, Count Fulk IV of Anjou, claims that he was knighted by his uncle, Geoffrey Martell in Whitsuntide. There is another medieval French text which mentions the act of becoming a knight. It is a letter for Lambert of Arras written by Count Guido of Ponthieu (1098) in which he shows his desire to make a knight of the son of the King of France:

It is towards the end of the eleventh century –the oldest examples come from France- that the noble lord who receives the sword is first given the title “knight” (*miles*). From the year 1096 comes the fragmentary “History of Anjou (*Fragmentarium Historiae Andgavensis*) from the pen of Count Fulk IV of Anjou (d.1109), in which the count records that his uncle, Geoffrey Martell, “made me a knight” on Whitsuntide in 1060. Two years later, in 1098, Count Guido of Ponthieu wrote a letter to Bishop Lambert of Arras, informing him of his intention “to decorate (the son of the French King) with knightly arms, to honor him, to elevate and consecrate him to knighthood” (Bumke, 1991: 232).

The idea of the giving of weapons as a solemn ceremony is also present in medieval German culture and language. There are some expressions that make us think that the knighthood ceremony was present in medieval German culture. For instance, we find “to gird with the sword”, which was widely used during the twelfth century. Similarly, the phrase “to declare a knight” is included in a German text written in 1160 called *Gesta Frederici*. What we can deduce from these expressions about the rules of knighthood and its ceremony is that knighting rituals were rather frequent in some medieval cultures, in this case, the German one. Bumke (1991: 233) asserts that:

The abundant historical documentation of the festivities in Mainz allows us to survey the Latin terminology of the knighting ceremony in use in Germany around 1200. The expressions “to take arms” and “to be decorated with arms” stem from the old aristocratic tradition of delivering the weapons to a young man when he reached manhood. Most frequently we encounter “to gird with the sword” or “to gird about with the sword”. Rarely was the old word for sword, *ensis*, used instead of *gladium*. Of greatest interest are the phrases that include “knightly” and knighthood” (*militaris, militia*): “to gird with the knightly sword”, “to gird with the

sword of knighthood.” One could also say: “to put on the weapons of knighthood, “to become bound by the knightly duties”, or simply “to become a knight.” The actual word “knight” (*miles*) appears in only a few sources: “to make a knight”, “to declare a knight”, to be elevated as new knights.” All these terms and phrases describe one and the same ceremony.

The medieval German language shows the process of becoming a knight by means of a wide variety of expressions. It is clear that in medieval German culture the knighthood ritual comprised, as in France, the delivery of a sword to the candidate to knighthood. Similarly, it can be appreciated that this was a ceremony of a significant solemnity and relevance in the medieval society. Becoming a knight did not necessarily imply a new social category or ascending in the medieval social hierarchy; knighthood, although of aristocratic origin, was mainly based on honour and honesty and became essential in a period of upheaval in which wars were constantly waged in Europe.

In medieval England, knighthood was considered an important part of the society of that time. Indeed, it became an institution by itself, independent from others. Knights were expected not only to fight but also to behave according to some particular values such as loyalty or honour. Jones (2010: 469) explains the main points of knighthood in the English Middle Ages as follows: “These standards included martial ethics, such as fighting loyally for one’s lord and refusing to flee from conflict, and social ethics, such as defending the poor and weak of society and enforcing justice”.

English medieval knighthood comprised two main rituals: the dubbing ceremony and probably the most well-known tournaments. The dubbing into knighthood was first said to be a ceremony in which a lord gathered his knights, who wore armour and weapons. However, this ritual evolved and later it also included the blessing of the sword of a recently knighted young man:

Knights regarded knighthood as a separate order in society. Knightly status became a sort of institution, with its own literature, ideals of

behavior, such as the tournament and the ceremony of dubbing into knighthood. Initially, dubbing was simply a ceremony in which the lord presented his warriors with weapons and armor, but during the twelfth century the ceremony expanded to include a blessing of the new knight's sword. In time, dubbing ceremonies became more complex, including for example, a prior all-night vigil in church for aspirants to knighthood (Rogers, 2010: 469).

Later on, knighthood eventually became an elitist class in medieval society as its ritual got more demanding so that only the wealthiest men could afford it. Knightly life evolved to such a degree that becoming a knight was only possible for those who demonstrated to have a noble lineage, i.e. that they descended from knights. In other words, knighthood was exclusively reserved for noblemen or aristocrats:

By the mid-thirteenth century in England and northern France, warriors of lesser means could no longer afford to undergo the public ritual that would make them knights. The social expectations of knights and the public responsibilities that they were expected to take on exceeded their means. Knighthood became an exclusive chaste, limited to those who were descended from knights and had the means to maintain the status (Bumke, 1991: 469).

Also, the rituals for knighthood are represented in medieval literature. For this, Arthurian literature plays a pivotal role in the development of the knightly values. Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal* is probably one of the most important Arthurian texts which best depicts the Arthurian knightly society. In this text there are two different representations of the knighthood ritual. Bumke (1991: 235) argues that: "Of outstanding importance is the *Conte du Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes, composed probably between 1180 and 1190. Here we find two knighting ceremonies which differ in important points of protocol".

The main knighting ceremony has to do with Perceval's own knighting process since the author provides a very concise portrayal of it. He introduces the knighthood ceremony as a solemn ritual. Chrétien describes that when Perceval is about to be

knighted at Gornemant's court, Gornemant himself is said to bind his spur as it is a custom for those who must make someone else a knight. Then, he proceeds to knight Perceval by means of a ritual full of solemnity. In it Gornemant takes a sword which he uses to girt Perceval and then Gornemant kisses the new knight claiming that Perceval has achieved one of the highest blessings that God can give: knighthood:

The noble lord bent down and tied on his right spur; for the custom was such that he who knights someone must tie on the spurs. There were plenty of pages around, and all those who could join lent a hand in arming Parzeval. The noble lord took the sword, girt him with it, gave him a kiss, and said that with the sword he had now bestowed upon him the highest estate that God has instituted and commanded: it is the estate of knighthood, which must be free of boorishness (qtd in Bumke, 1991: 235).

The representations of the knighthood ceremony in numerous texts describe a fixed process. In a thirteenth-century German text written by Wirnt von Grafenberg, we can appreciate to what extent the knighting ceremony was an established procedure. King Arthur celebrates a feast at court in order to celebrate the knighting of Wigalois. For this, Gawain and King Arthur provide the young knight with everything he needs and the ceremony culminates in the girding with a sword. This text also includes a tournament to commemorate Wigalois's knighthood ritual. This is explained by Bumke (1991: 238) as follows:

The literary descriptions of the thirteenth century reveal a fixed procedure: the ceremonial dressing, the girding with a sword, and the subsequent equestrian games are standard elements. The description in Wirnt von Grafenberg, one of the first in Germany, may serve as an example.

After analysing the origins of the knighthood ritual in medieval literature, we can assert that Bilbo's delivery of the mithril shirt and the sword Sting to Frodo echoes this very same idea: the dressing ceremony and the girding of the sword. Then, with these two

things, Frodo is ready to embark on an even more dangerous journey than that of carrying the Ring to Rivendell: to destroy the Ring at Mount Doom. This scene in which Bilbo gives Frodo the mithril shirt and Sting -two objects of a particular power because the shirt is made of a material impossible to destroy and protects its bearer from most dangers while the shining of the sword indicates the presence of enemies, especially Orcs- is pivotal. It is probably one of the few moments in which the two Hobbits are together and alone, not to mention the fact that the presence of Bilbo in *The Lord of the Rings* is scarce and minor. However, like in Arthurian tales and other medieval works, the delivery of the sword -Sting- and the dressing -the mithril shirt and the belt- involve Frodo's initiation into the world of knighthood and war, i.e. at the precise moment when he begins his journey and Quest with his companions from the Fellowship of the Ring in order to get to Mordor and destroy the Ruling Ring. This idea of Bilbo's giving his sword and silver-like coat of mail to Frodo as a knighting ritual is reinforced by the fact that immediately afterwards the Fellowship of the Ring departs from Rivendell toward Mordor.

In analysing the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo more in depth, it is important to point out that Tolkien describes it very briefly at the beginning of *The Lord of the Rings* as a kind of introduction for the story of the Ring and at the very end, when the Ring has been destroyed and Middle-earth finally saved. After Frodo's departure from Rivendell with the Fellowship of the Ring, Bilbo stays there and decides to study the Elvish lore. After this, we do not know anything about Bilbo and the story focuses more on Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring. Bilbo will appear again when the Ring is already destroyed and the two Hobbits are again in Rivendell.

If the story of *The Lord of the Rings* begins with Bilbo's birthday party, it also ends in a similar way. After the destruction of the Ring, the four Hobbits -Frodo, Sam,

Merry and Pippin- and Gandalf go to Rivendell and visit Bilbo, who remains there. Curiously enough, their visit coincides with Bilbo's birthday -he turns 129- and it is celebrated:

(176)

After the celebration of Bilbo's birthday the four hobbits stayed in Rivendell for some days, and they sat much with their old friend, who spent most of his time now in his room, except at meals. For these he was still very punctual as a rule, and he seldom failed to wake up in time for them. Sitting round the fire they told him in turn all that they could remember of their journeys and adventures. At first he pretended to take some notes; but he often fell asleep; and when he woke he would say: 'How splendid! How wonderful! But where were we?' Then they went on with the story from the point where he had begun to nod (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 963-964).

However, this time Bilbo is dying because of his old age. His weakness and the fact that he falls asleep indicate that the Ring strengthened him and, once the Ring is destroyed, Bilbo is weakened and is inevitably going to die. But there is another important element which draws the reader's attention when reading the chapter from *The Return of the King* called "Many Partings." Bilbo gives Frodo his sword, Sting, and the mithril shirt once again but this time Frodo receives something else: three books:

(177)

Then he gave Frodo his mithril-coat and Sting, forgetting that he had already done so; and he gave him also three books of lore that he had made at various times, written in his spidery hand, and labeled on their red backs: *Translations from the Elvish by B.B* (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 964).

This may represent that Frodo's Quest is not still fulfilled, that there is something else yet to be done such as saving the Shire from evil. Despite the fact that the Ring has been destroyed, Frodo must help heal the Shire which, as we know later, is cruelly ruled by Saruman and Wormtongue. One of the concepts behind the medieval uncle-nephew relationship was that the nephew was supposed to put an end to something that his uncle

left unfinished. In the case of Bilbo and Frodo, apart from the Quest for the Ring and the destruction of the Ring, there is a last thing that Bilbo commands Frodo to do: to order his papers and finish his story about the Ring:

(178)

The evening deepened in the room, and the firelight burned brighter and they looked at Bilbo as he slept and saw that his face was smiling. For some time they sat in silence; and then Sam looking round at the room and the shadows flickering on the walls, said softly:

‘I don’t think, Mr. Frodo, that he’s done much writing while we’ve been away. He won’t ever write our story now.’

At that Bilbo opened an eye, almost as if he had heard. Then he roused himself. ‘You see, I am getting so sleepy,’ he said. ‘And when I have time to write, I only really like writing poetry. I wonder, Frodo my dear fellow, if you would very much mind tidying things up a bit before you go? Collect all my notes and papers, and my diary too, and take them with you, if you will. You see, I haven’t much time for the selection and the arrangement and all that. Get Sam to help, and when you’ve knocked things into shape, come back, and I’ll run over it. I won’t be too critical’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 966).

Frodo finally finishes the book that Bilbo started to write about his previous adventures in the Lonely Mountains and the finding of Sauron’s Ring as well as Frodo’s journey and adventures to destroy it. He manages to finish the last thing Bilbo wants him to do for him since the old Hobbit can no longer do anything:

(179)

There was a big book with plain red leather covers; its tall pages were now almost filled. At the beginning there were many leaves covered with Bilbo’s tin wandering hand; but most of it was written in Frodo’s firm flowing script. It was divided into chapters but Chapter 80 was unfinished, and after that were some blank leaves. The title page had many titles on it, crossed out one after another, so:

My Diary. My Unexpected Journey. There and Back Again. And What Happened After.

Adventures of Five Hobbits. The Tale of the Great Ring, compiled by Bilbo Baggins from his own observations and the accounts of his friends. What we did in the War of the Ring.

Here Bilbo’s hand ended and Frodo had written: *The downfall of The Lord of the Rings and The Return of the King.* (As seen by the Little

People; being the memoirs of Bilbo and Frodo of the Shire, supplemented by the accounts of their friends and the learning of the Wise.) Together with extracts from Books of Lore translated by Bilbo in Rivendell (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1003-1004).

Frodo's writing of the story of the War of the Ring in Bilbo's Red Book puts an end to Bilbo and Frodo's relationship in Tolkien's own story. This means that Frodo has finally finished the tasks that Bilbo started and succeeded in them. *The Lord of the Rings* finishes with the departure of all Ring-bearers -Bilbo, Frodo, Gandalf, Galadriel and Elrond- from Middle-earth to Valinor. As Ring-bearers, both Bilbo and Frodo are allowed to leave Middle-earth and depart to Valinor as a token for their contribution to the destruction of the Ring and Sauron himself.

In comparing Bilbo and Frodo's relationship to those uncle-nephew relationships from Arthurian texts, the first characteristic is that Tolkien gives much less prominence to the bond between the two Hobbits. Indeed, it just seems to serve as an introduction for those actions connected with the story of the Ring rather than a central element as it occurs in Arthurian literature with Arthur and Gawain's uncle-nephew relationship. Despite the fact that Arthurian tradition focuses on the adventures of King Arthur and his knights, male relationships are given more prominence, especially those of an uncle and a nephew, i.e. a sister's son. Uncle-nephew relationships in Arthurian literature sometimes become the central theme of a story, such as that of Tristan and Mark. As for Gawain and Arthur, Gawain is privileged over other knights and this is appreciated in his description as one of the most powerful and best knights in King Arthur's court. On the contrary, Tolkien presents us his own version of the uncle-nephew relationship by introducing the story of the Ring very briefly. Apart from this, there are few occasions in which Frodo and Bilbo are together or talk to each other. Despite the fact that Bilbo and Frodo's friendship is particularly used to explain the origins of the finding of

Sauron's Ring, it is undeniable that Tolkien inspired himself on the medieval motif of the uncle-nephew relationship. Like Gawain with Arthur, Frodo has a privileged relationship with Bilbo and this is represented in Frodo's inheritance of the One Ring. He becomes Bilbo's heir just like Gawain since both Bilbo and Arthur are childless. However, the relationship between Bilbo and Frodo differs in one aspect from that of Arthur and Sir Gawain. While Gawain and Arthur always remain loyal to each other, the close bond between Bilbo and Frodo is threatened during their conversation in Rivendell. There Bilbo tries to seize the Ring from Frodo's hands. Frodo, then, starts to be suspicious of the old Hobbit and distrusts him until he realizes that he is being influenced by the Ring. Bilbo's treacherous attempt to recover the Ring may resemble the relationship between Tristan and his uncle Mark. The latter is constantly trying to kill Tristan who falls in love with his wife and aunt, Isolde. It is this act of treason - Tristan's love for Isolde- which utterly destroys the relationship between Tristan and his uncle. Something similar happens with Frodo and Bilbo when the old Hobbit demands the Ring. This is the very first time that Bilbo is aggressive to Frodo and that Frodo is suspicious of Bilbo's intentions. Fortunately, Bilbo realizes that he has made a mistake and apologizes for it. However, after this incident, Frodo and Bilbo's relationship does not change.

So far we have analysed the remarkable relationship between Bilbo and Frodo. Although Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 21) first tells us that they are cousins, later they are described as uncle and nephew (Anderson, 2012: 219). The relationship of an uncle and his nephew is present in numerous medieval texts and is especially developed in Arthurian literature. What is important about medieval uncle-nephew relationships is the reinforcement of the mother's side since the nephews are normally the sister's sons rather than the brother's sons. One reason for this may be that in primitive cultures

women had more important roles since there was a matrilineal society in which motherhood was considered sacred or of a special status. Examples of uncle-nephew relationships can be found in King Arthur and Sir Gawain, or Mark of Cornwall and Tristan, among others. Bilbo and Frodo's relationship has much in common with this medieval idealization of the relationship between an uncle and his nephew. The first one is that Frodo's mother is Bilbo's favourite cousin. So, it is obvious that the mother's side is given much importance. Uncle-nephew relationships in Arthurian literature and other medieval texts emphasize the idea that the nephew is always the sister's son. Gawain is the son of King Arthur's sister while Tristan is the son of Mark's sister. Similarly, Perceval discovers that his mother is the Grail King's sister. Like the tie between Gawain and Arthur, Bilbo and Frodo's relationship is based on deep affection and loyalty. Connected with the medieval motif of the uncle-nephew relationship is the idea of the unfinished quest. This means that the nephew, Frodo, must finish something that the uncle, Bilbo, started. In this particular case, Bilbo's finding of the Ring entails Frodo's Quest to destroy the Ring, which in turn is represented in the writing of the Red Book initiated by Bilbo and finished by Frodo. It is clear that Tolkien conceived the relationship of two of his main characters, Bilbo and Frodo, as a rewriting of the theme of the uncle-nephew relationships so present in medieval literature and particularly found in Arthurian tradition.

CHAPTER 6

ARTHURIAN WOMEN IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

Arthurian literature stands out for the scarce presence of women and the representation of the Arthurian world as male-dominant. However, we may find some examples of remarkable women. As Arthurian literature developed in the Middle Ages and later on, the roles of women increased significantly although they were deeply marked by patriarchal values. While the Arthurian world comprised King Arthur and his knights, women were excluded from it and had specific and negative roles: most women were reduced to the ideas of sacrificial ladies, temptresses, evil sorceresses and in general as destroyers of this idealized Arthurian society. Some female roles were specifically praised while others were demonized. Sacrificial nameless women kill themselves so that they can save the integrity of Arthurian society or allow the success of the Quest for the Grail, as it is the case of Perceval's sister, whereas those women who show some kind of autonomy or independence from the Arthurian patriarchal world are criticized and regarded as threats to it, for instance, Morgan Le Fay. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the world of Middle-earth is prominently male and we find few female characters, being the most relevant ones Arwen, Galadriel and Éowyn. Like Morgan le Fay, Galadriel is feared and demonized for her power and wisdom since she is one of the last Noldorin Elves -the fairest and highest branch of the Elven race- in Middle-earth. As for Arwen, she has a more passive role and her importance in the story lies not in her lineage as a High Elf woman but in her forbidden love and later marriage to Aragorn, the heir of the Numénorean Kings. Éowyn, who is niece to King Théoden, plays an important role in

the story since she, disguised as a male warrior, destroys the Witch King, the Lord of the Nazgûl. More importantly, Galadriel, Éowyn and Arwen echo some Arthurian characters as we shall see. While Galadriel could be compared to Morgan Le Fay, the Lady of the Lake and the Lady of Shalott and Arwen to Guenevere, Éowyn resembles a character from a minor Arthurian text, *The Romance of Silence* (13th century).

The first Arthurian text in which a woman is mentioned is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (1150). In it, we find the character of Morgan for the very first time, and she is surprisingly described as a powerful sorceress who can change her shape and rules the Otherworld (Avalon). Similarly, in Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Morgan is also mentioned and portrayed as King Arthur's sister and as a healer. Indeed, Morgan is described as a "lovely, learned and potent woman" (Fries, 2000: 69). However, in later Arthurian texts, Morgan becomes a sorceress and it is at this point that female stereotypes start to arise in Arthurian tradition. Rasmussen (2000: 41) explains the different female roles or stereotypes in Arthurian legends:

Arthurian heroines play numerous roles: they can be sorceresses, mothers of great men, ladies who inspire or vex the hero, attendants who counsel and assist another lady. Only rarely, however, are they daughters of mothers or mothers of daughters. Some Arthurian heroines have no parents at all (Lunete and Laudine (Iwein)); some have only fathers or male guardians (Condwiramus (Wolfram's *Parzival*), Queen Guenevere); some have active fathers and passive ghost-like mother figures whose function is subsumed by the appellative "mother of noble birth."

In Arthurian tradition, women's roles seem to be fixed and depend upon male characters since they lack autonomy in most cases and their identities are contingent upon male figures. Similarly, *The Lord of the Rings* apparently gives a rigid and traditional view of womanhood especially embodied in Éowyn and Arwen. In Neville's own words (2005:

109): “He did not destroy, invert, or even question the patriarchal system that relegated women to a marginal position in his fiction.”

This means that, like women in Arthurian tales, female characters in Tolkien’s work are marginalized and *The Lord of the Rings* continues to promote the traditional women’s roles in patriarchal societies: self-sacrifice, submissiveness, and isolation. It has been argued that the absence of women and their scarce participation in the story may be explained or justified by the fact that the period of time in which Tolkien lived was conservative, and misogynist or that he just portrayed the medieval societies from his Middle-earth as they were: patriarchal. Neville (2005: 101) explains:

That is, it can be argued that Tolkien’s fiction merely reflects the position of women in the types of societies that he depicted. In the case of the Riders of Rohan, for example, Tolkien presents a society very like the Anglo-Saxon world most famously depicted in *Beowulf*, a society in which women have traditionally been seen as decorative but ultimately powerless.

In general, female characters -especially Arwen and Éowyn- in Tolkien’s work play the traditional roles of women although some of them –Galadriel and Éowyn- somehow break these female stereotypes and indeed, they seem to share some features with Arthurian women as we shall see.

6.1. Galadriel as Morgan Le Fay, the Lady of the Lake and the Lady of Shalott

When reading *The Lord of the Rings*, one of the female characters that draws our attention is the Elf queen Galadriel. She represents a figure which is very present in English literature: the fairy queen. The figure of the Fairy Queen, normally shrouded in mystery and sometimes regarded as a sort of witch or sorceress, is defined as a figure

from folklore who was thought to rule a wonderful and beautiful realm, hidden and secret for most mortals.

The idea of the Fairy Queen may have its roots in different mythologies. For instance, the goddess Diana from the Greek mythology was supposed to be the queen of the fairies and to dwell in forests. Clute & Grant (1999: 330) explain that “in Greek mythology Diana the huntress, with her attendant nymphs, was their queen, and this name was corrupted into Titania, the wife of Oberon”.

In Celtic mythology there are some female deities, the ladies of the forest, also called *silvaticae* (wood nymphs), who were thought to be predecessors of the fairies in the sense that they were both wise and powerful women sometimes associated with forests and nature. Harf-Lancner (2000: 143) explains that: “the descendants of the *silvaticae* (“wood nymphs”), the beautiful unknown women who suddenly appear in the forest from which they seem to be a veritable emanation, little by little take the name of fairy”.

Also, in Celtic mythology we find fairy queens who were supposed to be diminished goddesses, as it is the case of Áine. According to Celtic stories, Áine was thought to live in a hill in east Limerick and could be a Sun goddess since some solar wells such as Tobar Áine in Ulster were named after her. She was said to be able to shape-shift. Monaghan (2004: 12) explains this as follows:

Usually described as a fairy queen, although she is probably a diminished goddess who inhabits a hill near storied Lough Gur in east Co. Limerick. Several scholars connect her with Anu (Danu), the great Goddess of Munster who gave her name to the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the tribe of the goddess Danu. There are indications that she was a sun goddess, for she was connected with solar wells like Tobar Áine near Lissan in Ulster as well as being linked with the sun goddess Grian, her sister.

Another example of Celtic fairy queen may be Clíodna. Clíodna is also regarded as a fairy queen and, like Áine, she is likely to have been a goddess of the land. Monaghan (2004: 91) claims that “especially associated with the southwestern province of Munster, she is sometimes called its fairy queen, although that title is also claimed by Áine and Aeval”.

The last of these Celtic fairy queens, Aeval, is also connected with the Irish region of Munster. Aeval is said to be the Queen of the Banshees²³ in Munster and enemy of Clíodna. She is also associated with natural environments, in this case the mountain of Slieve Bernaugh. So, these three Celtic goddesses, who were transformed into fairy queens, seem to be the origins of the fairy queens who evolved and became the medieval ladies of the forests. The symbolism and roles of the Celtic goddesses were kept in the images of the ladies of the woods since they were also protectors and guardians of the forests.

In the twelfth century, two types of fairies emerged: fairy godmothers and supernatural lovers. While some fairies were supposed to have nourishing and healing skills, others became lovers of some heroes. Harf-Lancner (2000: 148) explains the evolution of the fairies during the Middle Ages and later on:

The Middle Ages knew therefore two types of fairies: the Parcae, whose classical image had been profoundly transformed by popular tradition; and, the ladies of the forest whose path often crosses that of mortals. In the twelfth century, the latter became fairies when they entered into learned culture and as the word fairy became progressively disjoined from the character of the Parcae. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the two folklore types, previously distinct, melted into one new figure, fully literary, both loving goddess and mistress of destiny. After the Middle Ages, fairies would have no other countenance, and the fairies of our popular tales have often felt the influence of this romance creation.

²³ According to Celtic mythology, the Banshees (from Irish *Ban Sídh*) were originally fairy women who were thought to bring death to those who met them (Emick, 2016: 137).

In Arthurian tradition, we find examples of fairies. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot or the Knight of the Cart* (1181) the woman that protects Lancelot is said to be called 'fairy' and Morgan is also described as a fairy in another work of Chrétien: *Erec et Enide* (1170). Also, in the Lancelot -Grail cycle, the term 'fairy' is used for Morgan and the Lady of the Lake. However, while the Lady of the Lake is said to be a fairy since she lives in the lake of the fairies, Morgan is just given the name of Morgan le Fay, probably because of her magical powers. Harf-Lancner (2000: 143) argues that:

In the Lancelot-Grail cycle, many adventures are plotted along the lines of marvelous tales, and many of the female characters could be called fairies. The term, however, is applied to two characters alone: Morgan and the Dame du Lac; and it is always accompanied by a comment. It is never said of Morgan that she is a fairy; rather, she is titled *Morgue la fee* ("Morgan le Fay, Morgan the Fairy").

Other Arthurian texts in which Morgan le Fay and the Lady of the Lake are depicted as fairies are *Huth Merlin* (1225) and the *Vulgate Cycle* (c.1215-1235). While in the *Huth Merlin* (1225), the lady of the Lake is portrayed as the Fairy Queen, whose lake is the dwelling of the fairies, in the *Vulgate Cycle* (13th century), Morgan is given the name of "fairy" because she is represented as an extremely clever woman who is said to improve her skills fast and to learn very quickly.

Les Merveilles de Rigomer (c.1250), a French text which focuses on the Matter of Britain, mentions a female character, Lorie, who is also described as a fairy woman. She is depicted as a Fairy Queen who lives in a forest along with other fairies. Lorie, whom Gawain has fallen in love with, rescues him from the castle where he is imprisoned so that he can continue his quest. Apart from Gawain, Lorie also serves as a protector for Lancelot since she heals the wounds he received during his fight against a

panther. Harf-Lancner (2000: 146) explains this very clearly and suggests that Lorie's portrayal is the root of the figure of the fairy queen in later literature:

The fairies of *Les Merveilles de Rigomer*, always called fairies, do not at all resemble the heroines of the fairy *lais*: living communally in the forest, they obey the orders of their *provoste* ("magistrate"), the fairy Lorie, in whom one may glimpse a character who later will appear in literature as the Queen of the Fairies.

Another text, *Claris and Laris* (c. 1268-1291), shows a very similar idea but in this case the fairies live in a valley, the valley of Broceliande. Like the fairies in *Les Merveilles de Rigomer*, they are supernatural woman who can enchant people. Indeed, Morgan le Fay appears in this text followed by a group of women, claiming that they are all fairies and can cast an enchanting spell upon others. This capability of enchanting others may refer to the idea of fixing and deciding the fate of others and controlling human affairs:

In addition, the power to enchant people (*faer*) attaches to their "fairy" nature, a power that may be understood as the ability to fix the destiny of people at birth, but also, in a wider sense (and as corroborated by the role of fairies later on in the tale), as something like the power to intervene in all human affairs and to redirect their flow at will (Harf-Lancner, 2000: 146-147).

So far we have seen very briefly the origins and evolution of the fairy queen and the fairies. Present in different mythologies, fairies are powerful and wise women - normally ruled by a queen and sometimes regarded as diminished goddesses who live in hidden but accessible realms. Their powers are rather diverse: they can fix the fate of people -this trait was associated with some goddesses from ancient cultures such as the Roman Parcae or the Celtic Wyrd Sisters- and in turn control human affairs and their future. They may also be benevolent since they could heal and /or protect visitors, among others. Fairies were especially connected with nature, living mainly in natural environments such as forests or valleys.

In Arthurian legends, there are also some fairy women such as the Lady of the Lake, Morgan -already mentioned above- or the Lady of Shalott. This view of the fairy lady as a wise, powerful and feared woman is also present in *The Lord of the Rings*, especially in the character of Galadriel, an Elf-lady.

The figure of Morgan le Fay has been traditionally misunderstood and demonized. Her role in Arthurian society is undeniable despite the fact that she is better known for all her alleged hatred for Arthur and her thirst for vengeance. However, Morgan has not always been the wicked, dark sorceress from many Arthurian accounts. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlin* (1150), Morgan is described as King Arthur's sister as well as a healer and a shape-shifter. Lupack (2007: 462) explains this image of Morgan as a benevolent character:

This view of Morgan as healer has its roots in the earliest accounts of her activities and perhaps in her origin in Celtic mythology. In the *Vita Merlini* (c. 1150) Morgan is the first of nine sisters who rule the Fortunate Isle or the Isle of Apples and is a healer as well as a shape-changer. It is to this island that the wounded Arthur is brought (although Morgan awaits him rather than actually fetching him herself).

Also, in the anonymous poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1500) Morgan, described as "Merlin's mistress", is the one responsible for Gawain's own quest. She is portrayed as follows:

Through the might of Morgan le Faye, that lodges at my house / By subtleties of science and sorcerer's arts, / The mistress of Merlin, she has caught many a man, / For sweet love in secret she shared sometime / With that wizard, that knows well each one of your knights / and you. (Greenblatt, 2006: 211, ll. 2446-2451).

As we can see, Morgan is said to be Merlin's lover and sorceress. But here the idea of sorceress seems to have positive connotations since it is related to wisdom rather than to evil. Later on in the text, Morgan is also depicted as a positive, benevolent character:

“Morgan the Goddess, she, / so styled by title true; / None holds so high degree / That her arts cannot subdue” (Greenblatt, 2006: 212, ll. 2452-2455). Therefore, we can see that Morgan has much power and the fact that she is said to be a goddess may reinforce the hypothesis that Morgan’s roots can be found in the Celtic goddess Morrígan.²⁴

When Gawain finally defeats Bertilak, the Green Knight acknowledges that Gawain quest has been carefully planned by Morgan, who is Gawain’s aunt, in order to test him. In Bertilak’s own words:

She guided me in this guise to your glorious hall, / To assay, if such it were, the surfeit of pride / That is rumored of the retinue of the Round Table. / She put this shape upon me to puzzle your wits (Greenblatt, 2006: 212, ll. 2456-2459).

Here Morgan’s role is quite active since she challenges Gawain in order to demonstrate not only his prowess as a warrior and loyalty to King Arthur but also to what extent the world of Camelot is strong and solid. In *Gawain*, Morgan is the agent of the action although she is not present. Indeed, she is left apart so that a man, Bertilak, can carry out her plans. If in other Arthurian texts, Morgan is said to trigger the downfall of King Arthur and the Round Table by means of her son, Mordred, in this case, Morgan intends to test not only Gawain’s own prowess but also the loyalty of King Arthur’s knights. Fisher (2000: 78) claims that:

Morgan and her marginalization are the means to the poem’s end, because women are centrally implicated in the collapse of the Round Table and the end of the Arthurian Age. If women could be placed on the periphery, as Morgan is in this poem, then the Round Table might not have fallen. To deny the female would be to have the kingdom.

When in Arthurian texts women are given a prominent role in the story, they are normally portrayed as destroyers of the Arthurian society. Femininity as the center of

²⁴ In Celtic tradition, the Morrígan was the goddess of death and war and was thought to change her shape into that of a raven at the battlefield (Clute & Grant, 1999: 663).

the story is viewed negatively, as a sort of threatening force for the Arthurian male-dominant world. However, *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* seems to be an exception since Morgan takes part actively in the development of the story although we hear of it at the end and not by means of Morgan herself but through a sort of messenger, Bertilak.

In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthure*, Morgan is seen as a threat for the Arthurian society. Described as Arthur's half-sister and also called Morgan le Fay, she is said to be married to King Uriens and to have a lover, Accolon. More important is the fact that Morgan manages to steal the scabbard of Excalibur, Arthur's sword, as a sort of revenge against him for her lover's murder at Lancelot's hands. This act unveils her desire for breaking and destroying Arthur's own society since stealing Excalibur's scabbard, the symbol of the splendour and the glory of the Arthurian world, implies a serious threat and the beginning of the downfall of the Arthurian world. As Malory describes:

And there she found Arthur asleep in his bed, and Excalibur in his right hand naked. When she saw that she was passing heavy that she might not come by the sword without she had awaked him, and then she wist well she had been dead. Then she took the scabbard and went her way on horseback (Malory in Moore, 2000: 106, b. iv, ch. xiv).

Outraged by her lover's death, Morgan decides to punish Arthur, who kills Accolon, Morgan's lover, as a sort of revenge against him. Then she throws the scabbard into a lake so that Arthur could never find it:

When she espied him following her, she rode a greater pace through the forest till she came to a plain, and when she saw she might not escape, she rode unto a lake thereby, and said, Whatsoever come of me, my brother shall not have this scabbard. And then she let throw the scabbard in the deepest of the water so it sank, for it was heavy of gold and precious stones (Malory in Moore, 2000: 106, b. iv, ch. xiv).

The next thing that Morgan does is interesting because we see she actually has powers and she transforms herself into a stone so that she cannot be discovered and found by King Arthur. Malory describes it as: “Then she rode into a valley where many great stones were, and when she saw she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment unto a great marble stone” (Moore, 2000: 106, b. iv, ch. xiv). Arthur, aware that he will not get back his scabbard, regrets its loss and regards this as a revengeful act against him.

Additionally, there is another episode in which Morgan tries to destroy King Arthur himself. She gives him a mantle as a sort of royal token for her brother, the King. However, this gift is ill-intended since it causes its bearer’s death by fire and burning. According to Malory’s text, Arthur, who is suspicious of Morgan, decides not to wear it and delivers it to the Lady of the Lake:

And then he said unto the damosel that came from his sister, Damosel, this mantle that ye have brought me, I will see it upon you. Sir, she said, it will not beseem me to wear a king’s garment. By my head, said Arthur, ye shall wear it or it come on my back, or any man’s that here is. And so the king made it to be put upon her, and forthwithal she fell down dead and never more spake word after and burnt to coals. Then was the king wonderly worth, more than he was to-forehand, and said unto King Uriens, My sister, your wife, is always about to betray me, and well I wot either ye, or my nephew, your son, is of counsel with her to have me destroyed (Malory in Moore, 2000: 108, b. iv, ch.xvi).

Morgan is said to be responsible for many of Arthur’s unfortunate events which finally trigger the collapse of Camelot. However, Morgan is also given a very important role as the guardian of Avalon. At the end of Malory’s text, when Arthur is mortally wounded, he is put into a ship accompanied by several ladies, including the lady of the Wasteland, the Queen of Northgalis, Nimue, the chief lady of the lake and Morgan le Fay. Then, he departs to Avalon -here named Avilion- so that he can be healed.

The role of Morgan as the guardian of the mysterious island of Avalon has its roots in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*. Here Morgan, called Morgen, is one of the nine sisters that rule the isle of Avalon. Monmouth writes that:

The one who is first among them has greater skill in healing, as her beauty surpasses that of her sisters. Her name is Morgen, and she has learned the uses of all plants in curing the ills of the body. She knows, too, the art of changing her shape, of flying through the air, like Daedalus, on strange wings. At will, she is now at Brest, now at Chartres, now at Pavia; and at will she glides down from the sky onto your shores (Clarke, 1973: 101).

Although demonized and rejected, Morgan is clearly one of the most important characters in Arthurian literature. Even though the Arthurian world is misogynist and male-dominant, Morgan is given much power and does not always fit in the traditional role of women. In spite of her negative evolution from healer to evil doer, Morgan appears to keep some of her previous and early traits since she is said to carry the barge, along with other ladies, which leads Arthur to Avalon.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Galadriel mirrors Morgan in several aspects. She is one of the most mysterious characters and her role in the story is more important than what it seems. Galadriel, whose name in Sindarin means “radiantly-garlanded maiden” (Tyler, 2012: 262), is one of the few High Elves, the Eldar, who continued to live in Middle-earth during the Third Age. She belongs to one of the fairest race of Elves, the Noldorin. Galadriel's story begins at the end of the First Age when many of the Noldor Elves left Eldamar for Middle-earth. As an enemy of Feänor, the smith of the Silmarils and leader of the Noldorin Elves who rebelled against the Valar, Galadriel wanted to depart to Middle-earth. She lived with the Maiar for a long time in Doriath and learned a great deal from the Maiar Melian. Later on, she married Celeborn, a lord of the Grey Elves, and she was banned to return to Eldamar. During the Second Age, both Galadriel

and Celeborn went to live in the woods of Laurelindórenan where they founded a realm of Wood Elves called Lothlórien or the Golden Wood. Tyler (2012: 263) explains that:

Early in the Second Age she and Celeborn journeyed to Harlindon, where they dwelt for many years. Sometime later they went eastwards to Eregion, a colony of High Elves craftsmen founded in 750 Second Age. For a while they lived with the Elven-smiths of that land, but eventually they passed further east across the Misty Mountains to Wilderland, where Celeborn made a realm among the Wood-elves of Laurelindórenan (Lothlórien). The Golden Wood became a secret place, hidden even from the knowledge of the other Elves; for while the Power that dwelt there could not be concealed, few indeed perceived its true source, or suspected that one of the mighty among the Noldor still lingered in Middle-earth.

Galadriel also plays a relevant role in the story of the Ruling Ring. She is the bearer of one of the three Elven Rings, Nenyá, also called the Ring of Waters or the Ring of Adamant. This Ring was made of mithril, a sort of silver stone, with a diamond in it.

The fact that the Ring belonged to Galadriel is significant for her comparison with Morgan le Fay since Galadriel's Ring has healing properties. Tyler (2012: 464) argues that:

Nenyá was the only one of the Three to remain with its original owner, for Celebrimbor himself gave it to the Lady Galadriel; and though it was necessarily kept hidden throughout the Second Age, Nenyá was later used by her to heal those parts of Middle-earth where her writ still ran. Nenyá was made from mithril and set in it was a diamond; it shone like a star.

In *The Lord of the Rings* Galadriel also has a relevant role. Like Gandalf, she intends to stop the rising power of the Dark Lord and the evil of his Ring. She is also tested and tempted by the power of the Ring although she finally rejects it. For this, she is pardoned and is given the choice to return to Eldamar as well as it serves to put an end to her banishment in Middle-earth.

Galadriel appears for the first time when the Fellowship of the Ring crosses the woods of Lothlórien. Then, the eight companions are brought to Galadriel and Celeborn, who are both described as:

(180)

Very tall they were, and the Lady no less tall than the Lord; and they were grave and beautiful. They were clad wholly in white, and the hair of the Lady was of deep gold, and the hair of the Lord Celeborn was of silver long and bright; but no sign of age was upon them, unless it were in the depths of their eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight, and yet profound, the wells of deep memory (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 345).

When speaking about Gandalf's fate, Galadriel is unable to discover what has happened to the wizard in spite of her clairvoyance skills. In Galadriel's words:

(181)

But I cannot see him from afar, unless he comes within the fences of Lothlórien: a grey mist is about him, and the ways of his feet and of his mind are hidden from me (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 346).

After talking to Galadriel, the Companions have a very similar feeling of fear and mistrust towards her because she can look into the inner part of their souls. Sam explains that:

(182)

She seemed to be looking inside me and asking me what I would do if she gave me the chance of flying back home to the Shire to a nice little hole with –with a bit of garden of my own (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 348).

Also, the rest of the Company is slightly disturbed and fearful of Galadriel's ability to guess their thoughts:

(183)

All of them, it seemed, had fared alike: each had felt that he was offered a choice between a shadow full of fear that lay ahead, and something that he greatly desired: clear before his mind lay, and to get it he had only to turn aside from the road and leave the Quest and the war against Sauron to others (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 348-349).

So Galadriel is feared due to her power, which is not understood by some of the Companions, specifically by Gimli and Boromir. The latter claims that they have been tempted by Galadriel:

(184)

Maybe it was only a rest, and she thought to read our thoughts for her own good purpose; but almost I should have said that she was tempting us, and offering what she pretended to have the power to give” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 349).

At this point, it is very clear that Galadriel’s character is influenced by that of Morgan le Fay in the sense that they intend to test the prowess of the heroes who undertake the main Quest. If in *Gawain and the Green Knight* Morgan is said to have planned Gawain’s quest in order to find out to what extent Arthur’s knights are loyal and strong, Galadriel also seems to do the same with the eight companions when they arrive in Lothlórien. By using clairvoyant skills, she is determined to guess their intentions about the Ring and the Quest. However, this is more significantly appreciated when Frodo and Sam look into Galadriel’s Mirror. The mirror is depicted as “a basin of silver, wide and shallow, and beside it stood a silver ewer” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 352). The fact that the Mirror must be filled with water is narrowly connected with Galadriel’s Ring of Power, Nenyá, the Ring of Waters. More importantly, this mirror can show the past, the present and the future yet to come. As Galadriel says:

(185)

‘Many things I can command the Mirror to reveal,’ she answered, ‘and to some I can show what they desire to see. But the Mirror will also show things unbidden, and those are often stranger and more profitable than things which we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be. But which it is that he sees, even the wisest cannot always tell (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 352).

While Sam sees the fall and destruction of the Shire, Frodo sees Gandalf as the White Wizard, the citadel of Minas Tirith about to wage a battle and a last vision of Sauron himself as a lidless eye. Then, Galadriel says mysteriously:

(186)

‘I know what it was you last saw,’ she said; ‘for that is also in my mind’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 355).

Galadriel’s Mirror and Galadriel herself echo the figures of the Wyrd Sisters in Anglo-Saxon culture since her Mirror can show the fates of those who look into it, especially if they make one decision or another. The Wyrd Sisters have been described as: “three all-powerful female figures to whom even the gods and goddesses are subject” (Bates, 2000: 178). It seems likely to conclude that Galadriel somehow weaves the fates of Sam and Frodo through her glass and the visions that the Hobbits have.

In analysing similarities between Galadriel and Morgan the first one is connected with their status in their respective societies. They exert some kind of power both in Avalon and Lothlórien. If Morgan is said to be a healer in earlier Arthurian texts, Galadriel can also heal by means of her Ring of Adamant, Nenyá. Moreover, Morgan

and Galadriel embody the idea of the Fairy Queen. Paton's (1970:12) definition of "fairy queen" includes many of Galadriel features:

The fay of Arthurian romance is essentially a supernatural woman, always more beautiful than the imagination can possibly fancy her, untouched by time, unhampered by lack of resources for the accomplishment of her pleasure, superior to human blemish, contingency, or necessity, in short, altogether unlimited in her power.

Although slightly old-fashioned, this definition of fairy queen gives us a deeper insight in the figure of Galadriel. Like Morgan le Fay, she stands out for her exceptional beauty, power and superior status within her world. While Morgan is said to be the ruler of Avalon, Galadriel is the Lady of Lothlórien, one of the last High-Elven homes in Middle-earth along with Rivendell, and the bearer of one of the Three Elven Rings. Also, Galadriel is of a high lineage since she belongs to the Eldar, particularly the Noldorin Elves. Following the traditional view of the fairy queen, she lived in an isolated place, a realm which is hidden and unreachable for most inhabitants of Middle-earth. Indeed, there is an allusion to Lothlórien as "an island amid many perils" (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 339). Like Avalon, Lothlórien is the last realm of a lost race and is on the verge of disappearing. Both Avalon and Lothlórien are threatened and isolated kingdoms which eventually die out. While King Arthur's death implies the loss and disappearance of Avalon, the destruction of the Master Ring and the Restoration of the King of Gondor cause the departure of all the remaining High Elves in Middle-earth, including Galadriel, and in turn the abandonment of Elven kingdoms such as Lothlórien.

Moreover, Galadriel resembles Morgan le Fay in another aspect: the role of healer. In Arthurian texts, Morgan is said to be especially gifted and skilled in healing and preparing medicines. Likewise, Galadriel can heal by means of her Ring. After

Gandalf kills the Balrog, he is seriously injured and arrives in Lothlórien where he is healed. Although it is not known who healed the old wizard, it seems likely to think that it was Galadriel who did it. Burns (2008: 84) argues that:

But Gandalf, at Galadriel's request, is carried there to be healed of his injuries after Moria. Though Tolkien does not specify that it is Galadriel who tends Gandalf, from all we have seen of Lothlórien and of Galadriel, there is no one else likely to fill this role, the role that traditionally falls to the Fairy Queen.

