

Bones of the Soup:

An exploration of J.R.R. Tolkien's methodology

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I. Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien claims he did not get his characters, plot points and languages from outside sources. As Tolkien has two-cents of creativity, he claims complete authorial originality. Tolkien forgoes a reader's independence and implores readers to not peel back the top layers of Middle Earth, but rather embrace them as they are: a world created within the mind of an educated Englishmen who simply wished to create a mythological tale "for England" (Carpenter). However, if the reader were to commit such an act of heresy, and cross-reference Tolkien's novels *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion* with the ancient heroic epics Tolkien was known to be aware of, read, and even track; one can see clear parallels. Connections between the happenings within Middle Earth and other medieval texts can be commonly made. Through an analysis of Tolkien's teachings and other published pieces such as: "The Monsters and the Critics", *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, "On Fairy Stories", as well as numerous other essays, one can discern Tolkien's claimed authorial originality is biased toward actual scenes from other texts. For instance, the phrase: "Middle-Earth," comes from Norse mythology and not from the recesses of Tolkien's mind. Bilbo's stealing of the cup in *The Hobbit* sounds similar to the theft of a similar cup from a dragon's cave in the Germanic epic, *Beowulf*. This paper will examine Tolkien's most popular works for their points of origin in the ancient literary world. This will be an expansion of the works done by other Tolkien enthusiasts, proving that Tolkien, through his methodology, was influenced by exact sources outside his own imagination.

II. The Bones of the Soup

Taking the author's wishes into consideration, is a source critical approach to Middle Earth worth it? In Humphrey Carpenter's *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*-- a collection of letters written by Tolkien to his publishers, sons, friends, and other relations concerning the creation of Middle Earth-- the author blatantly expresses his fears and confusion as to why scholars would feel the need to dissect his work: "I remain puzzled, and indeed sometimes irritated, by many of the guesses at the 'sources' of the nomenclature, and theories or fancies concerning hidden meanings" (Carpenter 379). As time progressed, within his letters Tolkien seemed to be becoming more and more irritated by the mere idea of readers searching for sources, as seen in his comment and interpretation of Sir George Dasent's observation, "we must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled" (Fisher 7). Essentially, Tolkien was growing more and more discontent with the idea of audiences unfolding and delving deeper into Middle Earth, rather than accepting it as solely Tolkien's manifestation.

Jason Fisher also explores this idea of "Why even bother?" in his preface to a collection of essays entitled *Tolkien and the Study of His Sources*. Taking Tolkien's word at face value needs to be questioned and explored, and explored correctly. For example, Fisher presents similar questions as previously mentioned within this essay:

Could Tolkein have known a source? And assuming he could have known it, and did indeed use it, what did he do with it? And how does the knowledge of

this source help us to understand or appreciate *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or whatever work we are investigating? (Fisher 36)

Fisher then goes on to explain how oftentimes certain Tolkien scholars fail to consider the timeline of Tolkien's writings. With these questions and observations in mind, this source critical approach will take into consideration the common faults of prior critiques.

Tolkien was a philologist, meaning he not only studied words, but their origins as well. He was a man of myth and for him, the detail was in the background of the words rather than the words themselves. Philologists are scholars who study both the anthropology and the archaeology of words. Philologist Holt Parker explains the profession as such:

To be aphoristic the first question a philologist asks is, 'What does this mean?' The first question an archaeologist asks is, 'What does this do?' But the second question the *new* archaeologist asks is, 'What does this thing mean?' and the second question the new philologist should ask is, 'What does this text do?' (Parker 152)

Tolkien takes an immense amount of time tweaking and twisting until his tales seem as if they actually happened, digging up the bones of his own soup and substantiating his world. Through his work in philology Tolkien made Middle Earth and the details of such so intricate, that a philologist could dissect his work and be satisfied. Tolkien encouraged a kind of re-illumination of the fantasy genre, "he brought these academic sensibilities to his fantasy writing and in publishing *The*

Lord of the Rings changed the fantasy genre forever” (Rogers). He created a fantasy readers could *believe* in:

However, looking at these devices as a development in the fantasy genre, one can see that by establishing fixed geographic and linguistic laws, developed within and alongside a long and storied mythology and history, Tolkien was able to create a world that was fantastical enough so as to engage but familiar enough so as not to alienate. (Rogers)

The myth he created is capable of falling right into the Junius Manuscript, an Old English manuscript containing works such as *Genesis* and *Exodus* (Lockett).

The best method of analysis of will be to cross-reference the data found with the known familiarity of Tolkien with the sources in question. How might one come to know what Tolkien may or may not have taught, read, or been familiar with? Through an in-depth inquiry of his letters, interviews and quotations from those who knew the professor and author directly, one can estimate just how much Tolkien knew. My research will not only expose the bones and ingredients of the soup, but the quantity of each required to create the brew that is Middle Earth.

III. Heroic Ethos in a Warrior Society

Before one may enter into the world of medieval literature, one must first understand one major concept: Heroic Ethos. In Rebecca A. Tierney-Hynes's essay "Heroic Ethos: Reality and Representation", she defines heroic ethos as: "a set of values which prioritise and glorify the valour of an individual...the motivation of the hero is to garner fame and immortality in legend." In a warrior society, Heroic Ethos essentially involved, as the common saying goes, walking the walk and talking the talk. Heroes had to be prolific both in word as well as in deed if they intended to be considered heroes at all.

Heroic Ethos was a prominent motif in many works with which Tolkien was familiar; the most obvious he knew was the Old English epic *Beowulf*. Tolkien Scholars regard *Beowulf* as one of Tolkien's most taught works due to the fact that he released several essays as well as a translation of the Old English text. In his 1936 lecture "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*", Tolkien's main argument resides in the idea of "immortality" which is an offshoot of the aforementioned motif of Heroic Ethos. Immortality means more than simply living forever in a physical sense. Immortality, in this case, is the result of renown and one's name living forever when one's body does not. The idea of heroic ethos is also found in epics like *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, *The Saga of the Volsungs*, and many others.

This type of undying renown would be impossible if it was not for the importance of oral tradition and lineage within these warrior cultures. For instance, each tale in both Greek and Germanic cultures begins with some sort of allusion to a story that is heard rather than read. For instance, the opening Old English lines of

Beowulf are as such: *Hwæt! We Gar-Dena in gear-dagum, þeod-cyninga, þrym gefrunon, hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon!* This line has been interpreted two different ways, one being "Listen! We have heard of the might of the kings" the other, only recently proposed and taking a less imperative route "How we have heard of the might of the kings" (Brown). Regardless both opening lines have one major idea in common, the idea of the *scop*, or bard, singing not a tale he or she had imagined but one they had heard, passed on from one individual to another. The hero Beowulf is a perfect embodiment of fame: he is remembered and he is still on the tongues of storytellers some 1500 years later.

The idea of Heroic Ethos had seeped into Tolkien's consciousness long before the writing of *The Lord of the Rings* and thus by the 1940s, he was well aware of the literary value of the drive for deeds of daring-do, as it is apparent in Aragorn's speech before the black gate:

Sons of Gondor! Of Rohan! My brothers. I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me. A day may come when the courage of Men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship, but it is not this day. An hour of wolves and shattered shields when the Age of Men comes crashing down, but it is not this day! This day we fight! By all that you hold dear on this good earth, I bid you stand, Men of the West! (*The Return of the King*)

One may also compare this speech to William Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day speech in *Henry V*: "And Crispin Crispian sh'all ne'er go by, from this day to the ending of the world, But we in it shall be remembered- We few, we happy few, we band of

brothers" (IV. ii, 18-67). During King Théoden's mustering of the Rohirrim, where all that is mentioned is death:

Arise! Arise, Riders of Theoden! Spears shall be shaken, shields shall be splintered! A sword day... a red day... ere the sun rises! Ride now!... Ride now!... Ride! Ride to ruin and the world's ending! Death! Death! Death! Death! DEATH! Death! Forth, Eorlingas! (*The Return of the King*)

In death, however, comes immortality. Upon riding into battle, Theoden's speech, rather than discouraging his troops by informing them of their impending doom, bolsters their confidence by reminding them that although they ride their names into the history of the world, they ride to their immortality. Moreover, without these orator skills neither Theoden nor Aragorn would make good kings, or heroes.

Again, Heroic Ethos is more than simply walking the walk; the hero must also talk the talk. The son of King Volsung, Sinfjolti, was revered simply due to the fact that "this man knows how to speak with kings" (49).

When the hero Beowulf pulls up on the shores of Geatland, he is asked to speak of his deeds. Odysseus's deeds followed him throughout his 20-year journey. The entirety of *The Lay of Hildebrand* is based on the legend and deeds being passed from one individual to the next. Hadubrand describes his father not through memory, but through the rumored happenstances of his deeds. The importance of fame is central to the tale, for without it, Hadubrand would not believe his father to be dead and Hildebrand would be less of a hero. Without Heroic Ethos, the Germanic cultures would reject the tale. In *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, King Hrolf is described as such:

I have heard that King Hrolf is open-handed and generous and so trustworthy and particular about his friends that his equal cannot be found. He withholds neither gold nor treasure from nearly everyone who wants or needs them. He is handsome in looks, powerful in deeds and a worthy opponent... Hrolf is so great that his name will not be forgotten as long as the world remains inhabited. (Hrolf Kraki 31)

King Hrolf is the perfect ruler and because of his deeds and generosity his name is immortal.

Much like King Hrolf, the defining features of what it means to be a good king can be boiled down to one major factor: how many gifts does this king give?

Throughout the Germanic epics especially, how loyal one is to a lord is completely dependent on the king's hospitality. For instance, Svipdag in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* decides to side with King Hrolf solely because "he was far more generous with rewards than any of the other kings" (33). Tierney-Hynes examines this heroic code further by analyzing Dorothy Whitelock's interpretation: "The lord, in return for the thane's protection and a vow to revenge his lord's death, gave him the heriot (a gift of armor and horses) and land" (Tierney-Hynes). Whitelock cites several examples where thanes *actually* follow their lords into battle and knowingly to their death in exile, "the story of Lilla, thane of Edwin of Northumbria, who interposed himself suicidally between his lord and the sword of an assassin" (Tierney-Hynes). These Thanes ride to their death solely due to the fact that the lord they so choose to follow will appropriately reward them. This is reminiscent of Sauron's takeover and manipulation of the races of Middle Earth. Much like the Germanic kings of Old,

Sauron gave his potential followers rings of power. Although Sauron was a tyrant driven by evil intentions. He at least followed the basic principles of what it meant to be a good king.

When all was said and done, Bard left Laketown and returned to the original location of Dale and rebuilt the city, earning the title "King of Dale" in the process. This is yet one of the many instances where a warrior rises to kingship through his deeds, in this instance he is also a hero. Beorn is one of the smaller characters but larger heroes of *The Hobbit* mainly due to the fact that when he does enter the foray of battle, his presence alone sends the enemies running in fear. During The Battle of Five Armies, Beorn comes galloping in, in bear form of course, and not only slays the bodyguards of the goblin king but annihilates Bolg himself, sending the orc army into disarray. Single-handedly ending a war earns Beorn his hero status, not to mention the fact that he went on to lead his own people, The Beornings, and kept "the High Pass and the Ford of Carrock" open to travellers for the rest of his days (The Fellowship of the Ring). Unfortunately, Tolkien does not go into much detail on where Beorn comes from, as *The Hobbit* is the tale of Thorin's company.

Heroic Swords

In addition to Heroic Ethos, weaponry was also held in high esteem in early medieval warrior cultures. This is evident in many epics and tales of heroism such as *The Volsunga Saga*, *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, as well as the abovementioned *Beowulf*. In all three of the texts swords play an important role for they denote the

ultimate form of masculinity. Would Bilbo be as much of a hero if he did not have his trusty sword, Sting, by his side? Would the goblins flee in terror before Orchist if it did not have the lore behind its title? What goes down in history is a *name* for without a name there are no deeds to tie to a singular individual.

Odin appears in the Volsunga saga and declares that the man who pulls the sword from this tree shall be rightfully king:

As he walked up to Barnstock he held a sword in his hand while over his head was a low-hanging hood... He brandished the sword and thrust it into the trunk so that it sank up to the hilt. He who draws this sword out of this trunk shall receive it from me as a gift, and he himself shall prove that he has never carried a better sword than this one. (38)

In *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, prior to the death of Bjorn, he places three weapons in a cave wall and implores his lover, Bera, to take their sons to the cave: "You will find here a chest with three bottoms... Three weapons are imbedded in the rock, and each of our sons shall have the one intended for him" (38). Moreover, it seems as if the sword defines he who holds it. The sword, named Gram, would be held in pieces until its rightful owner would come into his own to claim it. King Sigmund prophesized, "Our son will bear it [Gram] and with it accomplish many great deeds, which will never be forgotten. And his name will endure while the world remains" (54), in this way although Sigmund did not yet know the name of his son, he knew the name of his sword, in turn deciding the un-born son's fate. When King Hrofl battled King Adils and "sliced off both his buttocks right down to the bone," he did so with his sword Skofnung, a sword known as "the best sword ever carried in the

northern lands" (68). Although Aragorn may not have pull the shards of Narsil from a stone, tree, or cave wall, before he could be deemed the "rightful" king of Gondor, the sword of his ancestors had to be reforged.

IV. An Epic Tale of Magic Numbers

Throughout time there have been many epics, some obvious, some not so blatant. For instance, Homer's *The Odyssey* is one of the more widely known epics, as most high schools require it to be taught. It is the story of the great Odysseus and his journey across the seas battling waves, monsters, and even the gods themselves. When challenged to string his mighty bow, Odysseus proves the legends true for only he has the strength to do so. These ideas boil down to just several of the characteristics which have been claimed to define the Epic. Although there are various systems one may use when outlining the epic, I have chosen to stick with the seven-ingredient recipe-- provided by Larry Swain, Professor of English at Bemidji State University-- rather than a five or a six simply due to the fact that I would like to connect Tolkien to as many elements of an epic as possible.

The seven-step process to creating an epic must go as follows: First, the hero must be larger than life. Second, that hero must be middle-aged. Thirdly, the epic must be of national importance. Fourth would be the place in history the epic takes place. This leads to requirement five: Divine Intervention; this must be apparent in one form or another, much like the mediation of Athena with Achilles and his rage toward Agamemnon in Homer's *The Iliad*. Sixth, the hero must partake in a journey.