Sometimes, Galadriel and Morgan are ambiguous since, because they are enchantresses, Galadriel and Morgan are feared, and for this reason they are associated with evil. They sometimes may be seen as evil-doers since the source of their powers is unknown to the rest of characters. Also, the fact that Morgan and Galadriel do not fit in the traditional view of women -they are not submissive, obedient or dependent on a man- serves to reinforce the idea of subversive femininity as negative. In the case of Galadriel, her position as one of the last -if not the last one- High Elves, the Noldor, of Middle-earth makes some characters regard her as dangerous and threatening. Although powerful, Galadriel is also tempted by the Ring and she does not refuse to take it when Frodo offers it to her. Tolkien describes this scene as follows: Frodo stops looking into Galadriel's Mirror and, seeing what is yet to come, the Hobbit tries to give the Ring to Galadriel:

(187)

Galadriel laughed with a sudden clear laugh. 'Wise the Lady Galadriel may be.' She said, 'yet here she has met her match in courtesy. Gently are you revenged for my testing of your heart at our first meeting. You begin to see with a keen eye. I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer. For many long years I had pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my hands, and behold' it was brought within my grasp. The evil that was devised long ago works on in many ways, whether Sauron himself stands or falls. Would not that have been a noble deed to set to the credit of his Ring, if I had taken it by force or fear from my guest? And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not

be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!’ (Anderson, 2012: 356).

This example does not only illustrate Galadriel’s immense power but also her craving for the Ruling Ring. This means that she could become a sort of Dark Lady and rule all Middle-earth and its peoples. However, she overcomes this desire for the Ring which is probably caused by its corruptive power and fights against herself so as to destroy the desire to own Sauron’s Ring. She finally wins and decides to be just Galadriel. This is illustrated as follows:

(188)

She lifted up her hand and from the ring that she wore there issued a great light that illuminated her alone and left all else dark. She stood before Frodo seeming now tall beyond measurement, and beautiful beyond enduring, terrible and worshipful. Then she let her hand fall, and the light faded, and suddenly she laughed again, and lo! She was shrunken: a slender elf-woman, clad in simple white, whose gentle voice was soft and sad (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 356).

In order to understand this episode, we must remember that Galadriel was the bearer of one of the Three Elven Rings. She is bound to the power of her ring and probably her desire for the Master Ring is more likely due to an external force, probably the Ring’s own will rather than her own wish for it. Moreover, this scene is important because it serves to test Galadriel and her power. Since she wins her own inner struggle to take the Ring, she is rewarded by the Valar with a return journey to Valinor as a token for her long exile in Middle-earth and her fight against Sauron.

Galadriel’s craving for the Ring somehow echoes the episode in which Morgan steals Excalibur’s scabbard from Arthur. In both cases, the act of possessing objects of absolute power may bring about the downfall of both Galadriel and Morgan and, in turn, this could worsen the conflicts already present in the Arthurian court and in Middle-earth, as indeed it happens when Morgan steals the scabbard from Arthur. In

Galadriel's case, she would have become a Dark Lady, with a completely different appearance from that of Sauron but in essence the same thing: someone with absolute power.

When the War is finished and Sauron is defeated, all the Ring-bearers must depart from Middle-earth, symbolizing the end of the age of the Rings. Galadriel, as owner of the Ring of Adamant, goes to the Grey Havens alongside Gandalf, who owned the Elven Ring of Fire, Frodo, Bilbo and Elrond, who had the third Elven Ring: Vilya, the Ring of Air:

(189)

There was Gildor and many fair Elven folk; and there to Sam's wonder rode Elrond and Galadriel. Elrond wore a mantle of grey and had a star upon his forehead, and a silver harp was in his hand, and upon his finger was a ring of gold with a great blue stone, Vilya, mightiest of the Three. But Galadriel sat upon a white palfrey and was robed all in glimmering white, like clouds about the Moon; for she herself seemed to shine with a soft light. On her finger was Nenya, the ring wrought of mithril, that bore a single white stone flickering like a frosty star (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1005).

The departure of Galadriel implies the end of the Elven Kingdoms in Middle-earth and many of the Elves, including her, return to Valinor after a very long exile. It is also the end of the Third Age, the period in which the Rings of Power were mostly used, and the beginning of the Fourth Age, the age of men. Tolkien says that "for the Third Age was over, and the days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times. With them went many Elves of the High Kindred who would no longer stay in Middle-earth" (Anderson, 2012: 1006).

Finally, it is important to point out that the influence of Morgan le Fay on Tolkien's Elf-queen Galadriel is significant. Both are powerful women in worlds where women are normally powerless and marginalized. However, they are rulers and protectors of mysterious and hidden paradisiacal realms, Avalon and Lothlórien.

Curiously enough, Morgan and Galadriel are described as the fairy queens of their respective lands although this seems to have slightly negative connotations since they are considered sorceresses and evil-doers. They may also be regarded as active agents of the actions which take place or have taken place in their realms.

Besides Morgan, one of the most fascinating and powerful female characters in Arthurian literature is the Lady of the Lake. Given many names (Viviane, Nimue, Niniane, etc.), the Lady of the Lake is said to have raised Lancelot and to be the guardian of Excalibur. She delivers the sword to Arthur and when he is about to depart to Avalon, Arthur gives Excalibur to Bedivere so that it could be returned to the Lady of the Lake. Like Morgan, she is commonly depicted as a sort of fairy, probably inspired in Celtic stories about water spirits. The figure of the Lady of the Lake is found for the first time in the Vulgate Cycle where she is specifically said to have raised and brought up the orphan Lancelot, who is also named as “Lancelot du Lac”²⁵. She can also be found later on in Thomas Malory’s *Morte D’Arthur*. Like Morgan, the Lady of the Lake is also a benevolent enchantress and healer. Clute & Grant (1999: 555) explain that her role varies in Arthurian tradition: she is Arthur’s protector, Merlin’s apprentice and Lancelot’s foster-mother:

She is seen as a student of Merlin’s who takes on his function as Arthur’s protector. It is she who gives Arthur Excalibur, and who receives it back as Arthur lies dying. She feigns love for Merlin and uses the spells she has learned from him to ensnare and trap him. She becomes the foster-mother of Lancelot when he is abandoned, and subsequently delivers him to Arthur’s court.

In Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*, chapter XXV of the first book is devoted to the Lady of the Lake, Merlin and Arthur. Merlin introduces the Lady of the Lake to Arthur. Merlin and Arthur see that the Lady holds a wonderful sword, Arthur’s future blade

²⁵ Lancelot receives his name ‘du lac’ or ‘of the lake’ because he was raised by the Lady of the Lake (Lupack, 2007: 455).

called Excalibur. The Lady delivers Excalibur to Arthur under the condition that he gives it back when the time comes:

So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo! said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damosel going upon the lake. What damosel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen; and this damosel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damosel unto Arthur, and saluted him, and he her again. Damosel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur, king, said the damosel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time (Malory in Moore, 2000: 38, b.i, ch.xxv).

The giving of Excalibur implies that the Lady of the Lake offers her protection, care-giving, and healing skills to Arthur. This is especially important because the sword symbolizes the splendour and prosperity of King Arthur's realm.

The similarities between the Lady of the Lake and Tolkien's Galadriel are rather interesting. The first resemblance has to do with their connection to water. As we know, the Lady of the Lake is a fairy-woman who dwells inside a lake, which is a sort of fairy land. Like her, Galadriel's power somehow depends upon water since she bears the Ring of Waters. In Celtic mythology, water was highly symbolic since it was considered the very essence of life alongside fire. Indeed, springs, rivers, wells and seas were considered sacred and Druids tended to use water in their rituals. Also, water was thought to be related to healing, knowledge and purification. MacLeod (2012:99) argues that:

We know that the ancient Celts venerated and conducted rituals in connection with bodies of water since earliest times. Offerings were made

into lakes, rivers and wells, and ceremonies were held at healing springs. Early maps indicate that throughout the Celtic territories, rivers were associated with goddesses. Water symbolized healing, purification, transformation and wisdom.

So the Lady of the Lake and Galadriel could be considered Celtic water goddesses. To start with, as seen above, the idea of the fairy queen may have its roots in Celtic goddesses and the Lady of the Lake and Galadriel seem to fit in the role of the Fairy Queen. They are both powerful women who rule hidden lands and exert a particular power and authority over the inhabitants of nearby realms. Also, it does not seem a coincidence that Galadriel's Ring of Power, also known as the Ring of Waters, is the one connected with water. This does not only link Galadriel to the Arthurian Lady of the Lake but also to Celtic water deities.

Especially relevant as well is the relationship between Arthur and the Lady of the Lake. It somehow echoes that of Aragorn and Galadriel. While the Lady of the Lake gives Arthur Excalibur and becomes a sort of guide for him, Galadriel gives Aragorn a green stone which symbolizes the return of the King of Gondor and, more specifically, his fate as the last heir (and king) of the Numénorean Kings of Middle-earth. Galadriel says this when the Company is about to leave Lothlórien:

(190)

This stone I gave to Celebrían my daughter, and she to hers; and now it comes to you as a token of hope. In this hour take the name that was foretold for you, Elessar, the Elfstone of the house of Elendil (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 366).

Then, Aragorn answers to Galadriel's words:

(191)

“O Lady of Lórien of whom were sprung Celebrían and Arwen Evenstar. What praise could I say more?” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 366).

If Excalibur represents the beginning of prosperity and glory in King Arthur's realm, Galadriel's gift of the green stone to Aragorn symbolizes the return of the King of Gondor. By taking the name *Elessar*, Aragorn paves his own way to the throne of Gondor and claims that he is the rightful and legitimate king. Although he is still called Aragorn, he adopts his identity as a future king of Gondor and Isildur's heir rather than that of a simple ranger:

(192)

Then Aragorn took the stone and pinned the brooch upon his breast and those saw him wondered, for they had not marked before how tall and kingly he stood, and it seemed to them that many years of toil had fallen from his shoulders (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 366).

Additionally, Galadriel's support to Aragorn is as important as that of the Lady of the Lake. By giving Excalibur to Arthur, she contributes to the development and splendour of Arthurian society, thereby providing Arthur with a power that makes him invincible. In the case of Galadriel, her support and help not only to Aragorn but also to the rest of companions are significant since it implies a last alliance among all the free peoples of Middle-earth and puts an end to the conflicts and bad relationships among Elves, Men and Dwarves. As for the relationship between Aragorn and Galadriel, it is not only limited to a political or social purpose; Aragorn is closely related to Galadriel since he is in love with Arwen, who is Galadriel's granddaughter. The love between Aragorn and Arwen, although forbidden, represents the last alliance of Elves and Men in order to defeat Sauron.

So far we have compared Galadriel and the Lady of the Lake. They have some features in common. Both represent the role of Fairy Queen and are supernatural women who live in hidden realms and are connected to nature. As we have seen, the fact that the Lady of the Lake and Galadriel are linked to water -the Lady of the Lake is the queen of a lake and is the guardian of Excalibur while Galadriel bears the Rings of

Water which has healing properties - may allude to a possible Celtic origin. These female characters are also bearers of powerful objects which are given to the main heroes. If the Lady of the Lake gives Excalibur to Arthur, Galadriel does the same by giving a green stone to Aragorn, which in turn epitomizes his prophesied ascension to the throne of Gondor.

In Arthurian literature there is another female character with whom Galadriel has some resemblances: the Lady of Shalott. The poem, written by Alfred Lord Tennyson around 1833, retells the story of Elaine, the lady of Ascolat or Estolad. In medieval Arthurian texts, Elaine is said to fall in love with Lancelot when he visits her castle. However, her love for Lancelot is unrequited and, seeing that he does not love her, she decides to commit suicide. However, in Tennyson's poem the story is rather different. The Lady of Shalott, whose name is unknown, is said to live in an isolated island near Camelot. This woman lives in a fortress, alone and isolated. However, she can see everything that happens around her by means of her magical mirror. What is important in Tennyson's poem is the description of the Lady as a sort of Fairy Queen. In her introduction to Tennyson's work, Almond (2011: 9) claims that:

Most fairies have some sort of magical power, but in the case of the Lady of Shalott, this seems to be curiously inverted. Certainly, in weaving her 'magic web with colours gay' to copy the 'shadows' of the mortal world that she sees reflected in her mirror, she is like a Fate, or one of the Weird Sisters, the Norns of Norse tradition; except in their case, the mortal world is a copy of their supernatural weavings. Fate, also, weaves the web of other people's lives, and dooms others to death. This Lady, if she weaves any fate, it is her own, and when doom descends, it is hers alone, and not another's.

Unlike other Fairy Queens such as Morgan le Fay or the Lady of the Lake, the Lady of Shalott is a powerless, lonely woman who lives in her own fortress and is afraid of everything that comes from the outside. However, she still possesses a skill associated with fairies: the gift of fate and foreseeing. She can weave her own fate but not the fate

of others, and she can see whatsoever is happening through her magical mirror.

Tennyson writes that:

There she weaves by night and day / A magic web with colours gay. She has heard a whisper say, / A curse is on her if she stay / To look down to Camelot. / She knows not what the curse may be, / And so she weaveth steadily, / And little other care hath she, / The Lady of Shalott (Almond, 2011: 33).

As for the mirror, it does not only show what it is yet to come but also the present.

Indeed, the Lady of Shalott 'weaves' her own fate through the mirror and she sees Lancelot's arrival to her castle and this is the curse that the poem talks about, i.e. the Lady's unrequited love will bring about her own death and downfall. Tennyson explains that:

But in her web she still delights / To weave the mirror's magic sights, / For often thro' the silent nights / A funeral, with plumes and lights, / And music, went to Camelot: / Or when the moon was overheard, / Came two young lovers lately wed; / "I am half sick of shadows," said / The Lady of Shalott (Almond, 2011: 36).

So we can see that the Lady of Shalott is a feeble, powerless and weak character who sees Lancelot and inevitably falls in love with him. This causes the Lady's desire to leave her own home, which in turn causes her own death:

She left the webs, she left the loom / she made three paces thro' the room, / she saw the water-lily bloom, / she saw the helmet and the plume / She look'd down to Camelot. / Out flew the web and floated wide; / the mirror crack'd from side to side; / "the curse is come upon me," cried / The Lady of Shalott (Tennyson in Almond, 2011: 43).

The first similarity between the Lady of Shalott and Galadriel is that they both 'weave' the fates by means of a magic mirror. As said before, Galadriel had some powers that perfectly echo those of the Wyrd Sisters or the Parcae, supernatural women -normally fairies or fairy queens - who decide the ill or good fate of a person. Likewise, the Lady of Shalott can foresee the fate and see things although she is less powerful and weaker than Galadriel. If Galadriel is described as a fairy lady whose power may be

overwhelming or even dangerous, the Lady of Shalott is rather the opposite. Although she can weave the fate and see things in her mirror, she is powerless because she is supposed to be under a curse. It seems likely to think that Tennyson probably wanted to show the story of Elaine, the Lady of Astolat, from her own point of view. Also, his description of the Lady of Shalott is rather negative and paradoxical since she dies, although apparently she could have predicted her fate.

Galadriel's Mirror resembles that of the Lady of Shalott in many aspects. First of all, both can foresee what is going to happen but not necessarily always. This means that, for instance, Galadriel's Mirror may show the past, the present, the future or things that may not happen. This depends on the intention of those who look into the mirror and more importantly, everything that is seen in the Mirror is also in Galadriel's mind. As for the Lady of Shalott, everything that happens around her can be seen in her mirror. Like Galadriel, the Lady of Shalott 'weaves' all the events that may be yet to come or happen and they are reflected in the mirror.

As has been seen, Galadriel, one of the most interesting and fascinating female characters in *The Lord of the Rings* is highly influenced by Arthurian women. Like Morgan le Fay, the Lady of the Lake and the Lady of Shalott, she represents the figure of the Fairy Queen, a supernatural woman, ruler of her own land and normally associated with fate and nature. Galadriel resembles Morgan because she is feared due to her power and wisdom. As the source of their respective power is unknown, they are both demonized and represented as ambiguous characters.

6.2. Guenevere and Arwen

If there is a female character who is central to the Arthurian legend, that is Guenevere, who has been traditionally regarded as King Arthur's wife and queen. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Guenevere is said to have a love affair with Mordred while Arthur is fighting far away from Britain. In another text, *Rise of Gawain*, written in the twelfth century, Guenevere is depicted in a very different way since she is told to be introduced to the world of witchcraft and have clairvoyant skills. It is in Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot* where Guenevere is described as Lancelot's lover for the very first time. In this text, Guenevere is kidnapped by Meleagant and finally saved by Lancelot. However, Guenevere, who is portrayed as a capricious lady, refuses Lancelot's love because she thinks that it is not pure and absolute love. However, she loves him deeply and when she hears rumours of Lancelot's death, she plans to commit suicide. In the *Vulgate Cycle* Guenevere meets Lancelot thanks to Galehaut's²⁶ help. Arthur falls in love with the False Guenevere, who is said to be the illegitimate daughter of Leodagan and half-sister to the true Guenevere, and decides to accept her as her queen. Because of this usurpation, Lancelot protects the true Guenevere until their adulterous love is unveiled. In the *Vulgate Cycle*, Guenevere is also kidnapped by Meleagant and rescued by Lancelot. In the *Mortu Artu*, the love between Guenevere and Lancelot is discovered and this causes Guenevere to be condemned to be burnt. Then, Lancelot manages to save her and carries her to the Joyous Guard, Lancelot's home. However, Arthur decides to wage war against him because of this.

In Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthure* Guenevere is represented as a jealous, angry and a capricious woman who, however, remains as a true lover to Lancelot. She is also

²⁶ Galehaut is Lancelot's close friend in the *Vulgate Lancelot*. He arranges the first encounter between Lancelot and Guinevere (Lupack, 2007: 445).

accused of infidelity and sentenced to death. As in other Arthurian texts, Lancelot saves her from death, and this causes Arthur and Lancelot's confrontation as well as Mordred's attempt to usurp the throne. Eventually, Guenevere, aware of the disastrous consequences of her love for Lancelot, rejects him and decides to become a nun:

Malory's Guinevere is jealous and demanding but also a true lover. Her jealousy and anger drive Lancelot mad and lead her to say she wishes he were dead. Nevertheless, she remains true to him. She is accused several times of crimes –infidelity and the murder of Mador's relative – and must be saved by Lancelot, as she is once again when their love is discovered and she is sentenced to be burned at the stake. When Mordred rebels against Arthur and attempts to marry her, she flees first to the Tower of London and then to the nunnery at Amesbury where she becomes abbess. Lancelot visits her there after the death of Arthur, but she asks him to leave and never to return and refuses even to give him a final kiss. She dies a holy death, of which Lancelot learns in a vision that instructs him to have her buried next to Arthur (Lupack, 2007: 449-450).

In most Arthurian texts, the role of Guenevere is normally associated with wrongdoing and destruction. She is normally represented as the culprit of the downfall of the Arthurian world, especially for her adulterous love for Lancelot and for the fact that she decides to abandon Camelot and flee from Arthur, precisely when he is away fighting against Mordred. Reinforcing the idea of Guenevere as the destroyer of King Arthur's idealized court, in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthure*, she is considered guilty of giving a poisoned apple to a knight who immediately dies. However, this poisoned apple was intended for Gawain rather than for the deceased knight.

As for her relationship with Arthur, this is doomed from the very beginning. Although Arthur loves her, Guenevere falls in love with Lancelot, Arthur's most loyal knight and friend. This love triangle threatens the very pillars of the Arthurian male-dominant society whose main symbol is the Order of the Round Table. The marriage between Arthur and Guenevere is probably ill-fated and rather unfortunate since they cannot have a child, an heir for Arthur's realm, something very important for the

continuity of the period of prosperity and splendour established when Arthur becomes the king.

Also, Guenevere has been traditionally seen as a passive character since she is normally described as powerless and voiceless. She apparently depends on men's decisions and her actions are dependent upon men, mainly Arthur or Lancelot. Guenevere's story is not told from her own point of view but from others', especially men's.

Arwen, also called Evenstar and Undómiel and whose name means "Noble Lady" in Sindarin, the Elven tongue, is the daughter of Elrond, the Elf lord of Rivendell and bearer of one of the Elven Rings, and Celebrían, the daughter of Galadriel and Celeborn. Like Elrond who was Half-elf, Arwen was given the gift of choice, i.e. she could choose her fate: to remain in Middle-earth all her life and have a mortal life or depart to Valinor and abandon Middle-earth forever. She is said to live both in Rivendell and Lothlórien for many years. It is in Lothlórien where Arwen falls in love with Aragorn, who, as one of the Dunédain, descendants of the Kings of Gondor, was raised in Rivendell by Elrond. The importance of Arwen in the story is connected with her love for Aragorn, a mortal man and heir to the Kings of Gondor. Arwen's decision of having a mortal life reminds us of a similar one in Tolkien's universe and which is that of Lúthien and Beren. Luthien was a High Elf who chose to have a mortal life with her beloved, Beren. They are important because they contributed to the recovery of one of the Silmarils. Tyler (2012: 44) argues that:

The daughter of Elrond Halfelven and Celebrían, daughter of Galadriel. She was born in the year 241 Third Age in Rivendell; and so great was her loveliness that in her, it was said, the likeness of Lúthien Tinúviel had returned to earth. To the children of Elrond was appointed the Choice of the Half-elven: to become of mortal kind and die in Middle-earth, or to take ship into the West with Elrond when the time came for the Three Rings to pass away. For many years Arwen Undómiel ('Evenstar') dwelt

among her mother's kin, in Lothlórien, to the east of the Misty Mountains. It was here that she fell in love with Aragorn II of the Dúnedain, and so made her choice. Thus the Doom of Lúthien was indeed shared by Arwen Evenstar.

Arwen is mentioned in the story several times but her presence is scarce and very limited. Her story is more focused on her forbidden love for Aragorn and her appearances are peripheral since they take place before and after the events and actions happen. The character of Arwen is isolated although some hints are given about her story. In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien gives more prominence to the love affair between Arwen and Aragorn rather than Arwen's own story. Anyway, most female women are left apart and more relevance are given to male characters.

The first time that Arwen appears is when the Hobbits and Aragorn arrive in Rivendell after their confrontation with the Ringwraiths. There, Frodo sees Arwen and feels impressed by her beauty:

(193)

Young she was and yet not so. The braids of her dark hair were touched by no frost; her white arms and clear face were flawless and smooth, and the light of stars was in her bright eyes, grey as a cloudless night; yet queenly she looked, and thought and knowledge were in her glance, as of one who has known many things that the years bring. Above her brow her head was covered with a cap of silver lace netted with small gems, glittering white; but her soft grey raiment had no ornament save a girdle of leaves wrought in silver (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 221).

Tolkien does not only praise Arwen's beauty but also her wisdom, experience and knowledge. Frodo is overwhelmed by her beauty and splendor since she is one of the few High Elves that remain in Middle-earth. Somehow shrouded in mystery, Arwen is also said not to be seen by many people -this reinforces her isolation and loneliness- and to be the 'Evenstar' of her race, the Eldar. The term 'Evenstar', which may be a shortening for 'evening star', can also be found in other literary works such as King

Alfred's translation of Boethius and present in a short poem by James Joyce. This is explained by Gilliver, Marshall & Weiner (2006: 122):

Tolkien also revived the word *evenstar*, quoted in the *OED* (Even-star) from King Alfred's 9th-century translation of Boethius and not recorded since the 16th century (though the ever-inventive James Joyce did also use it in a short poem in 1907). It is best known as the surname of Arwen, the last, bright child of her kindred.

The fact that Arwen is named 'Evenstar' may refer to the decline and disappearance of the race of the High Elves in Middle-earth, emphasizing the idea that she is the last of the Eldar who dwell in Middle-earth.

The comparison between Arwen and Lúthien Tinúviel is rather significant. Although she appears in *The Silmarillion* and her story is connected with that of the Silmarils, Lúthien is mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*, usually by Aragorn. The story of Lúthien is also reflected in Arwen's since they both have to choose between mortality and immortality:

(194)

So it was that Frodo saw her whom few mortals had yet seen; Arwen, daughter of Elrond, in whom it was said that the likeness of Lúthien had come on earth again; and she was called Undómiel, for she was the Evenstar of her people. Long she had been in the land of her mother's kin, in Lórien beyond the mountains, and was but lately returned to Rivendell to her father's house (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 221).

Apart from this, Arwen is not mentioned in the story until almost the end of it when the Ring is destroyed and the War of the Ring is over. However, she is described very briefly, and this happens when she marries Aragorn:

(195)

Then the King welcomed his guests, and they alighted; and Elrond surrendered the scepter, and laid the hand of his daughter in the hand of the King, and together they went up into the High City, and all the stars flowered in the sky. And Aragorn the King Elessar wedded Arwen Undómiel in the City of the Kings upon the day of Midsummer, and the tale of their long waiting and labours was come to fulfilment (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 951).

In spite of Arwen's absence and isolation from the story, in *The Return of the King* an appendix is included, which tells the story of Arwen and Aragorn from the beginning. Although chapter 7 will be exclusively devoted to studying the love between Aragorn and Arwen, there are some important points for understanding the character of Arwen which must be taken into account. Arwen is presented as being of a higher lineage than Aragorn, who indeed belongs to a high lineage within the race of men. Her condition as a High Elf makes her feel somehow oppressed and Elrond, her father, intends to persuade Aragorn not to fall in love with her since he says:

(196)

But as for Arwen the Fair, Lady of Imladris and of Lórien, Evenstar of her people, she is of a lineage greater than yours, and she has lived in the world already so long that to her you are a yearling shoot beside a young birch of many summers. She is too far above you. And so, I think, it may well seem to her. But even if it were not so, and her heart turned towards you, I should still be grieved because of the doom that is laid on us (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1034).

This example explains that the love between Arwen and Aragorn is forbidden because of their respective lineages and races. Additionally, Elrond's words echo the tragic fate for Aragorn and Arwen, whose love will not be possible until he fulfils his quest as heir to the Kings of Gondor.

In their first meeting Aragorn thinks that Arwen is Lúthien Tinúviel herself. Despite her likeness to Lúthien, Arwen argues that she is not that lady from older times although she admits that she is likely to have the same tragic fate:

(197)

'So many have said,' she answered gravely. 'Yet her name is not mine. Though maybe my doom will be not unlike hers' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1033).

At the end of story we can appreciate the tragedy of Arwen and her doom. She is determined to marry Aragorn so she renounces her gift of immortality in order to embrace a mortal life and live with him. However, Aragorn finally dies after enjoying a longer life than the rest of the race of men. This devastates Arwen, who, then, decides to leave Minas Tirith and goes to what is left of Lothlórien. There, she dies of grief and despair and with Arwen's death, the race of the High Elves disappear from Middle-earth:

(198)

But Arwen went forth from the House, and the light of her eyes was quenched, and it seemed to her people that she had become cold and grey as nightfall in winter that comes without a star. Then she said farewell to Eldarion, and to her daughters, and to all whom she had loved; and she went out from the city of Minas Tirith and passed away to the land of Lórien, and dwelt there alone under the fading trees until winter came. Galadriel had passed away and Celeborn also was gone, and the land was silent. There at last when the mallorn-leaves were falling, but spring had not yet come, she laid herself to rest upon Cerin Amroth; and there is her green grave, until the world is changed, and all the days of her life are utterly forgotten by men that come after, and elanor and niphredil bloom no more east of the Sea (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1038).

The first resemblance between Guenevere and Arwen is their loneliness and isolation from the worlds that surround them. Guenevere is queen but she is not given any prominence for her status. She is always left apart from the Arthurian court and she does not occupy any seat at the Round Table. Her role in Arthurian society is that of Leodegranz's daughter, King Arthur's wife or Lancelot's lover. Guenevere is not free to choose until the Arthurian world collapses and falls; then she decides to flee from any place connected with Arthur and Lancelot and enters a nunnery. Something similar happens with Arwen. Like Guenevere, Arwen is powerless despite her lineage and depends upon her father, Elrond, or upon her beloved and future husband, Aragorn. Her appearances in the story are pretty scarce and her presence is simply peripheral because her role is determined by Aragorn's actions rather than her own ones. However, there is

an important difference between Guenevere and Arwen which concerns their actions. While Guenevere's adulterous love for Lancelot brings about the collapse and the downfall of Arthurian society, Arwen's actions are not much emphasized except for her marriage to Aragorn. Although this somehow creates disruption since their relationship is also forbidden, it does not have any negative effects on Middle-earth, above all because a similar situation occurred before.

Another similarity between Arwen and Guenevere has to do with their own fates. Both women, who enjoy a good position in their respective societies, have tragic lives and tragic loves. Guenevere and Arthur's marriage is arranged so she feels disappointed with a husband she does not love. Also, she feels oppressed in Arthur's court so she seeks solace in Lancelot's arms. This act, which involves the breaking of the rules in the patriarchal Arthurian world, causes Guenevere's rebellion which in turn brings about all the tragic events that she has to bear. Similarly, Arwen's decision of mortality is also a sort of rebellious, almost unnatural action for an Elf. However, when Aragorn dies, she does not want to continue her mortal life and goes to Lothlórien, where she dies of grief.

To sum up, Arwen and Guenevere share many features. They are marginalized because they are women and their identities are dependent upon men: fathers, lovers or husbands. Moreover, their lives are tragic for several reasons. Arwen and Guenevere are doomed because of their forbidden loves. Arwen and Aragorn's love, although not the only romantic liaison between an Elf-woman and a man in the world of Middle-earth, presents some elements which describe the tragical life of Arwen. Her choice for mortality will lead her to a sad end since when Aragorn dies, she decides to go back to Lothlórien where she finally dies because of her grief and mourning for Aragorn. As for Guenevere, her requited love for Lancelot is as fatal as that of Arwen - although its

consequences are much worse - since it causes the downfall of the Arthurian world. The love triangle among Arthur, Guenevere and Lancelot evidently shows that King Arthur's society is doomed. After seeing the consequences and results of her love for Lancelot, Guenevere decides to reject both Arthur and Lancelot and for the first time in her life, she is free to choose. She finally dies in a nunnery in which she was first a nun and later the abbess.

6.3. Silence and Éowyn: the Woman Warrior

Although a minor Arthurian text, *The Romance of Silence* gives us a very interesting view of the figure of the warrior woman. Written in the thirteenth century by Heldris de Cornuälle, this text tells the story of Silence, a young girl, daughter of Count Cadour of Cornwall, who is brought up as a boy since she was not allowed to inherit her parents' lands. King Evan's wife, Queen Eufeme, tries to seduce Silence, thinking that she is an attractive man, but Silence rejects her. Outraged, the queen accuses her of attacking her and then, Silence decides to go to France, where she becomes a knight. After a long time, she goes back to England, where she fights for King Evan in order to put down a revolt but, again, Queen Eufeme continues to accuse Silence of assaulting her. Once again, she is sent far away from her home but in this case she has been entrusted with the following task: to find Merlin, an impossible quest to carry out according to the king since a prophecy foretold that a woman would catch Merlin and bring him back to court and Silence is supposed to be a man. Lupack (2007: 337) explains that:

The title character of the medieval romance is Silence, a girl raised as a boy because the English king Evan had decreed that women may not inherit and her parents want to pass their land on to her. When the king's wife Eufeme makes advances to Silence, whom she thinks to be a handsome young man, and then accuses Silence of attacking her when he / she rejects the queen, Silence is sent to France where she becomes a knight. Returning to England to help Evan put down a rebellion, Silence

is again accused by Eufeme and is sent away on a mission to find Merlin, which the king and the queen believe she will never accomplish since there is a prophecy that he can only be captured by a woman. But Silence does in fact bring Merlin back to court.

This medieval romance breaks up with the stereotypes of Arthurian tradition since, first of all, the main character, Silence, raised and dressed as a man, becomes a knight. As we already know, knighthood was considered an exclusively male status and women were excluded from it. Indeed, most female characters in Arthurian literature are marginalized, have irrelevant roles or are depicted as evildoers or destroyers. However, the values of self-sacrifice and submissiveness are praised when it comes to describe women and femininity. Another important characteristic in the *Romance of Silence* is the figure of the quester, the character that carries out the quest. Here Silence has to accomplish her task, which is that of finding Merlin as she finally does. It is also important to point out that Silence prefers to live a man's life not only because of the inheritance law but also because she is free to choose while women have no choices. This is illustrated when Silence explains "a man's life was much better than that of a woman" (Roche-Mahdi, 1991: ll.2.637-2.638). Although this text could be seen as revolutionary since Silence is depicted as a knight and a warrior and she is able to accomplish a quest which is impossible to carry out by any of them, the end of the story is rather different. Once her real identity is discovered, Silence finally chooses to have a traditional female life, rejects her previous status and marries King Evan. Schauss (2006: 714) argues that "Silence learns to excel as a knight and a minstrel. Finally, however, Silence is outed as a woman and (after the execution of the adulterous Queen Eufeme) married to the king, who reverses his previous prohibition on female inheritance". Finally, the fact that Silence is given such a name entails the

marginalization of women in medieval society and their powerlessness since women are not usually allowed to have an active life beyond their houses and families.

Éowyn is probably the only female hero in *The Lord of the Rings*. Unlike Arwen, who is praised for her beauty and has no role in the development of the story except for being Aragorn's wife, Éowyn represents the stereotype of the woman warrior. In his portrayal of Éowyn, Tolkien breaks and subverts many of the traditional patriarchal stereotypes of women since, as we shall see, Éowyn plays a central and active role in the story.

Éowyn is the niece of Theoden, King of Rohan and sister to Éomer. She and his brother were raised in Edoras by their uncle, the King. Unlike other female characters, Éowyn is said to become interested in war and battles since very young and that she was especially talented and skilled in using a sword and riding a horse. Indeed, the Rohirrim, as the warriors of Rohan are known, are said to be the best horse riders in Middle-earth. Tyler (2012: 210) argues that:

In the songs and lays made by minstrels of Rohan concerning the War of the Rings and the part played in it by the Rohirrim, great honour was given to a woman: the 'Lady of the Shield-arm', who, defending her fallen Lord, slew the Chief Nazgûl and brought his power to nothing (as had been indeed foretold many years before). This was the Lady Éowyn, sister of Éomer and later the wife of Prince Faramir of Gondor. She was the daughter of Éomund, Marshall of the Mark, and Théodwyn, sister of King Théoden; but after their early deaths, both she and her brother were taken into the King's House and raised as his son and daughter. Éowyn grew tall and fair, with a graceful step – and a skill with horse and blade to match any Rider of the Mark. As proud and brave as her brother, she found it increasingly difficult merely to wait upon the King in his decline; and she brooded much upon what she saw as the fall of Rohan into mean dishonour.

Éowyn is first introduced when Gandalf heals Theoden and the King awakens from the darkness he had been plunged into. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 504) describes Éowyn as follows:

(199)

The woman turned and went slowly into the house. As she passed the doors she turned and looked back. Grave and thoughtful was her glance, as she looked on the king with cool pity in her eyes. Very fair was her face, and her long hair was like a river of gold. Slender and tall she was in her white robe girt with silver; but strong she seemed and stern as steel, a daughter of kings. Thus Aragorn for the first time in the full light of day beheld Éowyn, Lady of Rohan, and thought her fair, fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood.

As we shall see, Éowyn will have a central role in the story. But first of all, when Theoden is getting ready for the battle to come and for his departure from Edoras, a problem arises: who will rule Rohan in his place? Although he is doubtful and wants Éomer to go with him, Theoden is not sure about the person who must rule in his absence. However, Háma says:

(200)

‘I said not Éomer,’ answered Háma. ‘And he is not the last. There is Éowyn, daughter of Éomund, his sister. She is fearless and high-hearted. All love her. Let her be as lord to the Eorlingas, while we are gone’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 512).

As we can see, Éowyn has a high position within King Theoden’s court and, like her brother, she is loved and thought to be as capable to rule as a man. Indeed, she is respected because she also belongs to the Eorlings, the royal family of Rohan made up of kings and warriors. So this is the first opportunity given to Éowyn to show her prowess and the first step on the road to her new role as a warrior woman.

When talking to Aragorn just before departing for battle, Éowyn shows her feelings of frustration and nonconformity about staying in Edoras while others are fighting. Éowyn says that:

(201)

All your words are but to say: you are a woman, and your part is in the house. But when the men have died in battle and honour, you have leave

to be burned in the house, for the men will need it no more. But I am of the House of Eorl and not a serving-woman. I can ride and wield blade, and I do not fear either pain or death (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 767).

Here Éowyn complains about the fact that, as she is a woman, she is not supposed to be as brave as a man but she must submit herself to men's will.

Éowyn also defends that being a woman does not imply incapacity for wielding a sword, riding or fighting in general. She also claims that doing what she is expected to do, such as staying in Meduseld when a battle is being waged, involves oppression, lack of freedom and frustration since she cannot accomplish as many exploits as she wants to. In other words, her duties do not allow her to act freely and do what she really wants: to fight in a battle and show her prowess as a warrior:

(202)

“‘A cage,’ she said. ‘To stay behind bars, until use and old age accept them, and all chance of doing great deeds is gone beyond recall or desire’” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 767).

Although Aragorn tries to convince her not to go to war and says that she must stay in her home, Éowyn is determined to leave Rohan and go to the battlefield with her uncle, Theoden, and the rest of the warriors. For this, she takes the name of Dernhem and disguises herself as a man.

Éowyn's most important deed takes place at the battle of the Pelennor fields when she tries to defend a wounded King Theoden from the Lord of the Nâzgul. Indeed, this is very interesting because she is thought to be a man and the Witch King, unaware of Éowyn's real identity, intends to threaten and frighten her by saying:

(203)

“Hinder me? Thou fool. No living man may hinder me!?” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 823).

However, Éowyn, who is unafraid of the Witch King and determined to save Theoden, replies that:

(204)

But no living man I am! You look upon a woman. Éowyn I am, Éomund's daughter. You stand between me and my lord and kin. Begone, if you be not deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite you, if you touch him" (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 823).

This causes a strange and surprising reaction of the Witch King, who is baffled and terrorized by Éowyn. Indeed, she is resolute to attack and confront him so that she can save her uncle and destroy the Witch King:

(205)

The winged creature screamed at her, but the Ringwraith made no answer, and was silent, as if in sudden doubt. Very amazement for a moment conquered Merry's fear. He opened his eyes and the blackness was lifted from them. There some paces from him sat the great beast, and all seemed dark about it, and above it loomed the Nâzgul Lord like a shadow of despair. A little to the left facing them stood she whom he had called Dernhelm. But the helm of her secrecy has fallen from her, and her bright hair, released from its bonds, gleamed with pale gold upon her shoulders. Her eyes grey as the sea were hard and fell, and yet tears were on her cheek. A sword was in her hand, and she raised her shield against the horror of her enemy's eyes (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 823).

After this, Éowyn begins to struggle against the Nâzgul. Although powerful and impressive, the Witch King does not seem to affect and intimidate her but rather the opposite. Éowyn fights fiercely and fearless against her enemy, demonstrating his warfare skills. However, the Lord of the Nâzgul is finally destroyed not only by Éowyn but also by Merry's unexpected help:

(206)

Still she did not blench: maiden of the Rohirrim, child of kings, slender but as a steel-blade, fair yet terrible. A swift stroke she dealt, skilled and deadly. The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn head fell like a stone. Backward she sprang as the huge shape crashed to ruin, vast wings outspread, crumpled on the earth; and with its fall the shadow passed away. A light fell about her, and her hair shone in the sunrise.

Out of the wreck rose the Black Rider, tall and threatening, towering above her. With a cry of hatred that stung the very ears like venom he let fall his mace. Her shield was shivered in many pieces, and her arm was broken; she stumbled to her knees. He bent over like a cloud, and his eyes glittered; he raised his mace to kill.

But suddenly he too stumbled forward with a cry of bitter pain, and his stroke went wide, driving into the ground. Merry's sword had stabbed him from behind, shearing through the black mantle, and passing up beneath the hauberk had pierced the sinew behind his mighty knee (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 823-824).

After this, Éowyn pierces the Lord of the Nâzgul with her sword, destroying him and with her sword shattered to pieces, she falls down and faints:

(207)

Then tottering, struggling up, with her last strength she drove her sword between crown and mantle, as the great shoulders bowed before her. The sword broke sparkling into many shards. The crown rolled away with a clang. Éowyn fell forward upon her fallen foe. But lo! the mantle and hauberk were empty. Shapeless they lay now on the ground, torn and tumbled; and a cry went up into the shuddering air, and faded to a shrill wailing, passing with the wind, a voice bodiless and thin that died, and was swallowed up, and was never heard again in that age of this world (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 824).

The fight between Éowyn, also helped by the Hobbit Merry, and the Lord of the Nâzgul is prophesied, i.e. the end of the Witch King, Sauron's most terrible servant, is foretold. This is why the Ringwraith is so afraid when he sees that it is actually a woman whom he is about to fight. The prophecy, made after the fall of the last King of Gondor, Eanur, many years before Aragorn's ascension to the throne of Gondor, was foretold by Glorfindel, a Noldor Elf and one of Elrond's counsellors:

(208)

“Do not pursue him! He will not return to this land. Far off yet is his doom, and not by the hand of man will he fall” (Anderson, Tolkien, 2012: 1027).

Once the Witch King is destroyed, we do not know much more about Éowyn until she reappears in the House of Healing, where she is taken to in order to be cured from her wounds. There she is healed by Aragorn, the future king of Gondor, since her wounds were inflicted by a Morgul's blade whose evil could only be healed by the hands of the king. In the Houses of Healing she meets Faramir, the son of Denethor, the deceased steward of Gondor and then she finally falls in love with him. Then, she decides to have a quiet, domestic life with Faramir rather than a life of warfare, destruction and death. Since the evil of Sauron has gone, Éowyn changes her mind and wants to lead a more conservative and traditional way of life. Éowyn says that:

(209)

And behold! The Shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 943).

Eventually, Éowyn and Faramir marry and he is appointed Steward of Gondor by Aragorn himself.

In comparing the characters of Éowyn and Silence we can distinguish several aspects in common. They live in a male-dominant society where women are excluded although they try to break up the roles and boundaries that society imposes on them. First of all, Éowyn and Silence must disguise themselves in order to achieve their goals, to enjoy their lives as they like, and in general to survive in their respective patriarchal societies. If Silence must be raised as a boy in order to inherit her parents' land, Éowyn must disguise herself as a male warrior so that she can do what she wants: to fight and wield a sword at the battlefield.

It is clear that both Tolkien and Heldris de Cornuälle intended to subvert some female stereotypes with their respective heroines, Éowyn and Silence. In the case of the latter, she is the main character of the story, unlike in other Arthurian texts where the

story focuses on men and their exploits; indeed, Silence becomes a knight, something unthinkable for a woman in the Middle Ages. Likewise, Éowyn, named Dernhelm and dressed as a man, becomes a warrior at the battle of Minas Tirith.

Éowyn and Silence are also given important roles in their respective stories. While Silence must carry out the principal quest, in this case, to find Merlin and bring him back to the king, Éowyn's relevant but not central role is that of killing the Witch King. In both cases, an old prophecy foretells that a woman will achieve a quest that no man could ever succeed in. While Silence finally takes Merlin back to Evian's court, Éowyn defeats the Witch King with the help of Merry. Additionally, Éowyn and Silence's attitude to the world in which they live is very similar. They know that being a woman in their societies entails to be excluded from them and, as women, they have not many choices to live their lives on their own. If they want to be successful or live freely, Éowyn and Silence know that they must become a man and have a man's life so this is why Silence is raised as a boy and Éowyn disguises as a man in order to fight at the siege of Minas Tirith.

Tolkien's female characters have many aspects in common with some women from Arthurian literature. Probably the most obvious is Galadriel, whose complex characterization as a powerful and wise Elf lady reminds us of the traditional image of the Fairy Queen, and in turn of that of Morgan Le Fay. Galadriel belongs to the noblest race of High Elves, the Noldor. She is also feared because of her power and wisdom, just like Morgan le Fay, who evolved from a benevolent healer to a wicked sorceress. Galadriel's Ring of Waters connects her with the figure of the Lady of the Lake. Like her, who delivers Excalibur to Arthur, Galadriel gives Aragorn an elfstone as a symbol of his future ascension to the throne of Gondor. She also has some resemblance with

Tennyson's Lady of Shalott since they can foresee the present, the future and what it may happen through their respective magical mirrors.

Arwen mirrors Guenevere in the sense that, like Arthur's wife, she lives in isolation and solitude, left apart from everything that takes place around her. More importantly, both women share a fatal doom because of their respective loves. While Arwen's self-sacrifice for mortality leads her to a bitter end -Aragorn's death triggers her own one - Guenevere's adulterous love for Lancelot causes the final destruction of the Arthurian society. In the end, Guenevere rejects anything related with Arthur and despises Lancelot, regarding him as one of the culprits of her hardships and troubles at King Arthur's court.