Finally would be number seven, or the syntactical decision making of the scribe, or in other words, whether or not the epic is written in a hieratic style.

First:

A hero in any epic is defined by their larger than life strength as well as ability to speak with aptitude; this idea can also be labeled as "heroic ethos" and is present in many of Tolkien's main characters throughout Middle Earth. Heroes can be big or small; they can be obvious or hidden beneath layers of confusion or even corruption, even the inconspicuous hobbits have their chance at glory; Tolkien confessed that "the hobbits are just rustic English people, made small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imagination not the small reach of their courage or latent power" (Carpenter).

Beginning with the heroes of *The Hobbit*, Thorin Oakenshield, the heir of Erebor and leader of the small band of dwarves is the first hero to really stand out. His name is that of legend, indicator number one of heroic status, for it was during the battle of Azanulbizar, before the Eastern gate of Moria that he was forced to use naught but an oaken branch as a shield. After this battle Thorin became known as King Under The Mountain and it was up to him to retake Erebor, the evacuated Dwarvish city beneath the Lonely Mountain, and defeat Smaug, the great worm residing within. It was his destiny to do so and as the company of dwarves and one burglar arrived in Laketown, the people there began singing of Thorin's return to his throne:

The streams shall run in gladness,

The lakes shall shine and burn,

All sorrow fail and sadness

At the Mountain-King's return!

(The Hobbit 210)

A strong warrior and even for a dwarf, Thorin was taller than most (*The Return of the King*) but what made him a hero was his ability on the battlefield and undying loyalty to his fellow dwarves. Moreover, due to his heroic deeds, the people of Laketown began telling the tales of his legendarium, thus beginning the snowball that is oral tradition and Heroic Ethos.

Bilbo Baggins, on the other hand, is a far less acknowledged hero, at least within the confines of Middle Earth. Employed by Thorin's company solely as a "burglar" and the lucky fourteenth member of their company, when faced with any sort of danger, Bilbo was not the first to confront the threat but rather hung back a bit until he was physically pushed into the situation. Even then, he was not the best fighter in the group; however, he was rather clever and this particular cunning saved his life and the lives of his company many a time. For instance, when Thorin's Company stumbled across three "monstrous trolls" about to gobble up every one of the dwarves, Bilbo stalls the hungry fiends long enough for daylight to creep over the horizon and turn the trolls to stone. Bilbo proceeds to repeat these types of courageous efforts throughout his time with the dwarves and Gandalf, not only exceeding the expectations of his peers but surprising himself in the process; for even as the mighty Thorin Oakenshield laid waiting to sit beside his fathers until the world renews he took a moment to appreciate the hobbit, "There is more in you of

good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure" (*Hobbit* 301).

Moving on to the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings*, like those in *The Hobbit* these heroes prove themselves time and time again as worthy of their status. For example, Aragorn, son of Arathorn and King Isildur's heir, when the reader is introduced to his character, he is known as Strider, a mere Ranger, and yet as the story progresses Aragorn makes a name for himself as a resilient fighter, a loyal-against-all-odds friend, and a cunning companion. In addition to this impressive resume, Aragorn also proves himself quite the orator when, at the end of the War of the Ring, he rallied not only the men of Minas Tirith but also the standards of the men of Middle Earth. Even after he grew weary and passed on, long after the end of the war, Aragorn's legend never faltered upon his tomb:

Then a great beauty was revealed in him, so that all who came after there looked on him in wonder; for they saw that the grace of his youth, and the valour of his manhood, and the wisdom and majesty of his age were blended together. And long there he lay, and image of the splendour of Kings of Men in glory undimmed before the breaking of the world. (1074, Return, Appendix A)

It was under his command that a great evil was banished from Middle Earth. It was under his lead that Sauron's great host was diminished thus allowing the Fourth Age of Middle Earth to begin in a period of peace.

Among the heroes of *The Silmarillion*, the tale of Túrin Turambar stands out the most. Son of Húrin, Túrin Turambar was a silent hero, a man raised by elves, and

a shrewd warrior. Exiled by his guardian from Doriath, based on a misunderstanding, Túrin fled to the hills where he changed his name but continued doing what he was best at: hunting orcs. As stories of him seeped into the countryside, Túrin earned many names such as: Neithan (The Wronged), Gorthol (The Dred Helm), Agarwaen son of Úmarth (the Bloodstained, son of Ill-fate), Adanehel (Man-Elf), Thurin (The Secret), Mormegil (the Blacksword), or Dagnir Glaurunga (the Bane of Glaurung) (*The Lost Road*). Out of all Tolkien's characters, Túrin was the most torn and lived through some of the hardest tragedies. He was not unlike Sigurd of *The Volsunga Saga*, one of Tolkien's favorite inspirations, where he is accepted into a world where he does not belong, treated as one of royalty, and ultimately kills a dragon (Túrin killed Glaurung whilst Sigurd defeated Fafnir).

Second:

Epics are not “coming of age” stories, they begin *in media res*, or “the middle of things”, thus there is no time for the heroes to find themselves. Odysseus had already been at war for ten years by the time *The Odyssey* begins its recitation. Beowulf was in his thirties when he battled Grendel. Aeneas was a general during the battle of Troy. One major feature common among all heroes of Middle Earth is the fact that they are all well into their lives by the time their number is drawn and before the adventure sets in. Bilbo Baggins was nearly 50 when Gandalf appeared at the door of Bag End: “I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone” (*The Hobbit* 12). The dwarves themselves stood well aged, with Thorin as the oldest at 195. By the time *The Lord of*

the Rings came about, Bilbo was having his 111th birthday party alongside Frodo's 33rd, both ages well enough to be considered middle-aged. In most epics, the heroes already have had their "coming of age" and thus the author does not need to waste time trying to portray it. When Gandalf finally left Middle Earth he had been there for almost 2,000 years. Aragorn, being Númenórean, he was blessed with a much longer life than a normal man being born in Third Age (T.A.) 2931 and it was not until 2980 that he married Arowyn, making him much older than 50 by the time the Fellowship is formed (*The Return of the King*).

Third:

In Virgil's *The Aeneid*, its national importance was the establishment of Rome from the refugees of the battle of Troy. When Tolkien first began this literary journey he came to conclusion that he was constructing a mythology *for England*. He had read and studied hundreds of epics, myths, sagas, and legends involving everything from ancient Greece to Troy, Iceland to Rome, as well as the Anglo-Saxons to the Danes. It was time for his beloved England to have her day. However, when it comes to an analysis of Middle Earth in comparison to England, there is but one place that has even a chance of a similarity: The Shire. In a way, many parts of Tolkien can be found in the little hobbit folk that inhabit the small patch of green in the Northwestern corner of Middle Earth; whether it be his love for colorful waste coats or the taste of excellent pipe weed

Fourth:

This is called *illo tempore*, or "in that time". The days when gods could walk among men, when monsters patrolled the countryside, and when magic was a completely normal experience represented the golden age, or "that time." *Illo tempore* is indicative of a time *before*, or more clearly, in the past. Aeneas could have only journeyed into the Underworld during "that time" as well as the fact that Dante could have only followed in his footsteps if he was also apart of "that time." The same goes for Middle Earth. This is the only plausible reason for Aragorn being able to hold the oaths of the men who dwelt in the mountain fulfilled, not to mention the fact that these men in particular were dead. The macrocosm in which Middle Earth resided was when there were elves, dwarves, men, and hobbits all breathing the same air and no one believed this to be odd.