The last female character we have examined here is Éowyn. Depicted as a warrior woman who prefers warfare rather than the home, she has significant similarities with a female character from a minor Arthurian text called *The Romance of Silence*. Silence and Éowyn have in common that they do not accept the roles that have been imposed on them. They are willing to adopt a man's identity if this means that they can have the life they want and do what they really want to. The peculiarity of Éowyn and Silence is positively reinforced by the fulfilment of their quests: to kill the Witch King and to find Merlin and take him back respectively.

Finally, it is clear that Tolkien's main female characters are highly influenced by Arthurian women. As we have seen, there are many common traits between Arwen and Guinevere, Éowyn and Silence or among Galadriel, the Lady of the Lake and Morgan le Fay. We cannot deny that the Arthurian heroines inspired Tolkien to create and portray the female characters of his work.

CHAPTER 7

ARAGORN AND ARWEN'S LOVE: ECHOES OF THE TRISTAN AND ISOLDE'S STORY AND LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE'S AFFAIR

Love is a theme which is present in Tolkien's work. It may appear as an intimate and close friendship between two friends such as Frodo and Sam, Merry and Pippin or Legolas and Gimli or as a romantic liaison such as that of Éowyn and Faramir. However, there is a love story which stands out above all of them in *The Lord of the Rings*: that of Arwen and Aragorn. The love between them is a forbidden one and therefore, full of controversy and difficulties. The relationship between an Elf-woman, who has the gift of immortality, and a mortal man, even though he lives longer since he is the heir of the Númenorean kings, causes a moral conflict, which symbolizes the human struggle between mortality and immortality and has a strong impact upon the two characters involved. If Arwen is determined to choose mortality, Aragorn refuses to accept her decision. Moreover, their belonging to different races - the High Elves and Men - seems to be an obstacle for them. As a High Elf, Arwen is doomed to live a long life in Middle-earth and then to depart from it to Valinor while Aragorn's fate is to become the King of Gondor as it is foretold. All these circumstances cause the relationship between Aragorn and Arwen to be doomed to failure. Their love story has a tragic tone because of the difficulties and hardships they have to confront. Finally, Arwen and Aragorn manage to get married and live their love freely for many years although their love has a bitter end. After many years of ruling, Aragorn feels tired and decides to die before becoming very old. For Arwen, who leaves her immortality for Aragorn and does not understand the idea of death, his departure is devastating and

disappointing and it causes her own death. The love between Arwen and Aragorn echoes the tragedy of love present in Arthurian love stories, such as those of Lancelot and Guenevere or Tristan and Isolde.

7.1. Aragorn and Arwen

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the love story between Arwen and Aragorn is mentioned very briefly and it is peripheral to the main actions in the work. If we want to know about the story of their relationship, we must go to an appendix in the third part, *The Return of the King*, which gives us a general view of the whole story between Arwen and Aragorn.

Their story starts when Aragorn and his mother go to live to Rivendell, where he is raised and by chance he meets Arwen. This first meeting is especially relevant because he sees Arwen while singing a song about Lúthien Tinúviel. Lúthien is, as Tolkien describes in *The Silmarillion* and as explained before, an Elf-lady who falls in love with a mortal, Beren. The story of Lúthien - daughter of Thingol, an Eldar, and Melian, a Maiar and Beren- has many resemblances with that of Arwen and Aragorn. Thingol, Lúthien's father, wrathful for Beren's love for Lúthien, challenges him to get back the Silmaril from the first Dark Lord, i.e. Melkor's crown. Lúthien and Beren succeed in their quest for the Silmaril but afterwards they die, Beren because of his wounds and Lúthien of grief. However, Beren and Lúthien are given the opportunity to have a second life in Middle-earth after showing their valour and honesty in the search for the Silmaril. Tyler (2012: 391) explains this as follows:

The Quest was successful, and the Silmaril was recovered (though it would have been better for all, especially Thingol, if it had not been); but Beren was slain by the Wolf of Angband; and Lúthien herself soon afterwards died of grief. In the Halls of Mandos they might have been separated for ever, for the fate of Men is apart from that of the Elves; and theirs was the first union between the Kindreds – a union for which no precedents then existed. But for their goodness and valour and utter

faithfulness this grace was granted to them: that Lúthien might be permitted, if she so wished to exchange her Elven-life for the mortality of Men; and, moreover, if she so chose, that she and Beren walked again in Middle-earth, in the green and secret country of Ossiriand; and there she bore Beren a son: Dior the Beautiful.

It is important to bear in mind the story of Lúthien and Beren in order to understand that of Arwen and Aragorn. Curiously enough, both descend from Lúthien and Beren themselves and this serves to emphasize their fate which entails the choice between living immortality separate or spending a mortal life together. So Arwen and Aragorn's doom seems to be somehow foretold by their fore-parents, Lúthien and Beren. This is illustrated when Tyler (2012: 391-392) says:

And though in due course she and Beren died for the second time, it was also granted to Lúthien that her line should never fail. Dior was the father of Elwing, who wedded Eärendil, who bore the Silmaril out of Middle-earth and brought succor to Elves and Mortals alike. And Eärendil's sons were Elros and Elrond. From Elros was descended Aragorn of the Dúnedain, and from Elrond Arwen Undómiel, who was said to walk in the likeness of Lúthien; and who, offered the choice of her Foremother, likewise relinquished her Eldarin immortality –for the love of a Mortal Man.

In the appendix where he explains the story of Aragorn and Arwen, Tolkien provides us with a scene in which their first encounter mixes up with that of Lúthien and Beren - since Aragorn is singing a song about it- reinforcing the idea that this meeting will doom their fates forever. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 1033) writes that:

(140)

And suddenly even as he sang he saw a maiden walking on a greensward among the white stems of the birches; and he halted amazed, thinking that he had strayed into a dream, or else that he had received the gift of the Elf-minstrels, who can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those who listen. For Aragorn had been singing a part of the Lay of Lúthien which tells of the meeting of Lúthien and Beren in the forest of Neldoreth. And behold! There Lúthien walked before his eyes in Rivendell, clad in a mantle of silver and blue, fair as the twilight in Elven-home; her dark hair strayed in a sudden wind, and her brows were bound with gems like stars. For a moment Aragorn gazed in silence, but fearing

that she would pass away and never be seen again, he called to her crying, *Tinúviel, Tinúviel!* even as Beren had done in the Elder Days long ago.

After this, Aragorn and Arwen start to talk to each other. She says that he is not the only one who has confused her with Lúthien and she also claims that although she is not Lúthien herself, she is likely to share her same fate:

(141)

Then the maiden turned to him and smiled, and she said: “Who are you? And why do you call me by that name?” And he answered: “Because I believed you to be indeed Lúthien Tinúviel, of whom I was singing. But if you are not she, then you walk in her likeness.” “So many have said,” she answered gravely. “Yet her name is not mine. Though maybe my doom will be not unlike hers. But who are you?” (Anderson, Tolkien, 2012: 1033).

Then, Aragorn unveils his identity and tells Arwen who he really is. Aragorn feels slightly ashamed of her lineage in comparison to hers. She claims that they are both relatives although not close ones:

(142)

“Estel I was called,” he said; “but I am Aragorn, Arathorn’s son, Isildur’s Heir, Lord of the Dúnedain”; yet even in the saying he felt that this high lineage, in which his heart had rejoiced, was now of little worth, and as nothing compared to her dignity and loveliness. But she laughed merrily and said: “Then we are akin from afar. For I am Arwen, Elrond’s daughter, and am named also Undómiel” (Anderson, Tolkien, 2012: 1933).

Aragorn is evidently impressed not only by Arwen’s beauty or her likeness to Lúthien but also for her wisdom and her splendour as an Eldar. Indeed, this is the moment when Aragorn falls in love with Arwen, which is illustrated by Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 1033) as follows:

(143)

Then Aragorn was abashed, for he saw the elven-light in her eyes and the wisdom of many days; yet from that hour he loved Arwen Undómiel daughter of Elrond.

Gilraen, Aragorn's mother, discovers his son's thoughts and his love for Arwen. She warns him against marrying Arwen and recommends him to forget her since the union between an Elf-lady and a man is forbidden; she also says that Arwen is beyond his possibilities. As Gilraen explains:

(144)

Your aim is high, even for the descendant of many kings. For this lady is the noblest and fairest that now walks the earth. And it is not fit that mortal should wed with the Elf-kin (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1034).

Gilraen's words reflect the moral conflict of a love affair between an Elf-lady and a man, emphasizing the idea that this union may be seen as unnatural. As expected, Elrond opposes Aragorn's love for Arwen for several reasons. The first one has to do with the role that Aragorn has to play as Isildur's Heir. This would entail self-sacrifice and much effort in order to show his prowess and worth to ascend to the throne of Gondor. Aragorn must carry out his quest as a future king on his own; his task would not allow him to fall in love with or marry a woman. The second reason for Elrond's refusal is Arwen's lineage, i.e. she belongs to a higher race, the Eldar, while Aragorn, although he belongs to the noblest race of men, the Numénorean Kings, is of a lower race than Arwen so he is not worthy of her. To use Elrond's words:

(145)

Aragorn, Arathorn's son, Lord of the Dúnedain, listen to me! A great doom awaits you, either to rise above the height of all your fathers since the days of Elendil, or to fall into darkness with all that is left of your kin. Many years of trial lie before you. You shall neither have wife, nor bind any woman to you in troth, until your time comes and you are found worthy of it (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1034).

After this, Elrond says that Aragorn is not still worthy of Arwen. He must show his prowess and worth in his own quest for the restoration of the Kingship of Gondor; this reminds us of Thingol's challenge to Beren to recover the Silmaril. This is explained by Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 1034) as follows:

(146)

But as for Arwen the Fair, Lady of Imladris and of Lórien, Evenstar of her people, she is of lineage greater than yours, and she has lived in the world already so long that to her you are but as a yearling shoot beside a young birch of many summers. She is too far above you. And so, I think, it may well seem to her. But even if it were not so, and her heart turned towards you, I should still be grieved because of the doom that is laid on us.

As we can see, Elrond seems to be particularly reluctant to support Aragorn's love for Arwen. Indeed, he claims that when the time comes, she will leave Middle-earth and go to Valinor as it is the destiny of any High Elf. However, he admits that it is possible that Arwen will fall in love with Aragorn:

(147)

"That so long as I abide here, she shall live with the youth of the Eldar," answered Elrond, "and when I depart, she shall go with me, if she so chooses" (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1034).

Then Aragorn leaves Rivendell for many years while Arwen stays with her father. Aragorn fights and confronts Sauron and his hosts in his attempt to defeat the Dark Lord. He fights as a Ranger, not as Isildur's heir. He meets Gandalf during his travels from whom he learns much wisdom. During his years in his 'exile' from Rivendell, he becomes more skilled in warfare and acquires much lore. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 1035) writes that:

(148)

For nearly thirty years he labored in the cause against Sauron; and he became friend of Gandalf the Wise, from whom he gained much wisdom. With him he made many perilous journeys, but as the years wore on he went more often alone. His ways were hard and long, and he became somewhat grim to look upon, unless he chanced to smile; and yet he seemed to Men worthy of honour, as a king that is in exile, when he did not hide his true shape. For he went in many guises, and won renown under many names. He rode in the host of the Rohirrim, and fought for the Lord of Gondor by land and by sea; and then in the hour of victory passed out of knowledge of Men of the West, and went alone far into the East and deep into the South, exploring the hearts of Men, both evil and good, and uncovering the plots and devices of the servants of Sauron. Thus he became at last the most hardy of living Men, skilled in their crafts and lore, and was yet more than they; for he was elven-wise, and there was a light in his eyes that when they were kindled few could endure. His face was sad and stern because of the doom that was laid on him, and yet hope dwelt ever in the depths of his heart, from which mirth would arise at times like a spring from the rock.

After a long time of exile, Aragorn goes to Lothlórien, where Galadriel welcomes him and he rests. To Aragorn's surprise, he meets Arwen there; however, although young and ageless, she is no longer the same smiling happy Elf-lady. Indeed, it is in Lothlórien, far from Elrond's advice and protection, where Arwen decides to choose her own fate:

(149)

And thus it was that Arwen first beheld him again after their long parting; and as he came walking towards her under the trees of Caras Galadhon laden with flowers of gold, her choice was made and her doom appointed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1035).

Before Aragorn's departure of Lothlórien, he and Arwen have a conversation about the doom that awaits them and the awakening of Sauron and his darkness in Middle-earth again. This implies that they will have to be separate from each other, especially Aragorn, who will have to demonstrate his worth as a future King of Gondor throughout several adventures, particularly those connected with the Ring Quest and the Fellowship

of the Ring. Despite this, Arwen is hopeful about the events that are yet to come and that Aragorn will achieve great deeds. She says that:

(150)

Dark is the Shadow, and yet my heart rejoices; for you, Estel, shall be among the great whose valour will destroy it (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1035).

However, Aragorn is not so sure about the fate that they will have to face and he also talks to Arwen about all the things she must renounce, such as immortality. He explains that:

(151)

Alas! I cannot foresee it, and how it may come to pass is hidden from me. Yet with your hope I will hope. And the Shadow I utterly reject. But neither, lady, is the Twilight for me; for I am a mortal man, and if you will cleave to me, Evenstar, then the Twilight you must also renounce (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1035).

Arwen is willing to renounce her gift of immortality. When Elrond hears of her daughter's decision, he, although grieved for Arwen's fate, does not oppose Arwen and Aragorn's love. Indeed, he accepts it under the condition that Aragorn fulfils his quest and shows that he is worthy of the Kingship of Gondor and his daughter's love. This is illustrated when Elrond says:

(152)

My son, years come when hope will fade, and beyond them little is clear to me. And now a shadow lies between us. Maybe, it has been appointed so, that by my loss the kingship of Men may be restored. Therefore, though I love you, I say to you: Arwen Undómiel shall not diminish her life's grace for less cause. She shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor. To me then even our victory can bring only sorrow and parting – but to you hope of joy for a while. Alas, my son! I fear that to Arwen the Doom of Men may seem hard at the ending (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1036).

During the War of the Ring, Aragorn succeeds in his quest and, once the Ring is destroyed, he restores the Kingdom of Gondor. This has positive consequences for his

love for Arwen. Scarcely mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*, what we know about Arwen and Aragorn's story is that they finally get married and live happily and peacefully for a very long time. Tolkien describes this as follows:

(153)

The Third Age ended thus in victory and hope; and yet grievous among the sorrows of that Age was the parting of Elrond and Arwen, for they were sundered by the Sea and by a doom beyond the end of the world. When the Great Ring was unmade and the Three were shorn of their power, then Elrond grew weary at last and forsook Middle-earth, never to return. But Arwen became as a mortal woman, and yet it was not her lot to die until all that she had gained was lost. As Queen of Elves and Men, she dwelt with Aragorn for six-score years in great glory and bliss; yet at last he felt the approach of old age and knew that the span of his life-days was drawing to an end, long though it had been (Anderson, 2012: 1035).

However, after the passing of many years, Aragorn feels that his death is coming. Although he is not old enough to die, he is weary of ruling and living for so many years. He acknowledges that his time has passed so he decides to put an end to his life, a similar process to that undergone by the Elves when they leave Middle-earth and depart to Valinor. In the case of Aragorn, his death is described as a peaceful process in which he goes to a bed and then, he falls asleep forever. In other words, he chooses to die before he gets too old:

(154)

Then going to the House of the Kings in the Silent Street, Aragorn laid him down on the long bed that had been prepared for him. There he said farewell to Eldarion, and gave into his hands the winged crown of Gondor and the scepter of Arnor; and then all left him save Arwen, and she stood alone by his bed. And for all her wisdom and lineage she could not forbear to plead with him to stay yet for a while. She was not yet weary of her days, and thus she tasted the bitterness of the mortality that she had taken upon her (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1037).

Then, Aragorn tries to comfort Arwen by saying that he was given a longer life than the rest of Men because of his lineage, that of the Numénorean Kings and for this, he was

given the chance to choose his death. He also tries to persuade Arwen to regret her choice and return to the land of her kindred far away and beyond Middle-earth. As

Aragorn says:

(155)

Lady Undómiel, said Aragorn, the hour is indeed hard, yet it was made even in the day when we met under the white birches in the garden of Elrond where none now walk. And on the hill of Cerin Amroth, when we forsook both the Shadow and the Twilight this doom we accepted. Take counsel with yourself, beloved, and ask whether you would indeed have me wait until I wither and fall from my high seat unmanned and witless. Nay, lady, I am the last of the Númenoreans and the latest King of the Elder Days; and to me has been given not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift. Now, therefore, I will sleep. I speak no comfort to you, for there is no comfort for such pain within the circles of the world. The uttermost choice is before you: to repent and go to the Havens and bear away into the West the memory of our days together that shall there be evergreen but never more than memory; or else to abide the Doom of Men (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1037).

Aragorn's words reflect the tragedy of Arwen and her love for him. Arwen, who is an Elf Lady turned into a mortal woman, does not understand 'death', the Doom of Men. Arwen and Aragorn's morality is presented by Tolkien through a paradox. If Arwen considers her gift of immortality as an obstacle between Aragorn and herself, Aragorn regards his exceedingly long life as weary and exhausting so when he decides to die, he feels comforted. However, this confronts with Arwen's own morality since she cannot understand why he has to die, and for her the worst of all is that he is willing to die. She replies the following to Aragorn:

(156)

That choice is long over. There is now no ship that would bear me hence, and I must indeed abide the Doom of Men, whether I will or I nill: the loss and the silence. But I say to you, King of the Númenoreans, not till now have I understood the tale of your people and their fall. As wicked fools I scorned them, but I pity them at last. For if this is indeed, as the Eldar say, the gift of the One to Men, it is bitter to receive (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1037-1038).

Arwen's words reveal her determination to face her mortal fate and her lack of understanding of what death means. For her, death is more a punishment than a gift; Arwen does not fully understand this idea and this will cause her own death:

(157)

But Arwen went forth from the House, and the light of her eyes was quenched and it seemed to her people that she had become cold and grey as nightfall in winter that comes without a star. Then she said farewell to Eldarion, and to her daughters, and to all whom she had loved; and she went out from the city of Minas Tirith and passed away to the land of Lórien, and dwelt there alone under the fading trees until winter came. Galadriel had passed away and Celeborn also was gone, and the land was silent. There at last when the mallorn-leaves were falling, but spring had not yet come, she laid herself to rest upon Cerin Amroth; and there is her green grave, until the world is changed, and all the days of her life are utterly forgotten by men that come after, and elanor and niphredil bloom no more east of the Sea (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 1038).

Arwen's return to Lothlórien is rather a symbolic since, on the one hand, she had lived there previously for many years with her grandmother Galadriel, and on the other hand, it was there where she made her choice for mortality. However, Arwen can no longer bear the burden of Aragorn's death and, as if she was trying to recover her lost immortality, she leaves Minas Tirith and returns to Lothlórien. Her early death is the result of her inability to accept and understand death. Because of Aragorn's loss, she somehow regrets her decision, since as Elrond had foretold Aragorn, mortality is too hard and unbearable for Arwen, who held the gift of immortality as she belongs to the Eldar, the High Elves. In other words, Arwen's return to Lothlórien, where she had lived for a very long time, represents her desire and craving for the happiness, sweetness and lack of worries that she had experienced there. Also, when Tolkien writes:

(158)

But Arwen became as a mortal woman, and yet it was not her lot to die until all that she had gained was lost (Anderson, 2012: 1037).

he hints at the idea that Arwen will die shortly after Aragorn's death. As an immortal Elf, she will not outlive Aragorn for a long time since her grief will end up killing her.

Arwen and Aragorn's love is characterized for its tragic and sad end. The sacrifice and renunciation of both of them make their love possible although in the end, the difference of their races leads them to a tragic end. As a mortal and a Númenorean King, Aragorn decides to die before his time because of the weariness and burdens that he has suffered during his long life. However, this triggers Arwen's premature death since it is impossible for her to endure mortality, despite the fact that she becomes a mortal woman and must embrace mortality. Moreover, her love for Aragorn does not enable her to see the real consequences of her choice of mortality and in the end, she discovers the truth behind her decision: mortality is more deadly and fatal for an Elf-woman than for a mortal woman even though she has become one. Because of her Elvish nature and fragility, Arwen does not outlive Aragorn for a very long time.

7.2. Tristan and Isolde

In Arthurian tradition the most well-known tragic and fatal love is that of Tristan and Isolde. The story has its origins in early Welsh literature and it was later developed in the Middle Ages. In Welsh literature Tristan is said to be the son of Tallwch and there are many allusions to Tristan as a warrior as well as a lover of his uncle's wife. This is explained by Lupack (2007: 371):

Welsh literature refers to Tristan as the son of Tallwch –as in Triad 19 in which Drystan son of Tallwch is one of the 'Three Enemy-Subduers of the Island of Britain'; in Triad 21, in which he is one of the 'Three Battle-Diademmed Men of the Isle of Britain'; and in Triad 71, in which one of the 'Three Lovers of the Island of Britain' is said to be 'Drystan (son of Tallwch, for Essyllt, the wife of his uncle March)'. Triad 26, which contains a brief narrative expansion on the elements of its list, notes that Drystan son of Tallwch was one of the 'Three Powerful Swineherds of

the Island of Britain' because he tended 'the swine of March son of Meirchyawn while the swineherd went with a message to Essyllt'.

There is one more Welsh old text, in this case a poem, called *Trystan ac Essyllt* or *Ystorya Trystan* (16th century) which also narrates the story of Tristan and Isolde. In this poem, Tristan and Isolde -called Trystan and Essyllt- decide to flee from March, Essyllt's husband, and enjoy their love freely. March goes to Arthur's court and asks him for help. However, Arthur is reluctant to send his knights to catch Tristan since he has a sort of ability thanks to which all the foes he attacks will bleed to death and those who shed his blood will also die. Finally, Arthur sends Gawain (Gwalchmai) to talk to Tristan. Gawain advises Tristan to speak to Arthur and he accepts this. Although the king tries to make Essyllt go back to March, she decides to remain with Tristan claiming that he is her true love.

In later medieval texts, the story of Tristan and Isolde is developed although the original plot is still preserved. Indeed, we can distinguish two different versions of the Tristan and Isolde story: the common (or primitive) one and its courtly counterpart. Lacy (2013: 236) argues that:

Scholars have traditionally divided the medieval Tristan texts into two groups, identified generally as the courtly and the primitive (or common) versions. The former, strongly influenced by court culture and by the spirit of courtly love, is a "refined" version which gives a good deal of attention to the analysis of emotional and psychological states. The so-called primitive tradition includes texts that are less introspective and analytical and often more violent than the courtly version.

An example of the primitive version is Bérout's *Tristran*, an incomplete manuscript written in Anglo-Norman. This account starts with Mark spying on the two lovers, Tristan and Isolde, who try to deceive Mark so that he cannot discover their relationship. However, their liaison is eventually revealed so Tristan is condemned to death and Isolde to live among lepers. This situation is finally reversed when both lovers manage to escape and go to live to a forest. Once again, Tristan and Isolde are

discovered by Mark, the king of Cornwall. Unlike in the courtly tradition, the effect of the love potion that the two lovers drink disappears after three years. This causes Tristan and Isolde's own repentance and they ask for pardon to King Mark. Once pardoned, however, Tristran is banished from court and condemned to wander as a leper.

Thomas of Britain's²⁷ *Tristram* (12th century) is one example of those courtly texts about the Tristan story. It narrates the love story between Tristan and Isolde. Here the author introduces a second Isolde, Isolde of the White Hands. Despite loving Isolde of Ireland -his promise to her is represented by a ring- Tristan decides to marry Isolde of the White Hands because of her beauty as well as her fame since she is wife to Mark of Cornwall. Lupack (2007: 374) says that:

He marries Yseut of the White Hands for her name as much as for her beauty; but on their wedding night, the night Yseut gave him reminds him of his true love.

This text especially focuses on the love triangle among Tristan, Isolde of Ireland and Isolde of the White Hands. The moral dilemma that Tristan undergoes is emphasized and given more prominence although he remains loyal and faithful in the end. In this text, we also find the motif of the love potion, which Tristan and Isolde of Ireland drink in their journey to Britain. The story ends with Tristan's death -he is seriously wounded after confronting several adventures- and with the late arrival of Isolde of Ireland, who dies of grief when she sees Tristan's dead body.

Another relevant Tristan account is that of *Sir Tristem*, a romance written at the end of the 13th century. This text is, along with Malory's *The Book of Sir Tristram*, the only text on this character written in Middle English. Like the *Tristram* by Thomas of

²⁷ Thomas of Britain is an Anglo-Norman poet whose main contribution was a poem about the love between Tristan and Isolde, called *the Romance of Tristan*. Little is known about the author's life, although his work is considered to be among the best of Anglo-Norman literature (Harper-Bills & Van Houts, 2007: 206).

Britain, this work presents the love triangle between Tristan and the two Isoldes and studies Tristan's moral dilemma and its implications.

The *Prose Tristan* may be regarded as one of the most relevant texts about the Tristan story since it contributed to its development. Written in the thirteenth-century, it is a very long prose romance which starts with Tristan's own birth. After giving birth to Tristan, his mother finally dies. Indeed, his name indicates the unfortunate and sad circumstances in which he was born. In his first years of life Tristan also has to face many hardships. For instance, his stepmother attempts to poison him several times although he always saves himself from dying. Despite his wretched childhood, he becomes famous when he defends and saves Cornwall, which is ruled by his uncle Mark, from Morholt, King of Ireland. However, Tristan is badly injured and needs to be healed. By chance, he arrives in Ireland where he is cured by Isolde. He falls in love with her, but he must confront Palamedes who also loves Isolde. The love triangle presented in the *Prose Tristan* gets more complicated as more knights and Mark of Cornwall fall in love with Isolde of Ireland. Regarding his love for Isolde impossible, Tristan decides to marry the second Isolde. It is important to point out that the love potion that Isolde of Ireland and Tristan drink is intended for her and Mark of Cornwall, not for Tristan. The *Prose Tristan* also ends with Tristan's death at Mark's hands by means of a spear poisoned by Morgan le Fay, which in turn causes Isolde's death from sorrow and grief.

Malory's *Book of Tristram* (1485) tells a very similar view of the story of Tristan and Isolde's story. However, he introduces some changes. Malory presents Tristan as a Knight of the Order of the Round Table and, as a member of it, he accomplishes several quests:

When Sir Tristram was come home unto the Joyous Gard from his adventures, all this while that Sir Lancelot was thus missed, two years and

more, Sir Tristram bare the renown through all the realm of Logris, and many strange adventures befell him, and full well and manly and worshipfully he brought them to an end (Malory in Moore, 2000: 557, b.xii, ch. xi).

However, Malory's retelling of the story is rather short and seems to be unfinished. Malory narrates how, after Sir Tristan's victory against the Saracen knight, he commands that Palomedes should be baptized and thus he becomes a Christian knight. This is how the story of Tristram finishes and indeed Malory does not provide more information about the story. In Malory's words:

Here endeth the second book of Sir Tristram that was drawn out of French into English. But here is no rehearsal of the third book (Malory in Moore, 2000: 562, b. xii, ch. xiv).

As we can see, all medieval texts about Tristan pay special attention to the love triangle among Tristram, Isolde of the White Hands and Isolde of Ireland. The centre of the story is the love between Tristan and Isolde, which sometimes can be more confusing because of the introduction of a second Isolde and the moral dilemma this entails. However, Tristan's exploits and adventures are not given much prominence.

Tristan's life seems to be condemned to misfortune from the very moment he is born and this is going to mark his entire life. His love for Isolde, sometimes depicted as being caused by drinking a love potion accidentally, is forbidden and this causes many problems for him. He is considered a traitor since he is in love with his uncle's wife. As for Isolde, she is powerless although she tries to save Tristan when she learns that he is seriously wounded.

The love between Tristan and Isolde has a tragic tone since she is already married to Mark, Tristan's Uncle, who seeks to take revenge against his nephew. Also, the fact that they fall in love immediately after drinking a love potion indicates the fatality and the impossibility of their love in the strict and oppressive Arthurian society.

In other words, the love between Tristan and Isolde of Ireland is doomed for several reasons and Tristan understands it. This is why he prefers to forget Isolde of Ireland and marries Isolde of the White Hands or Isolde of Brittany. However, he finally remembers his old love and remains faithful to her. In the end, he receives a mortal wound and Isolde, unable to heal him, dies as well. The lovers confront many hardships and their fatal end shows the tragedy of such a forbidden love. Despite their efforts, fatality does not allow Tristan and Isolde to enjoy their love as they mean to. They are victims of the patriarchal Arthurian society in which they live. Both of them have to play specific roles. Isolde, as Mark of Cornwall's wife, is expected to be the perfect, submissive woman whose function is to give her husband children and to fulfil his commands. Loving a man that is not her husband implies a disruption in the Arthurian society, which gets even more scandalous because her beloved is her husband's nephew. At the same time, this brings about Isolde and also Tristan's isolation from the Arthurian society, which will ultimately cause their deaths. In other words, the fatality and doom that lead Tristan and Isolde to their own destruction could be seen as a sort of punishment for their rebellious actions.

7.3. Lancelot and Guenevere

There is another love relationship in Arthurian tradition which is even more tragic and doomed than that of Tristan and Isolde: that of Guenevere and Lancelot. The adulterous love between them, who indeed love each other tenderly, has been traditionally regarded as the main cause for the collapse and downfall of King Arthur's court. The theme of the adulterous love between Arthur's wife and Arthur's best and most loyal warrior is included in the Vulgate Cycle for the first time. Also called *Lancelot*, this text was written between 1120 and 1125. It starts narrating the early years of Lancelot who was

raised by the Lady of the Lake, here named Ninianne. When he turns eighteen, Lancelot is instructed about knighthood by the Lady of the Lake, who tells him the values of knighthood and how to be a good knight. Then, Lancelot decides to go to Camelot in order to become a knight but his knighthood ceremony is unfinished and incomplete since Arthur has no sword. So Lancelot asks Guenevere for a sword so that he can be knighted. The love between Lancelot and Guenevere becomes the central theme of the *Lancelot*. Most of Lancelot's quests have to do with saving Guenevere. There is an episode in which a False Guenevere accuses the true one of usurping her identity and not being who she says she is. Arthur proclaims the False Guenevere her queen so Lancelot has to save the true Guenevere. However, this gives the two lovers more freedom to enjoy their love. Finally, the truth is revealed and Arthur reconciles with the true Guenevere. Another occasion in which Lancelot rescues Guenevere is when she is abducted by Meleagant. Later in the text, Lancelot must undertake the Quest for the Holy Grail in which he fails since it is Galahad, his son, who is destined to achieve the Grail Quest.

Another Arthurian text, *Mortu Artu* (1230) also focuses on the love between Lancelot and Guenevere. After Lancelot returns from his quest, Lancelot and Guenevere's love is finally discovered and unveiled. This brings about the collapse of the Round Table society and causes the disappearance of King Arthur's world. After discovering the love affair between Lancelot and Guenevere, King Arthur decides to wage a war against his once most loyal and truthful knight. This brings extremely negative consequences for all the Arthurian society since the once fellow knights confront each other in war (one disastrous result is that Gawain is killed by the wounds inflicted by Lancelot). Then Lancelot, in whose castle Guenevere was staying, delivers

her to King Arthur as a final act of loyalty. Arthur, seeing the downfall of his world, regrets having waged a war against his best friend and warrior.

In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* Guenevere and Lancelot's love is similarly described as the cause of the destruction of the Arthurian society. Indeed, this adulterous love in the idealized Arthurian court entails a threat and a danger for the whole society of King Arthur. However, it is a treacherous act which unveils Lancelot and Guenevere's secret love (Lancelot is spied and ensnared by Agravain and Mordred). Arthur knows that the revelation of this secret will bring about the downfall of Camelot and that his confrontation with Lancelot will destroy their friendship and the whole Arthurian society:

Jesu mercy, said the king, he is a marvelous knight of prowess. Alas, me sore repenteth, said the king, that ever Sir Launcelot should be against me. Now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold; and now it is fallen so, said the king, that I may not with my worship, but the queen must suffer the death (Malory in Moore, 2000:752, b.xx, ch. vii).

Lancelot, once again, rescues the queen from being burnt at the stake. This, as said above, results in a battle in which many of Arthur's closest knights die such as Gareth and Gaheris, Gawain's brothers and Arthur's nephews:

Alas, that ever I bare crown upon my head! For now I have lost the fairest fellowship of noble knights that ever held Christian king together. Alas, my good knights be slain away from me: now within these two days I have lost forty knights, and also the noble fellowship of Sir Launcelot and his blood, for now I may never hold them together no more with my worship (Malory in Moore, 2000: 756, b. xxi, ch. ix).

The fatal love between Lancelot and Guenevere has negative consequences and Arthur himself acknowledges the terrible effects on his society. Breaking the boundaries established by Arthurian society, as it is the case of Lancelot and Guenevere's love, involves its absolute destruction as a sort of punishment. In the final battle between Arthur and Lancelot, the latter decides that Guenevere must return to Camelot as a final

token of his ever-lasting loyalty to King Arthur. The end of both lovers is bitter and sad since Guenevere rejects Lancelot, whom she considers guilty of all her hardships and problems while he asks her for a last kiss which she refuses to give.

In Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* the love affair between Guenevere and Lancelot is also presented as ill-fated and as a cause of the fall of the whole Arthurian society. The Queen has a nightmare full of horrors and darkness which represent Guenevere's fears for her love for Lancelot to be revealed as well as the consequences that their relationship could have for the Arthurian world:

In the dead night, grim faces came and went / Before her, or a vague
spiritual fear - / Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors, / Heard by
the watcher in a haunted house, / That keeps the rust of murder on the
walls - / Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd / An awful dream;
for then she seem'd to stand / On some vast plain before a setting sun, /
And from the sun there swiftly made at her / A ghastly something, and its
shadow flew / Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd - / When lo! her
own, that broadening from her feet, / And blackening, swallow'd all the
land, and in it / Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke / And all this
trouble did not pass but grew (Tennyson in Gray, 1996: 271, ll. 69-83).

These lines represent the fatality of Lancelot and Guenevere's love. Her dream is but an omen for what is yet to come and happen. Indeed, the queen is perfectly aware of the fatal consequences of her adulterous liaison with Lancelot. Also, these lines portray her own oppression and her uncertainty for what may happen. She regards this dream as an omen and a warning about her forbidden love for Lancelot. So the queen is determined to talk to Lancelot and to warn him to leave Camelot forever and, in turn, to break their relationship. Tennyson says that:

'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land, / For if thou tarry we shall
meet again, / And if we meet again, some evil chance / Will make the
smouldering scandal break and blaze / Before the people, and our lord the
King.' / And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd, / And still they met
and met. Again she said, / 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.' /
And then they were agreed upon a night / (When the good King should
not be there) to meet / And part for ever (ll. 87-96) (Gray, 1996: 271).

However, Guenevere and Lancelot have not enough time to flee from Camelot since Mordred discovers them talking and reveals their romance. Mordred's revelation, an act of treason, threatens the Arthurian world and puts both lovers in danger. Before departing from Camelot and leaving Guenevere, Arthur's most loyal knight admits his guilt and tries to convince her to go with him to his castle. However, she finally rejects this proposal because she thinks that the love she feels for Lancelot is her own fault since she is a married woman and Lancelot a single knight:

'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise, / And fly to my strong castle overseas: / There will I hide thee, till my life shall end, / There hold thee with my life against the world.' / She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so? / Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells. / Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself! / Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou / Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly, / For I will draw me into sanctuary, / And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse, / Set her thereon, and mounted on his own, / And then they rode to the divided way, / There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past, / Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen, / Back to his land; but she to Almesbury / Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald / Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan: And in herself she moan'd 'Too late, too late!' / Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn, / A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high, / Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death; / For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea, / Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court, / Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land' (Tennyson in Gray, 1996: 272, ll: 111- 136).

This is the very moment in which Guenevere and Lancelot get separated in Tennyson's work. Both lovers admit that their relationship has destroyed the peace and prosperity of Camelot, although Mordred's usurpation to the throne is the main reason. While Lancelot goes to his land, Guenevere prefers to remain far away from anything connected with King Arthur and Camelot and decides to enter a nunnery, under the excuse that she is being chased and needs help. However, Guenevere's life as a nun is at first difficult and unbearable for her since she is constantly reminded that she is the queen and that she is guilty of the downfall of Arthur's realm. Eventually, Guenevere becomes the abbess of the nunnery and dies three years later.

7.4. Similarities among the Love Relationships of Arwen and Aragorn, Guenevere and Lancelot and Isolde and Tristan

After examining the most famous love relationships in Arthurian tradition, we will study to what extent the relationship between Arwen and Aragorn is influenced by the tragic loves of Tristan and Isolde and Guenevere and Lancelot. First of all, both romances have in common that they are forbidden, i.e. that their love is impossible because of their respective societies, the Arthurian world and Middle-earth, do not allow it. While Tristan and Isolde's love is supposed to be prohibited since she is married to Tristan's own uncle, Guenevere and Lancelot's love affair implies a moral conflict for the Arthurian world since he is Arthur's most loyal warrior and she is his wife and queen. As for Aragorn and Arwen, the forbidden nature of their relationship resides in the fact that they belong to different and opposed races. Arwen is a High Elf lady who is given the gift of immortality whereas Aragorn belongs to the race of Men, more specifically to the lineage of the Númenorean High Kings. These three love relationships have negative consequences for the worlds the lovers belong to. Tristan is banished from his own land and condemned to wander, which causes Isolde's early death. Guenevere is sentenced to be burned at the stake or to enter a nunnery in some texts while Lancelot is banished. In others, their love triggers a war between Arthur and Lancelot, resulting in Mordred's usurpation of the throne and the deaths of many knights such as Gawain. In the case of Arwen and Aragorn, she is the one who makes more sacrifices since she chooses to renounce her gift of immortality, given to her as a Noldorin High Elf. Her decision to become a mortal woman has negative consequences for the race of the High Elves since she is the last of this race in Middle-earth. This fact is reinforced by the name that Arwen is given 'Evenstar', which symbolizes the twilight

and decay of the High Elves. Her death entails the absolute disappearance and extinction of the race of the High Elves from Middle-earth. However, unlike Lancelot or Tristan, Aragorn does not suffer serious consequences since his love for Arwen is finally allowed and accepted after undergoing and eventually fulfilling his own quest.

Another feature in common amongst Lancelot and Guenevere's, Tristan and Isolde's and Aragorn and Arwen's love relationship is the idea of doom. As all these relationships disrupt the boundaries and moral values of their respective societies, they are doomed to have a bitter and sad end. In the case of Tristan and Isolde, he is seriously wounded and dies while Isolde, seeing that she cannot heal her love, dies of sorrow. As for Guenevere and Lancelot, the fact that Arthur's wife and queen and Arthur's best and most loyal knight fall in love with each other causes many problems for the lovers and Arthur's court; indeed it brings about the whole collapse of Camelot. Aragorn and Arwen's love is fatal from the very beginning since he is a mortal man and she an immortal Elf-maiden. There seems to be a paradox between Arwen and Aragorn's attitudes towards death which highlights the differences in their races. While Aragorn accepts death as a gift for all his long life, Arwen does not understand the sense of death and regards it as terrible and devastating. Her inability to face death in general and Aragorn's choice of death instead of keeping on living until becoming an old man makes Arwen and Aragorn's story even more tragic than it is. They have to struggle for their love for a long time, mainly against Elrond's refusal to accept it. To make things worse, Aragorn must accomplish his quest before marrying Arwen. Aragorn spends most of his life moving from place to place trying to defeat dark forces and to recover the prestige of the old Kings of Gondor. However, when he becomes a king and is able to marry Arwen, he does not enjoy his life for a long time, as he is expected to do. Instead, he feels that it is his time to die. The tragical fate of the love relationships

between Arwen and Aragorn, Guenevere and Lancelot and Tristan and Isolde lies in the fact that the lovers cannot handle the difficulties properly.

Like in the Tristan and Lancelot stories, Tolkien introduced a love triangle among Aragorn, Arwen and Éowyn. This motif is normally used to emphasize the complexity of a society in which heterosexual love is perceived as a destructive force. In Arthurian tradition, there are at least three main love triangles: Lancelot, Guenevere and Elaine of Astolat; Mark, Tristan and Isolde and the most important one: Arthur, Guenevere and Lancelot. These love triangles serve to reinforce the tragic tone and the forbidden character of these relationships. If in the Arthurian tradition, the third person is a man, normally the woman's husband, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the love triangle comprises the couple, Aragorn and Arwen, and another woman: Éowyn. Impressed by Aragorn's majesty and splendour, Éowyn falls in love with him. But her love for him is more heroic than romantic. Although Tolkien does not depict love affairs with many details, Faramir guesses that Éowyn falls in love with what Aragorn represents: fame, glory, splendour and power. In other words, Aragorn is what she has always craved for. Faramir says that:

(159)

'You desired to have the love of the Lord Aragorn. Because he was high and puissant, and you wished to have renown and glory and to be lifted far above the mean things that crawl on the earth. And as a great captain may to a young soldier he seemed to you admirable. For so he is, a lord among men, the greatest that now is. But when he gave you only understanding and pity, then you desired to have nothing, unless a brave death in battle' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 943).

However, before this conversation between Éowyn and Faramir, we find some glimpses or hints to Éowyn's fondness for Aragorn. In her talks to him, Éowyn normally speaks about battles and exploits. Therefore, it is not clearly portrayed that Éowyn's love for Aragorn is of a romantic nature. There are two main conversations between them in

which she tries to persuade him to do one thing or another. For instance, when Aragorn decides to enter the Paths of the Dead, Éowyn recommends him not to do that since it is a perilous journey which could kill him:

(160)

‘Nay, lady,’ said he, ‘I am not astray; for I walked in this land ere you were born to grace it. There is a road out of this valley, and that road I shall take. Tomorrow I shall ride by the Paths of the Dead.’

Then she stared at him as one that is stricken, and her face blanched, and for long she spoke no more, while all sat silent. ‘But, Aragorn,’ she said at last, ‘Is it then your errand to see death? For that is all that you will find on that road. They do not suffer the living to pass.’

‘They may suffer me to pass,’ said Aragorn; ‘but at the least I will adventure it. No other road will serve.’

‘But this is madness,’ she said. ‘For here are men of renown and prowess, whom you should not take into the shadows, but should lead to war, where men are needed. I beg you to remain and ride with my brother; for then all our hearts will be gladdened, and our hope be the brighter.’

‘It is not madness, lady,’ he answered; ‘for I go on a path appointed. But those who follow me do so of their free will; and if they wish now to remain and ride with the Rohirrim, they may do so. But I shall take the Paths of the Dead, alone, if needs be (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 766).

Then Éowyn tries to convince Aragorn to go with King Theoden to war to Minas Tirith. However, she changes her mind when she realizes that Aragorn is determined to enter the Paths of the Dead. Indeed, she asks him to let her go with them so that she can fight, which is something she has always wanted to do. However, Aragorn refuses claiming that, as a maiden of Rohan, she must remain with her people. She complains about the fact that she is always left behind and given an unimportant role. Aragorn replies that it would be a great honour for her to rule her people during the King’s absence. As Tolkien describes:

(161)

But as Aragorn came to the booth where he was to lodge with Legolas and Gimli, and his companions had gone in, there came the Lady Éowyn after him and called him. He turned and saw her as a glimmer in the night, for she was clad in white; but her eyes were on fire. ‘Aragorn,’ she said, ‘why will you go on this deadly road?’ ‘Because I must,’ he said. ‘Only

so can I see any hope of doing my part in the war against Sauron. I do not choose paths of peril, Éowyn. Were I to go where my heart dwells, far in the North I would now be wandering in the fair valley of Rivendell.'

For a while she was silent, as if pondering what this might mean. Then suddenly she laid her hand on his arm. 'You are a stern lord and resolute,' she said; 'and thus do men win renown.' She paused. 'Lord,' she said, 'if you must go, then let me ride in your following. For I am weary of skulking in the hills, and wish to face peril and battle.'

'Your duty is with your people,' he answered.

'Too often have I heard of duty,' she cried. 'But am I not of the House of Eorl, a shieldmaiden and not a dry-nurse? I have waited on faltering feet long enough. Since they falter no longer, it seems, may I not now spend my life as I will?'

'Few may do that with honour,' he answered. 'But as for you, lady: did you not accept the charge to govern the people until their lord's return? If you had not been chosen, then some marshal or captain would have been set in the same place, and he could not ride away from his charge, were he weary of it or no.'

'Shall I always be chosen?' she said bitterly. 'Shall I always be left behind when the Riders depart, to mind the house while they win renown, and find food and beds when they return?' (Anderson, 2012: 766-767).

This excerpt is especially relevant because Aragorn declares his love for Arwen and Éowyn takes notice of it since her silence after his words indicate that she knows the truth behind. Additionally, Éowyn's love for Aragorn is clearly heroic since it is based on the achievement of quests and deeds. She idealizes Aragorn and admires him deeply because he is what she has always longed for. As we can see in the example above, she is so anxious to show her prowess as a warrior and to become a heroine that she despairingly asks Aragorn to let her go. However, he refuses by saying that he must take the Paths of the Dead in order to defeat Sauron because it is his duty.

Despite Aragorn's refusal, on the following morning Éowyn goes to Aragorn and tells him that, despite the fact that the Paths of the Dead are dangerous and evil, she is willing to go through them with him so that she can show her prowess and thus remain close to Aragorn. However, once more, Aragorn refuses Éowyn's request:

(162)

In her hand she bore a cup, and then she set it to her lips and drank a little, wishing them good speed; and then she gave the cup to Aragorn, and he drank, and he said: 'Farewell, Lady of Rohan! I drink to the fortunes of your House, and of you, and of all your people. Say to your brother: beyond the shadows we may meet again!

Then it seemed to Gimli and Legolas who were nearby that she wept, and in one so stern and proud that seemed the more grievous. But she said: 'Aragorn, wilt thou go?' 'I will', he said. 'Then wilt thou not let me ride with this company, as I have asked?' 'I will not, lady,' he said. 'For that I could not grant without leave of the king and of your brother; and they will not return until tomorrow. But I count now every hour, indeed every minute. Farewell!'

Then she fell on her knees, saying: 'I beg thee!'

'Nay, lady,' he said, and taking her by the hand he raised her. Then he kissed her hand, and sprang into the saddle, and rode away, and did not look back; and only those who knew him and were near to him saw the pain he bore.

But Éowyn stood still as a figure carven in stone, her hands clenched at her sides, and she watched them until they passed into the shadows under the black Dwimorberg, the Haunted Mountain, in which was the Door of the Dead. When they were lost to view, she turned, stumbling as one that is blind, and went back to her lodging (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 768).

It is evident that Aragorn's refusal of Éowyn's decision to go to war represents Éowyn's unrequited love for Aragorn. His attitude towards Éowyn may be seen as almost cruel. In fact, his behaviour towards her is passive and careless; Éowyn is aware that, as a woman, she is not allowed to take part in wars, battles and dangerous journeys. There is an episode in which she passes a cup to Aragorn. This is quite relevant since it symbolizes the farewell of the hero before taking part in a battle and the wish for good fortune. In Arthurian tradition, King Arthur and his knights were said to gather together and drink, sometimes from the Holy Grail, as an act of regeneration, just before taking part in a quest or journey. There is a similar episode in *The Lord of the Rings* when the Company is about to leave Lothlórien, where Galadriel and Celeborn pass a cup among the companions. Aragorn's kiss on Éowyn's hand after drinking from the same cup may probably be a reference to Arthurian chivalric love which implies an idealized view of

the lover, especially that of the lady who must be saved and protected by a knight. Apart from this, Tolkien does not provide much more information about the relationship between Aragorn and Éowyn. Although portrayed in a very subtle and slight manner, we can say that Éowyn's love for Aragorn, besides being unrequited, is an idealized one. Éowyn does not love Aragorn for the man he is but for what the king he is expected to be: for glory, renown and splendour. Kleinman (2005: 146) argues that:

Aragorn has inspired in Éowyn the devotion of a soldier but this desire has caused Éowyn to eroticize that devotion. Faramir's assessment seems correct if we recall Éowyn's angry response when Aragorn reminds her that she must attend to her duties rather than follow him.

In the chapter "The Stewart and the King" from the third book, *The Return of the King*, the love between Éowyn and Faramir can be perceived clearly. At first, she is reluctant to talk to Faramir but then she realizes that she has much more in common with him than with Aragorn. Faramir says that he is not a hero as Aragorn and that he has not achieved the same renown but he claims that his love for Éowyn is true. Faramir's words have an impact upon Éowyn, who realizes the impossibility of his love for Aragorn, which is indeed her own craving for renown and adventures, and she changes after renouncing her ambition for fame and glory. Tolkien describes this as follows:

(163)

And Éowyn looked at Faramir long and steadily; and Faramir said: 'Do not scorn pity that is the gift of a gentle heart, Éowyn! But I do not offer you my pity. For you are a lady high and valiant and have yourself won renown that shall not be forgotten; and you are a lady beautiful, I deem, beyond even the words of the Elven-tongue to tell. And I love you. Once I pitied your sorrow. But now, were you sorrowless, without fear or any lack, were the blissful Queen of Gondor, still I would love you. Éowyn, do you not love me?'

Then the heart of Éowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her.

'I stand in Minas Anor, the Tower of the Sun,' she said; 'and behold! the Shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the Great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren.' And again she looked at Faramir. 'No longer I desire to be a queen,' she said (Anderson, 2012: 943).

The end of Éowyn, who finally marries Faramir, has been much criticized. It has been argued that her marriage represents the traditional female oppression in patriarchal societies and the impossibility for women to decide what to do with their lives (Enright, 2008:171-174) (Campbell, 2014: 72) (Neville, 2005: 109). However, this is not clear. Although at first Éowyn's marriage and decision to become a healer may seem sexist and patriarchal, it is likely to think that this was not Tolkien's intention. In our view, Faramir and Éowyn's marriage is a relationship between equals since they are two people who have been despised and rejected and are brought together; they have not been allowed to carry out exploits because they are expected to play a particular role rather than rebelling themselves (both Éowyn and Faramir had gone to war). In the case of Faramir, he does it against his father's will. Also, we can say that this relationship between Éowyn and Faramir is between equals because he has no power over her; they are at the same level not only because of their lineages -she is a shieldmaiden of Rohan and niece to the king, Theoden, while Faramir is the son of the last steward of Gondor and is named steward by King Aragorn- but also because they had been looking for understanding. In the case of Éowyn, she asks Aragorn, her brother and uncle for it unsuccessfully. As for Faramir, he tries to look solace and understanding in his father and does not find them. Finally, they find them in each other. After being about to die due to the wounds inflicted by the Witch King, Éowyn becomes aware that there are more important things beyond the honour and glory of a battle so she decides to become a healer. All this is explained by Porter (2005: 105) who argues that:

When Éowyn looks at Faramir, she sees understanding and strength not only of a warrior, for she recognizes that Faramir would be an effective soldier, but also of a peacetime leader in Ithilien. She accepts a new role for herself in which she can best serve as a healer; her love relationship also can grow over time, not merely framed by the fortunes of war. In Tolkien's books, Éowyn recognizes a longer lasting love than the

immediate attraction to a charismatic, fearless leader, a lord to whom she can offer service and for whom she can fight.

Another hypothesis for Éowyn's decision to marry Faramir is that she has already achieved what she wanted to: renown and glory. Her killing of the Witch King implies the accomplishment of a quest that was prophesied long time ago since it was said that the Witch King could not and would not be destroyed by a man's hands. The destruction of the Chief of the Nâzgul and Éowyn's battle against him obviously makes her a heroine since she is probably the only one female character in *The Lord of the Rings* who makes a great achievement. Moreover, about the controversial relationship between Éowyn and Faramir, Rutledge (2004:346) explains that:

This love story can be, and has been, criticized on several counts. Some have been unpersuaded by Éowyn's seemingly sudden turn from Aragorn to Faramir. Tolkien explained, quite convincingly in my judgment, that she had come to understand that Aragorn was out of her reach, being of such a high lineage and destiny –and also very “old”, not so much in years but in experience and in loftiness. We might say that her feelings for Aragorn had been a “crush”, unlike what is developing between her and Faramir. Tolkien did not think she ceased to love Aragorn, but it became love and admiration from afar. Faramir, in contrast, was her near companion in the moment of greatest cataclysm (or so they thought), and he loved her exactly for herself.

The love triangle in *The Lord of the Rings* is rather complex and very different from those of the Arthurian tradition. In the case of Guenevere, Lancelot and Arthur, and Tristan, Isolde and Mark, the love triangle becomes controversial and quite troublesome because we have two adulterous relationships. Curiously enough, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the idea of adultery is absent.

The female lovers, Arwen, Isolde and Guenevere, have many aspects in common. Their love relationships are very similar. At first, they may represent the chivalric view of women, that is, the lady who must be helped by the hero. However, the three heroines break up with this traditional consideration in the sense that they

willingly make very important decisions on their own in spite of their supposedly scarce presence and participation. Arwen, Guenevere and Isolde have to confront several hardships in order to enjoy their love more freely although this means social loneliness and exclusion. Guenevere and Isolde play a pivotal role in the development of their respective love stories; they are not passive but rather the opposite. Guenevere and Lancelot's love has traditionally been described as a chivalric one, i.e. their love is not only romantic and based on mutual affection but it implies the lady's rescue, a dangerous journey to save her and doing what the lady expects the knight to do for her sake. Porter (2003: 53) explains the chivalric nature of Lancelot and Guenevere's love:

The relationship has all the stock characteristics of a courtly love situation: a knight in love with a married lady of exalted station, strange and perilous adventures that must be undertaken for her sake, his swooning with ecstasy when he finds some stray strands of her golden hair on a comb, or his agreeing to play the coward at a tournament when she commands him to do so.

Guenevere is probably the Arthurian character who has been depicted more negatively. She has been described as an extremely demanding, imperious woman. However, her representation changes from text to text, sometimes providing a more benevolent view. A French romance called *Meraugis de Portlesguez* (13th century) describes Guenevere in an unusually positive way. Although irrelevant for her love for Lancelot, it offers another image of the queen. Schauss (2006: 42) argues that:

In *Meraugis de Portlesguez*, a thirteenth-century French romance, Arthur and his knights debate the relative merits of two men to decide which one will have the woman they both love. Guinevere interrupts the discussion and takes command, rebuffing Arthur's effort to silence her. She orders the men out of the room and convenes a "court" in which only women make the decision.

Malory explores the love story between Guenevere and Lancelot more in depth than other texts. At the beginning of the story, she is presented as a jealous, demanding and

temperamental woman, especially in her relationship with Lancelot. However, when she learns of Lancelot's affair with Elaine, she pardons him:

And then Sir Launcelot told the queen all, and how he was made to lie by her by enchantment in likeness of the queen. So the queen held Sir Launcelot excused (Malory in Moore, 2000: 531. b. xi, ch. vi).

However, when rumours about Guenevere and Lancelot's love start to grow, he tells her about his duty to defend ladies and his desire to leave the court. The queen, moved by fear more than jealousy, complains about his behaviour, which she considers treason, cowardice and falsehood:

Launcelot, now I well understand that thou art a false recreant knight and a common lecher, and lovest and holdest other ladies, and by me thou hast disdain and scorn. For wit thou well, she said, now I understand thy falsehood, and therefore shall I never love thee no more. And never be thou so hardy to come in my sight; and right here I discharge thee this court, that thou never come within it; and I forfend thee my fellowship, and upon pain of thy head that thou see me no more (Malory in Moore, 2000: 677-678, b. xviii, ch.ii).

Guenevere's harsh words to Lancelot reflect her fear for her love for Lancelot to be revealed. Unlike him, she has no choice and must stay in Camelot. Guenevere, who feels absolutely powerless in Camelot, considers his decision to be caused by cowardice and treason. Behind her outrage and anger, there are feelings of fear and uncertainty since she is aware of the problems that may arise if her romance with Lancelot is unveiled. Eventually, Guenevere and Lancelot's affair is known and revealed and the queen is accused of treason. To demonstrate her innocence, she asks Bors to fight for her in a joust. Guenevere is regarded as having destroyed the Order of the Round Table because of her love and, before Bors' fight, most knights reject and depise her, claiming that:

As for our most noble King Arthur, we love him and honour him as well as ye do, but as for Queen Guenever we love her not, because she is a destroyer of good knights (Malory in Moore, 2000: 682, b. xviii, ch. v).

To this, Bors replies that Guenevere does not intend to destroy the Order of the Round Table but rather the opposite since she has contributed to its glory and improvement. In fact, Bors's depiction of Guenevere is positive and criticizes those who accuse her of treason:

Meseemeth ye say not as ye should say, for never yet in my days knew I never nor heard say that ever she was a destroyer of any good knight. But at all times as far as ever I could know she was a good maintainer of good knights; and ever she hath been large and free of her goods to all good knights, and the most bounteous lady of her gifts and her good grace, that ever I saw or heard speak of (Malory in Moore, 2000: 682, b. xviii, ch. v).

As for Isolde, she is actually rather active. She is always trying to help Tristan as much as possible. She carries out her plans so that Tristan and she cannot be discovered and taken to court. Indeed, Isolde saves Tristan from death many times since she has healing skills. Especially in the French romances written by Béroul and Thomas of England (c. 1175) Isolde is portrayed as an active and ingenious character since she manages to save herself and Tristan from being caught. Schauss (2006:42) explains this:

In these works Iseult shows herself to be, in many instances, an active and resourceful character, as responsible as Tristan for the decisions concerning the conduct of their illicit love and more effective than he saving them from detection. In Béroul, for example, she devises a clever and equivocal "true lie," an oath that enables her to confess her sin with Tristan while also swearing, truthfully if deceitfully, that she has never betrayed her husband.

In spite of being marginalized, Isolde, Guenevere and Arwen are more important than they may seem. They help their lovers, Tristan, Lancelot, and Aragorn, to achieve their own quests. Tristan would have died without Isolde's help while Aragorn would not have achieved his quest without Arwen's support and courage. As for Lancelot, he admits that Guenevere inspires him to carry out his exploits. The idea of courtly love from Arthurian literature is present in Arwen and Aragorn's forbidden love and the love triangle formed by Arwen, Aragorn and Éowyn. Wollock (2011:239) explains that:

Tolkien, who associated courtly love with “pretenses” and corruption, objected to the idea that there is any of it whatsoever in his trilogy. Nevertheless, something like it emerges in a number of relationships, perhaps the most understated being the attachment of the ranger Aragorn and Arwen Evenstar, who eventually marry and reign after a long separation and many a chivalric exploits on Aragorn’s part. (Arwen encourages him from afar by supplying him with significant tokens to wear in battle.) The complications inherent in love triangles are supplied not by a jealous husband as in the Middle-Ages, but by Tolkien’s Elaine of Astolat figure, the warrior princess of Rohan who falls in love with Aragorn and follows him into battle.

Also, the concept of courtly love from the Arthurian literature has been traditionally thought to include features such as “the adoration to the lady, the desire to serve her devotedly and the notion that such service ennobles the lover” (Lacy, 1997: 71). In *The Lord of the Rings*, the idea of courtly love can be perceived in the fact that Arwen serves as an inspiration for Aragorn to carry out his Quest. This is emphasized by the fact that Arwen gives Aragorn a sort of banner made by herself as a token for hope:

(164)

And Aragorn said to Halbarad: ‘What is that that you bear, kinsman??’ For he saw that instead if a spear he bore a tall staff, as it were a standard, but it was close-furled in a black cloth bound about with many thongs.

‘It is a gift that I bring you from the Lady of Rivendell,’ answered Halbarad. ‘She wrought it in secret, and long was the making. But she also sends words to you: *The days now are short. Either our hope cometh, or all hopes end. Therefore I send thee what I have made for thee. Fare well, Elfstone!*’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 758).

Another element of the Arthurian courtly love is the love triangle. In Arthurian literature we find those of Tristan and the two Isoldes and Lancelot, Guenevere and Elaine of Astolad. The presence of a second woman in love with the hero contributes to the tragic end of the love of Tristan and the two Isoldes or that of Lancelot, Guenevere and Elaine. The love triangle anticipates the tragic events which trigger the death of the lovers, especially, in the case of Elaine of Astolad, who decides to kill herself since Lancelot

rejects her love. As for Tristan and Isolde, Isolde of Brittany's presence poses a threat to the love relationship of Tristan and Isolde of Ireland.

In Tolkien's work, there is another love triangle which reflects the Arthurian ideal of courtly love. In this case the tragic tone is not present since Éowyn's love for Aragorn is not romantic. She loves Aragorn for his deeds and prowess. In fact, he represents what Éowyn has always yearned for: war, glory and exploits. The tragedy in Arwen and Aragorn's liaison arises because they belong to a different race: Aragorn is a mortal man while Arwen is an immortal High Elf.

Finally, it is clear that heterosexual love relationships both in Arthurian tradition and in *The Lord of the Rings* are depicted as destructive - this is the case of Lancelot and Guenevere and Tristan and Isolde- and disruptive- Arwen and Aragorn's love disrupts their world although it does not destroy it. The tragic tone of these three love relationships show that love between a man and a woman is impossible in male-dominant societies, and, indeed, it may pose a threat to them. In other words, heterosexual love is not permitted in Arthurian society; only male friendship, a kind of love, is allowed and even reinforced. The romance between Aragorn and Arwen is represented in a similar way. Although slightly more optimistic than the Arthurian loves, Arwen and Aragorn's love eventually ends in tragedy, as it was foretold from the very moment that they met each other. The tragedy of heterosexual love in *The Lord of the Rings* is connected with the appraisal of male relationships. While Aragorn and Arwen's love is inevitably condemned to a tragic and bitter end, male friendships are, on the contrary, positively described and praised. Indeed, male friendships could be considered another important topic in *The Lord of the Rings* since these homosocial bonds between the companions contribute to the achievement of the Quest for the Ring. This is the case of the intimate friendship between Frodo and Sam, whose loyalty and

affection for Frodo lead to the destruction of the Ring. But, apart from this, their friendship may have an erotic and homosexual component:

(165)

In his lap lay Frodo's head, drowned deep in sleep; upon his white forehead lay one of Sam's brown hands, and the other lay softly upon his master's breast (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 699).

Curiously, this appraisal of homosexual and homosocial love is reinforced when Sam acknowledges his love for Frodo:

(166)

I love him. He's like that, and sometimes it shines through, somehow. But I love him, whether or no (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 638).

Apart from Sam and Frodo's male friendship, in *The Lord of the Rings* we may find more examples such as the bonds between Legolas and Gimli or Merry and Pippin.

There is a moment in which Éomer recognizes his affection for Aragorn:

(167)

Since the day when you rose before me out of the green grass of the downs I have loved you, and that love shall not fail you (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 948).

If love relationships, those of Arwen and Aragorn or Aragorn and Éowyn, are presented as troublesome, male friendships are rather the opposite. Tolkien emphasizes the idea that male comradeship is essential, in this case, for the achievement of the Quest for the Ring.

So far we have analysed the main Arthurian love stories and Tolkien's well-known romance between Aragorn and Arwen. There are some obvious resemblances among these three love relationships. The first one is connected with the nature of the romantic relationship. The three of them are presented as forbidden, morally reproachable and ill-fated. While Lancelot and Tristan fall in love with an already

wedded woman, Aragorn loves an Elf-lady, something forbidden for a mortal man. In these relationships there is a love triangle which contributes to the tragedy of the lovers or poses a threat to them. When Guenevere and Lancelot's love is unveiled, it causes Arthur's wrath and in turn a war between Arthur and Lancelot, bringing about disastrous consequences. Tristan is banished and finally murdered by his own uncle, Mark of Cornwall. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Éowyn takes part in the love triangle of Arwen and Aragorn. However, her love for Aragorn is not a romantic one but an idealized one. Éowyn loves Aragorn because he represents what she has always longed for: adventures, war and glory.

As for Guenevere, Isolde and Arwen, they are sacrificial women; Isolde and Arwen, unlike Guenevere who decides to reject her love for Lancelot, die of grief and sorrow after her lovers' death. However, there is a main difference among these relationships. While the Tristan story focuses on the love between Tristan and Isolde and Lancelot and Guenevere's romance is a recurrent and central theme in most Arthurian texts, Aragorn and Arwen's relationship is simply peripheral. Tolkien does not provide a deep insight into it since the little we know about their love is included in an appendix. However, *The Lord of the Rings* mirrors the idea of the Arthurian courtly love in the relationship between these two characters in the sense that Arwen, like Guenevere or like Isolde, helps her lover and inspires Aragorn to achieve his quest. Once he has achieved a series of deeds, Aragorn can marry Arwen. The influence of the courtly love from Arthurian texts may also be seen in the love triangle of Arwen, Aragorn and Éowyn.

Furthermore, Aragorn as a lover can be compared to Lancelot or Tristan. They are skilled and powerful warriors but their worth and prowess cannot be understood without the courage and help of their respective lovers, Arwen, Guenevere and Isolde.

Chivalric love is the inspiration for the heroes and their deeds, but it is undeniable that women like Arwen, Guenevere and Isolde do not simply act as inspirers but also as helpers, or encouragers. Despite their marginalization, Arwen, Isolde and Guenevere, help Aragorn, Tristan and Lancelot in their quests and exploits. Without Arwen's help, Aragorn would not have become King of Gondor.



CHAPTER 8

ARTHURIAN GEOGRAPHY AND MIDDLE-EARTH SETTINGS AND LANDSCAPES

Traditionally, scholarship on *The Lord of the Rings* has focused on studying the plot and the characters in *The Lord of the Rings*. However, Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth poses a question on the role of geography not only in his masterpiece as a single example but also on epic fantasy in general. This means that Middle-earth does not just function as a simple background for the events and actions that occur in it. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is also important to point out the echoes of some prototypically Arthurian landscapes and settings. If Middle-earth has served to provide a typical map of the geography of the epic fantasy, much of this influence comes from the Arthurian world. Some of the most common epic fantasy places comprise a Wasteland²⁸, i.e. a wounded land plunged into decay and disaster whose ruler, the Fisher King, is intimately connected with, the Faërie -magical woods inhabited by Elves or Fairies, or the Dark Realm, a darker and more extreme version of the Wasteland. Most importantly, the idea of ruler and realm as the same one thing is present both in Arthurian legends about the Grail and in *The Lord of the Rings* as we shall see.

So this chapter will examine the possible similarities (and differences) between Arthurian settings and Tolkien's Middle-earth, thereby providing a theoretical background for a better understanding of the role of geography in *The Lord of the Rings* and its possible Arthurian influence or parallelisms.

²⁸ T.S. Elliot's *The Waste Land*, a long poem published in 1922, re-imagines the myth of the Arthurian wasteland and adapts it to modern society. Elliot uses the myth of the wasteland from Arthurian tradition to represent the decline of modern society (Lupack, 2007: 263).

8.1. Criticism on Epic Fantasy Geography: a Brief Overview

Traditionally, criticism and scholarship on epic fantasy fiction have been much more concerned about the analysis of the plot and characters rather than with landscapes and settings. However, it is undeniable that the presence of the geography of the fantastic plays a pivotal role in the development of the actions that take place in these fantasy worlds. This means that places do not only serve as a sort of background for a particular action or event but they also have an impact upon it for good or ill.

First of all, we must take Tolkien's own words about geography into consideration. In his paper *Of Fairy Stories* collected in an essay anthology called *The Monsters and The Critics* (Tolkien, 1983), he established two types of worlds: primary and secondary. We could define "primary world" as our own world, the reality as we see it while the secondary world refers to an imaginary and fictionally consistent world. This concept of secondary world is especially relevant since it is normally portrayed as a land which has its own norms and rules, i.e. it has its own consistency, sometimes mirroring our real world. However, Tolkien does not provide a clear definition for these two concepts. He just gives some brief explanations about primary and secondary worlds in an obscure and unclear way. Tolkien argues that unreality (a feature from the secondary world) may be "of unlikeness to the Primary World" (in Tolkien, 1983: 139).

Also, as mentioned above, while more critics have focused on studying the secondary world from a theological point of view, they have forgotten a very important role of these secondary worlds common in fantasy fiction. They are active participants in the events and actions that take place in them rather than allegoric representations. The landscapes and settings of Middle-earth have two main roles. The first one is

connected with the development or evolution of the Quest for the Ring since we move from idyllic green landscapes such as Rivendell and the Shire to darker, oppressive ones, such as Moria or Minas Morgul. The second role refers to the close relationship between ruler and realm, represented in Aragorn and Gondor, Arthur and the Fisher King or Sauron and Mordor as we shall see.

Over the past few years, scholarship on the approaches to the geography and the landscapes of epic fantasy has increased. Clute & Grant (1999: 559) reinforce the relevance of landscapes in most fantasy novels: “landscapes almost invariably convey a sense, though often the effect is subliminal at best, that every nook and cranny, every chasm and crag, every desert and fertile valley is potentially meaningful”. So places are not exclusively used to provide a context for a particular action or actions, but they are also part of them. As for land, Clute & Grant (1999: 558) define it as “a secondary-world venue whose nature and fate are central to the plot: a land is not a protagonist, but has an analogous role”. This means that everything in fantasy fiction is interconnected: characters, landscape and events.

Mendlesohn (2008: 35) also analyses the function of natural environment and places. She argues that settings in fantasy novels may play an important role in the development of actions or events. For instance, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the landscape plays an active part in all the events. It may somehow function as a special character, or at least it can have some effects on both characters and actions. As Mendlesohn (2008: 35) explains, “Tolkien’s technique –and the one that will come to dominate the quest fantasy tradition- is to present the landscape as a participant in the adventure”. Ekman (2013: 1) provides an excellent and pioneer theoretical background about the function and relevance of settings and landscapes in epic fantasy fiction. Likewise, he also talks about the lack of interest towards the fantasy geography:

It is not uncommon for critics to draw attention to the importance of the natural environment in fantasy. Some even go so far as to suggest that in fantasy, or in some kinds of fantasy, or in some fantasy works, the landscape can function as a character on one level or another. Nevertheless, the fantasy landscape's proclaimed importance is not reflected in much of the fantasy criticism that has been produced, and much attention is still being paid to character and plot.

Also, Ekman (2013: 177) establishes or distinguishes other features of fantasy fiction. For example, he explains that "a frequent connection between land and people is expressed in the direct links that exist between many fantasy rulers and their realms". This means that the fate of a land is inevitably connected with that of its king or ruler. This idea is especially important for this study since it echoes the Arthurian myth of the Fisher King and the Wasteland. According to Arthurian tradition, the Fisher King was wounded and because of it, his land laid waste. Only the Grail Knight could heal him and his land. Moreover, Ekman (2013: 178) suggests that the restoration or finding of a rightful ruler may be a prototypical motif in many fantasy novels, such as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: "Whether by finding the rightful heir, identifying a suitable candidate for the empty throne, or curing the ailing king, the restoration of the sovereign is a ubiquitous motif in fantasy literature". This reminds us of the episode in some Arthurian tales where a young Arthur becomes king by drawing the sword from the stone after the realm was left without its ruler, Uther, Arthur's father. As mentioned before, Aragorn embodies this very idea since he must restore the kingdom of Gondor by fighting against Sauron.

Ekman (2013: 195) also points out that the connection between kingdom and ruler is not exclusively political. The well-being of a land depends upon the morality of its own ruler. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the tree of Gondor starts to bloom after

Aragorn's ascension to the throne. However, it remained withered during Denethor's stewardship.

When analysing landscapes in fantasy fiction, we may also find the landscapes of evil. They are the dark, infertile, lifeless places where the Dark Lord lives. Normally described as fortresses, these realms mirror the evil and moral corruption of their masters. Ekman (2013: 195) explains that:

The worst tourist spot that a fantasy world can offer is the territory that surrounds the stronghold, or prison of the resident Dark Lord. Such a realm reflects the evil of its ruler through highly unpleasant living conditions, being too hot, too cold, or simply too poisonous for normal life to thrive.

8.2. The Origins of Middle-earth

The word "Middle-earth" has its roots in the Anglo-Saxon "middangeard." During the Dark Ages in Britain people thought that the world was divided into three parts or levels: the Upperworld, the Middle-earth, and the Lowerworld (or Otherworld). The Upperworld was inhabited by gods, goddesses and elves. As Bates (2002: 59) explains:

In the Upperworld branches of the World Tree lived gods and goddesses. There were two worlds of gods. Asgard was the world of a tribe of gods known as the Aesir, living in great halls; they were warrior gods representing aspects of the old sky god called Allfather, who was eventually replaced by Odin. Also in the Upperworld were the fertility gods known as the Vanir. There were twenty-seven gods and goddesses in all. Finally the Upperworld featured a third world of knowledge, the land of the light elves, magical creatures who expressed the spirit of nature.

This echoes Tolkien's island of Arda, whose main city is Valinor, although with some differences. In Tolkien's world, there is a main god, Eru Ilúvatar, who in turn created other divinities known as Ainur or Valar. Also, there are the Maiar, who are angelic

spirits, like the Ainur but of lesser rank. Likewise, Elves in *The Lord of the Rings* normally departed from Middle-earth to move to Valinor, a gift only granted to them.

Middle-earth was thought to be the real world, where human beings and other creatures dwelt, such as giants, dwarves and ents. It comprised different lands or worlds such as Jotunheim (the land of giants and ents), Nidavellir, a subterranean dark land, and Svartalfheim, where dark elves lived:

The second level, around the lower branches and trunk of the World Tree was called Middle-earth. It is in this realm that human life unfolded. However, Middle-earth does not refer merely to the material world of everyday existence. Rather it is the spiritual world of humankind (Bates, 2002: 59).

Bates (2002: 59) also explains that:

Another world witnessed by Odin in his visionary journey was at the outer edge of Middle-earth disc, and lay 'over the ocean'. This was the world of the giants, or ents, called Jotunheim. The giants were the beings who established the Earth. They were huge elemental forces, brutishly strong but short on intellect. Also in this Middle realm, in the north, lived the dwarves. They dwelt underground in a world called Nidavellir (dark home), a 'subterranean' world of darkness where shapes are forged. And there was another world called Svartalfheim (land of the dark elves).

These portrayals of the real Middle-earth share some similarities with Tolkien's fictionalized Middle-earth. However, we can also appreciate differences. In Tolkien's imaginary world, we find several lands inhabited by different races. The lands populated by men are mainly Rohan and Gondor. Moria could be seen as an equivalent for Nidavellir since it is an underground palace where dwarves lived. However, Tolkien included more lands of elves into his own Middle-earth. There is not a specific land for the Dark Elves but several ones for the different races of Elves that Tolkien created. For instance, Rivendell is the home for the Noldorin Elves while Lothlórien belongs to the Grey-elves (except for Galadriel, who is a Noldorin). Moreover, although giants are not

mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ents (living trees) play an important role in the story since they defeat Saruman. They live in Fangorn, a very vast and ancient forest located at the edge of Isengard.

The third level is the Underworld or Otherworld. In this realm there was a gloomy place known as Nilfheim, the world of the dead. Within it there was a dark citadel called Hel, a fortress with many towers and very strong gates:

Deep in the roots of the tree lay the third realm. This was the Underworld or Lowerworld comprising Nilfheim (the world of the dead), located nine days northwards and downwards from Midgard. Nilfheim was a place of bitter cold and unending night. Its citadel was Hel, a place with towering walls and forbidding gates presided over by the hideous female monster, half white, half black, of the same name (Bates, 2002:60).

After analysing this, we can guess that Tolkien probably based his dark realm, Mordor, on this depiction of the Underworld. Mordor is portrayed as a desert, barren and infertile land corrupted by the evil of its lord, Sauron. Mordor was also named as the land of shadow or the black land.

8.2.1. Middle-earth in Anglo-Saxon early Literature and Arthurian Medieval Texts

As has been seen before, the word “Middle-earth” was not an invention of Tolkien’s genius. This term was used to define one level of the world. In fact, we will find this word in some of the most prominent texts of Anglo-Saxon literature and later in some Arthurian medieval texts and in Langland’s work, *Piers Plowman* (15th century).

Bede's Account of the Poet Caedmon (658-680 a.C)

One of the earliest accounts where the word Middle-earth is mentioned may be Bede's *Account of the Poet Caedmon (658-680 a.C)*. This is the first Old-English poem in English early medieval literature whose author is known. Bede's account talks about a man, Caedmon, who was asked by an unknown voice to sing a song about the Creation. After this, Caedmon receives the gift of singing and makes his vows and becomes a monk. The medieval word for Middle-earth, *Middangeard*, is present along the text. It appears in line 42 for the first time: "þa *middangeard* monncynnes weard, ece Drihten, æfter teode firum foldan, frea ælmihtig." ²⁹ (Mitchel and Robinson: 1995:222) In line 71, we also find another allusion to Middle-earth: "Song he ærest be *middangeardes* gesceape bi fruman moncynnes eal þæt stær Genesis, þæt is seo æreste Moyses booc." ³⁰ (Mitchel and Robinson, 1995: 222)

Finally, the last sentence where Middle-earth can be found in Bede's text is in line 120: "Ond swa wæs geworden, þætte swa swa hluttre mode bilwitre smyltre wilsumnesse Drihtne þeode, þæt he eac swylce swa smylte deaðe middangeard wæs forlætende, to his gesihðebecwom." ³¹ (Mitchell and Robinson, 1995: 225) Again, Middle-earth is presented as the real world.

The Dream of the Rood or A Vision of the Cross (8TH century)

The Dream of the Rood is one of the earliest poems about dreams and visions in Old English. It is especially relevant because it shows an incredible mixture of Christian and

²⁹ "Then middle-earth the guardian of humankind, / the eternal Lord, afterwards adorned (*teode*) / for the people of the earth, the almighty master" (Magennis, 2011: 30).

³⁰ "First he sang about the shaping of the Middle-World, and of mankind's beginning, and all the history of Genesis, that is the first book of Moses." (North, Allard & Gillies, 2014: 463)

³¹ "And so it came to pass that as he served God with pure spirit and with mild and serene devoutness, that he likewise left this middle-earth by a serene death, and he arrived in His sight." (<http://www.heorot.dk/bede-caemon.html> . Last accessed on 15th February, 2017)

Heathen elements. It tells the story of Christ's own crucifixion portrayed as a battle. The poem itself keeps a heroic tone all the time so it might have been influenced by epic Germanic medieval texts. Christ is depicted as a prototypical Germanic hero rather than a Christian Messiah or Saviour. In this case, the word Middle-earth is included in line 104 (Mitchell and Robinson, 1995: 262):

Hē ðā on heofanas āstāg. Hider eft fundað
on þysne *middangeard* mancynn sēcan on dōmdæge dryhten sylfa,
ælmhtig god, ond his englas mid.³² (ll. 103-105)

Once again, the term "middangeard" or Middle-earth is used to refer to the real world in the early Middle Ages or Dark Ages.

The Wanderer (late 10th century)

The Wanderer is an elegiac Old-English poem written around the 10th century. The poem describes the loneliness and exile of a warrior who has lost his lord and companions. In this text, the word 'middangeard' is also mentioned in line 62: "Swa þes *middangeard* ealra dogra gehwam dreoseð ond fealleþ, forþon ne mæg weorþan wis wer, ær he age wintra dæl in woruldrice."³³ (Mitchell and Robinson, 1995: 273) As we can see again, the term "middangeard" appears in several important Anglo-saxon texts and was used to refer to the real world by people who dwelt in the British Isles during the Dark Ages and the Early Middle Ages.

³² Trans: "then he ascended into heavens. Hither again, the Lord, Himself, will set out into this world (Middle-earth) to seek mankind on the day of judgement." (http://www.dreamofrood.co.uk/frame_start.htm. Last accessed on 15th February 2017).

³³ "Thus this Middle-world / each and every day and night declines and falls. / And so a man cannot become wise until he may possess/ his share of winters in the worldly kingdom" (North, Allard, & Gillies, 2014: 172).

The Seafarer (10th century)

The Seafarer is another Anglo-Saxon poem that explains and talks about the hardships of being a seafarer. Like other Anglo-Saxon poems, it has an elegiac and dramatic tone and reinforces the loneliness of the speaker, the seafarer. The word “middangeard” is seen in line 90: “swa nu monna gehwylc geond *middangeard* Ylde him on fareð, onsyn blacað, gomelfeax gnornað, wat his iuwine, æþelinga bearn, eorþan forgiefene.” (Mitchell and Robinson, 1995: 281) These lines have been translated as “just as now with each man in the middle world. Old age comes upon him, his visage grows pale, / the grey-hair mourns, knows his friends of old, a son of princes, given to the earth.” (North, Allard & Gillies, 2014: 193, 90-93).

So after accounting for the presence of the word Middle-earth in Anglo-saxon literature we can conclude that Tolkien’s Middle-earth seems to have somehow its origins in real world since it was used to refer to one of the three levels that the world was composed of. Also, it seems likely to think that Tolkien used this Germanic vision of the world to create his own Middle-earth.

In Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (15th century), the word Middle-earth is also mentioned. The poet has a vision in which there is a mirror called Middle-earth, which is a halfway place between heaven and hell. The author (Schmidt, 2000: 111) writes that:

Then I had an extraordinary dream. Right where I stood I was snatched up by Fortune and carried off into the domain of yearning desire. Fortune caused me to gaze in a mirror that was named Middle Earth, and then she said to me: ‘Here you can see things that will make you marvel. Here you can discover what it is your desire; why you may even (who can tell?) attain it.’

In Langland's text the word 'Middle-earth' is also used to refer to the world where human beings live and where God can show His plans.

8.2.2. Middle-earth in Medieval Arthurian Texts

The word "Middle-earth" was used in Anglo-Saxon culture and has an important presence in its literature. The Old-English word "Middangeard" continued to evolve and was used in later medieval literature. Curiously enough, the word Middle-earth can be found in several important and highly influential Arthurian texts, such as the anonymous *Alliterative Morte Arthure*³⁴ (ca. 1400) and Layamon's *Brut*³⁵ (ca. 1190-1215). This connection is important for understanding the Arthurian influence on Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. As a medievalist, Tolkien knew much about both Anglo-Saxon culture and Arthurian literature so it seems likely to think that he intended to create his own fictional Middle-earth based on some Anglo-Saxon beliefs. More importantly, the presence of the word "Middle-earth" in these two important Arthurian works implies a subtle but strong connection between the Arthurian legends and J.R.R. Tolkien's fictional world.

In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, we may find several allusions to the term "Middle-earth." The first one appears in lines 2950-2951: "Met the Marquis of Metz and smote him dead / the man on middle-earth who most enraged him" (Stone, 1988: 125). This lines serve to demonstrate the idea of Middle-earth as the vision of the world

³⁴ *Alliterative Morte Arthure* is a text written in alliterative verse which narrates the life of Arthur and his deeds. He has two dreams which foretell his own fate: in the first one, he fights against a bear, which prophesies Arthur's struggle with the giant of Saint Michel, and in the second one, he sees the Wheel of Fortune and some of the most important heroes and warriors, symbols for Arthur's excessive pride (Lupack, 2007: 32).

³⁵ Layamon's *Brut* tells the story of the origins of the British Isles and focuses on Arthur's life, from his birth to his fall. Merlin also has an important role in Arthur's fate and his deeds. Merlin predicts Arthur's departure to Avalon to be healed and his return (Lupack, 2007: 30).

that people had during the Middle Ages, which was a sort of intermediate level between the Upperworld (similar to heaven) and the Otherworld. In lines 3875- 3880, the poet alludes to Middle-earth again:

He was unmatched on middle-earth, I must affirm, Sire
This was Sir Gawain the Good, the greatest of all
Of men who go under God, the most gracious knight,
Hardiest of hand-stroke, highest – fortunèd in war
Most courteous in court under the kingdom of heaven
And the lordliest leader as long as he lived (Stone, 1988: 125).

Instead of using common Arthurian names of places or landscapes such as Caerleon, Logres, or Britain, the poet chooses to make allusion to Middle-earth. So we can say that ‘Middle-earth’ was a term commonly used term in the Middle Ages and not an invention by Tolkien.

In Layamon’s *Brut* we also find more allusions to Middle-earth. In this text, it appears as “Middel-aerdes”: “al middel-ærdes mund; whi is hit iwurðen / þat mi broðer Modred; þis morð hafueð itimbred” (Brook & Leslie, 1963-1978: 740, ll. 14079-14080). Like in *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, this term refers to the real world and in this case it alludes to Mordred’s treason and all the havoc that he wrecks on Middle-earth.

8.3.The Myth of the Wasteland in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle-earth: Rohan, Gondor, Mordor and the Shire

In Arthurian tradition, especially in the tales concerning the Quest for the Grail, we find an idea that will be present in all epic fantasy fiction in general and in *The Lord of the Rings* in particular. This idea refers to a decadent, sterile land, the Wasteland, whose ruler, the Fisher King, is unable to rule his own land. Lupack (2007: 475) defines the Wasteland as “a land laid waste because of a wound inflicted upon its king. The wound can only be healed-and thus the land restored-by the chosen Grail knight”. According to the legends of the Grail, the Fisher King (Pellinore or Pelleas) has a wound that does not

allow him to rule. This physical wound of the Fisher King is represented in the landscape of his own realm:

And just as he had found the land outside all bare and deserted, so he found precious little within. Everywhere he went the streets were empty and the houses in ruins, with not a man or woman anywhere there were two churches in the town which had both been abbeys: one of nuns, lost and fearful, the other of monks, confused bewildered. He found these churches well adorned neither with ornament nor tapestry; instead he saw their walls crumbling and broken, their towers open to the sky; and the doors of all the houses hung open at night as they did by day. No millstone ground, no oven baked in any part of the town, and there was not a pennyworth of anything to be had: no bread, no pastry, no wine, no cider, no ale (Bryant, 2006: 41).

So here the realm of the Fisher King is portrayed as a desert, barren, empty land whose inhabitants have fled due to the sterility of their land, a land of hunger, diseases and downfall. Also, according to the legend, the Fisher King challenged Arthur's knights, especially Sir Perceval, to ask a question. If he asks the correct question, Perceval would be able to see the Grail and heal the Fisher King. However, Perceval fails and regrets his failure with grief:

I was once at the house of the Fisher King, and I saw the lance with the head that most certainly bleeds, but I asked nothing about the drop of blood I saw hanging from the tip of that white head. And truly, I have done nothing since then to make amends. Nor do I know who was served from the vessel I saw, the Grail, and I have suffered such grief ever since that I would be gladly dead; for I have forgotten God because of it and not once since then I have asked Him for mercy – I do not think I have done anything to earn it (Bryant, 2006:70).

Therefore, the healing of the Wasteland depends upon the fulfilment of a particular quest. In this case, Perceval was required to answer a question for the restoration of the Wasteland, about the Grail itself or the Fisher King's wounds, depending on the texts. In the end, Perceval acknowledges his own mistakes and rides back to the Grail Castle to ask the question and discover the truth behind the Fisher King and the Grail. These elements from the myth of the Wasteland are present in *The Lord of the Rings*. In

general, Middle-earth could be considered a sort of Wasteland since all its realms are threatened by Sauron and his hosts. However, this idea is especially portrayed in Rohan, Gondor, Mordor and the Shire.

8.3.1. Rohan

Rohan may be the clearest example of a wasteland in *The Lord of the Rings*. Indeed, just before Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, and Gimli enter Meduseld, Aragorn himself tells a very meaningful poem about Rohan:

(97)

Where now the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?
Where is the helm and the hauberk, and the bright hair blowing?
Where is the hand on the harpstring, and the red fire glowing?
Where is the spring and the harvest and the tall corn growing?
They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow;
The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.
Who shall gather the smoke of dead wood burning,
Or behold the flowing years from the Sea returning?
(Tolkien in Anderson, 2012:497).

These lines refer to the decline of the race of Men, especially appreciated in their respective kingdoms: Rohan and Gondor. The first four lines may refer to the absence of the true ruler and leader of the kingdoms of the men. Also, the poem portrays the previous state of glory and splendour, which is now lost, and the current decline of Rohan: “the smoke of dead wood”. This is also reinforced when Aragorn claims that “the raising of this house is but a memory of song, and the years before are lost in the mist of time” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 496). Rohan was founded by Eorl the Young who established his kingdom in the White Mountains at the north of Gondor. In fact, Rohan belonged to Gondor but after the victory against the Orcs in Calenardhon, this land was ceded to the Easterlings and named the Riddermark (Land of the Knights). In Gondor this land was called Rohan. Tyler (2012: 550) describes it in the following way:

It was a fair and generous country, fertile and level for the most part, and ideal for the rearing and breeding of horses because of its grassland. The Riders were famed for their skill with their great steeds, and their herds and studs prospered in the years which followed the victory at the Field of Celebrant.

This excerpt offers a very similar portrayal of what the Arthurian Wasteland was like before going into decay due to the Fisher King's wounds. So, here Rohan is described as a rich, fruitful and prosper land, just like the Wasteland, which was previously a glorious land. However, Rohan also had to overcome several difficulties especially at wartime. During the War of the Ring, Rohan was especially tested as we will see later on.