Trolls could hide in caves from the break of dawn. Rock giants of the Misty Mountains could nearly clobber Thorin and his company to death. Goblins rode wargs into battle as the nine ring wraiths flew above on their winged Nazgul. Enormous spiders haunted Mirkwood. The dwarves awoke a Balrog from the depths of Moria. The men of Ithilien rode their massive Mûmakil, also identified as Oliphaunts, into the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Even dragons appear on multiple occasions, whether they bare likeness to Smaug, hiding beneath his Lonely Mountain, or Glaurung, the large moving mass of burning stench across the countryside.

Fifth:

There is no direct mention of "God" or gods in Middle Earth although god-like figures are very present. Tolkien was a god-fearing man who, although he may not have meant to, incorporated quite a few similarities between the universe of Middle Earth and the Christian universe known today. *The Silmarillion* contains Middle Earth's creation story and how in the very beginning there was Ilúvatar and he created the Ainur, "the Holy Ones." They were in charge of singing a "Great Music" thus creating the world. With every herd, though there is always one black sheep and in this case, the black sheep was Melkor who decided to have his own thoughts that did not match the plan of Ilúvatar. Melkor grew more and more resentful. Finally, as Lucifer was cast down from the Heavens, Melkor was treated as an infection by the rest of the Valar; thus shunned into exile.

The Valar represented the good in the world while Melkor introduced the evil, the fires, and the rain. They have powers, or so control over certain aspects, such as the Greek gods were personifications of the natural elements, thus were The Valar held responsible for certain areas of the world. For example, Manwë was the "king" of the Valar, known as the "breath of Arda." Ulmo was the lord of the waters with his assistant Ossë, of the Maiar. Námo was the keeper of the house of the dead, while Varda was the lady of the stars. Oromë loved Middle Earth and was the warrior. Aulë, watcher of the Earth and the official repairman of Melkor's mischief, was married to Yavanna, "giver of fruits" as well as a shapeshifter. She would sometimes appear among the people in the shape of different animals. Melkor was also one of the Valar but was rejected from their order (*The Silmarillion*).

Beneath the Valar are their servants, the Maiar. Gandalf is one of these such Maiar, essentially a lesser Valar. Other examples would include Eönwë, the herald of Manwë. He was the key component in the War of Wrath when he led the Western hosts against those of Melkor, also known as "Morgoth," thus destroying Thangorodrim, the location of Morgoth's fortress of Angband, in the process (Silmarillion 252). Another popular Maia would be Sauron, one of the many Maia corrupted by Melkor, as well as the aforementioned Balrogs.

In addition to these celestial beings, there are other powers that haunt Eä, or Middle Earth. For instance, the conundrum that is Tom Bombadil, he is older than time itself and has no agenda. While Frodo and his friends stay at the home of Bombadil and his wife, he dreams two very different, very real dreams, that at one point or another come true. There is also the water of Fangorn Forest, where Merry and Pippin come into contact with Treebeard, an Ent or "Treeherder." There is "something" in the water of Fangorn that makes the trees come alive, much to the dismay of the hobbits. This also happens before Frodo and his friends meet Bombadil when Old Man Willow tries to gobble them up. There are many mysteries in Middle Earth and not all are explained and, unfortunately, these questions may never be answered hence the enticement that is this mythology.

Sixth:

Much like the journey of Odysseus, a 20-year long adventure which is engulfed by the pages of Homer's other tale, *The Odyssey*, journeys make up a large

part of the tales of Middle Earth. A "journey" could mean many things. According to Merriam Webster, not only is a journey simply traveling from one place to another, but also suggests these "places" are more than physical locations. Some journeys occur between periods of time or state of being. To begin with, *The Hobbit* is one conglomerate piece on the journey from Point A: Bag End, to Point B: The Lonely Mountain of which Bilbo Baggins records in his hobbit-tale *There and Back Again*. Not only is this a physical journey for Thorin's company, but there are significant inner-character journeys as well. The most prominent of which would be Bilbo and how he managed to find courage amongst the dwarves' doubt. When Bilbo had been dropped by Dori and lost to the mountain and the goblins, they bickered: "The dwarves wanted to know why he had ever been brought at all, why he could not stick to his friends and come along with them, and why the wizard had not chosen someone with more sense" (*The Hobbit* 102). On the other hand, as the story progresses Bilbo was put into more and more situations where it is instead up to him to save the dwarves, as when the wood elves take them captive and Bilbo manages to not only spring the dwarves from their cells, but stuff them all in barrels to freedom.

The Lord of the Rings is also a Point A to Point B story; however, there are small micro-journeys paralleling Frodo and Sam's adventure from The Shire to Mount Doom. Four hobbits set out from The Shire, and they meet up with Strider (Aragorn) at the Prancing Pony in Bree. From there they head to Rivendell to see Elrond and discuss the fate of the One Ring. A fellowship is formed: Gandalf the Grey, Frodo Baggins, Samwise Gamgee, Perigrin Took, Merryadok Brandyweather,

Legolas of the Woodland Realm, Gimli son of Dorin, Aragorn son of Arathorn, and Boromir of Gondor. They set out and meet their first obstacle in the mines of Moria, where they lose Gandalf.

Only after escaping into the care of Galadriel they set out once more, this time they are stopped at the Gates of Argonath where they are assaulted by a band of orcs; this is known as the Breaking of the Fellowship. Frodo and Sam disappear across the Eastern bank, destined to go the rest alone. Suddenly the company was assaulted by orcs and it was there Boromir was found:

He was sitting with his back to a great tree, as if he was resting. But Aragorn saw that he was pierced with many black-feathered arrows; his sword was still in his hand but it was broken near the hilt; his horn cloven in two was at his side. Many Orcs lay slain, piled all about him at his feet.

(Two Towers, 416)

Thus Boromir passed from the Fellowship. Merry and Pippin at this time have been scooped up by the Orcs and dragged away toward Isengard, they manage to escape right on the outside of Fangorn Forest, meet Treebeard the Ent, and convince him to lay siege to Isengard. At the same time, Gimli, Aragorn, and Legolas are in pursuit of the band of orcs and follow them to Fangorn forest where Merry and Pippin escaped. Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas, while in Fangorn, meet up with Gandalf the White, Gandalf the Grey's spirit returned to finish what he started. From there, as the old hobbit walking-song goes, "the road goes ever on and on, back to the place where it began" (*The Hobbit*).

Seventh:

This could incorporate simply an elevated register, or any form of language that is in meter or pattern. As an “epic” is defined as a long, narrative poem, most epics are already in a hieratic style. Although Tolkien may not have written *The Lord of the Rings* in poetic verse, when it comes to how the stories of Middle Earth are actually written, Tolkien had a style all his own. His love of nature and particular attention to details fill every chapter with vivid descriptions of his world. In this passage of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien describes Frodo's first meeting with Lord Elrond:

The face of Elrond was ageless, neither old nor young, though in it was written in the memory of many things both glad and sorrowful. His hair was dark as the shadows of twilight, and upon it was set a circle of silver; his eyes were grey as a clear evening, and in them was a light like the light of stars... a king crowned with many winters, and yet hale as a tired warrior in the fullness of his strength. (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 227)

In that passage, Tolkien fuses humanity and nature in the most gracefully and articulate way possible, forming a work of art rather than a simple portrayal of a character's visage. Elegant would be the proper term to use. In addition to his already furious preoccupation with structure, upon receiving any critical feedback whatsoever would cause a knee-jerk reaction to rewrite the entire passage. This is perhaps why *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien's jewel, was never released; Tolkien was never satisfied his sub-creations would ever do the glorious landscapes of Middle Earth justice.