More importantly, Theoden's physical appearance is very meaningful because it epitomizes the Arthurian concept of king and realm as one single entity. If in the Grail legends, the Fisher King is represented as an old man, whose wounds do not allow him to rule properly, something similar happens to Theoden in *The Lord of the Rings*. He is first described as follows:

(98)

And in the middle of the dais was a great gilded chair. Upon it sat a man so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf; but his white hair was long and thick and fell in great braids from beneath a thin golden circlet. In the centre upon his forehead shone a single white diamond. His beard was laid like snow upon his knees; but his eyes still burned with a bright light, glinting as he gazed at the strangers (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 501).

Here Theoden is portrayed as an extremely old king. His physical appearance symbolizes his own way of ruling, characterized by decadence and rottenness, and his moral corruption. This extract serves to reinforce the idea of kingdom and ruler as the same thing, as being totally dependent on each other. Ekman (2014: 178) explains:

Whether by finding the rightful heir, identifying a suitable candidate for the empty throne, or curing the ailing king, the restoration of the sovereign is a ubiquitous motif in fantasy literature, particularly that of the portal-quest variety. It may be the object of a quest or simply an unintended result; it may even be a minor side effect of the story's general resolution. Whether central or peripheral to the story, whether a recurring theme or a final twist, restoring the ruler –the proper ruler, the ruler who will make everything well- is part of many fantasy stories' happy ending.

These words are important when analysing the figure of Theoden. He is first portrayed as a rotten king who has been corrupted by Gríma and Saruman. Theoden's healing depends quite a lot upon Gandalf and is a part of Aragorn's own Quest since Aragorn's task as a high king resides in 'healing' and uniting the kingdoms of men: Gondor and Rohan.

However, Theoden changes when Gandalf casts a spell on him in Meduseld. The scene that is described when the wizard rises his staff is rather significant since it epitomizes his struggle against evil and Theoden's first step to physical, moral recovery and restoration:

(99)

He raised his staff. There was a roll of thunder. The sunlight was blotted out from the eastern windows; the whole hall became suddenly dark as night. The fire faded to sullen embers. Only Gandalf could be seen, standing white and tall before the blackened hearth (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 503).

Gandalf's struggle to release Theoden from evil is not only a moral process, but it is also a physical one as we can see in the previous quotation. The darkness which Gandalf's fight against represents the moral corruption that has ruled in Meduseld, mainly portrayed in Gríma Wormtongue, Saruman's ally. After the spell, Gandalf tells Theoden that he is free of the shadow and evil that dwelt in him. When he awakens from his sleep of shadows, Theoden says:

(100)

Dark have been my dreams of late, but I feel as one new-awakened. I would now that you had come before, Gandalf. For I fear that already you have come too late, only to see the last days of my house. Not long now shall stand the high hall which Brego son of Eorl built. Fire shall devour the high seat. What is to be done? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 504).

Theoden is almost healed when he says these words and things seem to change drastically. If he was previously portrayed as a weak ruler, now Theoden King looks quite different. At the beginning of the chapter “the King of the Golden Hall” in *The Two Towers*, he is presented as hostile, unfriendly towards Gandalf and suspicious of the wizard’s intentions. Indeed, Both Theoden and his marshall, Gríma, name him “stormcrow” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 502) and “ill-news” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 503)

An act of pity is the beginning of Theoden’s complete recovery. When he shows pity towards Wormtongue, the King’s recovery is fulfilled since he shows that he is ready to rule Rohan properly again. However, Gríma accuses him of becoming Gandalf’s puppet. In Wormtongue’s own words:

(101)

It is as I feared. This wizard has bewitched you. Are none to be left to defend the Golden Hall of your fathers, and all your treasure? None to guard the Lord of the Mark? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 508).

Then, Theoden claims that Gríma’s own wickedness has made him ill physically and morally and he is no longer willing to do what Gríma commands him to. However, Theoden decides not to take revenge against Gríma but rather the opposite. He intends to test Gríma’s doubtful loyalty by taking him to the battlefield at Helm’s Deep. Theoden says that:

(102)

You have my pity. And I do not send you from my side. I go myself to war with my men. I bid you come with me and prove your faith (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 508).

As expected, Wormtongue refuses to go to war. Warfare was considered a heroic way to gain honour and show one's prowess in Anglo-Saxon culture. In refusing, Gríma shows his cowardice and lack of loyalty towards Theoden and Rohan. He also tries to stay in Rohan so that he can rule it on his own. However, he fails in his attempt to get the whole control of Theoden's kingdom. Instead of departing with his lord to war, he tries to escape.

After this episode, Theoden goes to war three times and fights at the battle of Helm's Deep, the siege of Minas Tirith and lastly, at the Pelennor fields. In all of them, Theoden shows his prowess as the King of the Rohirrim, especially in his final battle. While fighting at the battlefield he receives a mortal wound by the Witch King. Then, his niece Éowyn finally takes revenge and kills the Lord of the Nâzgul. After Theoden's death, it is Éomer, his nephew, who becomes king of Rohan and leads his men against Sauron's hosts. Later in the story and after the War of the Ring is finished, Theoden's burial is celebrated. His death is described as heroic, brave and glorious since he died fighting:

(103)

Out of doubt, out of dark, to the day's rising
He rode singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.
Hope he rekindled, and in hope ended;
over death, over dread, over doom lifted
out of loss, out of life, unto long glory
(Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 954).

These lines provide a very similar depiction of what death implied or meant in the Middle Ages. In Arthurian ethos, death was seen as a glorious end for a knight or

warrior, especially if he died at the battlefield. For example, in some Arthurian texts, when Lancelot accidentally kills Gaheris, Gawain's brother, Gawain chooses to take revenge against him and intends to kill him. However, Gawain dies because of the wounds he received while fighting against Lancelot. Gawain's death (Gawain was one of Arthur's best knights) is regarded as heroic. The best death for a knight is that which happens on a battlefield, fighting. This can be also appreciated in Theoden's death as it is reflected in the poem above. His heroic death can be compared to Arthur's own death. Like Arthur, who is mortally wounded by Mordred in the battlefield at Camlann, Theoden dies at the battle of Minas Tirith, where he is killed by the Witch King.

8.3.2. Gondor

If we want to study the myth of the Wasteland in Tolkien's work, we need to pay attention to the realm of Gondor, which is one of the realms founded by the Númenor kings, specifically, by Elendil the Tall. Initially, there were two realms of the race of men in Middle-earth: Gondor and Arnor. Unlike Arnor, which was a small, not very important realm, Gondor was rather the opposite because it comprised many lands of Middle-earth: Ithilien, Anórien, Anfalas, Belfalas, Minas Anor, Minas Ithil, Ephel Dúath and Osgiliath:

At the founding of the realm, in 3320 Second Age, Gondor included most of the lands about the feet of the White Mountains, save only for the far eastern dales beyond the river Lefnui. Her chief provinces were the royal fiefs of Ithilien and Anórien, and her rule extended as far as the coastal regions of Anfalas and Belfalas. Her greatest cities were Minas Anor, Tower of the Sun, on the eastern shoulders of the White Mountains; Minas Ithil, Tower of the Moon, in the western vales of Ephel Dúath; and Osgiliath, Citadel of the Stars, which lay in between, upon either side of the Great River (Tyler, 2012:282).

Gondor is probably the most powerful realm of men in all Middle-earth. This realm was often at war with Sauron during the Second Age. The War of the Wrath involved Sauron's own defeat since there was a last alliance between Elves and Men. However, the downfall of Gondor took place when Isildur got the Master Ring from Sauron's hands as a sort of reward for his father's death, Elendil. This does not just imply a breakdown in the lineage of the Númenorean kings but also between men. The race of Men started to diminish and went to dwell in different lands of Middle-earth.

In comparing Gondor to the Arthurian Wasteland we can see several similarities. The most evident one refers to their respective rulers. Both the Fisher King and Isildur are responsible for the good ruling of their people and realms but they fail. In the case of the Fisher King, he possesses a wound that does not allow him to rule properly and which is also a symbol for his physical inability and moral infertility or corruption. As for Isildur, his greed and definitely his moral corruption, caused by Sauron's Ring, brought about the disappearance of the lineage of the Númenorean Kings in Middle-earth, whose heirs were the Dúnedain, a race of men that dwelt in different parts of Middle-earth after Isildur's fall. Instead of destroying the Ring in the Orodruin, Isildur decided to take it for himself, as a sort of token or gift for his father's death. As Elrond explains in the Council in Rivendell:

(104)

“This I will have as wergild for my father and my brother,” he said; and therefore whether we would or no, he took it to treasure it. But soon he was betrayed by it to his death; and so it is named in the North Isildur's Bane' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 237).

The downfall and death of Isildur caused some serious consequences for the kingdoms of men since the men from Númenor started to diminish after the war and disappeared in Arnor:

(105)

In the North after the war and the slaughter of the Gladden Fields the Men of Westemnethe were diminished, and their city of Annúminas beside Lake Evendim fell into ruin; and the heirs of Valandil removed and dwelt at Fornost on the high North Downs, and that now too is desolate. Men call it Deadmen's Dike, and they fear to tread there. For the folk of Arnor dwindled, and their foes devoured them, and their lordship passed, leaving only green mounds in the grassy hills (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012:239).

This example illustrates the desolation and decadence that came just after Isildur's death. The fact that the One Ring was not destroyed, partly because of Isildur's own ignorance about its power and maliciousness, implied a consequent downfall and ruin of the Númenorean realms Arnor and Gondor.

As for Gondor, which was much more powerful, it managed to remain free longer. However, it was also devastated by evil forces. Instead of being a kingdom itself, Gondor ended up becoming a stewardship, ruled by a temporary 'ruler', at least until the legitimate king comes back:

(106)

In the South the realm of Gondor long endured; and for a while its splendor grew, recalling somewhat of the might of Númenor, ere it fell. High towers that people built, and strong places, and havens of many ships; and the winged crown of the Kings of Men as held in awe by folk of many tongues. Their chief city was Osgiliath, Citadel of the Stars, through the midst of which the River flowed. And Minas Ithil they built, Tower of the Rising Moon, eastward upon a shoulder of the Mountains of Shadow; and westwards at the feet of the White Mountains Minas Anor they made, Tower of the Setting Sun. There in the courts of the King grew a white tree, from the seed of that tree which Isildur brought over the deep waters, and the seed of that tree before came from Eressëa, and before that out of the Uttermost West in the Day before days when the world was young (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 238).

Here Gondor is portrayed as a glorious and powerful, and slightly withering, kingdom whose location was particularly good when a war was waged there.

Another very important element that shows the decline of Gondor is its white tree. The White Tree of Gondor represents the Arthurian idea of Wasteland in a very clear way. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the tree is depicted as totally withered. Tolkien points out, “but in the midst, drooping over the pool, stood a dead tree, and the falling drops dripped sadly from its barren and broken branches back into the clear water” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 736) and “it looked mournful, he thought, and he wondered why the dead tree was left in this place where everything else was well tended” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 737). Like the kingdom of the Fisher King, the White Tree of Gondor symbolizes both the physical and moral state of their realms and rulers. The fact that the tree is dead and withered involves that Gondor is dead in the sense that it has no king and its steward is not a suitable ruler due to his corruption. During the Third Age, Gondor was already a kingdom which had lost its splendour and whose steward, Denethor, behaved as a weak and a poor ruler. However, the decadence and decline of Gondor is something gradual and is connected with the increasing power of Sauron. This means that the more powerful and stronger Sauron became the weaker Gondor was:

(107)

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 Númenoreans became mingled with that of lesser men. Then the watch upon the walls of Mordor slept, and dark things crept back to Gorgoroth. And on a time evil things came forth, and they took Minas Ithil and abode in it, and they made it into a place dread; and it is called Minas Morgul, the Tower of Sorcery. Then Minas Anor as named anew Minas Tirith, the Tower of Guard; and these two cities were ever at war, but Osgiliath which lay between as deserted and in its ruins shadows walked (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 238).

Consequently, since the very moment that Isildur seized the Master Ring, evil and darkness got into his own realm and caused its progressive deterioration and fall. *In The*

Lord of the Rings, when Pippin and Gandalf arrive in Minas Tirith, the Hobbit feels impressed by the beauty and the splendour of the Citadel:

(108)

Pippin gazed in growing wonder at the great stone city, vaster and more splendid than anything that he had dreamed of; greater and stronger than Isengard, and far more beautiful. Yet it was in truth falling year by year into decay; and already it lacked half the men that could have dwelt at ease there. In every street they passed some great house or court over whose doors and arched gates were carved many fair letters of strange and ancient shapes: names Pippin guessed of great men and kindreds that had once dwelt there; and yet now they were silent, and no footsteps rang on their wide pavements, nor voice was heard in their halls, nor any face looked out from door or empty window (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 736).

This description shows the splendour which is still present in the buildings of Minas Tirith although the fact that it is empty implies that the city is falling into a silent and progressive decline. Gondor's downfall is also caused by the threatening nearby presence of Mordor and Barad-Dûr. Pippin shows his fear and hopelessness for what it is yet to come. In Pippin's own words:

(109)

He looked at the great walls, and the towers and brave banners, and the sun in the high sky, and then at the gathering gloom in the East; and he thought of the long fingers of that Shadow: of the orcs in the woods and the mountains, the treason of Isengard, the birds of evil eye, and the Black Riders even in the lanes of the Shire –and of the winged terror, the Nazgûl. He shuddered, and hope seemed to wither. And even at that moment the sun for a second faltered and was obscured, as though a dark wing had passed across it. Almost beyond hearing he thought he caught, high and far up in the heavens, a cry: faint, but heart-quelling, cruel and cold (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 749).

Here the cry probably comes from a winged monster ridden by a Nazgûl. This cry symbolizes a fatal omen of what it is yet to come to Gondor at the siege of Minas Tirith: evil, destruction and death. Pippin also points out that “It is the sign of our fall, and the shadow of doom, a Fell Rider of the air” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 749). The cry of

the Nazgûl seems to be the first sign of the terrible battle which is about to be waged in Minas Tirith. This sense of hopelessness and approaching battle grows and is portrayed in the landscape of Gondor:

(110)

It was dark and dim all day. From the sunless dawn until evening the heavy shadow had deepened, and all hearts in the City were oppressed. Far above a great cloud streamed slowly westward from the Black Land, devouring light, borne upon a wind of war; but below the air was still and breathless, as if all the Vale of Anduin waited for the onset of a ruinous storm (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 789).

This gloomy and dark environment epitomizes not only the threatening and approaching evil that comes from Mordor but also the hopelessness and despair of the inhabitants of Minas Tirith and of those who fight against Sauron such as Pippin.

Instead of acting as a brave ruler, Denethor is presented as a weak ruler easily corrupted by the idea of owning the Master Ring. Indeed, Denethor claims that he would like to keep the Ring in Minas Tirith since he does not see that the only possibility to destroy Sauron and his evil is by throwing the Ring into Mount Doom.

Denethor says:

(111)

If I had this thing in the deep vaults of this citadel, we should not then shake with dread under this gloom, fearing the worst, and our counsels would be undisturbed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 796).

Moreover, we notice Denethor's failure as a ruler (he is not a king) when he commands Pippin to go out so that he can make a pyre to burn himself and his son Faramir's dead body. This action reveals Denethor's real cowardice and inability to rule Gondor especially at wartimes. In Arthurian legends, the prowess of a good knight or ruler was especially tested in wars, often successfully. Pippin acknowledges that:

(112)

But the Lord of the City, Denethor, has fallen before his city is taken. He is fey and dangerous (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 809).

Indeed, Denethor decides to kill himself rather than confronting the foe at the battle field in Minas Tirith since he thinks that fighting against Sauron is useless. In Denethor's own words:

(113)

Battle is vain. Why should we wish to live longer? Why should we not go to death side by side? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 835).

Then, Denethor shows his madness more clearly when he says:

(114)

Didst thou think that the eyes of the White Tower were blind? Nay, I have seen more that thou knowest, Grey Fool. For thy hope is ignorance. Go then and labour in healing! Go forth and fight! Vanity. For a little space you may triumph on the field, for a day. But against the Power that now arises there is no victory. To this City only the first finger of its hand has yet been stretched. All the East is moving. And even now the wind of thy hope cheats thee and wafts up Anduin a fleet with black sails. The West has failed. It is time for all to depart who would not be slaves (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012:835).

There seems to be a reason for Denethor's own weakness and cowardice. As a steward of Gondor, he possesses one of the Palantíri, the Seeing Stones. These stones, created by Fëanor, given to the Kings of Númenor and brought to Middle-earth by Elendil, were "in fashion like a globe of crystal, in the heart of which flickered a tiny flame" (Tyler, 2012: 510). Only the heirs of the Númenor kings could use them properly and master them. Their main use was to see what was happening in other parts of Middle-earth or communicate with others. Denethor was corrupted by one of this Palantíri, which in turn Sauron used to destroy the steward of Gondor. Indeed, Denethor's words look like Sauron's own words rather than those of the steward of the Kings of Gondor. As Tyler (2012: 510) argues, "the Stone of Minas Anor (Minas Tirith) fell virtually under the

control of Sauron who used it to break the mind of Denethor II, last Ruling Steward". Sauron's control of Denethor can be appreciated in the fact that he wants to kill his still alive son, Faramir. In this way, Gondor would be plunged into chaos and left with no ruler or heir.

Finally, the battle for Minas Tirith is surprisingly won by Aragorn's unexpected help. Instead of marching directly towards Minas Tirith, he crosses the Paths of the Dead, a place under a mountain dwelt by the wraiths of many men who betrayed Isildur in his fight against Sauron. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 764) writes that:

(115)

Over the land there lies a long shadow,
westward reaching wings of darkness,
The Tower trembles; to the tombs of kings
doom approaches. The Dead awaken;
for the hour is come for the oathbreakers:
at the Stone of Erech they shall stand again
and hear there a horn in the hills ringing.
Whose shall the horn be? Who shall call them
from the grey twilight, the forgotten people?
the heir of him to whom the oath they swore.
From the north shall he come, need shall drive him:
He shall pass the Door to the Paths of the Dead.

Aragorn's unexpected army led Minas Tirith to victory, defeating Sauron and his hosts.

If Gondor can be seen as a sort of Arthurian Wasteland, it is also important to explain the process of healing of Gondor. Unlike Rohan which is saved by Gandalf rather than by its own ruler, the healing of Gondor is intimately connected with Aragorn's own quest. If in the Arthurian legends, it is a King Arthur's knight who heals the Fisher King, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn plays the role of healer of the race of men and especially, of Gondor. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 844) says that "the hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known."³⁶ So the

³⁶ In the Middle Ages and in Renaissance England and France, there was a common belief that kings could heal diseases such as scrofula, king's evil, or epilepsy, among others. This was called the 'royal

rightful ruler must heal his own land, Gondor, and save the whole Middle-earth from Sauron and other evil forces. In the chapter “The Houses of Healing”, Aragorn talks about a plant called Athelas which is also curiously named as ‘kingsfoil’ meaning ‘leaves of the King’:

(116)

When the black breath blows, / and death’s shadow grows, / and all lights pass, / come athelas! come athelas! / Life to the dying / In the king’s hand lying! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 847).

Once the battle for Minas Tirith is ended and won, Aragorn leads all the armies to the Black Gate to a final battle at the Cormallen Fields. He is no longer Strider, the Ranger from the North but Aragorn, the heir of Isildur, the rightful King of Gondor. After the destruction of the Ring, Aragorn ascends to the throne of Gondor and the White Tree of Gondor starts to blossom and grow, which symbolizes the healing of Gondor and that its true king is on the throne and rules well.

8.3.3. Mordor

So far we have analyzed both Rohan and Gondor as lands that echo the Arthurian idea of the Wasteland, i.e. a realm laid waste which is finally healed and saved. But in *The Lord of the Rings*, we can find another example of a “Wasteland”: Mordor. Mordor, the Black Land, represents this same Arthurian idea of a place plunged into chaos, destruction, darkness and corruption but taken to its limits, i.e. an extreme version of the

touch’. Bloch (2015: 6) explains that: “For many centuries the kings of France and the kings of England used ‘to touch for scrofula’-to use the classical expression of the time. That is to say, they claimed to be able, simply by their touch, to cure people suffering from this disease, and their subjects shared a common belief in their medicinal powers. Over an almost equally long period, the kings of England used to distribute to their subjects, and even beyond the boundaries of their own State, the so-called cramp rings, which by virtue of their consecration at the hands of a king, were held to have acquired the power to restore health to the epileptic, and to assuage all kinds of muscular pains”.

Arthurian Wasteland. While Rohan and Gondor can be saved, Mordor cannot be healed because of its deep evil and corruption. Before Sauron dwelt in it, Mordor was already an infertile, barren land. Tyler (2012: 433) explains that “even before its adoption by Sauron, Mordor was a bleak and desert land, barren and infertile”. Therefore, the landscape of Mordor mirrors the maliciousness of its own ruler, Sauron. This means that the natural environment of Mordor, full of darkness and barrenness, is a reflection of Sauron’s spiritual and moral darkness, corruption and infertility. This gloomy, deserted, sterile land clearly echoes the narrow relationship between a ruler and his realm as it happens with Gondor and Aragorn.

If we compare Mordor to the Arthurian ‘Wasteland’ we can see some similarities and differences. The most obvious one is the gloomy landscape and the sterility of the Fisher King’s land and of Mordor, physical traits which symbolize their moral and spiritual rottenness. However, they differ in one aspect: their healing. While the Fisher King and his realm are eventually saved and healed, Mordor cannot be healed so it is destroyed. Tolkien describes Mordor as:

(117)

Upon the west of Mordor marched the gloomy range of Ephel Dúath, the Mountains of Shadow, and upon the north the broken peaks and barren ridges of Ered Lithui, grey as ash. But as these ranges approached one another, being indeed but parts of one great wall about the mournful plains of Lithlad and of Gorgoroth, and the bitter inland sea of Núrnen amidmost, they swung out long arms northward; and between these arms there was a deep defile. This was Cirith Gorgor, the Haunted Pass, the entrance to the land of the Enemy. High cliffs lowered upon either side, and thrust forward from its mouth were two sheer hills, black-boned and bare. Upon them stood the Teeth of Mordor, two towers strong and tall. In days long past they were built by the Men of Gondor in their pride and power, after the overthrow of Sauron and his flight, lest he should seek to return to his old realm (Anderson, 2012: 622).

In this extract, Tolkien provides a very concise description of the landscape of Mordor. The use of some adjectives such as gloomy, grey, mournful, bitter, black-boned, bare, etc. and the distribution of the mountains, cliffs and other geographical features contribute to Mordor's depiction as a dark, oppressive land ruled by evil.

The relationship between landscape, spirituality and feelings is also so strong that it has its effects on the characters of the Hobbits Frodo and Sam. The further they get into Mordor, the more hopeless and miserable they feel. Tolkien describes that:

(118)

A deep silence fell upon the little grey hollow where they lay, so near to the borders of the land of fear: a silence that could be felt, as if it were a thick veil that cut them off from all the world about them (Anderson, 2012: 630).

This idea may be also appreciated when the Hobbits arrive at Mount Doom. The oppression they feel grows as they approach it and Barad-Dûr is nearer. In Tolkien's own words:

(119)

So the desperate journey went on, as the Ring went south and the banners of the kings rode north. For the hobbits each day, each mile, was more bitter than the one before, as their strength lessened and the land became more evil (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 914).

As the oppressive environment of Mount Doom grows harder and the difficulty and harshness of Sam and Frodo's Quest increase, the two Hobbits become more despaired and hopeless. So we can see that Mordor and its black landscapes have serious effects on them partly because of the evil which Sauron has inflicted upon Mordor. We notice to what extent the evil and oppression of Mount Doom are affecting their spirituality and minds:

(120)

There came at last a dreadful nightfall; and even as the Captains of the West drew near to the end of the living lands, the two wanderers came to an hour of blank despair. Four days had passed since they had escaped from the orcs, but the time lay behind them like an ever-darkening dream. All this last day Frodo had not spoken, but had walked half-bowed, often stumbling, as if his eyes no longer saw the way before his feet. Sam guessed that among all their pains he bore the worst, the growing weight of the Ring, a burden on the body and a torment to his mind. Anxiously Sam had noted how his master's left hand would often be raised as if to ward off a blow, or to screen his shrinking eyes from a dreadful Eye that sought to look in them. And sometimes his right hand would creep to his breast, clutching, and then slowly, as the will recovered mastery, it would be withdrawn (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 914).

Here both the physical and mental changes suffered by Frodo can be perceived. The deeper he gets into Mount Doom, the stronger the evil lying within the Ring and in Mordor is. Both landscape and Ring are corrupting Frodo. Finally, the evil within the Ring breaks Frodo's mind and the Hobbit fails to destroy the Ring. In other words, he finally decides not to destroy the Ring but keep it instead:

(121)

But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 924).

However, after the destruction of the Ring and the consequent downfall of Sauron, Mordor is destroyed since its own evil cannot be healed. All the mountains and the fortresses, included Mount Doom and Barad-Dûr, in Mordor disappear and the only thing left of Mordor is a barren, infertile desert.

8.3.4. The Shire

After the end of the War and Aragorn's crowning, the Hobbits decide to go back home. The peaceful and idyllic Shire that they knew is totally different when they return. In fact, the title of the chapter, "The Scouring of the Shire", implies its own healing, i.e. the Shire must be released from the evil that has corrupted it. The Shire is then ruled by a leader called Chief who is tyrannizing the Hobbits by not allowing them to enter the Shire from nightfall to dawn or eat extra food among other things. The evil of the West which the Hobbits fought against is now present in their own home and their last task is to heal the Shire and save it from evil. This state of decay is also present in the landscape:

(122)

But now, seeing what things were like, they decided to go straight to Hobbiton. So the next day they set out along the Road and jogged along steadily. The wind had dropped but the sky was grey. The land looked rather sad and forlorn; but it was after all the first of November and the fag-end of Autumn. Still there seemed an unusual amount of burning going on, and smoke rose from many points round about. A great cloud of it was going up far away in the direction of the Woody End (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 977).

This example shows to what extent evil has corrupted the Shire. If previously it was a green, peaceful place with many woods, rivers, whose inhabitants lived quietly, here it is depicted as a dark, sad place. The chief of the Shire is Saruman who tries to oppress the Hobbits and take revenge against Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin due to their successful quest of destroying the Ring. In Frodo's own words:

(123)

'Yes, this is Mordor,' said Frodo. 'Just one of its works. Saruman was doing its work all the time, even when he thought he was working for

himself. And the same with those that Saruman tricked, like Lotho' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 994).

In order to heal his homeland, Frodo decides to expel Saruman from it instead of killing him. However, in his last attempt to threaten the Hobbits, he says:

(124)

“But do not think that when I lost all my goods I lost all my power! Whoever strikes me shall be accursed. And if my blood stains the Shire, it shall wither and never again be healed” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 995).

Frodo forgives Saruman and lets him go. This act of mercy seems to be the first step to heal the Shire as well as Saruman. An act of mercy (Bilbo did not kill Gollum) contributed to the final destruction of the Ring and the healing of all Middle-earth. In Saruman's own words:

(124)

‘Yes, you have grown very much. You are wise, Halfling’ said he. ‘Yes, you have grown very much. You are wise, and cruel. You have robbed my revenge of sweetness, and now I must go hence in bitterness, in debt to your mercy. I hate it and you! Well, I go and I will trouble you no more. But do not expect me to wish you health and long life. You will have neither. But that is not my doing. I merely foretell’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 996).

Once Saruman and Gríma Wormtongue leave the Shire, the place seems to recover its previous state of peacefulness, prosperity and greenery.

8.4. Minas Tirith and Camelot

Both Minas Tirith and Camelot share many similarities regarding both their appearance or portrayal and their meaning or symbolism. As it is widely known, Camelot is the ‘capital city’ of King Arthur's whole kingdom which comprises several lands. In some Arthurian medieval texts, Camelot is not King Arthur's court but Logres or Caerleon. The use of Camelot as King Arthur's own capital appeared for the first time in Thomas

Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and was later popularized by Tennyson in the 19th century.

Camelot has been traditionally described as an unassailable towered fortress where Arthur had set his court. Alfred Lord Tennyson provides a concise, modern and excellent portrayal of Arthur's main city. Our view of Camelot comes from his main Arthurian works, *Idylls of the King* and *The Lady of Shalott*:

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces / And stately, rich in emblem and the work / Of ancient kings who did their days in stone; / Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court, / Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere, / At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak / And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven (Gray, 1996: 44, ll. 296-302).

According to this description of Arthur's city, we can guess that Camelot was a splendid, rich and glorious city which is falling into decay. Most importantly, especially in studying its similarities with Minas Tirith, Camelot is here presented as a city ruled by "ancient kings who did their days in stone". This description reminds us of the idea behind Tolkien's Argonath. The Argonath, the meaning of which is 'pillars of the Kings' in Sindarin language, are huge statues made in stone over the Anduin River which have the appearance of two kings of Gondor, Isildur and Anárion:

(125)

As Frodo was borne towards them the great pillars rose like towers to meet him. Giants they seemed to him, vast grey figures silent but threatening. Then he saw that they were indeed shaped and fashioned: the craft and power of old had wrought upon them, and still they preserved through the suns and rains of forgotten years the mighty likeness in which they had been hewn. Upon great pedestals founded in the deep waters stood two kings of stone: still with blurred eyes and crannied brows they frowned upon the North. The left hand of each as raised palm outwards in gesture of warning; in each right hand there was an axe; upon each head there was a crumbling helm and crown. Great power and majesty they still wore, the silent wardens of a long-vanished kingdom. Awe and fear fell upon Frodo, and he cowered down, shutting his eyes and not daring to

look up as the boat drew near. Even Boromir bowed his head as the boats whirled by, frail and fleeting as little leaves, under the enduring shadow of the sentinels of Númenor (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 383).

These huge monuments in honour of the Númenorean Kings and the past glory of Gondor serve to reinforce the idea of this realm as a shadow of the past or a fallen kingdom. Also, the feelings and emotions that the Argonath stones cause in the Companions show the impressive past and still felt glory which Gondor once enjoyed. This sense of falling or fallen splendour is also present in Tennyson's own depiction of Camelot.

Another important similarity between Camelot and Minas Tirith has to do with their own ruling. They are not just simple realms. Their respective kings, Arthur and Aragorn are High Kings. This means that they are kings of kings since their lineage is nobler, more ancient and more powerful than other minor kings, such as King Lot of Orkney or King Theoden of Rohan. High kingship is thought to have arisen in Ireland in the early Middle Ages. This term commonly refers to a title given to a ruler who is supposed to have the right by blood to become the king of the different lands and realms of a whole country. In Arthurian tradition, as a High King, King Arthur inherited his title from his own father, Uther, who managed to unite all the lands and peoples from Britain. That is why Uther and later Arthur became high kings of Britain. This idea of high kingship is also present in the symbolism of Arthur's sword, Excalibur. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* Arthur is presented as a High King because he succeeded in his task of reuniting the tribes of Britain. Like Arthur, Aragorn is a High King since he belongs to the lineage of the Kings of Númenor who ruled Middle-earth as High Kings. Isildur, Aragorn's ancestor, ruled both the High Kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor. After destroying the Ring and Sauron, Aragorn is

crowned High King of Gondor, being called Elessar, which means ‘elfstone’. However, Aragorn differs from Arthur in the sense that he must become High King not before, like Arthur, but after accomplishing his own quest, i.e. the restoration and healing of the kingdom of Gondor and the race of men. In order to become High King of Gondor, Aragorn is tested and must show his prowess as a leader and worthy future king. Perkins and Hill (2003: 64) argue that “Aragorn, becoming the High King, has extensive power, but it is important that this comes to him through hereditary right as well as long years of patient effort and great valor”.

Moreover, Camelot and Minas Tirith have in common the close relationship between the city and its ruler. This bonding between Camelot and Arthur and Gondor and Aragorn implies that this intimate unity does not take place at a political level but also at a moral or spiritual one. The state of Camelot or Gondor depends upon their rulers and the way they rule. In Arthurian tradition, when Arthur ascends to the throne, his realm becomes more prosperous, peaceful and fair since there are not so many wars. Something similar happens to Aragorn and Gondor. Before Aragorn’s crowning, Gondor was plunged into a state of decay and chaos symbolized in the withered White Tree of Gondor due to the moral weakness and corruption of its steward, Denethor. However, this changes when Aragorn is crowned king. As mentioned above, if Theoden’s physical appearance embodied the situation of his own realm, which was old and rotten, Aragorn’s portrayal also represents this same idea of the outward appearance of the king as a physical and spiritual mirror of his own kingdom:

(126)

But when Aragorn arose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them not for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow,

and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 947).

Consequently, Aragorn is no longer a wanderer, a ranger but the rightful and legitimate King of Gondor. Once its ruler has returned and become king, Gondor flourishes thanks to him. This 'light' that surrounds Aragorn brings hope and prosperity for the people of Gondor.

However, we may also find some differences between Camelot and Minas Tirith. The main one is connected with the power which resides in both cities. As has been seen before, both King Arthur and Aragorn are very important symbols of their respective kingdoms which are even closely linked to their kings, both physically and morally. They are both unassailable fortresses that cannot be conquered so easily. While the strength and might of Camelot lie in the prowess of King Arthur's knights, the power of Minas Tirith is especially related to its location since it was built in a place especially hard and difficult to have access to:

(127)

For the fashion of Minas Tirith was such that it was built on seven levels, each delved into the hill, and about each was set a wall, and in each wall was a gate. But the gates were not set in a line: the Great Gate in the City Wall was at the east point of the circuit, but the next faced half south, and the third half north, and so to and fro upwards; so that the paved way that climbed towards the Citadel turned first this way and then that across the face of the hill. And each time that it passed the line of the Great Gate it went through an arched tunnel, piercing a vast pier of rock whose huge out-thrust bulk divided in two all the circles of the City save the first. For partly in the primeval shaping of the hill, partly by the mighty craft and labour of old, there stood up from the rear of the wide court behind the Gate a towering bastion of stone, its edge sharp as a ship-keel facing east. Up it rose, even to the level of the topmost circle, and there was crowned by a battlement; so that those in the Citadel might, like mariners in a mountainous ship, look from its peak sheer down upon the Gate seven hundred feet below. The entrance to the Citadel also looked eastward, but was delved in the heart of the rock; thence a long lamp-lit slope ran up to the seventh gate. Thus men reached at last the High Court, and the Place

of the Fountain before the feet of the White Tower: tall and shapely, fifty fathoms from its base to the pinnacle, where the banner of the Stewards floated a thousand feet above the plain (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 735).

This long and extremely concise description of Minas Tirith shows the image of a citadel set in the slope of a very high rocky mountain. This implies that possible enemies could have many difficulties and hardships in trying to besiege it. Also, we can say that the city was built in such a way that it looked like rather a sort of maze or labyrinth. As we can see after reading the example above, Minas Tirith has several gates which look in different directions, and the court where the Steward or the King has his lodgings is the highest part of it. All this makes Gondor impossible to be conquered by Sauron and his hosts, despite the fact that Sauron's armies are manifold and one Nazgûl ridden by the Witch King is sent there. As for Camelot, we have not a very concise portrayal of Arthur's city. Unfortunately, Arthurian texts do not usually give us an exact description or a very general one at the best. As pointed out before, in *Idylls of the King* Tennyson provided a view of Camelot as modern readers see it nowadays although it is a very brief description:

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him / And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good ship sail / Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens / And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air: / And here is truth; but an please thee not, / Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me. / For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King / And Fairy Queens have built the city, son; / They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft / Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand, / And built it to the music of their harps. / And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son, / For there is nothing in it as it seems / Saving the King; tho' some there be that hold / The King a shadow, and the city real: / Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass / Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become / A thrall to his enchantments, for the King / Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame / A man should not be bound by, yet the which / No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear, / Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide / Without, among the cattle of the field. / For an ye heard a music, like enow / They are building still, seeing the city is built / To music, therefore never built at all, / And therefore built for ever (Gray, 1996: 43, ll. 249- 274).

Here Camelot is portrayed as a walled city although at the same time Tennyson describes it as a sort of fairyland, an enchanted fortress built with music. Camelot is generally seen or thought to be a walled fortress comprising Arthur's castle, many towers and the houses of villagers. Despite this lack of a particular description of King Arthur's most important city, we can say that it differs from Minas Tirith in the sense that its might does not depend upon its geographical location but upon the prowess of King Arthur's skillful knights. The strong friendship and loyalty makes the Order of the Round Table almost invincible and many of Arthur's knights are depicted as powerful knights who stand out for their sense of justice and helpfulness for those who need them.

8. 5. Avalon, Valinor and Tol Eressëa

In Arthurian tradition, Avalon refers to a mysterious land inhabited by Morgan Le Fay and other fairies. It is normally depicted as a mysterious hidden place where King Arthur was thought to have departed to in order to heal the mortal wounds that he received at the battle of Camlann. However, in *Le Morte D'Arthure* Thomas Malory identified Avalon with Glastonbury. In *The History of the Kings of Britain* Geoffrey of Monmouth claims that Arthur's sword (here named Caliburn) was forged here in Avalon. According to Monmouth, Avalon was ruled by nine sisters, Morgan being described as the most skillful healer of all of them. According to Arthurian tradition, King Arthur is believed to return from Avalon in case of need. Malory wrote that Arthur was taken to Avalon in a barge by three women (all of them, queens) such as Morgan Le Fay, the Queen of the Wastelands, the Queen of North Galis and the Lady of the Lake.

In Tolkien's world of Middle-earth, we may find two places that have some similarities with the Arthurian isle of Avalon: Valinor and Tol Eressëa. Valinor, which means 'Land of the Valar' in the Elvish tongue, was an island inhabited by the Valar gods and goddesses and later by the Elves who abandoned Middle-earth. Tyler (2012: 680) explains that:

its dimensions are of course not recorded, but it originally embraced the entire Isle of Aman; only later was the easternmost portion of this land set aside as a dwelling for the Eldar –being named Eldamar as a consequence- while the Valar and the Maiar withdrew into the land west of the Mountains they had raised as a defence against Melkor. (In this connection Valinor is also sometimes known as the Guarded Realm.)

This paragraph tells us the history of Valinor although very briefly. However, we can notice some similarities with Avalon. For instance, the fact that Valinor is called 'the Guarded Realm' reminds us of the atmosphere of mystery and secrecy that shrouds Avalon. Indeed, mortals were not allowed to enter both Avalon and Valinor since they were forbidden places for them, except for King Arthur and Frodo who went the former to Avalon and the latter to Valinor for the same reason: to heal their own wounds. Tyler (2012: 861) provides a description of what Valinor is like:

Elsewhere there were gardens and enchanted woods, and fields of grain, and orchards, and lakes: each the particular domain of one of Valar or Valier, peopled by their servants and followers, the Maiar. The westerly boundary was the shore of the Encircling Sea, Ekkaia, where stood the lonely Halls of Mandos. North and south of Valinor the Valar and Maiar did not journey.

Here Valinor is described as an idyllic place full of gardens and forests inhabited by the Valar and the Maiar as well as by the High Elves, the Eldar. This portrayal of Valinor, a green, wonderful island which is beyond the reach of any mortals from Middle-earth, shares some similarities with the depiction of Avalon, which is portrayed as an island and valley in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*:

But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest –if indeed I go
For all my mind is clouded with a doubt –
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea
(Tennyson in Gray, 1996: 299, ll: 424-431).

These words are uttered by King Arthur just before being taken to Avalon. In examining similarities with Tolkien's Valinor, we can say that both Avalon and Valinor represent a sort of paradise and those who go there have the purpose of resting. Tennyson shows us an idyllic island and valley where summer is eternal and winter no longer exists. Avalon and Valinor also embody the idea of eternal happiness represented in the beautiful green landscapes of the two islands.

Apart from Valinor, in *The Lord of the Rings* we may find another island which resembles the Arthurian mythical island of Avalon: Tol Eressëa. This island, which is curiously named Avallon, was once part of Middle-earth and was later separated by the Valar. It was first inhabited by the elves Teleri. The island, supposedly created by the Valar Ossë, is also the dwelling of some Noldorin Elves and Grey Elves who built a haven called Avallónë. Christopher Tolkien (1996: 32) points out:

The name Avallon ('for it is hard by Valinor') appears, but as a new name for Tol-eressëa; afterwards in the form Avallónë ('for it is of all cities the nearest to Valinor'), it became the name of a haven in the isle: *Akallabêth*".

Therefore, it is clear that Tolkien used the term 'Avallon' to create his own paradisiacal islands. He did not only provide a term for these imaginary islands but he also described them in a way which clearly reminds us of the Arthurian Avalon:

Few will have overlooked the close resemblance between the names *Avallónë*, which is a Quenya (Elvish) word and *Avalon*, a Celtic (Mannish) name meaning, it is said, 'Isle of Apples'. Both are indeed traditionally applied to faraway islands in the West, unreachable save by those appointed to make the journey. In (Celtic) British mythology, King Arthur is said to have been borne away in a barge draped with black samite to the Isle of Avalon, there to recover from the (mortal) wound sustained by him at the Battle of Camlann (Tyler, 2012: 48).

Summing up, both the Arthurian Avalon and Tolkien's Tol Eressëa do not only share an etymological trait but also their symbolism: peaceful, blissful and green landscapes where it is always summer and where some characters, King Arthur or Frodo, can go there to be healed, being the island a nurturing or caring element. In one of J.R.R. Tolkien's books published posthumously, *The Fall of Arthur* his son Christopher Tolkien also commented on the similarity between the name given to Tol Eressëa and the Arthurian island of Avalon explaining the reason why his father gave that name to it:

Why did he at about this time write that Tol Eressëa, a name then going back some twenty years, was changed to *Avallon* - for no very evident reason? That there was no connection at all with the Arthurian Avallon seems impossible to accept; but it must be said that similarity to the departure of Arthur became still less evident (Christopher Tolkien, 2013: 156).

When Christopher Tolkien talks about Arthur's leaving, he refers to the fact that his father left his own Arthurian account unfinished. This is why he does not explain what happens to Arthur, i.e. whether he dies or not. However, in *The Lord of the Rings* Frodo's departure to Valinor in order to heal his wounds inflicted by the Witch King at the Weathertop echoes that of Arthur leaving Camelot in a barge towards Avalon. Moreover, Christopher Tolkien (2013: 162) claims that the land of the bay of Eldamar, the home of the Elves in Aman, was also given the name of Avalon:

Similar is the change of the name of the Bay of Elvenhome (or of Faërie, or of Eldamar) to the Bay of Avalon. The name Avalon, no used of Tol Eressëa, is here extended from the isle to the coasts of the vast bay in which Tol Eressëa is anchored.

This means that Tolkien used the term Avalon, which itself refers to an isolated island impossible to reach or be seen by mortals, for Tol Eressëa and the Bay of Avalon or Eldamar. In the case of Tol Eressëa, it was first part of the realm of Aman, including Valinor, and then the Valar set it apart, becoming an isolated island as its name shows: ‘the Lonely Isle’. As for the bay of Avalon and Eldamar, it is depicted as a dying or decadent land which is under “perpetual twilight” (Tyler, 2012: 185). This idea is again connected with the Arthurian Avalon in the sense that after Arthur’s departure Avalon is said to disappear forever. As we have seen, Tol Eressëa may be somehow identified with the Avalon of the Arthurian legends in the sense that it is impossible to go there. Christopher Tolkien (2013: 162-163) argues that:

It seems then that the Arthurian *Avalon*, the Fortunate Isle, *Insula Pomorum*, dominion of Morgan la Fée, had now been in some mysterious sense identified with Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Isle. But the name *Avallon* entered, as a name of Tol Eressëa, at the time when the Fall of Númenor and the Change of the World entered also, with the conception of the Straight Path out of the Round World that still led to Tol Eressëa and Valinor, a road that was denied to mortals, and yet found, in a mystery, by Aelfwine of England.³⁷

³⁷ Historically, Aelfwine of England was the grandson of King Alfred. His name, Aelfwine, very common in Anglo-Saxon society, meant elf-friend. The figure of Aelfwine appears in Tolkien’s *The Lost Tale, Book II*, as Eriol the Mariner, or simply as Aelfwine, whose main exploit is to be the first man to visit Tol Eressëa (Tolkien, 1995: 282-334).

8.6. The Valley of No Return and Lothlórien

In Arthurian texts, it is not uncommon to find forests as ideal backgrounds for King Arthur's knights to have adventures and successfully fight sorceresses or evil knights. Maybe one of the most interesting forests that appear in Arthurian tradition is that of the Valley of No Return. This place is thought to be dwelt by Morgan le Fay who exerts a great power over it. According to some legends, this wood would be located in Broceliande in France. In the Valley of No Return, the knights who were unfaithful to their ladies could not escape and were obliged to remain there. Larrington (2006: 51) describes it as:

An enchanted valley from which no knight who has ever been unfaithful to his lady in any way, 'even in desire alone', can escape, a paradise that rapidly palls on its inhabitants. Here knights are punished for their infidelity; forced to remain in the company of their ladies, they are deprived of the opportunity of performing knightly deeds in an enchantment that lasts seventeen years.

The Valley of No Return appears for the first time in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec* (1176) and later in *Lancelot* (ca. 1176-1181) and in the *Livre d'Artus* (ca.1400). This wood echoes the traditional Fairyland or Faërie from Celtic tales. The Fairyland was normally an enchanted land inhabited by fairies and ruled by the Fairy Queen, which is sometimes portrayed as enchanted woods or as a sort of Otherworld. It was also a hidden place, unreachable for most mortals although some could sometimes get lost there. The ways of entering Fairyland was through rivers or forests. A Fairyland stands for its impossibility and timelessness. When a person enters the realm of the fairies, he or she is believed to spend more time there than he or she thinks since time is supposed to pass more slowly than in the real world. This world of Fairyland could be dangerous for those who happen to get into it since it would be rather unlikely that they ever

return their own homes. However, the Fairyland was also a place of wonders and strangers would get really amazed by its beauty.

Most of the Fairylands have been traditionally depicted as perilous realms, unreachable for most mortals and supposed to be inhabited by sorceresses. Fairylands are normally ruled by women or female characters who exert a curious power over others that dwelt there. Additionally, these places normally have a purpose: to test the hero's faithfulness and morality. In *Livre d'Artus* the Valley of No Return is enchanted by Morgan, who wants to confine his lover, Guiomar, there. Also Morgan puts a sign warning that the knight who wins the challenge of breaking the enchantment of the Valley will be able to save Gawain from Carados at the Dolorous Tower. In the *Lancelot*, Galescalain, Morgan's nephew, enters the Valley. Although the landscape is idyllic and apparently peaceful, he must face several dangers and adventures, two dragons included. He also must cross a river and kill three knights. Finally, Galescalain, deprived of his armour, gets to a garden where there are other knights who have failed in the quest. The fact that he has no armour or swords serves to reinforce the idea of infidelity and in turn his failure in fulfilling the chivalric code, i.e. he was unable to protect his lady. In Larrington's (2006: 55): own words "Only the knight who has never been unfaithful in love can overcome the Valley's evil customs".

Finally, it is Lancelot who manages to break the enchantment of the Valley. He is also tested by Morgan, who wants to know if Lancelot is in love with Guenevere or not. After being released to rescue Gawain, Lancelot finds a damsel in his way to the Dolorous Tower. This woman tries to seduce him although unsuccessfully. So this serves to prove Lancelot's fidelity towards Guenevere. Therefore, we can say that the Valley of No Return is not a simple landscape which serves to test the heroes' own

prowess and the limits of their own morality. Moreover, the Valley of No Return is a symbol for femininity and female power.

Similarly, in *The Lord of the Rings* we may find another example of Fairyland where women have great power: Lothlórien, which means ‘dream-flower’ in Sindarin, was one of the most ancient woods in Middle-earth, located on the two sides of the river Celebrant:

While Lothlórien was not the most ancient forest in Middle-earth, it was unquestionably the most singular: for only there were to be found the great *mellyrn*, the mallorn trees which gave the Golden Wood its name. Golden-leaved with silver-grey boughs, they grew to a height beyond the measure of all other living things. The people of Lothlórien were as singular as their trees, for they did not dwell on the ground, but in the woven branches of the mighty *mellyrn*, on high platforms (*or telain*). For this reason the Elves of the Golden Wood were called *Galadhrim*, ‘Tree-people’ (Tyler, 2012: 386).

Also, both Galadriel and Celeborn, the lady and the lord of the Golden Woods, lived in Calas Galadhon, which means ‘city of the trees’, in the very heart of Lothlórien. While other realms from Middle-earth were falling into decay and chaos, Lothlórien remained untouched thanks to Galadriel’s Ring of Power, just like the fairylands from Celtic stories. Tyler’s (2012: 387) says that “and the power of Galadriel, focused through the Ring of Adamant, laid a change on the Golden Wood, so that it was set apart from the stream of time, ageing far more slowly than other lands”. This means that Lothlórien resembles a fairyland in the sense of timelessness, a place where everything seems to be ever-lasting and untouched.

When the Companions head for Lothlórien, they have different reactions. For instance, Legolas and Aragorn feel delighted with the idea of entering the wood but Gimli and Boromir are uneasy since they think it is a dangerous place. The Hobbits are

slightly afraid and reluctant to get into Lothlórien but they do it anyway. Legolas describes the wood as:

(128)

That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people. There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold. Not till the spring comes and the new green opens do they fall, and then the boughs are laden with yellow flowers; and the floor of the wood is golden and golden is the roof, and its pillars are of silver, for the bark of the trees is smooth and grey (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 326).

However, Boromir regards Lothlorien as a dangerous wood from where few people have returned:

(129)

By strange paths has this Company been led, and so far to evil fortune. Against my will we passed under the shades of Moria, to our loss. And now we must enter the Golden Wood, you say. But of that perilous land we have heard in Gondor, and it is said that few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 329).

To Boromir's words, Aragorn replies:

(130)

Say not *unscathed*, but if you say *unchanged*, then maybe you will speak the truth. But lore wanes in Gondor, Boromir, if in the city of those who once were wise they now speak evil of Lothlórien (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 329).

The fact the Aragorn mentions the word 'unchanged' instead of 'unscathed' reinforces the idea of timelessness, a feature of the Fairyland. As the Companions get into the woods, the landscape becomes more impressive and all the companions are amazed by its beauty and splendour which are kept thanks to Galadriel's ring:

(131)

When his eyes were in turn uncovered, Frodo looked and caught his breath. They were standing in an open space. To the left stood a great mound, covered with a sward of grass as green as Springtime in the Elder

Days. Upon it, as a double crown, grew two circles of trees: the outer had bark of snowy white, and were leafless but beautiful in their shapely nakedness; the inner were mallorn-trees of great height, still arrayed in pale gold. High amid the branches of a towering tree that stood in the centre of all there gleamed a white flet. At the feet of the trees, and all about the green hillsides the grass as studded with small golden flowers shaped like stars. Among them, nodding on slender stalks, were other flowers, white and palest green: they glimmered as a mist amid the rich hue of the grass. Over all the sky was blue, and the sun of afternoon glowed upon the hill and cast long green shadows beneath the trees (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 341).

In fact, this green idyllic landscape of the Golden Wood makes them forget about their quest and the shadows of evil that have been chasing them: the Nâzgul and the Balrog at Moria. As an enchanted land, Lothlórien has the power to comfort those who are goodhearted and disturb those who have evil thoughts. In Legolas's own words:

(132)

At first we were weary and danger was too close behind; and afterwards we almost forgot our grief for a time, as we walked in gladness on the fair paths of Lórien (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 346).

After meeting Galadriel, all the Companions have different feelings about her, as if Galadriel intended to disclose their thoughts and feelings with the purpose of testing all of them. Like Morgan in her Valley of No Return, Galadriel intends to test the Companions by looking at them in order to see how loyal and honest each companion is and to what extent they want to continue with the Quest for the Ring:

(133)

And with that word she held them with her eyes, and in silence looked searchingly at each of them in turn. None save Legolas and Aragorn could long endure her glance. Sam quickly blushed and hung his head (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 348).

However, this causes different reactions in the Fellowship of the Ring. While Legolas and Aragorn feel not much troubled, the rest of the Company, especially Gimli and Boromir, feel awkward when Galadriel glances at them. Boromir explains:

(134)

To me it seemed exceedingly strange. Maybe it was only a test, and she thought to read our thoughts for her own good purpose; but almost I should have said that she was tempting us, and offering what she pretended to have the power to give. It need not be said that I refused to listen. The Men of Minas Tirith are true to their word (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 349).

At this point of the story, Boromir has some doubts about the development of the quest for the Ring. Galadriel tells him that Gondor would fail and Boromir himself would fail in his quest. From the very beginning, Boromir was reluctant to go into the wood because he distrusted the Elves that dwelt there. Also, this quotation clearly shows Galadriel's own ambiguity, which in turn resembles that of Morgan Le Fay's. However, Aragorn denies that Galadriel has wicked purposes and Lothlórien is an evil place. He says to Boromir:

(135)

Speak no evil of the Lady Galadriel. You know not what you say. There is in her and in this land no evil, unless a man bring it hither himself. Then let him beware! But tonight I shall sleep without fear for the first time since I left Rivendell. And may I sleep deep and forget for a while my grief! I am weary in body and in heart (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 349)

Here Aragorn points out that evil is an inner force and that there cannot be evil in Lothlórien since it is an old, almost sacred wood. On the contrary, those who get into it are more likely to bring evil. In Lothlórien, Boromir's progressive moral corruption can be slightly observed. We notice that his behaviour is becoming violent. What Galadriel says to him is probably connected with the downfall of Gondor in general and his own betrayal to the Fellowship of the Ring in particular.

Also, Galadriel tests Frodo's morality and prowess by making him look at her Mirror. This echoes the role of Morgan Le Fay, who tries to test Lancelot when he visits the Valley of No Return. In Galadriel's own words:

(136)

'Many things I can command the Mirror to reveal', she answered, 'and to some I can show what they desire to see. But the Mirror will also show things unbidden, and those are often stranger and more profitable than things which we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be. But which it is that he sees, even the wisest cannot always tell. Do you wish to look? (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 352).

Frodo's task of looking into Galadriel's Mirror involves testing his own morality as well as his way of making decisions. All the decisions he takes will lead to dangerous paths so he must be very careful. Frodo tries to ask for advice but Galadriel tells him to do what he considers best. Also, she herself admits that if he had not had enough courage, she would not have taken him to her Mirror:

(137)

I do not counsel you one way or the other. I am not a counsellor. You may learn something, and whether what you see be fair or evil, that may be profitable, and yet it may not. Seeing is both good and perilous. Yet I think, Frodo, that you have courage and wisdom enough for the venture, or I would not have brought you here. Do as you will (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 354).

After looking into the Mirror and fearful of the things he sees, such as Sauron's One Eye, Frodo decides to give the Ring to Galadriel thinking that she is more powerful and stronger than him to bear the Ring. This act shows Frodo's own lack of self-confidence and weakness. This is the last test of the Fellowship of the Ring in Lothlórien, the aim of which is to show how strong its bearer is and to what extent the place can bear or endure the corruptive power of Sauron and his evil.

After this, the Company decides to depart from Lothlórien although they are not sure where to go and what to do. Celeborn, the lord of Lothlórien, gives them advice:

(138)

‘Now is the time’, he said, ‘when those who wish to continue the Quest must harden their hearts to leave this land. Those who no longer wish to go forward may remain here, for a while. But whether they stay or go, none can be sure of peace. For we are come now to the edge of doom. Here those who wish may await the oncoming of the hour till either the ways of the world lie open again, or we summon them to the last need of Lórien. Then they may return to their own lands, or else go to the long home of those that fall in battle (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 358).

When commenting more similarities between the Valley of No Return and Lothlórien, we can say that these two places end up disappearing. In the case of the Valley of No Return and after Lancelot breaks the enchantment, the Valley is no longer a wonderful place but a common one. As for Lothlórien, it has a tragic end. After the departure of the Fellowship of the Ring, the Golden Wood was besieged by Orcs, finally defeated by the Elves who in turn destroyed Dol Guldur. But after the War of the Ring, both Galadriel, Celeborn and the other Elves that dwelt Lothlórien left the Golden Wood and departed towards Valinor. Tyler (2012: 388) explains that:

Nonetheless, with the victory of the War of the Ring, the great days of Lórien came at last to an end. For Galadriel’s long exile in Middle-earth was rescinded by the Valar as a reward for her labours against Sauron (and for rejection of the Ruling Ring). At the end of the Third Age she took ship into the West, together with the Bearers of the other Rings of Power; and some time after her passing, Celeborn also deserted the Golden Wood. In the Fourth Age only a few of the Galadhrim still ‘lingered sadly...and there was no longer light or song’ in Lothlórien.

Finally, both the Valley of No Return and Lothlórien have many similarities as we have seen. They represent the idea of Fairyland, a timeless land unreachable for many and from which few can escape. It is also ruled by fairy queens: Morgan le Fay and Galadriel. This matter has been previously analyzed in chapter six in which one of the

roles given to Galadriel and Morgan Le Fay is that of testing the hero. King Arthur's knights and their loyalty are tested while Galadriel must test herself too. She must prove that the Ring cannot corrupt her and she achieves it. Because of this Galadriel may return to Valinor since she belonged to the Noldor race of Elves, who had been previously banished to Middle-earth.

8.7. The Waste City and Minas Morgul (Minas Ithil)

First of all, both the Waste City and Minas Morgul represent the idea of landscapes of terror and evil. They are depicted as dark and oppressive lands ruled by evil forces. It is possible to think that Tolkien drew inspiration from the dark realm of the Arthurian Waste City to create his own one: Minas Morgul. Both cities stand out not only for their spooky environment but for what they symbolize: spiritual rotteness. In *Perlesvaus*, a thirteenth-century Arthurian text also called *The High History of the Holy Grail*, the Waste City is described as a ghostly ruined empty place where Lancelot is challenged to a beheading game and he succeeds in it:

A supernatural ruined city in *Perlesvaus*. Lancelot visited the Waste City and was challenged to a Beheading Game by one of the residents. By honoring his pledge to return in a year and face death, Lancelot ended a curse and saved the Waste City and its people. In the Fourth Continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* the king of the Waste City attacks Governant of Gohort, but is driven away by Perceval (Bruce, 1999:492).

Therefore, the Waste City is depicted as a cursed place in ruins. The representation of a place like this is especially important because it serves to create a prototypical land in epic fantasy fiction: that of the realms of evil and horror. Minas Morgul is described as follows:

(139)

All was dark about it, earth and sky, but it was lit with light. Not the imprisoned moonlight welling through the marble walls of Minas Ithil long ago, Tower of the Moon, fair and radiant in the hollow of the hills.

Paler indeed than the moon ailing in some slow eclipse was the light of it now, wavering and blowing like a noisome exhalation decay, a corpse-light, a light that illuminated nothing. In the walls and tower windows showed, like countless black holes looking inward into emptiness; but the topmost course of the tower revolved slowly, first one way and then another, a huge ghostly head leering into the night (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 688).

Minas Morgul, which means ‘Tower of Sorcery,’ was once one of the two fortresses built by the Númenor Kings in Middle-earth: Minas Ithil (later named Minas Morgul) and Minas Anor (later called Minas Tirith). Minas Ithil was located on a valley near the Mountains of Shadow, very close to Mordor. During the War of the Last Alliance, Sauron conquered the city by surprise by means of an unexpected ambush. However, Isildur and his army finally took Minas Ithil again and it was restored to the Númenor kings. However, nobody dared live there since it became a cursed place (its tree was burned, for instance). When Gondor fell in decay, Minas Ithil was finally taken by the Nazgûl and became their home, called Minas Morgul:

By the end of the second millennium of the Third Age, Gondor had dwindled sadly from its frontier days of glory. Osgiliath, originally the chief city and capital of the whole realm, was partly desolate, and the South-Kingdom was now ruled from Minas Anor. In the year 2000 the Nazgûl issued over the high pass of Cirith Ungol and laid siege to the Tower of the Moon; and although for two years their forces were unable to enter the fortified city, even so the siege was too powerful to be broken by Gondor, and no reinforcements were able to get through. In 2002 Minas Ithil fell at last and the Nazgûl themselves then inhabited it, together with many Orcs. Men of Gondor began to call it Minas Morgul, the ‘Tower of Sorcery’, and Minas Anor was consequently renamed Minas Tirith, ‘the Tower of Guard’ (Tyler, 2012: 425).

During the War of the Ring Minas Morgul was a powerful fortress where the Witch King recruited all his armies. In fact, when Sam, Frodo and Gollum pass near the city, Frodo is tempted to enter the fortress due to the evil and black magic that dwell in it. When the War of the Ring ended and Sauron was defeated, Minas Morgul was

destroyed since it had been under the power of Sauron for so long that his evil was almost impossible to be erased without its destruction. Tyler (2012: 426) explains that:

With all of the ruined city of Osgiliath in his hands, the Witch King of Minas Morgul then advanced towards Minas Tirith, capturing the Rammass Echor and the Fields of Pelennor and besieging the last fortress of Gondor. Yet on March 15th, five days after leaving Minas Morgul, the Lord of the Nazgûl was himself destroyed – and the Morgul-host as also utterly overwhelmed – in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Minas Morgul fell once more into the hands of the Dúnedain, but it had been too long an evil place for any man to dwell there, and by order of the King Elessar the once-beautiful Tower of the Moon was cast down and its foundations removed.

Summing up, the Waste City and Minas Morgul have many aspects in common. Their respective portrayals as dark, spooky and oppressive cities do not just function as a simple background. Their darkness, deadliness and ghostliness are connected with the spirituality or morality of he who rules both in the Waste City and Minas Morgul. In the case of the Waste City, we do not know who the ruler is but what we know is that the city is plunged into a sort of chaos and its inhabitants are cursed. When Lancelot visits the ghastly city, he is challenged to a beheading game in a year's time³⁸. When one year is passed, Lancelot goes to the Waste City and he wins the challenge. Then, the city is restored and the evil that dwelt in it disappears. This landscape of horror and ghostliness seems to have inspired Tolkien in depicting his Minas Morgul. Like the Waste City, Minas Morgul is a supernatural city cursed by evil, in this case by the sorcery of the Witch King and the other eight Nazgûl.

However, the Waste City and Minas Morgul differ in one aspect. While the first one is eventually saved and healed by Lancelot, who wins the challenge of the

³⁸ In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (15th century) there is also a beheading game. The Green Knight cuts off his own head and challenges Gawain to look for him in a year's time. When the time has come, Gawain decides to search for the Green Knight. Then, Gawain fights against him and eventually defeats him (Greenblatt, 2006: ll. 162-212).

Beheading Game, Minas Morgul cannot be saved due to the almost perpetual evil that lives in it. In fact, after the War of the Ring, all the lands controlled and ruled by Sauron are destroyed because it was impossible to save them since they had been under Sauron's power for too long.

As has been seen, many places in Middle-earth have been highly influenced by Arthurian landscapes and settings. Especially relevant for this study is the Arthurian idea of Wasteland present in some of the most well-known places from Middle-earth such as Rohan, Gondor, Mordor or the Shire. Moreover, we can notice similarities between some particular places from Middle-earth and the Arthurian geography, such as Minas Tirith and Camelot, Valinor, Tol Eressëa and Avalon, among others. From this parallels, we may guess that Tolkien's settings, influenced by Arthurian mythology, are likely to have created some prototypical lands which are essential in modern epic fantasy: the royal cities in decay, the paradisiacal, unreachable islands used for eternal rest, the landscapes of terror and evil and the fairylands.

CHAPTER 9

MAGICAL AND POWERFUL OBJECTS

When reading fantasy fiction in general, it is very usual to find magical objects which may be central to the plot. They may have any form but the most common ones are swords, grails, rings, spears, wands, etc. Magical objects are used as weapons in order to defeat an enemy or are the sources of a power that must be controlled, found or destroyed. These items, sometimes of divine nature, are usually described as to confer power to their owners to the extent that they are invincible. They can be good, normally with power for healing, or evil, i.e. they are a destructive force. *The Lord of the Rings*, a work which has paved the way for many other fantasy novels, is a clear example of the use of objects of power as weapons since Sauron's Ring is the center of the plot as well as Andúril, Aragorn's blade, which resembles Arthur's well-known Excalibur. In Tolkien's work, there are also many other objects such as the three Elven Rings, Galadriel's Mirror, Frodo's mithril shirt and sword, Sting, two of the Seeing Stones, Gandalf's staff, etc. Westfahl (2005: 493) explains that magical objects have been given many different roles in fantasy literature:

Many magical objects are either weaponry or the focus of power, like traditional magic wands, or the wizard's staff wielded in *The Lord of the Rings*. Terry Pratchett's Discworld series (see *The Colour of Magic*) satirizes such props: the wizard's staff is the subject of one of Nanny Ogg's bawdy songs. Power is present in everyday objects or garments. Dorothy's shoes in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* give her the power to return from Oz to Kansas. The Sorting Hat in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* allocates children to the Houses in Hogwarts School that best fit their characters. Harry Potter himself possesses numerous magical objects: naturally a wand, but also a cloak which, like the "tarnhelm" in Richard Wagner's Ring cycle, gives

invisibility. Lloyd Alexander's *Book of Three* (1964) and its sequels borrow magical objects from Celtic folklore: a brooch that brings foreknowledge, hazelnuts that confer understanding of animal speech and the "Black Cauldron" from which living-dead warriors spring.

These objects of power and magic may have their roots in ancient mythologies and were later developed in medieval literature. In Celtic mythology, we find several cauldrons which represent wisdom, rebirth, healing and power and give their bearers a huge power. The Tuátha de Danann³⁹ from the Celtic mythology are said to bring four powerful objects to Ireland: a stone, a spear, a cauldron and a sword. MacDonald (2012: 23) explains how they were brought to Ireland:

The Tuatha De Danann brought four magic talismans with them to Ireland (objects believed to have magic or protective powers), to help them win, and keep, power. The Stone of Fal cried out with joy when touched by a lawful king, but stayed silent for impostors; the glowing, white-hot Spear of Light brought victory to any warrior; no enemy could escape the Sword of Nuada that hunted down victims and murdered them; no one was ever hungry after eating from the bottomless Cauldron of the Good God, the Dagda.

In Germanic mythology, we find more objects of power. One of the most famous is Thor's hammer called Mjölnir. Thor, who was the Norse God of Thunder and War, is said to use his hammer, which was a symbol of all his power and strength, to protect Asgard⁴⁰ and keep it safe. Odin's auger, named Rati, is another example of a powerful object; in this case, Odin used it to make holes and defeat his enemies. There are two more relevant examples of magical objects in the Norse myths: Heimdall's horn Gjöll, the fetter Gleipnir and a magical ring called Draupnir. The fact that most of these objects have a proper name (we may also include Arthur's Excalibur or Aragorn's

³⁹ In Celtic mythology, the Tuátha de Danann, also known as faery-folk, "were the children or people of the goddess Danu" (Monaghan, 2014: 168).

⁴⁰ In Nordic mythology, Asgard, also named Aesir, is the pantheon where the Nordic gods such as Ymir, god of the Giants, or Odin were supposed to live (Clute & Grant, 1999: 10).

Andúril) implies that they were thought to possess an identity and powers of their own.

Barber & Wayland-Barber (2012:100) explain:

This power of the personal name, together with Willfulness, may account for why so many objects –particularly in Germanic mythology- have proper names: Thor’s battle-hammer Mjöllnir, Heimdall’s horn Gjöll, the unbreakable fetter Gleipnir, Odin’s auger Rati and magic ring Draupnir (it drops eight rings like itself every nine days); Roland’s sword Durendal and horn Oliphant, Oliver’s sword Halteclere; King Arthur’s sword and so on. All these objects have in common the trait that they do something – they have the power to smash, make noise, bind, pierce, reproduce, cut and –in the case of the weapons- kill. Like blessings and curses, this power was taken very seriously, and swords in particular seem often to have received a name when completed, as though, like children, they were now being launched into the world to do good or ill.

The ring Draupnir is described as a golden ring owned by Odin which was thought to confer him absolute power. Curiously, Draupnir itself ‘creates’ other minor rings, somehow becoming a sort of master ring which is much more powerful and terrible than other rings. With Draupnir, Odin rules and dominates the other gods and the Nine Worlds. Likewise, Odin gives rings of lesser power to other gods or heroes. Consequently, Odin somehow is a lord of the rings and his ruling ring echoes that of Sauron. This is explained by Day (2012: 75) as follows:

‘Draupnir’ means ‘the dripper’, for this magical golden ring had the power to drip eight other rings of equal size every nine days. Its possession by Odin was not only emblematic of his dominion of the Nine Worlds but consolidated his accumulated powers by giving him a source of almost infinite wealth. In his capacity as the King of the Gods, Draupnir gave him the greatest ring-hoard and allowed him to become the greatest ring-giver in the Nine Worlds. With the acquisition of Draupnir, Odin’s quest for dominion was completed. It can be no accident that Draupnir spawns eight other rings of equal weight in nine days. Through Draupnir, Odin rules Asgard, while the other eight are used by Odin the Ring Lord as gifts of wealth and power by which the other eight worlds are governed. Like the earthly Viking king who as a ‘ring-giver’ rewards his earls, so Odin maintains the order of the other eight worlds by his gift of rings to chosen heroes and kings. The ring on his hand is the ultimate source of all magical rings and all wealth. Through his control of Draupnir, Odin literally becomes the ‘Lord of the Rings.’

Sauron and his ring have many similarities with Odin and his ring Draupnir. Owning both rings entails the dominion of the Nine Worlds, in the case of Odin, and all Middle-earth, in the case of Sauron. The eight rings that Draupnir give every nine days remind us of the Nine Rings which Sauron fashions and gives to the Kings of Men and which are controlled by and subdued to the One Ring.

In Arthurian literature, objects of power can be found in the Grail stories. Much has been debated about its origins and nature, but what we know is that the figure of the Grail, a mysterious object, sometimes undefined and on other occasions said to be a cup, dish, chalice or even a stone, establishes what it will become almost a stereotype in fantasy fiction. The Grail, whatever form it takes, is an ideal; it is a symbol for hope, healing, recovery, and redemption. The Grail and other objects of power in fantasy novels are the centre of the plot of their respective stories. However, in Arthurian tradition there are more objects of power besides the Grail. Sometimes, these objects of power and magic appear not as a single item but as a collection or a group of items. This is the case of the Celtic hallows⁴¹ and the Grail hallows.

The Grail Hallows comprise several objects: the Longinus spear, a cup, a dish and a sword. They may have their roots in the Celtic Cauldron of Dagda, Lia Fail (the stone of destiny), the Spear of Lugh and the Sword of Nuada. Giles (2011:19) suggests that:

In Ireland mythology tells of four magical objects that included the Cauldron of the Dagda. Brought to Ireland by a conquering race of Otherworld faery people called the Tuatha de Danaan, they served a symbolic function in Celtic culture. The other three items were the Stone of Destiny, the Spear of Lugh and the Sword of Nuada. These magical items form the basis for the symbols of the Cup, Spear, Stone and Dish, or the four hallows as they are called in the Grail stories.

⁴¹ The Celtic hallows include a series of powerful objects, some of them associated with a Celtic god: the Lia Fail, also named the Stone of Destiny, the Cauldron of the god Dagda with food-giving properties, the magical spear of the god Lugh, and the magical sword of Nuada (Griffins, 2004: 21).

Although the Grail is probably the most important one, there are others such as Excalibur or the Perilous Seat. Connected with the Grail Quest, the Perilous Seat is said to be an empty seat in the Round Table where only the true Grail knight could sit on. Firstly associated with Judas' empty seat in the Last Supper in Robert de Boron's *Merlin* (13th century), the Perilous Seat is portrayed as a place in the Round Table reserved for the Grail Knight in the Vulgate Cycle. Lupack (2007: 470) explains that "In the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle Merlin instructs Uther to build a table in commemoration of the Grail Table; at the table, there is an empty seat reserved for the Grail Knight."

This idea of hallows, a series of objects which provide absolute power if used together, is also used in modern fantasy literature. In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2014) the hero, Harry, must gather three objects: the Elder Wand, the Cloak of Invisibility and the Resurrection Stone. In the other novels from The *Harry Potter Saga* it is also frequent to find objects of power such as the wands, the sorcerer's stone, Gryffindor's sword, the time-turner, the goblet of fire, the prophecy ball, or the pensieve, among others⁴², which the heroes use or find. The Horcruxes⁴³, the items used by Voldemort to divide his mortal soul and keep it safe, are also a good example of the importance of items in fantasy fiction, some of them having their origins in Arthurian legends. In *The Dragonlance Chronicles* (1984-1985) the appearances of a goddess's healing stick, the dragon orbs and the dragon lances or spears trigger a bloody war among all the peoples of Ansalon⁴⁴.

⁴² The Deathly Hallows are three objects: the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Invisibility Cloak. They make their bearer undefeatable and more powerful than death itself and they are essential for Voldemort's destruction (Rowling, 2007: 407, 410-411).

⁴³ The Horcruxes are several objects used by Voldemort himself to keep his own soul safe in them. The Horcruxes were Tom Riddle's diary, Salazar Slytherin's locket, Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem, his own snake Nagini, the Gaunt family ring, Helga Hufflepuff's cup and Harry himself (Rowling, 2014: 467-470).

⁴⁴ Ansalon is the imaginary world in the *Dragonlance Chronicles* saga.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the most important object of power is Sauron's One Ring but there are others similar in power such as the Elvish Three Rings, the Palantíri or Aragorn's sword named Andúril. Of a much lesser power are Frodo's sword Sting and the *mithril* shirt. In Lothlórien Galadriel delivers a special object for each companion. Aragorn is given a precious stone as a token of hope and as a symbol of his rightful claim as king of Gondor. To Sam, Galadriel provides a small box with the sacred soil of Lothlórien while she gives Frodo a "phial", a sort of torch which contains the light of a star, Eärendil, used to repel darkness and evil.

9.1. Excalibur and Andúril

Excalibur is the most important symbol of King Arthur's world which has inspired many fantasy authors since it is very common to find powerful and practically invincible swords such as Aragorn's Andúril and Godric Gryffindor's sword in *The Harry Potter Saga* among others in some fantasy novels. Clute & Grant (1999: 917) explain the role of swords in fantasy literature and its Arthurian origins as follows:

Omnipresent default weapon of fantasy (hence sword and sorcery), the sword's phallic symbolism is obvious. The archetypal magical sword is Arthur's Excalibur or Caliburn, whose healing scabbard is an amulet; in his *Life of Manuel*, James Branch Cabell named another magic blade Flamberge after the swords of Charlemagne and others; Board-cleaver in William Morris's *The Sundering Flood* (1897) carries the not uncommon condition that once drawn it may not be resheathed without taking a life; Sacnoth in Lord Dunsany's "The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save for Sacnoth" is more cunning in battle than its wielder; further examples abound. Notable broken swords include: Sigmund's, broken against Odin's spear in Richard Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelungs* and remade by Siegfried; Narsil in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), whose reforging as Anduril signals the emergence of its hidden-monarch bearer, Aragorn; and the eponymous cursed blade of Poul Anderson's *The Broken Sword*, broken by Thor, whose renewal stinks of wrongness.

Swords are more than simple objects. They may be depicted as living, dangerous objects which sometimes symbolize more than a simple item such as a demon, a spirit or a symbol for the human soul. Additionally, swords in fantasy fiction are normally made of especial materials which make them more powerful:

Many swords embody spirits, the soul: eating, strength-giving Stormbringer carried by Michael Moorcock's Elric is this doomed Antihero's dark shadow; Glirendree in Larry Niven's "Not Long Before the End" (1969) is a transformed demon; the Living Blade in Diana Wynne Jones's *The Homeward Bounders* (1983) is a psychic projection that compensates for its owner's withered arm; the tediously chatty Kring in Terry Pratchett's *The Colour of Magic* (1983) expresses its desire to be a ploughshare. Stormbringer is the model for cursed swords in games, which can be let go only with great difficulty –or in extreme cases, as with Glirendree, not at all. Some swords are of unusual materials: G.K. Chesterton's eponymous *The Sword of the Wood* (1928) deals handily with an "enchanted" blade which defeats steel swords because magnetized; the Sword Called Llyr in Henry Kuttner's *The Dark World* (1946) and Eirias in Susan Cooper's *Silver on the Tree* (1977) are both crystal enabling the former's concealment within a pane of glass; the reforged sword in Michael Scott Rohan's *The Forge in the Forest* (1987) appears, in a sly technofantasy hint, to be reinforced with carbon fibres. Some have odd properties: Orcrist and Glamdrig in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) warn of nearby goblins by glowing (presumably to the detriment of ambushes); that in *The Sword of Shannara* (1977) by Terry Brooks merely compels truth, which alone destroys a less than resilient Dark Lord; that in Piers Anthony's *Wielding a Red Sword* (1986) is the empowering emblem of war; Need, the magic sword of Mercedes Lackey's Vows and Honour sequence, must be carried by a woman and will not strike a woman, however inimical (Clute & Grant, 1999: 929).

One important aspect of the role of blades in fantasy fiction is the giving of a proper name, which is connected with the hero or the heroine who wields it as symbol for his / her lineage or his/ her abilities and skills. In some cases, only the rightful wielder can use the blade:

Very many fantasy heroes and heroines routinely carry named swords, as Roland carried Durandal –a determined exception being tegeus - Cromis in M. John Harrison's *The Pastel City* (1971), whose blade is unfashionably nameless. Examples of noteworthy swords and sword-bearers include: Oscar in Robert Heinlein's *Glory Road* (1963), waxing

sentimental over his blade The Lady Vivamus; Fritz Leiber's Fafrhd and the Gray Mouser, with Graywand and Scalpel (plus the Mouser's dagger Cat's Claw); the 12 named swords of Fred Saberhagen's Swords sequence, with their plethora of magical abilities; the eponymous swords of Tad Williams's Memory, Sorrow and Thorn; and Roger Zelazny's Corwin of Amber with Grayswandir. Of special note is Severian's lovely maintained *Terminus Est* in Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* (1980-83), an executioner's blade whose ingenious design (mercury flows in an internal channel to shift the centre of gravity) has led unwary readers to assume it magical (Clute & Grant, 1999: 917).

Excalibur, also named Caliburn in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Layamon and Wace's texts, is present in several early Arthurian texts such as these which coincide in the fact that Arthur's sword is described as having been forged in Avalon.

In Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Chronicle* (1338), Excalibur is also mentioned and described as being ten feet long. In Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Arthur's blade is named Excalibur for the very first time. Malory tells us that it is the Lady of the Lake who delivers the sword to King Arthur under the condition that the king will give her what she would ask for when the time comes:

Anon withal came the damosel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her again. Damosel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur, king, said the damosel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time (Malory in Moore, 2000: 38, b. i, ch. xxv).

Excalibur's scabbard is magical so it gives Arthur more power and heals him when he is hurt. Indeed, the scabbard is the source of the power of Excalibur itself. Merlin explains to Arthur that the scabbard is worthier and more powerful than the sword. With it, he will not bleed or be hurt. In Merlin's own words:

Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the swords, for whiles ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no

blood, be ye never so sore wounded; therefore keep well the scabbard always with you (Malory in Moore, 2000: 39, b.i ch. xxv).

As the story unfolds, Excalibur is, however, stolen from Arthur by Morgan le Fay who gives it to her lover, Accolon. Arthur gets Excalibur back with the help of the Lady of the Lake. However, Morgan, outraged for her lover's death, decides to steal the scabbard which is described as "heavy of gold and precious stones" (Malory in Moore, 2000: 106, b.iv, ch. Xiv) and later thrown by Morgan le Fay into the water; probably into a lake or river (Malory does not specify). The author does not say anything else about Excalibur almost until the very end of his work when a dying Arthur commands Bedivere to throw the sword into a lake. In Arthur's own words:

Take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest (Malory in Moore, 2000: 791, b.xxi, ch. v).

Then Bedivere accepts to carry out Arthur's orders although he is reluctant to throw Excalibur into the lake. For Bedivere, obeying his lord will mean the disappearance and loss of King Arthur and everything connected with his ruling. Instead of doing what Arthur has ordered him to do, Bedivere hides the sword under a tree. Malory explains this and uses Bedivere's own words:

So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself: If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree (Malory in Moore, 2000: 791, b.xxi, ch. v).

However, Arthur realizes that Bedivere has not done what he is ordered to and accuses him of treason. Bedivere does the same thing for a second time, i.e. he does not throw Excalibur into the water, regarding this as a sinful and shameful act. Once again, Arthur accuses him of betrayal and of attempting to steal Excalibur. At the third time, Bedivere fulfils Arthur's desire and command:

Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might; and there came an arm and a hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long (Malory in Moore, 2000: 791, b.xxi, ch. v).

With Bedivere's throwing of Excalibur, the sword goes back to the place which it belongs to. Once he realizes he is dying, Arthur decides to give Excalibur back to the Lady of the Lake. The disappearance of the sword involves King Arthur's death and the consequent downfall of his own kingdom.

Excalibur itself represents the power and invulnerability of King Arthur and of the Arthurian society as a whole. However, King Arthur's power and strength comes from the scabbard rather than from the blade itself. The scabbard, also given by the Lady of the Lake, protected Excalibur and made it unbreakable. With Excalibur and the scabbard, Arthur could not be defeated.

Arthur's legendary blade is not the only sword of power in Arthurian literature. Sometimes Arthur's sword has been confused with the Sword in the Stone. This blade was first introduced by Robert de Boron in the thirteenth century and developed by Thomas Malory in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. When Uther Pendragon dies, Britain is left without a ruler. Merlin puts a sword in a stone or an anvil on it so that only the true and right heir of Uther would be able to unleash it. Many knights and warriors attempt to get the sword out of the stone but none achieve it. However, a young Arthur is looking for a blade for his foster-brother and when he sees the sword in the stone, he decides to take it. Arthur, then, draws the sword in the stone and gives it to Kay, who claims to have done the deed. Kay is asked to draw the sword again from the stone but he cannot do it so finally it is Arthur who does it and is proclaimed king by Merlin. Despite the fact that

he demonstrates that he is the legitimate and rightful king, the drawing of the sword is not enough for some Briton leaders and Arthur needs to show his prowess in some battles. Unlike Excalibur, which is magic and provides its bearer with an incredible strength and power, the Sword in the Stone is simply used as a tool to mark Arthur as the rightful king. Once he becomes king, this sword disappears from the story:

Arthurian motif first introduced by Robert de Boron (? -1212) in the early 13th century, repeated by Sir Thomas Malory and other writers subsequently. After the death of King Uther, Britain was without a sole ruler. Merlin placed a sword in a stone (or, in some versions, in an anvil set atop a stone) with the statement that it might be drawn only by the rightful new king. Contests took place, but no one could withdraw it until the young Arthur did, seeking a sword for his foster-brother Kay to use in a tournament. Kay at first claimed he had drawn the sword himself, but rapidly admitted Arthur had done so, and the feat was repeated for the benefit of the assembled company. Although Merlin proclaimed Arthur's kingship, the act of drawing the sword did not convince all of the leaders of the Britons, and Arthur had to face a series of battles to enforce his sovereignty. The Sword in the Stone, although a symbol of his kingship, seems to have conferred no specific magical powers. It is not the same as Excalibur, and after the kingmaking plays little part in the cycle (Clute & Grant, 1999: 917).

The Sword in the Stone is important insofar as the fact that it represents the legitimate and rightful ruler. The sword itself embodies the finding of the true heir to the throne of Britain. Nevertheless, once Arthur becomes the king, the sword disappears and is not mentioned again in Arthurian tradition.

In Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*, there is a sword which can be compared to Excalibur: Aragorn's Andúril, forged of the remainders of Narsil, the sword of Elendil, Aragorn's ancestor. The name of 'Andúril' is rather significant for its own bearer since it means 'flame of the west' and plays a pivotal role in *The Lord of the Rings*. Aragorn's own blade, Andúril, is, as Tyler writes (2012: 23), "the greatest heirloom of the House of Isildur". In order to understand the origins of this sword, it is important to explain the story behind Elendil's Narsil. The word Narsil means "red and white flame" in Quenya,

the Elvish language, and it is one of the most important weapons in the history of Middle-earth. Forged by a Dwarf smith called Telchar during the First Age, Narsil was given to Elendil of the lineage of the Númenorean Kings. Tyler (2012: 459) describes this blade as “a long sword, with a cutting edge that was extraordinarily keen. In the hands of Elendil it was an irresistible weapon”.

Elendil used Narsil in several battles, such as those of the War of the Last Alliance, alongside with the terrible and powerful Elvish Spear of Gil-Galad. He also fought with Narsil at the Battle of Dagorlad where the Elvish and the men’s armies fought against and confronted Sauron’s evil forces. When Sauron is about to completely destroy both armies with the power and strength of his Ring, Narsil changes the course of the battle. In his attempt to destroy Sauron, Elendil is defeated by the Dark Lord and Narsil, apparently, broken into pieces. However, Isildur, Elendil’s son, uses what is left of the sword and cuts off the hand of Sauron in which he wears the Master Ring. This causes Sauron’s downfall and weakening since he is deprived of his Ring of Power:

During the War of the Last Alliance it glittered on the field of battle alongside Aiglos, the Spear of Gil-galad (another famous and deadly weapon of the Age); and in the Battle of Dagorlad (3434) it proved too much for Sauron’s soldiers to withstand. Yet in the final hand-to-hand combat with Sauron upon the slopes of the volcano Orodruin, in the last year of the Age, Elendil fell in the act of slaying Sauron, and his sword broke beneath him. Elendil’s son Isildur then took the hilt-shard of Narsil and used it to cut the Ruling Ring from the hand of the Dark Lord (Tyler, 2012: 459-460).

After this, the sword was kept and at the Council of Elrond it was decided that Narsil, the heirloom of the Númenorean Kings, was going to be reforged for the last heir of Elendil, Aragorn. Reforged by the Elven smiths in Rivendell, Narsil was given the name of Andúril, which means ‘flame of the West’ in reference to the return of the rightful High King of Gondor and descendant of Elendil. Tyler (2012: 23) says that:

The re-forged sword's new name was engraved upon the blade and its sheath, together with many runes of virtue and designs of seven stars (to symbolize the High kingship) with a rayed Sun and crescent Moon (for the twin realms of Gondor and Arnor).

Andúril is forged again in Rivendell by Elven smiths after the decision of carrying the Ring and destroying it in Mount Doom is made. Andúril is first mentioned at the Council of Elrond in which Boromir talks about a dream he had and a voice he heard in it:

(210)

Seek for the Sword that was broken / In Imladris it dwells / There shall be counsels taken / Stronger than Morgul-spells. / There shall be shown a token / That Doom is near at hand, / For Isildur's Bane shall waken, / And the Halfling forth shall stand (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 240).

After Boromir's words about his dream and his difficult journey to Rivendell, Aragorn shows Andúril which is still broken into two pieces. As Aragorn says:

(211)

'And here in the house of Elrond more shall be made clear to you,' said Aragorn, standing up. He cast his sword upon the table that stood before Elrond, and the blade was in two pieces. 'Here is the Sword that was Broken!' he said (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 240).

There is a conflict between Aragorn and Boromir about what the sword represents and Aragorn's own legitimacy. Boromir thinks that the broken sword is useless to confront Sauron and indeed, he misunderstands the purpose of the Council, which is to destroy the Ring and not to find the broken pieces of Narsil / Andúril. It is Aragorn again who attempts to explain the story of the old broken blade:

(212)

'The words were not *the doom of Minas Tirith*,' said Aragorn. 'But doom and great deeds are indeed at hand. For the Sword that was Broken is the Sword of Elendil that broke beneath him when he fell. It has been treasured by his heirs when all other heirlooms were lost; for it was spoken of old among us that it should be made again when the Ring, Isildur's Bane, was found. Now you have seen the sword that you have

sought, what would you ask? Do you wish for the House of Elendil to return to the Land of Gondor?’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 241).

Aragorn’s words show the importance of Andúril for the Quest for the Ring. The sword seems to be somehow connected with the Ring itself and broadly speaking its power can almost be equated to that of the Ring. Indeed, the success of the Fellowship of Ring is initially associated not with a bloody battle or war but with Aragorn himself and Andúril, which in turn embodies a threat to Sauron: the return of the rightful King of Gondor:

(213)

The Company took little gear of war, for their hope was in secrecy not in battle. Aragorn had Andúril but no other weapon, and he went forth clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 273).

When the Company is about to leave Lothlórien, Galadriel gives Aragorn a sheath for Andúril, reinforcing the importance of the sword and its power. This sheath makes the sword unbreakable. This is something important since, as we shall see, Excalibur’s scabbard plays a similar role. Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 365) explains as follows:

(214)

‘Here is the gift of Celeborn and Galadriel to the leader of your Company,’ she said to Aragorn, and she gave him a sheath that had been made to fit his sword. It was overlaid with a tracery of flowers and leaves wrought of silver and gold, and on it were set in elven-runes formed of many gems the name Andúril and the lineage of the sword.

When the Company is fragmented, and Aragorn meets Gandalf again, the wizard advises him to go to Rohan, where a battle is about to be waged, since the time for Andúril to be exposed again has come. To use Gandalf’s own words:

(215)

‘Your next journey is marked by your given word. You must go to Edoras and seek out Théoden in his hall. For you are needed. The light of Andúril

must now be uncovered in the battle for which it has so long waited. There is war in Rohan, and worse evil: it goes evil with Théoden' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 489).