Tolkien's diction was archaic. Steve Walker explores this ideal in his *The Power of Tolkien's Prose: Middle Earth's Magical Style*:

The diction manages to seem in its essence nostalgic... there are words in Tolkien's fiction that would stagger an Anglo-Saxon; *láthspell*, *eored*, *dwimmerlaik*, *ell*, *weregild*, *eyot*, and *mearas* are rescued from total obscurity in the eyes of most readers only by the most pellucid of contexts. (Walker)

These words tend to evoke archaic overtones. Moreover, modern words within the context of the archaic words take on archaic meanings, "*mark* is a section of land (496), *dint* reverts to its earlier verb functions (59), *baleful* means distressed (705)" (Walker). Walker further explains that although these words may be archaic to the reader, they were simply a part of the vernacular, "linguistic as well as historic past becomes immediately present" (Walker).

The "Magic" Number:

In addition to the basic epic structure, there is also the repeated sighting of the "magic" number three, which can be seen in a multitudinous of Middle-Earth instances such as the nine riders, the three rings given to the elves, the nine within the fellowship, the twelve dwarves in Thorin's company, the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* is a trilogy and many more. The number three is so important to connecting Tolkien with the world of medieval literature because there are so many instances where three has made an appearance.

There is no solidified reasoning behind the choosing of the number three; however, it does seem to show up in more than simply a religious interface. For

example, due to the fact that the triangle has three edges and three vertices, it is the most stable physical shape. Scientifically speaking, humans can perceive the universe in three dimensions. Even the human eye distinguishes colors based on a three-coned system (i.e. humans are trichromatic, meaning the retina “contains three types of color receptor cells”). Essentially, the universe is based on a system of threes.

From a Biblical standpoint, three plays an important role. For instance there is the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ had twelve disciples; twelve is a multiple of three. The resurrection of Jesus took three days after his crucifixion. Peter denied Jesus three times. Noah had three sons Job had three daughters. The Ark of the Covenant contained three sacred objects “The gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.” Israelite men were required to appear before the Lord three times in a year: “Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.” Jesus answered Satan’s temptation, delivered three times, by citing three scriptural passages. These are from the Bible alone.

Granted the number three was around long before the Christian Era, God was worshipped as a three-part deity in many cultures: “the Assyrians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans, but also of the ancient Scandinavians, the Druids, the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru, as well as the Chinese and Japanese” (“The Number Three”). It is claimed that the number three first garnered its power through being the first odd number containing an even number (“The Number Three”). In Judaism,

there are three parts of the human soul: *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*. There are three Patriarchs of Judaism: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Buddhism has the Triple Bodhi, or “ways to understand the end of birth:” *Budhu*, *Padebudhu*, and *Mahaarath*. Hinduism follows a Trimurti: Brhama the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. There are three basic tenets in Zoroastrianism: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. Essentially the number three is a curiosity, which somehow finds itself in many different aspects of the universe.

From a Germanic point of view, threes came in the form of the parts of Yggdrasil: Asgard, Midden-Gard, and Helheim. In *Beowulf* there are three major parts: when *Beowulf* fights Grendel, when *Beowulf* fights Grendel’s mother, and when *Beowulf* fights the Dragon. Within this same story there are three digressions. By the time *Beowulf* initially arrives at Heorot, Grendel has been plaguing the Danes for twelve years. *Beowulf*’s troop he gathers to fight the dragon, including himself, adds up to twelve.

In *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, the farmer Svip has three sons: Svipdag, Beygad, and Hvitserk. When Svipdag is in battle he defeats six berserkers and then requests “the lives of twelve men, whenever [he] decides on it” (Hrolf 29). Once Svipdag joins the army of the king he is invited to sit at the table but to leave enough room on the benches “for twelve men” (Hrolf 32). There are three sons of Bera and Bjorn: Elk-Frodi, Thorir, Bodvar. Before Bjorn’s death he imbeds three weapons in the cave wall: a long sword, an axe, and a short sword. The three sons grew to be great in strength and were only allowed to take part in the games alongside the king’s men until they were twelve years old when they became too strong.

In *The Saga of the Volsungs*, three also seeps into the plot. The mother of King Volsung is pregnant for six years. During the exchange of insults between Hodbrodd's father and Sinfjolti, Sinfjolti claims, "You should know something of wolves. I am the one who sired nine wolves by you." After Sigmund pulls the sword from Barnstock, Siggeir offers to buy the sword from him for three times the sword's weight in gold. King Volsung's sons travel to Gautland in three ships. The he-wolf returns for "nine nights in a row...and each time killed and ate one of the brothers until all but Sigmund were dead" (41). Signy slept with Sigmund for three nights before exchanging shapes once more with the sorceress. Fafnir was one of three brothers before taking the cursed treasure and transforming into a dragon. The king Gjuki, the lord of the land south of the Rhine River, also had three sons. Sigurd, disguised as Gunnar, shared three nights in a bed with Brynhild.

Threes are everywhere. In the first chapter of the first part of Tolkien's trilogy, Bilbo is introduced through the celebration of his 111th birthday, whilst simultaneously celebrating the 33rd birthday of his heir, Frodo Baggins. The Baggins' guest list included 144 guests. Now add each of the numbers together:

$$1+1+1=3$$

$$3+3=6$$

$$1+4+4=9$$

Three, six, and nine are all related to the magic number. If we were to delve further, each number is also divisible by the number three, equating as such:

$$111/3=37$$

$$33/3=11$$

$$144/3=48$$

The Fellowship contained nine individuals. When the breaking of the fellowship occurs, it splits into threes: Gimli/Aragorn/Legolas, Merry/Pippin/Treebeard, Frodo/Sam/Gollum. There were nine rings wraiths. Moreover, each novel of the trilogy is split into two books: six books total. The *Lord of the Rings* takes place in the Third Age. The dwarves in Thorin's company equates to twelve of which are eventually attacked by three "monstrous trolls." Tolkien did not make these connections to the magic number simply by accident. Tolkien was clearly trying to make some sort of connection to the epic convention of "magic threes".

In *The Silmarillion*, Barahir was being pursued by Morgoth. As a drive for survival, he took refuge within the forest of Dorthonian and remained there until he had but twelve companions left (189). The day Numenor was swallowed by the sea, there were "nine ships... four for Elendil, and for Isildur three, and for Anarion two; and they fled before the black gale of the twilight of doom into the darkness of the world" (335). After Sauron took control of the One Ring, the only rings left unsullied were the three rings given to the elves: "Narya, NENYA, and Vilya, they were named, the Rings of Fire, and of Water, and of Air, set with ruby and adamant and sapphire" (345).

Although the number three may be prominent throughout *The Hobbit* and subsequent *Lord of the Rings*, the number seven is what shows up most in *The Silmarillion*. The number seven has its own mystical properties as it appears

throughout history. There are seven days in a week, seven deadly sins, seven classical planets, seven colors in the rainbow, seven seas, seven continents, seven wonders of the ancient world. The ancient Egyptians viewed seven as the “god number” and would often order things in groups/multitudes of seven.

Within the Old Testament of the Bible the number seven also plays a large role: the seven days of creation, anyone who attempts to kill Cain “will suffer vengeance seven times over” (Genesis 4:15), Noah is commanded to bring seven pairs of every “clean animal” onto the ark (Genesis 7:2), there are seven days of feast during Passover, the Menorah is a seven-branched candelabrum, Jericho’s walls fell on the seventh day after seven priests with seven trumpets walked around the city seven times.

Sevens are also found within the New Testament: Jesus multiplied seven loaves into seven basketfuls of surplus (Matthew 15:32-37), seven demons were driven out of Mary Magdelene (Luke 8:2), the final sayings of Jesus add up to seven. In the book of Revelation there are seven of each of the following: golden lampstands, stars, torches of fire, seals, horns and eyes, angels and their trumpets, thunders, diadems, last plagues, golden bowls, and kings.

Sevens are also prominent features in other religious sects. In Hinduism there are seven worlds in the universe, seven seas in the world, and seven *Rishies* (Gurus) called *sapta rishis*. In Islam there are seven levels of both Heaven and Hell. Islam also has it’s own version of the seven deadly sins from the Hadith of Mohamed: "Avoid the seven sins polytheism, witchcraft, the killing of the soul which Allah has forbidden except by right, consuming *riba*, consuming the wealth of the

orphan, to escape from the battles and slandering chaste women." In Verse 12:46 of the Quran, Yusef is asked to interpret the King's dream in which seven fat cows were devoured by seven skinny cows and seven green spikes.

According to Judaism, there are seven days of mourning, called the Shiv`a. In regards to Jewish weddings, seven blessings are recited under the *chuppah* during the ceremony and the bride and groom are celebrated with the *Sheva Berachot*, meaning they're celebrated with seven days of meals after their wedding; this is known as the "Seven Blessings". The seven orifices of the face (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, and the mouth) are called the "Seven Candles". Moreover the number of nations God told the Israelites they would displace when they entered the land of Israel add up to seven: the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite,, the Hivite, and the Jebusite (Deut 7:1).

From the mythology point of view, there are sevens all over the place. There are "Seven Lucky Gods" in Japanese myth. In Khasi myth, there were seven divine women who were "left behind on earth and became the ancestresses of all human kind." In the Irish epic *The Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the warrior Cúchulainn is constructed in sevens: seven toes on each foot, seven fingers on each hand, and seven pupils in each eye. When Cúchulainn is seven years old he receives his first weapons and defeats the entire army of Ulaidh.

Scientifically speaking, seven also somehow makes an appearance. For instance, the neutral pH value between acidity and alkalinity is seven. There are seven periods in the periodic table. The number of principal energy levels for electrons around the nucleus is seven. Isaac Newton identified seven colors of the

rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. According to cognitive psychologist George A. Miller's paper "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information" the number of objects an average human can hold in working memory is seven, plus or minus two. This is also known as Miller's Law.

Much like the number three, the number seven seems to emerge everywhere, whether it is religion, science, or basic geographical features of Earth. It seems only natural then that the number seven would also appear throughout Germanic works. In *The Saga of the Volsungs*, Sigmund reprimands Sinfjolti, "You accepted help to kill seven men. I am a child compared to you, but I did not ask for help in killing eleven men" (45). Tolkien's works.

There are seven Lords of Valar: Tulkas, Lorien, Mandos, Manwe, Ulmo, Aule, and Orome. In direct correlation, there are also seven Queens of the Valar: Nessa, Vana, Vaire the Weaver, Este the Healer, Nienna, Yvanna, and Varda. Also in *The Silmarillion*, during the battle between Fingolfin and Morgoth, Fingolfin inflicts "Morgoth with seven wounds, and seven times Morgoth gave a cry of anguish" (179). In the land of Belerienad, there were only seven years of peace before Morgoth renewed his assault (187). The King of the Sea marched upon Middle Earth for seven days before he "came to a hill, and he went up, and set there his pavilion" (324). When Sauron constructed his temple on the island of the Numenorians, the smoke billowing from its center covered was so terrible "the land lay under a cloud for seven days, until slowly it passed into the west" (327). Finally, the battle which ended the Third Age, led by Gil-Galad and Elendil against the

stronghold or Sauron in Mordor lasted seven years before Sauron emerged and the one ring was cut from his fingers by the shards of Narsil.

There are other minor statements of seven throughout the other Middle Earth tales, pertaining specifically to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. There are fourteen members of Thorin's Company. In *The Two Towers*, Gandalf was overheard by Pippin singing the Rhymes of Lore to himself:

Tall ships and tall kings

Three times three,

What brought them from the foundered land

Over the flowing sea?

Seven stars and seven stones

And one white tree.

According to Gandalf, the seven stars and seven stones represent the *palantíri* of the Kings of Old (600). Moreover, seven rings were given to the Dwarf lords of old during Sauron's play for power.

V. The Burglar and The Hall of the Dead

There are several plot points of with a distinct correlation between them and both biblical and Germanic texts. The most prominent of which is during *The Hobbit* when Bilbo Baggins steals the cup from the dragon Smaug's hoard; this scene is almost mirrored in *Beowulf* when an unfortunate slave stumbles upon an ancient "worm-hoard" and as he scrambled away, steals a single cup to return to his master. This happens again, when Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas are exploring the Hall of the Dead in order to achieve victory over the forces of Mordor; this has an uncommon resemblance to *The Aeneid's* exploration of the Underworld in order to emerge a proper founder of Rome.

There is also the aforementioned re-forging of a sword in order to establish a rightful king, as in the reforging of Isildor's sword and the reforging of the sword in *The Volsunga Saga*.

Within the same manuscript as *Beowulf* lies an excerpt from the Book of Judith. Because the tale is found beside *Beowulf*, it is understood that Tolkien was well aware of its existence as well as content. This Old English poem tells the story of a Hebrew widow, Judith who "rescues the people of the besieged city of Bethulia by beheading the Assyrian general Holofernes as he attempts to seduce her" (Stephen O. Glowsecki). Like most Germanic heroic tales, men dive into battle clad in armor whilst being circled by the a-typical beasts of battle. Glowsecki goes on to explain how the choice of a female protagonist suggests a "relatively high status of women within Anglo-Saxon nobility... the poem alters its source to stress the heroine's wisdom and courage rather than the allure of her beauty or the cunning of

her plot to seduce Holofernes" (117 Broadview Anthology). This scene directly correlates to the destiny of Éowen, the lady of Rohan.

Here was a woman who, upon being told to remain behind whilst her uncle Theoden, King of Rohan, rode into battle disguised herself as a man and rode alongside the Rohirrim. During the battle of Pelennor Fields Éowen fought beside her king and, when injured in combat she stepped in to help him, standing face-to-face with the Witch-king of Angmar. The lord wraith boasted "no man may hinder me" and Éowen removed her helmet, and declared "no living man am I! You look upon a woman." before thrusting her sword and defeating the Nazgûl (Return of the King). Much like Judith, Éowen is portrayed as a woman of prowess and was seen by readers as not only nobility but a hero. Moreover, just as Judith was protecting her realm from Assyrians, Éowen was protecting her people from the rule of Mordor.