Aragorn shows Andúril for the first time in a battle at Helm's Deep, when he and Éomer are about to fight against Saruman's hosts. More important is the fact that there is another battle scene which is specifically relevant for the role that Andúril plays in the story. In it, Aragorn leads several armies to the battle at the Pelennor Fields. It is interesting how Tolkien talks about the sword since he is constantly mentioning Andúril and the fact that the Sword that was Broken is forged again. He repeats it constantly, emphasizing the importance of this blade for the Ring Quest and for Aragorn's own Quest:

(216)

For now men leaped from the ships to the quays of the Harlond and swept north like a storm. There came Legolas, and Gimli, wielding his axe, and Halbarad with the standard, and Elladan and Elrohir with stars on their brow, and the dour-handed Dúnedain, Rangers of the North, leading a great valour of the folk of Lebennin and Lamedon and the fiefs of the South. But before all went Aragorn with the Flame of the West, Andúril like a new fire kindled, Narsil re-forged as deadly as of old; and upon his brow was the Star of Elendil (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 829-930).

Tolkien presents Andúril as a very powerful weapon which Sauron himself is afraid of and this is repeated by the author all the time. However, as the story unfolds and the great war approaches, Tolkien gives more relevance to the sword. In the quotation above, Andúril is no longer the Sword that was Broken but "the Flame of the West" since it symbolizes the hope for the peoples of Middle-earth, especially for the race of men as well as the unity of the whole race of mankind thanks to the return of the king, Aragorn. The arrival of Aragorn and the armies which come with him serve to win the battle at the Pelennor fields. Once this is finished, Andúril is unsheathed just in case Sauron decides to attack unexpectedly. In Aragorn's words:

(217)

You shall not be sheathed again until the last battle is fought (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 864).

Aragorn's Andúril has many aspects in common with King Arthur's Excalibur. The first one is connected with royal legitimacy. Both kings receive their swords as heirlooms: Excalibur from Uther, Arthur's father, and Andúril from Isildur, Aragorn's great-grandfather. Arthur first needs to draw the sword in the stone to show that he is the rightful king while Aragorn wields the renamed and re-forged sword, Andúril.

Excalibur and Andúril are not simple weapons of extraordinary power used in battles and wars. They have a special symbolism connected with their wielders, King Arthur and Aragorn. The two swords epitomize the power of their respective kings, and are connected with their fates. In the case of Arthur, Excalibur represents the power, invulnerability and prosperity of King Arthur's court. As for Andúril, the Re-forged Sword represents the power and splendour of the Kings of Gondor lost time ago when Narsil, Elendil's blade, was broken into pieces by Sauron. In both Excalibur and Andúril's cases, the swords are intimately linked to their own wielders. This is especially appreciated when a dying Arthur commands Bedivere to throw Excalibur away since Arthur's death in turn implies Excalibur's disappearance and return to the Lady of the Lake. Something similar happens with Aragorn. His part in the Quest for the Ring is a search of his own since he claims his right for the throne of Gondor by fighting against Sauron and showing his prowess. The fact that Andúril is re-forged just before Aragorn and the rest of the Fellowship leave Rivendell reinforces this very same idea of the intimate connection between a ruler and his sword. In other words, the re-forging of Andúril is a symbol for the last heir of the ancient kings of Gondor's claim to the throne.

Excalibur and Andúril also share another feature. Although they possess an immense power of their own, their powerful properties are increased thanks to a magical scabbard and a sheath respectively. It is the Lady of the Lake who gives the scabbard to Arthur while Galadriel gives Aragorn a sheath for Andúril. In the case of Excalibur, as Hamilton (2006: 10) writes, “When wielding Excalibur, together with its jewel-encrusted scabbard, King Arthur could never be defeated, or even wounded, in battle”. Tolkien evidently echoes this when he writes that Galadriel gives Aragorn a sheath for Andúril, something that makes Aragorn’s blade impossible to break. She explains that: “‘The blade that is drawn from this sheath shall not be stained or broken even in defeat,’ she said” (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 365).

However, there are some differences between the two swords. The first one is that Arthur’s sword was not forged again like Andúril. Both swords are used in a different way. While Arthur uses Excalibur to maintain his power in his realm, Aragorn makes use of Andúril to show that the lineage of Elendil and Isildur, who cut Sauron’s hand and took his Ring, still lives. Ridsen (2006: 72) argues that:

Because Uther uses the sword selfishly, the world is denied its healing potential, but the potential, the power of the symbol that connects the king and his people to nature and to antiquity, remains, waiting only for the proper king to regain it. For Tolkien the Sword that was Broken, Narsil / Andúril, serves a similar purpose, but its wielder uses it more worthily. He does fight with it, but to rid the world of tyranny, not to impose it, and he doesn’t draw it needlessly or for personal gain.

This means that the essence of Excalibur and Andúril is aimed at the healing of a land by the hands of a rightful ruler, Arthur and Aragorn. Although he proves his legitimacy by means of the Sword in the Stone, King Arthur must continue to prove his worth and Excalibur symbolizes this. Arthur himself, alongside his extraordinary sword, needs to save and heal his realm from chaos and evil and to restore peace. Similarly, Andúril is

used as a symbol for healing. Although it is a tool used in war and battle, Andúril serves as an instrument for the healing of Middle-earth and especially for the race of Men and the Kings of Gondor. In other words, while Arthur and Aragorn as rulers represent the figure of the king who heals, it is likely to think that their swords are also instruments used for the healing of a land or a kingdom.

There are other minor similarities between Excalibur and Andúril. They are not new swords made for a particular hero but they stand out for their antiquity. Excalibur, which previously belonged to Arthur's father, is indeed older than it may seem. As Merlin says to Uther "Behold, the sword of power, Excalibur, forged when the world was young, and bird and beast and flower were one with man, and death was but a dream!" (Ridsen, 2015: 72).

As explained above, Andúril, the blade reforged from the remainders of Narsil, is claimed to have been first forged in the First Age of Middle-earth for the Númenorean Kings. When it is reforged for Aragorn, it is the end of the Third Age of Middle-earth. The antiquity of the old blades serves to reinforce, even more, the legitimacy and right to rule of their respective wielders, Arthur and Aragorn.

9.2. From Merlin's Mirror in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* to the Glass of Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* and Galadriel's Mirror

It has been very common to find magical mirrors in universal literature. From the Middle Ages to modern fantasy fiction they have become a secondary or minor but relevant motif. Magic mirrors have been commonly and traditionally associated with clairvoyance, i.e. they can show not only what was yet to come but also the past or even the present. They are also considered as traditional symbols for truth and understanding although fantasy literature has turned the magic mirror motif into a powerful object used

to watch people and events from a distance, as a means of communication or even as portals into a different world:

Mirrors and other reflecting surfaces, literary symbols of truth and insight, are transformed by science fiction and fantasy into objects that facilitate observation across distances, serve as a means of communication through space and time, and open portals into other worlds similar to but often different from our own (Westfahl, 2005: 528).

Examples of magic mirrors in universal literature may be found in works such as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) and Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*. Tolkien also made use of this traditional motif of the magical mirror in his work. Galadriel's Mirror is presented as a powerful object which does not necessarily shows the past, the present or the future but rather the consequences of what might happen if Frodo does one thing or another. Magic mirrors are used to reflect what it may happen, has happened or is happening. Clute & Grant (1999: 651) explain the role of magic mirrors in literature and add some examples of literary works in which they can be found:

The ability to reflect, instantly, whatever it may be happening close at hand extends by natural analogy to the display of scenes far off in space or time: hence mirrors can be scrying devices, as with the Magic Mirror in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937). Many traditional magic mirrors operate thus: the god Vulcan showed past, present and future; the Moon King's mirror in Lucian's *True History* revealed events anywhere on Earth, as did Merlin's in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96). Cambuscan's mirror in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Squire's Tale" warned of national ill-fortune and the falsity of women. The mirror of Galadriel in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) is a reflecting pool which displays potential futures. Avram Davidson's *The Phoenix and The Mirror* (1966) invokes much learned alchemy and astrology for its preparation of a "virgin speculum" crafted in darkness, whose first fleeting image is a portent.

Magic mirrors have their roots in ancient mythologies. In Celtic mythology, for instance, they are frequent motifs. One predecessor of Elaine, a female character who is present in Arthurian literature and falls in love with Lancelot, is said to be a siren from

Clyde River in Scotland. This woman is described as having a magic mirror at which she stares and can see whatever happens around her:

The original Elaine may have been the siren of Scotland's Clyde River. There she lived on a rock-built castle on the rock of Dumbarton, staring into a magic mirror in which she could see all that went on in the world – a mirror that has been interpreted to mean the waters itself, whose mirroring surface could be “cracked” by storms (Monaghan, 2014: 149).

In fact, Tennyson used Elaine's story to rewrite and re-imagine it in his poem *The Lady of Shalott*. Magic mirrors can be found in many fairy tales and in popular folklore since they are connected with superstitions. Mirrors are given several roles. The main one is that they are supposed to reflect not only the physical appearance of a person but also his/her soul. Traditionally, vampires have been represented as incapable to be reflected on mirrors because they have no souls. Moreover, mirrors may show a person's most intimate desire as it occurs with the Mirror of Erised⁴⁵ in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Saga. In Andersen's tale *The Snow Queen* (1844) the shattering of a wizard's mirror can have fatal consequences for the one who looks into it. This is explained by Westfahl (2005: 529) as follows:

In fairy tales and folklore, mirrors are magical objects associated with many superstitions. As the Moon reflects the light of the Sun, magic mirrors reflect not only the surface appearance but also the inner soul of the person looking into them. For that reason, vampires cannot cast a reflection, a tradition followed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but discarded in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. Mirrors reveal not only a character's identity but also their desires, as the Mirror of Erised shows Harry his dead parents in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Harry's mentor Dumbledore warns him that such reflections can be illusions. Reflections can be distorted, as in carnival or funhouse mirrors; In Hans Christian Andersen's “The Snow Queen” (1845), a magician's distorting mirror shatters, corrupting human souls. When two mirrors face each other, their reflections seem to continue into infinity, an image used to great effect in

⁴⁵ The name of the mirror, Erised, is an anagram of ‘desire’.

Father Inire's specula and mirror-leaved book in Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*.

In many texts, mirrors are used by a wizard, a witch or a fairy lady to see what is happening around. They can also be employed as weapons to tyrannize a land as in *Ombria in Shadow* (McKillip, 2002). However, fantasy is not the only literary genre to include magic mirrors. In science-fiction texts, such as in Norton's *Merlin's Mirror* (1975), mirrors are a technological way to communicate with others rather than a supernatural object of divination. In Westfahl's own words (2005: 529):

Witches and wizards use magic mirrors to observe others from a distance, as does the Queen to spy on Snow White in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Mirrors play similar roles in several Patricia MacKillip novels. *The Tower at Stony Wood* (2000) re-imagines Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" (1842), who is cursed to watch the reflection of the world rather than participate in it (see Freedom), while the villains in *Ombria in Shadow* (2002) and *In the Forests of Serre* (2003) use mirrors to exert power over these domains. In science fiction, mirrors can be technological rather than magical means of communication, as in Andre Norton's *Merlin's Mirror* (1975), where the mirror is an alien device used in Merlin's education.

As for Galadriel's Mirror, Westfahl points out the uncertainty of the visions that Frodo and Sam have. They may be intended to influence Frodo and Sam's quest. However, the Mirror is not fully reliable since, as we shall see, its images may not necessarily come true. In other works, the mirror symbolizes doom or fate and the decision of not looking into a magic mirror entails a desire to avoid fate:

Images in the mirror communicate possible futures, often influencing heroes on their quests. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam look into the Mirror of Galadriel, a basin filled with water, but are cautioned against using its images as a guide. When characters base their actions on divination, they often find they cannot avoid destiny. In Delia Sherman's *Through a Brazier Mirror* (1989), a sorceress makes a futile attempt to avoid the image of her own death (Westfahl, 2005: 529).

The last role associated with magic mirrors is that of portals. Mirrors serve as an entrance to another world, which is parallel to our own. Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1871) is probably the most famous example of the mirror as an entrance to a new world. In Carroll's work, Alice walks through a mirror and enters a new world. Westfahl (2005: 529) argues that:

Mirrors also serve as portals to other worlds. A closeted mirror leads to a world in which outward appearance reflects inner personality in George MacDonald's allegory *Lilith*, while in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), the sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice steps through a mirror and crosses a threshold into a dream world where natural laws seem reversed. In MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858), the mirror reflects Cosmo's room but not Cosmo; instead he sees a woman trapped in the reflected room until he breaks the mirror and with it the spell. Crossing between worlds is one use of mirror magic in Stephen R. Donaldson's *The Mirror of Her Dreams* (1986).

As mentioned above, in J.K. Rowling's *Harry and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997), there is a magic mirror, the Mirror of Erised, which shows a person's most intimate desire and is used to keep the sorcerer's stone. This mirror is not the only one. There other objects in *The Harry Potter* Saga which may be considered as magic mirrors: Dumbledore's Pensieve or the piece of glass that Sirius Black gives Harry. The Pensieve is not a looking glass but rather a reflecting surface. Even so, it has similar properties to those of the traditional magic mirror and it serves to reveal Dumbledore and other people's memories. By means of Dumbledore's Pensieve Harry learns many things about Voldemort and about events connected with the Wizarding World while a piece from a mirror allows Harry to be in contact with Sirius. Later, Harry uses this same fragment to

ask Aberforth Dumbledore⁴⁶ for help. The characteristics of the mirrors in *The Harry Potter* Saga are probably based on those of Galadriel's own Mirror:

When readers of fantasy literature read about Harry's magic mirror and its connection to something more than just reflecting appearance, they are most likely reminded of Lewis's *Narnia*, and, most especially, of Tolkien magisterial *Lord of the Rings*. For mirrors, light, and seeing eyes, Galadriel alone is a virtual warehouse of magical objects; Tolkien lovers reading about the Mirror of Erised that reveals the heart's desire, the Pensieve, and Sirius's mirror fragment showing Dumbledore's eye think of Galadriel's reflecting pond that shows what might be and contains the light of the Evening Star (Granger, 2009: 178).

One of the very few Arthurian texts written after the Middle Ages was that of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. This work, if not an Arthurian text properly speaking, makes use of some Arthurian characters such as Arthur himself, here called Arthegall, or Merlin to describe the Elizabethan court. Despite its complexity and symbolism, *The Faerie Queene* tells the story of a quest for Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, who represents Elizabeth I. This text is important because Spenser mentions a magic mirror which Merlin gives to Arthur so that he could see whatever it happens around him. Apart from Merlin's mirror, Spenser mentions others but of lesser relevance or symbolism:

In *The Faerie Queene*, besides 'real' mirrors like Lucifera's 'mirrour bright' (I iv 10), Merlin's magic looking glass (III ii 18-21) and 'the fountaine shere' in which Narcissus views his face (44), we find metaphorical mirrors like the fair woman (Una, I vi 15; Belphoebe, II iii 25), the human face (of Scudamour V iv 45), the head of the slain Pollente (V ii 19), the 'curtesie' of the present age (vi proem 5) Elizabeth as 'Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine (I proem 4; cf VI proem 6). (Hamilton, 1990: 477)

⁴⁶ Aberforth Dumbledore is Albus Dumbledore's brother (Albus Dumbledore is a very powerful wizard and the Head of the School of Magic, Hogwarts). Aberforth helps the main protagonists Harry, Hermione and Ron enter Hogwarts without being noticed by the evil guardians, the Death Eaters (Rowling, 2014: 464-480).

This means that this author uses the term ‘mirror’ for different purposes. The mirrors in Spenser’s work may show different things to each person such as, among others, a person’s face, an invasion about to happen, etc. Hamilton (1990: 477) argues that:

What mirrors show in *The Faerie Queene* is again largely conventional: to the proud Lucifera her own face, to Silvanus the beauty of Una, to Braggadoggio Belpheobe’s ‘celestiall grace’, to King Ryence –as did the legendary mirror of Virgil in *The Seven Sages of Rome* lines 1955-2036- the planned invasions and treasons threatening his kingdom from outside or inside (III ii 21), and to Britomart her future lover and husband Artegall (i 8, ii 23-5). Nor are the traditional effects of mirror gazing neglected: the flattering mirror causes deception (VI proem 5) and the beautiful image in the mirror engenders love. Narcissus and proud Lucifera fall in love with themselves, Britomar with the ‘comely knight’ Arthegall. The love-engendering mirror is therefore aptly called ‘*Venus looking glas*’ (III I 8). With this role in the story of Britomart and Artegall, Spenser gives the mirror a new and crucial function: it is only because Britomart has already seen Artegall in Merlin’s mirror that she can later recognize him as her destined husband. This decisive role of mirror gazing for her future fate cannot be justified merely by recourse to the conventions of the magic mirror that reveals things distant, past and future, of the mirror as young maiden’s love oracle, and of the mirror of Venus engendering love.

Spenser does not only make use of the magic mirror motif but he seems to deconstruct it by giving it a more metaphorical symbolism. Despite this, he keeps the traditional association of the magical mirror which is that of seeing past, present and future events. This mirror, which curiously belongs to Merlin, is described as a deep and circular surface:

“What is quite original, though, is the shape of Merlin’s mirror: being round and hollow, ‘a glassie globe,’ it ‘seem’d a world of glas’ (III ii 18-21)” (Hamilton, 1990: 477).

This is important for our analysis of Galadriel’s Mirror since it gives a clue about the presence of magic mirrors, especially those which show the present, the past, the future or events happening while looking into it. Another important mirror which is mentioned in an Arthurian text is that of the Lady of Shalott in Tennyson’s homonymous poem, which retells the story of Elaine, the Lady of Astolad, who lives in complete isolation

and loneliness and falls tragically in love with Lancelot. Tennyson presents the character as an enigmatic Lady described as a fairy-woman since she can weave not only the fate of others but also her own. The Lady's looking glass is connected with this idea of fate or doom. In Tennyson's own words:

And moving thro' a mirror clear / That hangs before her all the year, /
Shadows of the world appear / There she sees the highway near / There
the river eddy whirls, / And there the surly village churls, / And the red
cloaks of market girls, / Pass onward from Shalott (Almond, 2011: 34).

In this example, we conclude that the Lady of Shalott uses her mirror to see what is happening around her since her mirror is first described as a tool to see and to know what is happening outside. However, it is later described as an object with which the Lady can 'weave' the doom or fate of others. Tennyson (Almond, 2011: 36) says that "But in her web she still delights / To weave the mirror's magic sights." As we can see, the Lady's mirror has two main purposes. It shows events that happen around the Lady's castle but at the same time she can control what she sees in the looking glass. The most interesting part of the story of the original Elaine of Astolad, the Lady of Shalott in Tennyson's poem, is the appearance of Lancelot and Elaine's fatal love for him. Tennyson also includes him in his poem. The Lady sees Lancelot through her mirror when he rides to Camelot and falls immediately in love with him. This sight also causes the mirror's sudden breaking into pieces:

From the bank and from the river / He flash'd into the crystal mirror, /
"Tirra lira," by the river / Sang Sir Lancelot. / She felt the web, she left
the loom, / She made three paces thro' the room, / She saw the water-lily
bloom, / She saw the helmet and the plume, / She look'd down to
Camelot. / Out flew the web and floated wide; / The mirror crack'd from
side to side; / "The curse is come upon me," cried / The Lady of Shalott.
(Tennyson in Almond, 2011: 42-43)

It may seem that Lancelot's appearance in the mirror causes the Lady's death but, actually, it is the shattering of the mirror that triggers it. Thanks to Tennyson's ambiguity, we do not know the nature of the curse: is it Lancelot or is it the Lady's isolation that kills her? Anyway, it is clear that the mirror is intimately linked to the Lady of Shalott because she perceives reality by looking into it and she can also see things which are about to happen. The breaking of the mirror, which was believed to bring bad luck for seven years or even cause death, brings about the Lady's own death.

Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* offers a very interesting view of the magical mirror so present in mythologies and literature. Tennyson's contribution is especially significant for analyzing another interesting representation of the magic looking glass: that of Galadriel in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* since, as we shall see, both mirrors have many things in common.

In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien also included a magic mirror: Galadriel's. She shows the looking glass to Frodo and Sam so that they may know what is yet to come or might happen if they behave or act in a particular way. The Mirror is filled with water, which means that it is controlled by Galadriel's Ring of Waters:

(218)

With water from the stream Galadriel filled the basin to the brim, and breathed on it, and when the water was still again she spoke. 'Here is the Mirror of Galadriel,' she said. 'I have brought you here so that you may look in it, if you will' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 352).

Then Frodo asks what the Mirror shows and Galadriel replies that she has the power to make the Mirror show some things as well as what people desire to see. She also argues that the Mirror, although controlled by her own mind, can show unexpected things which may happen or may not. In Galadriel's words:

(219)

‘Many things I can command the Mirror to reveal,’ she answered, ‘and to some I can show what they desire to see. But the mirror will also show things unbidden, and those are often stranger and more profitable than things which we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be. But which it is that he sees, even the wisest cannot always tell. Do you wish to look?’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 352).

Sam is the first to look into the Mirror and he sees the darkness into which Middle-earth is about to plunge as well as the destruction of the Shire. This makes the Hobbit want to go back to the Shire but Galadriel admonishes him not to do so since the Mirror may show events that may happen or not:

(220)

‘Remember that the Mirror shows many things, and not all have yet come to pass. Some never come to be, unless those that behold the visions turn aside from their path to prevent them. The Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 354).

After this, Galadriel asks Frodo if he wants to look into it but he is at first reluctant to do it. The Hobbit, who is afraid of what the Mirror can show, asks Galadriel for advice. She tells that looking into the Mirror may be dangerous but it can also be good for he who looks into it. She explains that:

(221)

‘You may learn something, and whether what you see be fair or evil, that may be profitable, and yet it may not. Seeing is both good and perilous. Yet I think, Frodo, that you have courage and wisdom enough for the venture, or I would not have brought you here. Do as you will!’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 354).

Galadriel's words finally persuade Frodo to look into the Mirror and his visions are very similar to those of Sam. The first thing which the Mirror shows is the increasing and threatening darkness over Middle-earth. Frodo sees many things: a figure in white clothes who could be Saruman or Gandalf, Bilbo, what it seems to be Minas Tirith and the war which will later take place there:

(222)

Then there was a pause, and after it many swift scenes followed that Frodo in some way knew to be parts of a great history in which he had become involved. The mist cleared and he saw a sight which he had never seen before but knew at once: the Sea. Darkness fell. The sea rose and raged in a great storm. Then he saw against the Sun, sinking blood-red into a wrack of clouds, the black outline of a tall ship with torn sails riding up out of the West. Then a wide river flowing through a populous city. Then a white fortress with seven towers. And then again a ship with black sails, but now it was morning again, and the water rippled with light, and a banner bearing the emblem of a white tree shone in the sun. A smoke as of fire and battle arose, and again the sun went down in a burning red that faded into a grey mist; and into the mist a small ship passed away, twinkling with lights. It vanished, and Frodo sighed and prepared to draw away (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 354-355).

Frodo's vision somehow anticipates the return of the legitimate king of Gondor, the bloody battle at Minas Tirith and the departure of the Elves from Middle-earth. It can also be considered as a vision of the final battle against Sauron. What the Mirror later shows Frodo is even more disturbing since the Hobbit sees the Dark Lord himself. Due to this vision, the Ring becomes heavier as if Sauron himself were there, in the mirror:

(223)

But suddenly the Mirror went altogether dark, as dark as if a hole had opened in the world of sight, and Frodo looked into emptiness. In the black abyss there appeared a single Eye that slowly grew, until it filled nearly all the Mirror. So terrible was it that Frodo stood rooted, unable to cry out or to withdraw his gaze. The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat's, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing.

Then the Eye began to rove, searching this way and that; and Frodo knew with certainty and horror that among the many things that it sought he himself was one. But he also knew that it could not see him – not yet, not unless he willed it. The Ring that hung upon its chain about his neck grew heavy, heavier than a great stone, and his head was dragged downwards. The Mirror seemed to be growing hot and curls steam were rising from the water. He was slipping forward (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 355).

The Mirror shows Sauron himself and his powerlessness without his Ruling Ring. Frodo's vision reveals Sauron's despair about the discovery of his Ring, which he lost a long time ago. Also, Frodo learns that the Dark Lord is looking for it and the Ring itself senses his master's presence. Realizing what Frodo attempts to do, Galadriel warns him not to touch the water of the Mirror and then she recognizes that Frodo's visions are also in her mind, especially that of Sauron. As Galadriel says:

(224)

'I know what it was that you last saw,' she said; 'for that is also in my mind. Do not be afraid! But do not think that only by singing amid trees, nor even by the slender arrows of elven-bows, is this land of Lothlórien maintained and defended against its Enemy. I say to you, Frodo, that even as I speak to you, I perceive the Dark Lord and know his mind, or all of his mind that concerns the Elves' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 355).

Galadriel's Mirror stands out for its ambiguity. As Galadriel points out, the glass may be good or evil; it may show things that may happen or not. What is important is the fact that she can control the things which are shown and this is partly due to her Ring of Waters (she fills the Mirror with water). Sam and Frodo's first visions coincide in the fact that they show the increasing darkness and the threats that Middle-earth will confront but in a sort of nightmare-like way. However, when Frodo sees Sauron's eye, it seems that the Mirror is more than a simple object for divination or prophecy. If we pay attention to Galadriel's words about the fight against Sauron in Lothlórien and her

ability to know Sauron's thoughts, we can guess that the Mirror could be a sort of means to get to the Dark Lord's mind rather than an element for prophecy.

If we compare Galadriel's watery Mirror to that of the Lady of Shalott we can see many resemblances among them. Galadriel and the Lady of Shalott's respective mirrors are weapons of prophecy and doom. They are used to show reality and are connected with the figure of a fairy lady. While Galadriel's Mirror somehow reflects uncertain events, since it can show both past, present, future or even what the seer desires to see, the Lady of Shalott's glass just reveals the present. When Tennyson (Almond, 2011: 36) writes "But in her web she still delights / To weave the mirror's magic sights", he means that the Lady herself has the skill to control the visions reflected in her mirror. This reminds us of Galadriel, who indeed acknowledges that she controls her own mirror and its visions and orders the Mirror to show what she wants to. The mirrors of Galadriel and the Lady of Shalott have an intimate bond with their respective owners. While Galadriel's watery Mirror reflects her power, especially due to her Ring of Adamant, the Ring of Waters, the Lady of Shalott is powerless and weak since she cannot control what she sees in her mirror. For instance, when she sees Lancelot, the Lady collapses and her mirror shatters. As for Galadriel, she perceives the visions of the Mirror in her mind and she controls them.

9.3. Cursed and Deadly Objects: the Perilous Seat and the Palantíri

We have previously explained that fantasy fiction stands out for the use of magical items as a plot device. Typically, we may find magical swords of an immense power, magical rings, spears, grails or other sorts of objects whose finding or destruction is essential for their respective stories. Apart from the 'quest' artifact, cursed and deadly objects are also present although they may be given less importance.

In Arthurian literature, the most important objects, such as Excalibur or the Grail, are associated with good or healing. However, it is also common to find magical items which cause evil or even death to the one who uses them. They are described as ‘cursed’ because only a chosen one can make use of them properly. In Arthurian tradition we find the example of the Perilous Seat, a place in the Round Table, reserved for the rightful Grail Knight but there may be many more, such as a deadly mantle in Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthure*, given to Arthur by Morgan le Fay, which kills a false Lady of the Lake. In *The Lord of the Rings* there are also cursed and deadly artifacts. Besides Sauron’s Ring, which is the most destructive object, we find the Palantíri, i.e. seven stones used to see things from different places of Middle-earth and to communicate among themselves.

The Perilous Seat, also known as Siege Perilous in French, is an empty seat in the Round Table. Only the true Grail knight could sit on it. As said before, some critics argue that the Perilous Seat has its roots in religion since it may symbolize Judas’ empty seat at the Last Supper. In Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval*, a seat at the Grail Table, which kills those who are not spiritually pure or worthy, is mentioned. In many continuations to Chrétien’s unfinished work, the table is said to be given to Arthur by a fairy. Many knights attempted to sit on it and vanished. It is then Perceval who finally sits at the table:

The Siege (from the French *siège*, seat) Perilous is the seat at Arthur’s Round Table in which only the chosen knight can sit. In the prose rendition of Robert de Boron’s *Merlin*, the empty seat is reminiscent of the seat that Judas vacated. There is also an empty seat at Joseph of Arimathea’s Grail Table which destroys anyone unworthy of sitting there. In his Continuation to Chrétien’s *Perceval*, Gerbert de Montreuil says that it was sent to Arthur by the fairy of Roche Menor. Six knights tried to sit in it and were swallowed by the earth before Perceval sits in it and completes the adventure. When he does, the six are restored to Arthur’s court (Lupack, 2007: 470).

In the *Vulgate Cycle*, Merlin orders the Round Table to be made in order to commemorate the Grail Table. In the Round Table Merlin intentionally leaves a seat empty: none but the Grail knight could sit in it. In the *Queste del Saint Graal* the Perilous Seat is linked to Christ's seat at the Last Supper or Joseph of Arimathea's seat at the Grail Table (a man dies when trying to seat in Joseph's place at the table). Galahad has been traditionally the Grail Knight although sometimes it is Perceval the one considered as the Grail Knight. Both Galahad and Perceval, depending on the texts we are dealing with, are said to successfully sit in the Perilous Seat. This is explained by Lupack (2007: 470) as follows:

In the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, Merlin instructs Uther to build a table in commemoration of the Grail Table; at the table there is an empty seat reserved for the Grail knight. In the *Queste del Saint Graal*, the Siege Perilous is said to parallel the seat of Christ at the Last Supper and the seat occupied by Josephus at the Grail Table. Two brothers, jealous of Josephus, objected to his having a special place, and one of them sat in it only to be destroyed; so it came to be called the Feared Seat. Galahad is the knight for whom the Siege Perilous at Arthur's table is destined.

The motif of the dangerous seat still persists in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The author describes it as a place in the Round Table made for the one who will achieve the Grail Quest. Merlin himself claims that the Perilous Seat can only be occupied by one person and those who try to sit in it will die. As Merlin says:

But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow (Malory in Moore, 2000: 72, b.iii, ch. iv).

Later in the story, some of Arthur's knights approach the Perilous Seat and see an inscription written in gold which foretells Galahad's sitting on it:

So when the king and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the sieges of the Round Table all about, written with golden letters: Here ought to sit he, and he ought to sit here. And thus they went so long till that they came to the Siege Perilous, where they found letters newly written of gold which said: Four hundred winters and four and fifty

accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled (Malory in Moore, 2000: 564-564, b. xiii, ch. ii).

The Perilous Seat is mentioned in Malory's work one last time in order to reveal the truth behind it. It is Merlin himself who makes that seat and enchants it so that the true Grail knight can sit in it:

And then he made the Siege Perilous, in the which Galahad sat in at his meat on Whitsunday last past (Malory in Moore, 2000: 595, b. xiv, ch. ii).

The symbolism behind the motif of the Perilous Seat is quite clear. The Perilous Seat has many resemblances with the episode in which Arthur needs to draw the sword from the stone, a rite of initiation and legitimacy. Despite the fact that he is not a king, Galahad is said to belong to a royal lineage. He is considered to descend from the biblical King David and from Joseph of Arimathea. The Perilous Seat from the Arthurian legends echoes other elements used for the proclamation of a King in ancient mythologies such as the inauguration stones in Celtic ancient culture. It is likely to think that the idea of the Perilous Seat, a dangerous seat reserved for a chosen knight who will carry out the Grail Quest, has many aspects in common with the Celtic inauguration stones, especially the Lia Fáill, mentioned before. According to Celtic tradition these stones were used to announce the legitimate king of Ireland by means of a cry. Darrah (1997: 75) explains Galahad and Perceval's sitting on the Siege Perilous and compares it to the Celtic Lia Fáill:

The only individuals who were able to sit in the seat with apparent safety were Perceval and Galahad, really the same personage, for the latter seems to have replaced Perceval later in the development of the romances. When Perceval attended Arthur's court at Pentecost the king was fêted by the crows and had fresh spring herbs –iris and mint- spread before him. He then gave out robes and insignia to knights and squires. There was jousting at which Perceval, spurred on by Elaine, Gawain's sister, excelled. His success seems to have qualified him as a candidate for the Siege Perilous. He sat in it. The stone split underneath him, shrieked in anguish and there was thunder. He escaped death only because he was descended from a line of holy kings. The shrieking is paralleled in Irish

legend by the Lia Fail, the coronation stone at Tara, which indicated in this way a rightful occupant. Perceval may therefore be supposed to have been elected to the kingship at this point, but it is considerably later in the story that he is to be found established at Corbenic as the Fisher King.

This is important because this idea of royal legitimacy linked to a seat made of stone, i.e. the inauguration stone, is also present in Tolkien's Palantíri. Despite the fact that they are not the main objects connected with Aragorn's royal lineage (this is probably better perceived in Aragorn's sword, Andúril) the Palantíri have much in common with the Arthurian Perilous Seat as we shall see.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, we find other powerful and dangerous objects which can only be used by one person, mainly the rightful king: the Palantíri. Their name means "that which looks far away" (Tyler, 2012: 510) and they are eight stones created by Fëanor in the Elder Days and given to the Kings of Númenor. Elendil carried seven stones to Middle-earth as an heirloom for the house of the Númenorean Kings. The Palantíri, also called 'Seeing stones', were described as "a globe of crystal, in the heart of which flickered a tiny flame" (Tyler, 2012: 510). Those who looked into the stones could see this same flame grow and become a mixture of several colours until it turned into a particular image. The Palantíri could show what the seer wished to see. Although the eight stones were all mighty and strong, there was one which was stronger and more powerful than the others. An important aspect of the Seeing Stones is that they can be used by anyone (sometimes with terrible consequences for them) but they work best when the true heir of Isildur makes use of them. The Palantíri were kept in several places in Middle-earth such as Annúminas, Amon Sûl, Osgiliath, Orthanc, Minas Ithil and Minas Anor in Gondor and Arnor, which were once part of the Númorean kingdom. These magic stones had different properties, which could change according to their owners' abilities and mind:

The Stones were all in accord with each other, but some were more potent than others and one was the master of them all. After their arrival in Middle-earth they were distributed throughout the Númenorean realms-in-exile, being kept at Annúminas, Amon Sûl and the Tower Hills in Arnor; and at Osgiliath, Orthanc, Minas Ithil and Minas Anor in Gondor. Each Palantír had different characteristics and performed according to the nature of the person who commanded it; but they responded best when the user (or his agent) was of the true descent of Elendil. Using the Seven Stones, the Dúnedain were long able to guard and unite the Realms in Exile; but with the passing of time, many of the palantíri were lost or were taken by enemies of the Dúnedain (Tyler, 2012: 510).

The Palantíri were given two main uses: to communicate and to see what was yet to come. As for the stones themselves, two were of a particular power: the Master Stone or Chief Palantír, which was kept safe in Avallónë, and the stone of the Tower Hills, which is the most important stone of the other six ones kept by the High Elves and only used to look at the West. Despite their might and usefulness, the Palantíri started to disappear. However, at least four survived: three of them were kept in Minas Tirith, Orthanc and Mordor and were used by Sauron for his evil purposes. Another Palantír, the one from the Tower Hills, was sent back to Eressëa at the end of the Third Age. In Tyler's own words (2012: 510):

The Palantír of Osgiliath disappeared when the Dome of Stars was destroyed during the Kin-strife (1437 Third Age); the Stones of Amon Sûl and Annúminas were lost in the waters of the Ice Bay with King Arvedui of Arthedain in 1974; the Stone of Minas Ithil was captured by Sauron in 2002, when the Tower of the Moon was taken by his servants, the Ringwraiths (though this was not known for many years); the Palantír of Orthanc fell into the clutches of the traitor Saruman (c. 3000); and finally, the Stone of Minas Anor (Minas Tirith) fell virtually under the control of Sauron (who used it to break the mind of Denethor II, last Ruling Steward). By the time of the War of the Ring, only the Palantír of the Tower Hills remained untouched by evil. (Since it 'looked' only towards the Far West, it was quite useless to those struggling for power, and it had long been in the keeping of the High-elves.) As for the eighth of the stones, the 'Master-stone' or Chief Palantír, this had never left the Undying Lands; it stood in the tower of Avallónë, in Eressëa, and was in direct accord with the Stone of the Tower Hills, which was the Master-stone of the Seven, though subservient to the Palantír of Eressëa.

As the War of the Ring was being waged, the Seeing Stone used by Sauron was finally destroyed in Barad-dûr, while that of Minas Tirith could no longer be used except by the legitimate king. The Master Stone was sent back to the Undying Lands. Only the stone from Orthanc, found by chance at Saruman's tower, was still in use during the Fourth Age:

During the War of the Ring the Ithil-stone, long before taken by Sauron, was destroyed in the Fall of Barad-dûr, and that of Minas Tirith rendered completely unusable (save by a person with an iron will). Only the Orthanc-stone, recovered from Saruman by a strange mischance, remained to the new King of Gondor for use during the Fourth Age; for the Palantír of the Tower Hills was secretly put aboard Master Elrond's ship by Círdan the Shipwright, and so passed over Sea back to Eressëa at the end of the Third Age (Tyler, 2012: 510-511).

In *The Lord of the Rings*, two Palantíri are mentioned. The first one is the Orthanc-stone while the second one is that of Minas Tirith. The former is found when Saruman is defeated by Gandalf and the rest of the Company. At the very moment the tower of Orthanc starts to fall down, they find the stone although Tolkien does not say what it is: (225)

With a cry Saruman fell back and crawled away. At that moment a heavy shining thing came hurtling down from above. It glanced off the iron rail, even as Saruman left it, and passing close to Gandalf's head, it smote the stair on which he stood. The rail rang and snapped. The stair cracked and splintered in glittering sparks. But the ball was unharmed: it rolled on down the steps, a globe of crystal, dark, but glowing with a heart of fire (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 569).

It is actually Pippin who picks up the strange globe but Gandalf commands him to give it to him. However, Pippin feels attracted to the power which emanates from the stone and is tempted to look into it. As Tolkien (Anderson, 2012: 577) describes:

(226)

The thought of the dark globe seemed to grow stronger as all grew quiet. Pippin felt again its weight in his hands, and saw again the mysterious red depths into which he had looked for a moment.

Pippin cannot resist looking into the stone and tries to steal it from Gandalf. His desire is so strong that he is not afraid of what the stone can do to him. When the Hobbit looks into the dark globe, he just sees darkness but, then, darkness becomes fire and he cannot release himself from the stone:

(227)

At first the globe was dark, black as jet, with the moonlight gleaming on its surface. Then there came a faint glow and stir in the heart of it, and it held his eyes, so that now he could not look away. Soon all the inside seemed on fire; the ball was spinning, or the lights within were revolving. Suddenly the lights went out. He gave a gasp and struggled; but he remained bent, clasping the ball with both hands. Closer and closer he bent, and then became rigid; his lips moved soundlessly for a while. Then with a strangled cry he fell back and lay still (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 578).

This shows that the Palantír has been corrupted by Sauron and Saruman has been using it to contact the Dark Lord. In this case, Pippin sees the Dark Lord and Mordor through the stone and Sauron himself asks the Hobbit some questions. The interesting point is that Pippin does not hear Sauron's words but he looks into the stone and understands what he sees. Indeed, Sauron tells Pippin that he intends to take the stone back. As Pippin explains:

(228)

'I saw a dark sky, and tall battlements,' he said. 'And tiny stars. It seemed very far away and long ago, yet hard and clear. Then the stars went in and out –they were cut off by things with wings. Very big, I think, really; but in the glass they looked like bats wheeling round the tower. I thought there were nine of them. One began to fly straight towards me, getting bigger and bigger. It had a horrible –no, no! I can't say.

'I tried to get away, because I thought it would fly out; but when it had covered all the globe, it disappeared. Then *he* came. He did not speak so that I could hear words. He just looked, and I understood.

“So you have come back? Why have you neglected to report for so long?”

‘I did not answer. He said: “Who are you?” I still did not answer, but it hurt me horribly; and he pressed me, so I said: “A hobbit.”’

‘Then suddenly he seemed to see me, and he laughed at me. It was cruel. It was like being stabbed with knives. I struggled. But he said: “Wait a moment! We shall meet again soon. Tell Saruman that this dainty is not for him. I will send for it at once. Do you understand? Say just that!”’

‘Then he gloated over me. I felt I was falling to pieces. No, no! I can’t say any more. I don’t remember anything else’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 579).

This means that Sauron uses his own Palantír and the one from Orthanc to subdue those who look into it, such as Saruman and Pippin. While Saruman is finally corrupted by the evil power of the stone, Pippin resists it. However, the Palantíri were created to be used by the heirs of the Númenorean Kings, who possessed enough power to look into the Seeing Stones without any danger. Aragorn himself points out this and Gandalf, who is also afraid of the Palantír, decides to give it to Aragorn:

(229)

‘Dangerous indeed, but not to all,’ said Aragorn. ‘There is one who may claim it by right. For this assuredly is the *palantír* of Orthanc from the treasury of Elendil, set here by the Kings of Gondor. Now my hour draws near. I will take it’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 580).

When travelling to Minas Tirith, Gandalf explains that the Seeing Stones were not conceived and made for evil purposes but they were turned into cursed objects of evil by Sauron. Indeed, he points out that the power of the Palantíri is beyond Saruman and Sauron’s might and strength:

(230)

It is beyond his art, and beyond Sauron’s too. The *palantíri* came from beyond Westeros, from Eldamar. The Noldor made them. Fëanor himself, maybe, wrought them, in days so long ago that the time cannot be measured in years. But there is nothing that Sauron cannot turn to evil uses. Alas for Saruman! It was his downfall, as I now perceive. Perilous to us all are the devices of an art deeper than we possess ourselves. Yet he must bear the blame. Fool! To keep it secret, for his own profit. No word

did he ever speak of it to any of the Council. We had not yet given thought to the fate of the *palantíri* of Gondor in its ruinous wars. By Men they were almost forgotten. Even in Gondor they were a secret known only to a few; in Arnor they were remembered only in a rhyme of lore among the Dúnedain (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 583).

After this, Gandalf says that the stones were used for two main purposes: to communicate the different parts and lands of the kingdom of Gondor, and in turn keep them safe, as well as to watch whatever may be happening in Gondor. The wizard also talks about the location of some of the stones while he ignores the whereabouts of others:

(231)

‘What did the Men of old use them for?’ asked Pippin, delighted and astonished at getting answers to so many questions, and wondering how long it would last.

‘To see far off, and to converse in thought with one another,’ said Gandalf. ‘In that way they long guarded and united the realm of Gondor. They set up Stones at Minas Anor, and at Minas Ithil, and at Orthanc in the ring of Isengard. The chief and master of these was under the Dome of Stars at Osgiliath before its ruin. The three others were far away in the North. In the house of Elrond it is told that they were at Annúminas, and Amon Sûl, and Elendil’s Stone was on the Tower Hills that look towards Mithlond in the Gulf of Lune where the grey ships lie.

‘Each *palantír* replied to each other, but all those in Gondor were ever open to the view of Osgiliath. Now it appears that, as the rock of Orthanc has withstood the storms of time, so there the *palantír* of that tower has remained. But alone it could do nothing but see small images of things far off and days remote. Very useful, no doubt, that was to Saruman; yet it seems that he was not content. Further and further abroad he gazed. Until he cast his gaze upon Barad-dûr. Then he was caught! (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 583).

Gandalf’s words reflect the power that the Palantíri have even though their presence in the story of *The Lord of the Rings* is very limited. Such is the power of the stones that even surpasses that of both Sauron and Saruman themselves. However, the Palantíri

which are left cannot be used by anybody but by the legitimate heir to the Kings of Gondor.

Later, in *The Return of the Ring*, Aragorn acknowledges that he has looked into the Orthanc stone and has communicated with Sauron. This very first contact between Aragorn, the king, and Sauron is presented as an initial ‘battle’ in which he shows himself to Sauron as the King of Gondor. The Dark Lord attempts to subdue Aragorn’s will but finally he overcomes Sauron and manages to control the stone. He also shows Andúril to Sauron, letting him know that the lineage of the Kings of Gondor is not totally extinct:

(232)

‘It was a bitter struggle, and the weariness is slow to pass. I spoke no word to him, and in the end I wrenched the Stone to my own will. That alone he will find hard to endure. And he beheld me. Yes, Master Gimli, he saw me, but in other guise than you see me here. If that will aid him, I have done ill. But I do not think so. To know that I lived and walked the earth was a blow to his heart, I deem; for he knew it not until now. The eyes in Orthanc did not see through the armour of Théoden; but Sauron has not forgotten Isildur and the sword of Elendil. Now in the very hour of his great designs the heir of Isildur and the Sword are revealed; for I showed the blade re-forged to him. He is not so mighty that he is above fear; nay, doubt ever gnaws him’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 763).

The fact that Aragorn manages to master the Orthanc stone may entail that Sauron is not as powerful as it was believed and that the power of the globe resides in the legitimacy or right that its bearer may have. Aragorn controls it because he is the rightful king while Sauron can corrupt the stone but not necessarily control it. Like the Perilous Seat from the Grail stories, the Palantíri stones also symbolize royal and probably spiritual or moral legitimacy.