In Germanic cultures women were no laughing matter. Queen Medb in *The Tain* was the entire reason for the war, for she and her husband were in a competition to see who had more; ultimately they were equal. Wealtheow in *Beowulf* holds her head in the court of Heorot and is seen multiple times interacting with the warriors and Hrothgar as the men would. In the Norse tradition there were Valkyries, Odin's shield-maidens who would fight beside and protect him. Signy, daughter of King Volsung killed her own children because they could not possibly live up to the glory of the Volsung name (*The Saga of the Volsungs*). Although there are not *many* female heroes in the tales of Middle Earth, those who do exist uphold the ideals of the Germanic female warrior.

In the tale of *Beowulf*, the final monster the hero must fight is the dragon. After he has been established as a king in Geatland, an infuriated dragon lays waste to his land. How this episode comes about is as such:

Some sort of slave of a warrior's son fled the savage lash, the servitude of a house, and slipped in there, a man beset by sins. Soon he gazed around and felt the terror from that evil spirit; yet... [The manuscript is unreadable at this point]... when the terror seized him he snatched a jeweled cup. (ll.2223-2231)

This scene is especially important due to the fact that Bilbo Baggins, in the place of the "slave" follows a similar plot pattern. Although Bilbo spends a considerably longer time interacting with Smaug than *Beowulf's* slave with the dragon, when Bilbo steals a golden cup from the fire drake's hoard, he simultaneously incurs Smaug's wrath. The Great Worm ravages the mountainside and lays waste to the neighboring Lake Town. However, much like the dragon in *Beowulf*, Smaug meets his doom. Where *Beowulf* battles the dragon with a sword, Bard the Bowman takes down Smaug with his legendary Black Arrow, another named weapon which goes down in history.

In *The Volsunga Saga*, the hero Sigurd is faced by a great dragon Fafnir. In order to defeat the giant serpent, he constructed several ditches thus when the dragon would crawl over him, he could deliver that final death blow:

And when the serpent crawled over the pit, Sigurd plunged the sword up under the left shoulder, so that it sank to the hilt...And when the huge worm

felt his mortal wound he thrashed his head and his tail destroying everything that got in his way. (63)

This scene of Sigurd defeating Fafnir is nearly mirrored in *The Silmarillion*. During the adventures of Túrin Turambar, the hero finds his world threatened by the great dragon Glaurung, also known as the Father of Dragons. As his people flee the great dragon's slow death march, Turin makes a final stand by waiting beneath the lip of chasm for the great body of Glaurung to pass over:

Turin drew the Black sword of Beleg as stabbed upwards with all the might of his arm, and of his hate, and the deadly blade, long and greedy, went into the belly even to its hilts. Then Glaurung, feeling his death pang... writhed, screaming, lashing, and coiling himself in his agony...and lay there at last in a smoke and a ruin, and was still. (The Children of Húrin 238)

Much like the usage of the number three, these resemblances to Medieval Literature are far too similar to be coincidence.

In *The Silmarillion* there was a man who lead the Eldar into the west "for the leagues of Middle-earth were uncounted, and weary and pathless." The Eldar were Iluvatar's chosen people and this man, named Oromë, was their guide. One could say this movement into the west was a sort of exodus. This tale of a large movement of people out of strife into the "promise land" mirrors that of Moses and his leadership before the Hebrews. Although Oromë may not have parted a sea to get his people to safety and prosperity, without this spectacular leader his people would surely be lost.

However, it is difficult not to pick up on some common influences that Tolkien shared with Germanic culture: the love and appreciation of nature. Not only was nature a very important part of Tolkien's life, strongly swaying how he viewed the world seen here in his statement about a possible origin for Leaf by Niggle:

One of its sources was a great-limbed poplar tree that I could see even lying in bed. It was suddenly lopped and mutilated by its owner, I do not know why. It is cut down now, a less barbarous punishment for any crimes it may have been accused of, such as being large and alive. I do not think it had any friends, or any mourners, except myself and a pair of owls. (Tolkien Reader 32)

On the other hand, this theme of the force of nature personified can also be seen in the Finnish epic, *The Kalevala*, a favorite of Tolkien's. The Christian world perceived the Germanic tribes as Pagans, thus the focus on the natural world would be probable.

VI. Speak Friend and Enter

Words had always transfixed Tolkien. His mother, Mabel, had homeschooled his brother, Hilary, and him. When she introduced young Tolkien to Latin he was "delighted" and from that point on, proceeded to ingest as much language as he could. He went through English, Latin, and although Tolkien did not much care for it, French. After moving into a villa behind King Heath's Station around the time Tolkien was nine, the boy began to notice the odd names on the side of coal truck of the passing trains: Nantyglo, Senghenydd, Blaen-Rhondda, Penrhiwceiber, and many more (Carpenter 34). These names, as he soon learned, were Welsh and thus spurred his curiosity. He went through every language-oriented book in his small family library and then, after the passing of his mother in 1904, the library of his guardian, Father Francis Morgan. Tolkien then began to move into Old English, Middle English, Anglo-Saxon and then beyond the words, "It was one thing to know Latin, Greek, French, and German; it was another to understand why they were what they were...he had begun to study philology, the science of words" (Carpenter 42).

His passion grew at an exponential rate as Tolkien devoured shelves upon shelves of books pertaining to this great love of words until finally he began inventing his own. As a child at play, even, Tolkien and his cousins would speak in a dialect called "Anamalic." When they grew out of this phase, they invented another, "Nevbosh," and soon after Tolkien went rogue and took on the task of inventing his own formula. After being accidentally introduced to the Gothic language, Tolkien's imagination truly began to soar.

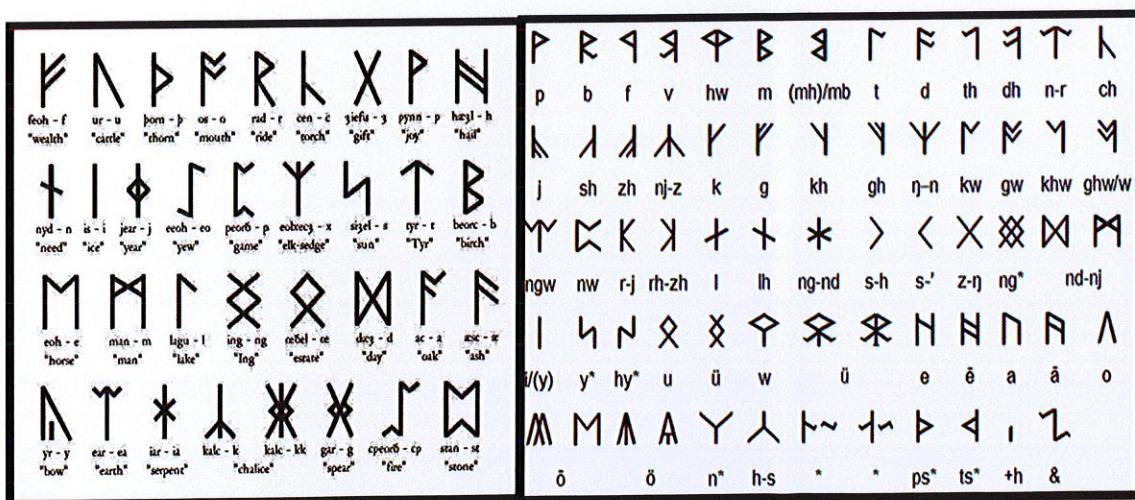
Tolkien's school-life also aided his road to authorship. With the creation of the T.C.B.S. (Tea Club, Barrovian Society, Etc.), Tolkien finally had an outlet where his creations would be heard and critiqued appropriately (Letters 8). The group consisted of four members, Tolkien, Christopher Wiseman, R.Q. Gilson, and G.B. Smith and they used their time together to recite their works and formed quite the elite group. By the time he was 18, Tolkien had begun writing in verse, experimenting with fairies and the woodland realm. Soon after, Tolkien entered into training as the second lieutenant in the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers to fight in the Great War. While battling in the trenches, trench fever put him on bed rest and it was there he began writing scenes for *The Book of Lost Tales*, which would eventually turn into *The Silmarillion* (Carpenter 264).