Despite the fact that Tolkien explains and describes the origins of the Orthanc stone, we know that there is another besides that of Orthanc or that of Sauron: the Minas

Tirith stone. Denethor shows it to Gandalf when Faramir is about to be burnt at the stake and Denethor claims that it is impossible to defeat Sauron:

(233)

Then suddenly Denethor laughed. He stood up tall and proud again, and stepping swiftly back to the table he lift from it the pillow on which his head had lain. Then coming to the doorway he drew aside the covering, and lo! he had between his hands a *palantír*. And as he held it up, it seemed to those that looked on that the globe began to glow with an inner flame, so that the lean face of the Lord was lit as with a red fire, and it seemed cut out of hard stone, sharp with black shadows, noble, proud, and terrible (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 835).

Denethor's pessimism and weakness may be caused by the fact that he has looked into the stone several times. In fact, he later admits the use of the Seeing Stone and the dark, hopeless future that is about to come. However, this vision of the future is biased because Denethor only sees what Sauron wants to show him. The darkness and desolation of a devastated Middle-earth plunged into evil eventually makes Denethor mad. In his own words:

(234)

'Pride and despair!' he cried. 'Didst thou think that the eyes of the White Tower were blind? Nay, I have seen more than thou knowest, Grey Fool. For thy hope is but ignorance. Go then and labour in healing! Go forth and fight! Vanity. For a little space you may triumph on the field, for a day. But against the Power that now arises there is no victory. To this City only the first finger of its hand has yet been stretched. All the East is moving. And even now the wind of thy hope cheats thee and wafts up Anduin a fleet with black sails. The West has failed. It is time for all to depart who would not be slaves' (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 835).

Denethor acknowledges that he has been using one of the Palantíri for a long time and has seen the future of Middle-earth. The Palantír shows him the coming and the victory of the Dark Lord as well as a brief victory for the folks of Middle-earth who fight against him. However, Sauron's intention to destroy the race of Men by corrupting the

Steward of Gondor's mind fails since his Ring is destroyed and he is eventually defeated. Once the War of the Ring is finished and Sauron and his Seeing Stone destroyed, one of the Palantíri is still preserved so as to keep Middle-earth safe from any evil force. When the Hobbits say farewell to Aragorn in the same place where they find the Orthanc stone, Pippin expresses his desire to own a Palantír in order to be in touch with Aragorn and other members of the Company of the Ring. To this Aragorn replies that:

(235)

‘Only one now remains that you could use,’ answered Aragorn, ‘for you would not wish to see what the Stone of Minas Tirith would show you. But the Palantír of Orthanc the King will keep, to see what is passing in his realm, and what his servants are doing’ (Tolkien in Anderson, 2012: 960).

Despite the fact that the Arthurian Perilous Seat and Tolkien's Palantíri are different objects we can appreciate some elements in common between them. They are symbols of a power reserved for a particular hero. Except for Perceval and Galahad, all those who attempted to sit in the Perilous Seat died by burning. Similarly, Tolkien's Palantíri are dangerous but extremely powerful globes which are used to communicate and foresee the future. Indeed, the might of these magic stones is even superior to that of the Dark Lord and Saruman. Like the Grail knight, only a particular hero, i.e. the King of Gondor, can handle the Seeing Stones without subduing his will to Sauron. This means that, even if they are cursed objects, in the sense that they can cause death or madness to those who try to sit in it or use them, both the Perilous Seat at the Round Table and the Palantíri represent royal and moral legitimacy. In the case of the former, the rightful Grail knight, whose main virtue is that of spiritual purity (he is sometimes described as the descendant of King David), sits in the seat without any harm to his physical integrity. Aragorn himself can control and master a Palantíri, even if it has been

corrupted by Sauron, because he is the heir to the Kings of Gondor, for whom the stones were intended and made (he saves the Orthanc stone from Sauron's evil influence). This idea connects the Palantíri with another Arthurian object: the Sword in the Stone, which could only be drawn by the rightful king, Arthur. Behind this idea of royal legitimacy present in the Palantíri and the Perilous Seat lies another concept: moral integrity. Only those who stood for their moral righteousness could eventually sit in the Perilous Seat and look into the Palantíri with no harm.

To conclude, we have analysed some magical objects from Arthurian legends and their influence on *The Lord of the Rings*. It is clear that magical objects play a more relevant role than that of a simple plot device. Present in many ancient mythologies, these items may take different forms such as swords, mirrors, grails, or rings. These objects of power have become essential and prototypical in fantasy literature partly thanks to Tolkien's masterpiece. It is rather common to find a powerful sword which belongs to the main hero (Aragorn's Andúril echoes King Arthur's legendary blade Excalibur) or a quest object (the Grail or Tolkien's Ring) whose similarities we have studied in another section. We can also find objects of doom and prophecy normally represented as mirrors such as the Lady of Shalott and Galadriel's looking glasses, or cursed and fatal items such as Tolkien's the Seeing Stones. Like the Perilous Seat from the Grail stories which is reserved for the Grail knight, these objects can only be used by a particular hero, Aragorn, whose royal legitimacy and moral virtue make him suitable to master the stones and release them from Sauron. It is undeniable that some of the objects from *The Lord of the Rings* are influenced by the Arthurian legends. Aragorn's Andúril is, undoubtedly, highly influenced by King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, as a symbol for a king's might, invulnerability and strength. As for Galadriel's Mirror, it resembles that of the Lady of Shalott as an object of prophecy and

fate, although a fate which can change. The Perilous Seat and the Palantíri are different things, but the symbolism behind them is the same. They embody moral and spiritual integrity as well as royal legitimacy although they can also become a mortal danger for those who are not righteous enough.



CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* owes a literary debt to the Arthurian legends. Considering that he intended his masterpiece as a mythology for England, it is more than likely that Tolkien borrowed some elements from Arthurian tradition. Today, after more than sixty years of its publication, *The Lord of the Rings* still enjoys a great popularity. Tolkien's work continues to inspire many authors to write fantasy fiction, making the fantastic genre one of the most profitable and popular ones among readers. Brooks (qtd. in Timmons, 2000:1) argued that "I don't know if we can measure Tolkien's impact. Every writer of modern fantasy was influenced by Tolkien to some degree. He was the premiere fantasy writer of the last century, and all of us writing today owe him a huge debt". *The Lord of the Rings* has a huge influence not only on literature but also on other disciplines such as videogames or films. Peter Jackson's well-known trilogy (2001-2003) contributed to increase the interest in Tolkien's masterpiece.

The Quest for the Ring certainly echoes the Grail Quest. Frodo, like the Grail knight, embarks on a perilous journey in order to save Middle-earth, which will also test his own worth. Frodo's spiritual Quest may be equated with that of Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval, since both evolve from selfishness to compassion. Similarly, Frodo progresses from the sense of individuality to that of community since his Quest would not have been achieved if he had not accepted help from others: the Companions (especially Sam) and Gollum. Besides Frodo's quest, there is another example of Arthurian Quest in *The Lord of the Rings*: that of Aragorn. He definitely resembles King Arthur as a healing king. By fighting for his people, Aragorn will not only recover his authority as

Isildur's heir but he will also unify the race of men. Theoden, controlled by Wormtongue, and Denethor represent the decay and corruption of the two realms of men: Rohan and Gondor. However, Aragorn must prove his worth as a leader after Gandalf's disappearance and the dissolution of the Fellowship. Moreover, he will be tested throughout the story. His love for Arwen may be an example of this. Another test takes place when he looks into the *Palantíri* and faces Sauron.

The theme of the 'Fellowship' is also significant in *The Lord of the Rings*. The Fellowship of the Ring has many resemblances with the Order of the Round Table, especially the one which Malory portrayed in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Both Fellowships share the same moral values: equality, comradeship and loyalty. The Ring and the Round Table are the symbols used to represent these three ideas. In the two companies, the kings, Arthur and Aragorn, are depicted as equal peers to their Companions. Moreover, they also share a similar purpose: to restore peace to their realms. Even so, they differ in one aspect: while the Ring must return to the place where it was forged in order to be destroyed, the Grail must be found and given to Arthur. Another similarity between the two Fellowships is the idea of fragmentation. An act of treason within each one of the Companies (Mordred and Agravaine's revelation of Lancelot and Guenevere's adulterous love and Boromir's craving for the Ring) brings about the downfall. Finally, there can be other parallelisms between some Arthurian knights and some members of Tolkien's the Fellowship of the Ring. As mentioned above, while Frodo and Aragorn respectively echo the Grail Knight and King Arthur, Sam may be seen as Bedivere, the archetypal image of the most loyal and faithful knight. Gandalf in his role of wizard and adviser of Aragorn reminds us of Merlin. Merry and Pippin may resemble Perceval in their lack of courtly manners and their wish to prove their worth.

Tolkien's work may be also considered a rewriting of the Grail legend in many aspects. The presence of a quest object, the Ring, which becomes the centre of the plot, has reminiscences of the Grail and the Grail Quest from Arthurian tradition. Although they differ in their nature -the Ring embodies evil and destruction while the Grail represents good, healing and restoration- both objects share the power to destroy. The Grail Quest causes the dissolution of the Order of the Round Table since many of Arthur's knights die (Perceval, or Galahad, for instance). The Ring, similarly, can destroy all Middle-earth and plunge it into chaos; it also brings about the fragmentation of the Company of the Ring, broken by Boromir's attempt to take the Ring. Like the Grail, the Ring can provide an unusual long life but with a little difference: the former has the power to nourish its bearer in order to protect him/her while the latter gives a long but cursed life to its bearer, who is subdued to it. Sauron's Ring has some resemblances with a peculiar version of the Grail: that of Eschenbach's Grail stone. While the weight of the Grail stone changes according to its bearer's sins, the Ring becomes heavier as the Hobbits approach Mordor especially because of its oppressive power. The Ring and the Grail cause disruption in their respective worlds so a quest, a stepped journey, is undertaken to restore the previous state of peace and prosperity. The Grail Quest and the Quest for the Ring differ in their purpose since the Ring must be destroyed whereas the Grail must be found although they ultimately have the same final goal, i.e. the restoration of peace.

Bilbo and Frodo's close tie has some resemblances with the medieval motif of the uncle-nephew relationship. The most prominent examples in Arthurian literature are King Arthur and Gawain, Perceval and the Fisher King or Mark of Cornwall and Tristan. Bilbo and Frodo are first described as cousins although Tolkien later writes that Frodo is Bilbo's nephew on the mother's side just like King Arthur and Sir Gawain, the

Fisher King and Perceval or Mark and Tristan. The medieval idealization of the relationship between an uncle and his nephew is also linked with the idea of favouritism and fosterage. In the case of Frodo, he is Bilbo's favourite cousin (indeed, he becomes his heir) and lives with Bilbo as a son of his own. Bilbo acts as a guide for Frodo, especially in his Quest. When Bilbo gives Frodo his own sword and the mithril shirt, he somehow makes Frodo a knight and gives him advice about the perils he can face.

The role of women in Tolkien's work has been harshly criticized, particularly because of the marginalization and scarce presence of his heroines. However, the few women who appear, Galadriel, Éowyn and Arwen, cannot be perceived as weak characters. Although few in number, Galadriel, Éowyn and Arwen are more important than it may seem. Galadriel is curiously the only female character who bears a Ring of Power while Éowyn kills the Witch King, something that no man can do. Arwen, probably the most marginalized woman in the story, encourages and helps Aragorn in his Quest. She is of a higher lineage than Aragorn (she is a High Elf-maiden) and possesses the gift of immortality. These three women also have much in common with some heroines from Arthurian tradition. Galadriel inevitably reminds us of Morgan Le Fay, the Lady of the Lake or even the Lady of Shalott. Like them, Galadriel embodies the figure of the fairy woman, a powerful and wise lady normally regarded as a sorceress because of her might. She is not only the lady of Lothlórien but also her guardian and the bearer of the Ring of Waters, a symbol for healing, rebirth and purification. Her Mirror is, curiously enough, very similar to that of the Lady of Shalott. Éowyn represents the figure of the woman warrior and has many resemblances with an almost unknown but interesting character: Silence. Both women must disguise themselves in order to go to battle. The two heroines are prophesied to achieve a quest that no one else, not even men, can do: to find Merlin and to kill the Witch King

respectively. Éowyn and Silence also have similar endings: they choose to give up their lives as warriors in order to get married. Arwen can be compared to Guenevere in the sense that she is left apart from the world which surrounds her. Both women have tragic lives and tragic loves and they have to make difficult choices. While Guenevere decides to forget Lancelot and she becomes a nun, Arwen chooses to have a mortal life instead of enjoying immortality.

The theme of love in *The Lord of the Rings* is presented as peripheral and not given much prominence. Despite this, it cannot be denied that Aragorn and Arwen's love has clear resonances of the ideal of courtly love from Arthurian tradition. Their relationship has much in common with those of Tristan and Isolde and Lancelot and Guenevere. Like the love of these characters, that between Aragorn and Arwen is forbidden since she is an immortal Elf-lady and he is a mortal man. His deeds are connected with Arwen since it is her who encourages him to carry out his quest of becoming the king of Gondor. This relates Arwen to Isolde and Guenevere since they do not only inspire the heroes in his exploits but they also help them. Without Arwen's help, Aragorn would have failed in his quest while Isolde helps Tristan to escape from his uncle or even heals him. Tragedy is also an essential element in the context of the Arthurian courtly love. The tragedy of Aragorn and Arwen's love lies in the fact that when Aragorn dies, Arwen also dies of grief and sorrow since she cannot understand death. Tristan and Isolde's love and Guenevere and Lancelot's liaison are also doomed to have a tragic end. Isolde kills herself when she learns of Tristan's murder and Guenevere finally rejects Lancelot's love because of all the troubles that their love has caused to King Arthur's society. Another feature of the courtly love is the presence of a love triangle, such as those of Tristan and the two Isoldes or Lancelot, Guenevere and Elaine of Astolad. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Éowyn becomes the third element in the

love triangle although her love for Aragorn is not romantic; she loves him because he is what she has always yearned for: battle, glory, and heroic deeds.

One of Tolkien's innovations is the presence of a secondary world, independent from our own: Middle-earth. The term, as we have seen, is frequently found in many medieval and Arthurian texts and is not an invention of Tolkien. The world of Middle-earth is not, as it may seem, a simple background for a series of actions; indeed, landscapes and settings may function as participants in the main actions or are intimately connected with the heroes or heroines. This idea of the land and the ruler as one comes from the Arthurian myth of the Wasteland and can also be perceived in *The Lord of the Rings*. In the case of Rohan, the king's decrepit appearance, very similar to that of the Fisher King from the Grail stories, represents the decline of his own realm while the absence of the legitimate King of Gondor is symbolized in the withered White Tree of Gondor. Minas Tirith, capital of Gondor, is described as a city in decay. By contrast, when Aragorn becomes the King of Gondor, the White Tree flourishes and the return of the legitimate king brings a period of peace and prosperity for the realm. Mordor and the Shire may be regarded as other examples of the Arthurian idea of the Wasteland. The landscape of Mordor epitomizes the darkness, evil and corruptive power of its ruler Sauron while the Shire is plunged into chaos and evil because of Saruman. The Shire is finally saved by Frodo and the other three hobbits while Mordor cannot be healed because of the pure evil that has dwelt in it.

Other places from Middle-earth with Arthurian influence are, for instance, Minas Tirith, Valinor, Tol Eressëa, Lothlórien or Minas Morgul. Minas Tirith is, like Camelot, a walled city of High Kings (both Arthur and Aragorn are not simply rulers but high kings). Minas Tirith and Camelot symbolize royal splendour and authority. Valinor and Tol Eressëa, the idyllic and unreachable islands near Middle-earth, echo the

Arthurian isle of Avalon. In fact, Tolkien also named Tol Eressëa as Avallon. Like the Arthurian Avalon, Valinor and Tol Eressëa are heavenly and unreachable islands for healing and resting. The forest of Lothlórien can be compared to the Arthurian Valley of No Return since they are ‘fairylands,’ i.e. a forest, a valley or other natural environments ruled by a fairy queen: Galadriel and Morgan le Fay respectively. Only a faithful knight can enter the Valley of No Return and get out from it. In the case of Lothlórien, the Companions must enter the forest blindfolded. Like the Valley of No Return, Lothlórien is an enchanted place, untouched and unspoiled by evil thanks to Galadriel’s Ring of Waters.

Arthurian literature also contributed to the shaping of the map of fantasy by means of the landscapes of evil, also present in Tolkien’s work. The Waste City, which appears in *Perlesvaus*, is described as a ghostly, evil city in ruins in which Lancelot is challenged to the Beheading Game. Once he destroys the spell on the city, this is released from the curse and saved. Minas Morgul is a city of terror and evil in *The Lord of the Rings*. Ruled by the Witch King, the evil of Sauron corrupts the city, which had previously belonged to Gondor and had been a prosperous place. Both Minas Morgul and the Waste City are landscapes of terror which represent the destruction and corruptive power of evil.

Finally, it is common to find objects of power in Tolkien’s work, some of them with clear Arthurian resonances both in appearance or symbolism. Probably, the most evident ones are the Ring and Aragorn’s sword Andúril. Like Excalibur, which is protected by a scabbard with magical powers, Andúril includes a sheath, given by Galadriel, to protect its bearer. Both swords provide an extraordinary strength and power to King Arthur and Aragorn respectively. Andúril, like Excalibur, symbolizes restoration and healing as well as royal legitimacy. Other objects of power are

Galadriel's Mirror and the Palantíri, the Seeing Stones. In literature, magical mirrors are frequently found, and Galadriel's Mirror follows the same patterns of the traditional magic mirror as an element not only for prophecy but also for understanding present events. Merlin's mirror in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and the Lady of Shalott's looking glass in Tennyson's poem are examples of the traditional use of this magic object. Galadriel's Mirror shares many similarities with the Lady of Shalott's looking glass because it does not only show the future but also things that are happening or may happen. Both in Tolkien's work and in the Arthurian legends, there are deadly and cursed objects which can only be touched by a chosen hero. The Perilous Seat from the Grail stories is said to bring death to those who sat in it and were not the chosen Grail Knight while those who looked into the Palantíri, the Seeing Stones, would become mad since only the rightful king could use the Seeing Stones. These objects of power (especially Excalibur, Andúril, the Perilous Seat and the Seeing Stones) represent royal authority and legitimacy.

Finally, the influence of Arthurian legends in *The Lord of the Rings* is quite clear and it is undeniable that Tolkien borrowed some elements from Arthurian literature to create his work. The publication of Tolkien's Arthurian work, *The Fall of Arthur*, shows his interest for Arthurian legends and this may also explain the presence, the adaptation, the reinvention and the reinterpretation of Arthurian elements in Tolkien's masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*.

WORKS CITED

- Allen Paton, Lucy. 1970. *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*. New York: Burt Franklin.
- Almond, Jocelyn. 2011. *The Lady of Shalott*. North Carolina: Lulu Press.
- Anderson, Douglas. ed. 2012a. *The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Anderson, Douglas. ed. 2012b. *The Hobbit*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Archibald, Elizabeth & Putter, Ad. 2009. *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barron, William. R. J. 2001. *The Arthur of the English: the Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Bates, Bryan. 2002. *The Real Middle-earth: Magic and Mystery in the Dark Ages*. London: Sidgwick and Jackson.
- Bloch, Marc. 2015. *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*. Routledge: New York.
- Bloom, Harold. 2008. *Bloom's Modern Interpretations: J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Bowman, Sarah L. 2010. *The Functions of Role-playing Games*. Jefferson, MacFarland.
- Brook, George L. & Leslie, Roy. F. (1963-1978). *Brut*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bruce, Christopher W. 1999. *The Arthurian Name Dictionary*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Bryant, Nigel. 2006. *The Legend of the Grail*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Bumke, Joachim. 1991. *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle-Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burns, Marjorie. 2008. "Spiders and Red Evil Eyes: the Shadow Sides of Gandalf and Galadriel". In Bloom, Harold. ed. *Bloom's Modern Interpretations: J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 69-100.
- Campbell, Lori. 2014. *A Quest of Her Own: Essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy*. Jefferson: MacFarland.
- Carpenter, John. 2011. *Tolkien: A Biography*. London: Harper Collins.

- Carpenter, John & Tolkien, Christopher. 2012. *The Letter of J. R. R. Tolkien*. London: Harper Collins.
- Carter, Lin. 2011. *A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings*. London: Hachette.
- Chance, Jane. 2001. *Tolkien's Art: a Mythology for England*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Clark, George & Timmons, Daniel. 2000. *J. R. R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Clarke, B.F.L. 1973. *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlin*. Cardiff: Wales University Press.
- Clute, John & Grant, John. 1999. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. London: St Martin Press.
- Curry, Patrick. 2004. *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien Myth and Modernity*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Darrah, John. 1997. *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewell.
- Day, David. 2011. *Tolkien's Ring*. London: Anova Books.
- Doel, Fran. 1998. *Worlds of Arthur: King Arthur in History, Legend and Culture*. Gloucestershire: Tempus.
- Dover, Carol. 2003. *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Drout, Michael D.C. 2007. *J. R. R. Tolkien's Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. New York: Routledge.
- Duggan, Joseph J. 1999. *Perceval: the Story of the Grail*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Duggan, Joseph J. 2001. *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Eaglestone, Robert. 2005. *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*. New York: Continuum.
- Ekman, Stefan. 2013. *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Emick, Jennifer. 2016. *The Book of Celtic Myths: from the Mystic Might of the Celtic Warriors to the Magic of the Fey Folk, the Storied History and Folklore of Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Wales*. Avon: Adams Media.

- Enright, Nancy. 2008. "Tolkien's Females and the Defining of Power". In Bloom, Harold. ed. *Bloom's Modern Interpretations: J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 171-186.
- Fisher, Sheila. 2000. "Leaving Morgan Aside: Women, History, and Revisionism in *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*". In Fenster, Thelma. ed. *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, 77-96.
- Flieger, Verlyn. 2004. "Frodo and Aragorn: the Concept of a Hero". In Zimbaro, Rose A. & Neil Davis Isaacs. eds. *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: the Best of Tolkien Criticism*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 122-145.
- Flieger, Verlyn. 2005. *Interrupted Music: the Making of Tolkien's Mythology*. Kent: Kent State University Press.
- Frappier, Jean. 2000. "Perceval or Le Conte du Graal". In Fenster, Thelma. ed. *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, 175-200.
- Fries, Maureen. 2000. "Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Literature". In Fenster, Thelma. ed. *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, 59-77.
- Fulton, Helen. 2012. *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*. Chichester: Blackwell-Wiley.
- Gardner, Laurence. 2003. *Realm of the Ring Lords: the Myth and the Magic of the Grail Quest*. Gloucester: Fair Winds Press.
- Garner, Alan. 2013. *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. London: Harper Collins.
- Gilliver, Peter; Marshall, Jeremy & Edmund Weiner. 2009. *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goodrich, Peter H. & Thompson, Raymond H. 2003. *Merlin: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.
- Granger, John. 2009. *Harry Potter's Bookshelf: the Great Books behind the Hogwarts Adventures*. New York: Berkley Books.
- Gray, James Martin. 1996. *Idylls of the King*. London: Penguin.
- Greenberg, Martin H. 1992. *After the King: Stories in Honor of J. R. R. Tolkien*. New York: T. Doherty Associates Press.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 2006. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. London: Norton & Company, 160-212.
- Griffin, Justin E. 2004. *The Grail Procession: the Legend, the Artifacts and the Possible Sources of the Story*. London: MacFarland.

- Haber, Karen. 2002. *Meditations on Middle-earth: New Writing on the Worlds of J. R. R. Tolkien by Orson Scott Card, Ursula K. Le Guin, Raymond E. Feist, Terry Pratchett, Charles de Lint, George R. R. Martin and more*. New York: St. Martin Press.
- Hamilton, Albert Charles. 2006. *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge.
- Hamilton, John. 2006. *Weapons of Fantasy and Folklore*. Minnesota: ABDO Publishing.
- Harf-Lancner, Laurence. 2000. "Fairy Godmothers and Fairy Lovers". In Fenster, Thelma. ed. *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Harper-Bills, Christopher & Van Houts, Elizabeth. 2002. *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*. New York: Boydell Press.
- Hatto, Arthur Thomas. 2004. *Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival*. London: Penguin Books.
- Horne, Mark. 2011. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Christian Encounters*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc.
- James, Edward. 2012. "Tolkien, Lewis and the Explosion of Genre Fantasy". In James, Edward & Farrah Mendelsohn. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, Leslie E. 2002. *Myth and Middle-earth: Exploring the Medieval Legends behind J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Cold Spring Press.
- Kennedy, Edward D. 2002. *King Arthur: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.
- Kerry, Paul E. 2011. *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings*. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kim, Hyonjin. 2000. *The Knight Without the Sword: A Social Landscape of Malorian Chivalry*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.
- Kleinman, Scott. 2005. "Service". In Eaglestone, Robert. ed. *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*. New York: Continuum, 138-150.
- Lacy, Norris J. 2010. *Lancelot-Grail: the Quest for the Holy Grail*. New York: Boydell & Brewer.
- Lacy, Norris J. & Wilhem, James J. 2012. *The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation*. New York: Routledge.
- Larrington, Carolyne. 2006. *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition*. New York: I. B. Tauris.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 2004. *A Wizard of Earthsea*. New York: Bantam Books.

- Leeming, David. 2005. *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leitch, Megan. 2010. "Speaking of treason in Malory's *Morte Darthur*". In Archibald, Elizabeth & David F. Johnston. eds. *Arthurian literature XXVII*. Cambridge: Broydell and Brewer, 103-134.
- Lupack, Alan. 2007. *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MacDonald, Fiona. 2012. *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of Celtic Mythology*. Brighton: Book House.
- MacLeod, Sharon Paice. 2012. *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief with Newly Translated Prayers, Poems and Songs*. North Carolina: MacFarland.
- Magennis, Hugh. 2011. *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahoney, Dhira B. 2000. *The Grail: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Maisch, Ingrid. 1998. *Mary Magdalene: the Image of a Woman through the Centuries*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.
- Matthews, John. 2011. *The Grail Tradition*. London: Aeon Books.
- McCarthy, Thomas. 2006. *Exploring the Middle Ages*. New York: Marshall Cavendish.
- McKillip, Patricia. 2002. *Ombria in Shadow*. London: Hachette.
- Mendlesohn, Farrah. 2008. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Miller, Dean A. 2000. *The Epic Hero*. Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mitchell, Bruce & Robinson, Fred C. 1995. *A Guide to Old English*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Monaghan, Patricia. 2004. *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*. New York: Facts on File.
- Moore, Helen. 2000. *Le Morte Darthur*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth.
- Morgan, Giles. 2011. *A Brief History of the Holy Grail: History, Myth and Religion*. London: Robinson.
- Morris, Rosemary. 2009. *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer.

- Neville, Jennifer. 2005. "Women". In Eaglestone, Robert. ed. *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*. New York: Continuum, 101-110.
- North, Richard; Allard, Joe & Patricia Gillies. 2014. *Longman Anthology of Old English, Old Icelandic, and Anglo-Norman Literature*. New York: Routledge.
- Norton, André. 2014. *Merlin's Mirror*. New York: Open Road.
- O'Day, Joseph. 2004. *The Ring of Truth: Truth and Wisdom in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Xulon Press.
- Parsons, Deke. *J. R. R. Tolkien, Robert E. Howard and The Birth of Modern Fantasy*. Jefferson: MacFarland.
- Perkins, Agnes & Hill, Helen. 2003. "The Corruption of Power". In Lobdell, Jared. ed. *A Tolkien Compass*. Illinois: Open Court.
- Porter, Lynette R. 2005. *Unsung Heroes of The Lord of the Rings: from Page to Screen*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Porter, Pamela J. 2003. *Courtly Love in Medieval Manuscripts*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Rabelo-Cámara, Yls. 2016. [unpublished thesis]. *Morgana versus Ginebra: Análisis de la Dicotomía entre las Representantes del Paganismo y el Cristianismo en el Mundo Celta de Las Nieblas de Avalon*. Santiago de Compostela: University of Santiago de Compostela.
- Rabine, Leslie W. 2002. "Love and the New Patriarchy: Tristan and Isolde". In Tasker-Grimbert, John. ed. *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.
- Radulescu, Raluca. 2003. *Arthurian Studies to the Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur*. Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer.
- Ranke, Friedrich. 2000. "The Symbolism of the Grail in Wolfram von Eschenbach". In Mahoney, Dhira B. ed. *The Grail: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, 367-378.
- Rasmussen, Ann Marie. 2000. "Ez ist ir g'artet von mir: Queen Isolde and Princess Isolde in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan und Isolde". In Fenster, Thelma. ed. *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, 41-58.
- Reid, Robin Anne. 2009. *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Risden, Edward. L. .2015. *Tolkien's Intellectual Landscape*. North Carolina: MacFarland.
- Roberts, Adam. 2006. "The One Ring". In Eaglestone, Robert. ed. *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien Classic*. London: Continuum, 59-70.

- Rogers, Clifford J. 2010. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosebury, Brian. 2003. *Tolkien: a Cultural Phenomenon*. New York: Palgrave.
- Rowling, J. K. 2014. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. 2014. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. 2014. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. 2014. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rutledge, Fleming. *The Battle for Middle-earth: Tolkien's Divine Design in The Lord of the Rings*. Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing.
- Santoyo, Julio César & Santamaría, José Miguel. 1983. *John R. R. Tolkien*. Barcelona: Barcanova.
- Schauss, Margaret. 2006. *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt, Aubrey. V. C. ed. 2000. *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scott-Littleton, Covington. & Malcor, Linda A. 2000. *From Scythia to Camelot: A Radical Reassessment of the Legends of King Arthur*. New York: Routledge.
- Senior, William. A. 2012. "Quest Fantasies". In James, Edward & Farrah Mendelsohn. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 190-199.
- Shippey, Tom. 2000. *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Squire, Charles. 2003. *Celtic Myth and Legend*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Stableford, Brian. 2005. *The A to Z to Fantasy Literature*. Plymouth: the Scarecrow Press.
- Staines, David. 1990. *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Stone, Bryan. 1988. *Alliterative Morte Arture and Stanzaic le Morte Arture*. London: Penguin Books.
- Tasker-Grimbert, Joan. 2002. *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.
- Thompson, Raymond H. & Busby, Keith. 2006. *Gawain: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.

- Thorpe, Lewis. ed. 2015. *History of the Kings of Britain*. London: Penguin Books.
- Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 2012. *The Silmarillion*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tolkien, Christopher. 1995. *The Shaping of Middle-earth: the Evolution of a World*. New York: Del Rey Books.
- Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 1995. *The Book of Lost Tales 2*. New York: Del Rey Books.
- Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 2006. *The Monster and the Critics and Other Essays*. London: Harper Collins.
- Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 2009. *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tolkien, Christopher. ed. 2013. *The Fall of Arthur*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tyler, James. E. A. 2012. *The Complete Tolkien Companion*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books.
- Vaccaro, Christopher. 2013. *The Body in Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on Middle-earth Corporeality*. North Carolina: MacFarland.
- Vander Ploeg, Dirk. 2007. *Quest for Middle-earth*. Lincoln: iUniverse Books.
- Wayland-Barber, Elizabeth & Barber, Paul J. 2004. *When they Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind shapes Myth*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Weis, Margaret & Hickman, Tracy. 1988. *Dragonlance Chronicles*. London: Penguin Books.
- Westfahl, Gary. 2005. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Themes, Works and Wonders*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Weston, Jessie L. 2011. *From Ritual to Romance*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Wiggins, Kayla McKinney. 2007. "The Person of a Prince: Echoes of Hamlet in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*". In Croft, Janet Brennan. ed. *Tolkien and Shakespeare: Essays on Shared Themes and Language*. Jefferson: MacFarland, 91-109.
- Wolfe, Gary K. 2011. *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Wollock, Jennifer. 2011. *Rethinking Chivalry and Courtly Love*. Oxford: Praeger.
- Zlosnik, Sue. 2005. "Gothic Echoes". In Eaglestone, Robert. ed. *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*. New York: Continuum, 47-58.

APPENDIX

Names of characters, places and objects from *The Lord of the Rings* in alphabetical order

Ainu or Ainur: (also called the Valar). Angelic spirits created by Ilúvatar (God). They took part in the creation of the world, Arda, and some of them went to Middle-earth. They were Melkor, the first Dark Lord, Manwë, Aüle, Yavanna, Elbereth, and Ulmo. They were the guardians of the world.

Amon Hen: a ruined fortification located on a hill at the southern end of Nen Hithoel, near the western side of the river Anduin.

Amon Sul: (see Weathertop)

Andúril: (meaning Flame of the West). Aragorn's sword which was forged from the rests of Narsil, Elendil's blade, used by Isildur to take the Ring from Sauron and defeat him.

Anfalas: the bay of Belfalas at Gondor.

Annúminas: the capital city of Arnor, one of the two realms of the Númenorean Kings in Middle-earth. One of the Palantíri was kept in that city.

Anórien: one of the oldest regions of Gondor where Minas Anor (Minas Tirith) was built.

Aragorn: (also named Strider or Elessar). Son of Arathorn and Gilraen. He is one of the Rangers from the North (also known as the Dúnedain) and a direct descendant of Isildur, last High King of Gondor. He guided all the race of men against Sauron in the War of the Ring. He wedded Arwen Undómiel after the war.

Arnor: one of the two realms of the Númenorean Kings in Middle-earth. It was located on the northern part of Middle-earth. Gondor was the other kingdom of the Númenorean Kings.

Arwen: daughter of Elrond, the Half-elf, and Celebrían, and granddaughter of Galadriel. She chooses to marry Aragorn instead of her immortality.

Balrog: one of the demons of fire and shadow created by Morgoth, the first Dark Lord.

Belfalas: a biggest bay at Gondor.

Beregond: one of Denethor's guards who instructs Pippin in his duties as a knight.

Beren: a mortal man who fell in love with Lúthien, daughter of Thingol and Melian.

Bilbo: Frodo's cousin; he is the Hobbit who finds the Ring in the caves of the Lonely Mountains.

Black Gate, the: a gate built by Sauron to prevent intruders from entering Mordor. During the War of the Ring, Aragorn's army gathered there in order to give Frodo a chance to destroy the Ring.

Black Riders, the: (also called the Ringwraiths, Nazgûl or Nine Riders). They were powerful kings of men who eventually became servants of Sauron after he gave them the Nine Rings.

Boromir: son of Denethor II, the Stewart of Gondor and Finduilas. His brother is Faramir and he was one of the Nine Companions who formed the Fellowship of the Ring.

Caradhras: the tallest peak of the Misty Mountains. The mines of Moria were built under them.

Celeborn: a Sindar Elf. He married Galadriel and became Lord of Lothlórien.

Crickhollow: a small village in Buckland, in the Shire. Frodo bought a house in this village to pretend that he would live there after Gandalf recommended him to leave the Shire.

Dagorlad: the plain just before Mordor where Sauron was first defeated by the armies of the Elves and the Men of Gondor.

Denethor II: he was the last Stewart of Gondor and Boromir and Faramir's father.

Dúndan: the race of men from the North. Many of them were Rangers, including Aragorn. They were descendants of the High King of Gondor.

Edoras: the capital city of Rohan.

Eldamar: the Elvish name given to the Undying Lands.

Elendil: the first High King of Gondor.

Elrond: son of Earendell and Elwing. He was the Lord of Imladris (Rivendell) and possessed one of the Three Rings of the Elves: Vilya.

Ents: an ancient race of tree-like creatures. Fangorn Forest is the last place where they dwelt.

Ephel Dúath: the mountains which surround Mordor, also known as the Mountains of Shadow.

Eorl, the House of: Descendants of Eorl, founder of Rohan, and members of the royal family of Rohan.

Éowyn: she belonged to the House of Eorl, and was the niece of King Theoden. She killed the Chief of the Ringwraiths, the Witch King, in battle. After the war, she married Faramir and became princess of Ithilien.

Fangorn, the forest of: a forest near the Misty Mountains.

Faramir: son of Denethor, the Stewart of Gondor and brother of Boromir. He became the Prince of Ithilien after the War of the Ring.

Fellowship of the Ring, the: a Company formed by nine members: the four hobbits (Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin), Aragorn, Boromir, Legolas and Gimli. The initial aims of the Company were to protect the Ring bearer, Frodo, and to carry him safely to Mordor. However, the Fellowship was dissolved when Boromir tried to take the Ring from Frodo and the other companions were attacked by orcs.

Frodo: the hobbit who led a leading role in the Quest for the Ring. He was Bilbo's nephew and received the Ring as an heirloom. After destroying the Ring, he left for Valinor.

Galadhrim, the: the Elves of Lothlórien who lived in the trees.

Galadriel: an Elf- lady who belonged to the Noldor, one of the races of the High Elves, and was the keeper of one of the most powerful three Elvish Rings, Nenyà.

Gandalf: a Maiar spirit sent to Middle-earth as a wizard in order to defeat Sauron. He kept the third of the Elvish Rings, Narya.

Gil-galad: the last of the kings of the High Elves in Middle-earth and original bearer of one of the Three Elven Rings, Vilya, which was later given to Elrond.

Gimli: a dwarf, son of Glóin. He was another member of the Fellowship of the Ring. He helped Aragorn and Legolas in battle.

Gollum: (also called Sméagol). A hobbit who stole the Ring from his cousin, Déagol. The latter had found it while they were both fishing. After killing him, Sméagol left his family and went to live to the caves of the Misty Mountains. The power of the Ring corrupted him and he became almost a beast, a gangrel-like creature.

Gondor: the ancient kingdom in Middle-earth founded by the Kings of Númenor. After Isildur's death, the realm fell in decay.

Grey Havens, the: an important port used by the Elves who left Middle-earth for Valinor. Frodo and Bilbo were invited to sail towards this place since they had been Ring bearers.

Háma: he was the captain of King Theoden and keeper of Meduseld.

Hollin: (also called Eregion). It was a region near the Misty Mountains and the Gate of Moria.

Ioreth: one of the oldest women who served at Denethor's court in Gondor.

Isengard: one of most important fortress of Middle-earth which was taken by Saruman.

Isildur: last King of Gondor. He defeated Sauron in the War of the Wrath after Elendil, his father, was slain by the Dark Lord. Isildur took the Ring as a prize for his victory and also to compensate for the loss of his father.

Ithilien: a region of Gondor founded by Isildur and whose main city, Minas Ithil (Minas Morgul), was taken by Sauron.

Khazad-Dûm: the bridge in Moria where Gandalf fights against the Balrog and eventually falls into darkness.

Laurelin: one of the two trees which illuminated the land of the Valar.

Legolas: he was a Silvan (Teleri) elf. He also joined the Company of the Ring and fought with Aragorn and Gimli in several battles.

Lothlórien: (also named the Golden Wood). It was the realm of the Sindarin Elves. Galadriel is the Lady of Lothlórien.

Lúthien: an Elf-maiden, daughter of Thingol and Melian, who fell in love with a mortal man, Beren.

Maiar: angelic deities of a lower rank than the Ainur. Sauron and Gandalf were Maiar.

Meduseld: the fortress where the Kings of Rohan lived in.

Melian: a Maiar lady who married Thingol, a High Elf.

Merry: (real name Meriadoc Brandybuck). One of the hobbits who took part in the Company of the Ring. Pippin and he were taken as hostages by the orcs and carried to Isengard. He became a knight at Theoden's court and helped Éowyn to kill the Witch King. After the War of the Ring, he became Master of Buckland.

Middle-earth: the fictional land created by Tolkien. It was formed by the region of Eriador, where the Shire is located, the realms of Rohan and Gondor or Mordor, among others.

Minas Morgul: it means 'tower of sorcery.' It was a city of Gondor which was taken by the Nazgûl.

Minas Tirith: (also known as 'The Citadel'). The capital city of Gondor. The siege of Minas Tirith meant the first defeat for Sauron since his captain, the Witch King, was killed at this siege.

Mordor: the land of shadow, the realm of Sauron in Middle-earth which was previously a desert land.

Moria: the Mines of Moria were the dwelling of the dwarves under the Misty Mountains. It was a palace-like place. It was known for the abundance of mithril (silver)

Mount Doom: (also called Orodruin). A mountain of fire in Mordor. Sauron forged the One Ring with its fire.

Narsil: Elendil's sword, which was broken into pieces by Sauron. Isildur managed to defeat the Dark Lord with the broken sword.

Noldorin: one of the three races of Elves, who were also called the 'Eldar', and were divided into three races: the Noldor, the Teleri and Vanyar.

Numenorean Kings: those who came from Númenor to Middle-earth and founded the Kingdom of Gondor.

Oathbreakers: the men living under the mountain who denied their help to Isildur and worshipped Sauron in secret. Isildur himself cursed them not to rest until they had fulfilled their oath. In *The Lord of the Rings* Aragorn summons them to fight against Sauron.

Orcs: (also named goblins). Elves corrupted by Sauron to create his army.

Orodruin: (see Mount Doom)

Orthanc: the tower in Isengard built by Saruman.

Osgiliath: the ancient capital city of Gondor which fell into decay and eventually became a ruined city.

Palantír: (also known as the 'Seeing Stones'). There were seven Palantír stones in all Middle-earth but Sauron eventually took them and corrupted them for his evil purposes. Only the true heir of Isildur, Aragorn, had the ability to look into one of them without being harmed.

Parth Galen: a field located between the river Anduin and Amon Hen.

Pelennor, the fields of: a plain of Gondor very close to the Black Gate of Mordor.

Pippin: (real name Peregrin Took). One of the Hobbits who joined the Fellowship of the Ring and was taken as a hostage by the orcs and carried to Isengard. He looked into the Palantír, one of the seven Seeing Stones and saw Sauron. He became one of the knights of Denethor.

Prancing Poney, the: an inn in Bree. The four Hobbits stayed there following Gandalf's advice. They also met Aragorn in this same inn.

Red Book, the: a book written by Bilbo which narrates his adventures in the Lonely Mountain where he confronted the dragon Smaug.

Ringwraiths: (see Black Riders)

Rivendell: (also called Imladris). Elrond's dwelling place in Middle-earth. The Council took place there and the Fellowship of the Ring was formed.

Rohan: one of the main realms of the race of men in Middle-earth founded by Eorl the Young.

Rohirrim: the riders of Rohan led by Éomer, King Theoden's nephew.

Samwise Gamgee: (also called Sam). He is Frodo's most loyal and faithful friend. He helps him in everything. His loyalty saves the Quest. After the War of the Ring and Frodo's departure to Valinor, he becomes the mayor of the Shire.

Saruman: he was one of the Istari (wizards) and leader of the White Order. He succumbed to Sauron and tried to persuade Gandalf not to destroy the Ring.

Sauron: (also called the Necromancer). A Maiar spirit who joined Melkor, the first Dark Lord. After Morgoth's defeat, Sauron went to Middle-earth and created Mordor.

Shelob: a spider-like monster which descended from Ungoliant, an evil entity which adopted the form of a spider and joined Morgoth, the first Dark Lord.

Shire, the: the homeland of the Hobbits. It was formed by four Farthings: Northern, Southern, Western and Southern. Hobbiton, Brandybuck, Crickhollow and Bree are some of its main towns.

Sting: Frodo's sword which was given to him by Bilbo, who got it from the trolls' treasure in his first adventure with Gandalf and the dwarves, the main aim of which was to look for Smaug's treasure.

Telperion: one of the two trees grown by Yavanna, one of the Ainur, in order to light up the land of the Ainur.

Theoden: King of Rohan. He died in battle while fighting against the leader of the Nazgûl. After his death and the War of the Ring, his nephew Éomer became king of Rohan.

Thingol: the King of the High Elves in Middle-earth during the First Age and husband of Melian.

Tower Hills: (also called Emyrn Beraid). A fortress built by Elendil. The Seeing Stones were kept in one of its towers.

Undying Lands, the: name given to Arda, also called the Blessed Realm, where the Valar and the High Elves lived.

Valinor: the sacred land inhabited by the Valar and the Elves.

Warden: the chief healer in the House of healing in Minas Tirith.

Wargs: a race of evil wolves.

Weathertop: (also known as ‘Amon Sûl’). Located on the Weather Hills, it was a ruined fortification on a hill. In this place, Frodo was stabbed by the leader of the Nazgûl.

Witch King, the: the most powerful (and the leader) of the Nine Riders. He was eventually defeated by Éowyn. An omen prophesied his downfall since he could not be killed by the hand of a man.

White Tree of Gondor, the: the symbol for Gondor. Isildur brought its seeds from the White Tree of Númenor before Sauron destroyed it. The emblem of the flag of Gondor is a white tree.

Wormtongue: King Theoden’s counsellor. He deceived the king in order to control him and fulfill Saruman’s orders.