While on bed rest, Tolkien received a letter from Smith discussing the T.C.B.S. and how nothing, not even death, could "put an end to the immortal four." Shortly after Tolkien received this note, Smith succumbed to gas-gangrene. Thus, the concluding line of his final letter hit Tolkien hardest: "May God bless you, my dear John Ronald, and may you say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them, if such be my lot" (Carpenter 94). Those words were the push Tolkien needed to take this idea he had been sitting on and make it a reality, to take his "little fairy language" and give it a history. Like the Philologist Tolkien was, not only would he create a standard background for his languages, but they would in turn evolve into an entire mythology.

Tolkien decided one day to take the bits and pieces of the dialects he loved too much and incorporated them all into the vernacular of the species of Middle

Earth. Yes, the Babylon of Middle Earth would have English and yet it would also encompass Aldrin (the speech of the Valar), Common Eldarin (the proto-language Tolkien worked on until his death), Khuzdul (the secret language of the dwarves), as well as numerous other lingual subsets. These are examples of Tolkien's glossopoeia, or constructed artistic languages (Higley).

Tolkien took great pride in his cultivation of languages, especially that of the high elves, he even invented his own runic alphabet which can be seen along the edges of the maps usually found within the coverlets of his books; however an extremely similar runic alphabet can also be found looking back through Anglo-Saxon history: the futhorc. According to English Professor Jane Chance, "Tolkien well understood the power of the written and spoken word, philologist that he was—he knew that words were magic." Although each word and symbol may have a different meaning, they were all established through study of medieval texts and archaic languages. Below one can compare the two runic alphabets, the former being the Anglo-Saxon futhorc whilst the latter is Tolkien's dwarfish Cirth runes:



Although the designated sounds may be different, the shapes hold extreme

similarities. For instance, the futhorc “W” is the exact same as the Cirth “P”. The “d” and “m” of the futhorc match the “nd-nj” sounds in Cirth. As an avid scholar of Anglo-Saxon works, Tolkien would be well aware of the futhorc and thus would recognize these similarities.

Later in life he would actually write most of his notes in his made up “fairy language”, more often than not changing one letter to mean another, making later visitations very difficult for the outside reader to translate. For instance, the earliest conceptual predecessor of the Celtic-sounding Elvish language Sindarin was called Gnomish -- a highly developed language with thousands of words, set down in a dictionary written about 1915. However, so many revisions separate Gnomish and Sindarin that a speaker of the latter would never have understood what a speaker of Gnomish was saying” (Ardalambion Index). Due to his love of Finnish grammar, this language is also quite similar to Quenya, the language of the High Elves (*The Fellowship of the Ring*). However, the question of how many languages Tolkien created is yet to be determined: “By the strictest definition, Tolkien didn't make even one single language. By the most liberal definition, he made a virtually indefinite number of languages” (Ardalambion Index).

He used outside languages for more than solely the common tongue of Middle Earth, he also loved to toy with names and their meanings. For instance, according to the Old English Dictionary, Bosworth-Toller, the entire line of the kings of Rohan were different Old English terms for “king” or “lord”. Théoden comes from the Old English *ðeóden* meaning a “prince” or “king”. Another king of the line of Rohan, Eorl the Young, *eorl* meaning “an earl” in Old English. Aldor the Old is

especially tricky as *ealdor* in Old English means both “elder” and “having authority over others”. Brego means “a leader”. Fréa actually comes from *freá* meaning “a lord, master”. The next in line Fréawine is a play on the Old English *freá-wine* meaning a “dear or beloved lord”. Goldwine means “A liberal and kindly prince”. Deor on the other hand throws off this pattern somewhat, as it means “wild animal”; alas Tolkien could also be referencing its alternative meaning: “brave, bold”. In addition, Tolkien could also be referencing the Old English poem found in the Exeter book entitled Deor; however, Deor was a poet “of the Heodenings”, not a king (Contexts 146). Whether or not Tolkien is acknowledging the power of the *scop* in the making of Deor a king, is definitely an option for interpretation. This pattern continues with Gram, a name meaning “fierce” or even “tyrannical,” also Gram is the name of the sword in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*. However, Helm picks up the kingly title once more meaning both “helmet” and “crown”. Thus ends the first line of the kings of Rohan.

When the second line is picked up by Helm’s nephew Frealaf, Tolkien continues to play with Old English for if one were to break down Frealaf into two words *frea* and *laf* they would consecutively mean “lord” “remnant”, essentially suggesting Frealaf was representing what was left of the kingly line. After Frealaf comes Brytta Leofa; *brytta* in this case would mean “lord” and *leofa* would be a play on *leof* meaning “beloved”. Walda is a reference to *æl-walda* or “almighty”. Folc and Folcwine could be plays on the terms *folc* and *folc-wita*, meaning “people of a nation” and “a senator”; however, this is more difficult to prove. On the other hand, the next king Fengel means “a prince”. Thengel is the father of Theoden, and both names once again mean “prince”.

When toying with Old English verses were not enough, Tolkien then turned to poems, such as the “Voluspo” contained within the *Poetic Edda*. Within just a few stanzas of the sixty-stanza poem, twenty-three names from the stories of Middle Earth are mentioned syllable for syllable:

There was Motsognir the mightiest made	Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali,
Of all the dwarfs, and Durin next;	Heptifili, Hannar , Sviur,
Many a likeness of men they made,	Frar , Hornbori, Fræg and Loni,
The dwarfs in the earth, as Durin said.	Aurvang, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.
Nyi and Nithi, Northri and Suthri,	The race of dwarfs in Dvalin’s throng
Austri and Vestri, Althjof, Dvalin,	Down to Lofar the list must I tell;
Nar and Nain , Niping, Dain	The rocks they left, and through wet lands
Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nori,	They sought a home in the fields of sand.
An an Onar, Ai, Mjothvitnir.	There were Draupnir and Dolgthrasir,
Vigg and Gandalf , Vindalf, Thrain,	Hor, Haugspori, Hlevang, Gloin,
Threkk and Thorin, Thror , Vit and Lit,	Dori, Ori , Duf, Andvari,
Nyr and Nyrath,-- now have I told—	Skirfir, Virfir, Skafith, Ai.
Regin and Rathsvith— the list aright.	

Gandalf first appears in *The Hobbit*, the rest, however, are dwarven names, some of which fall into Thorin's company. If one were to break down Gandalf's name in Old Norse, *gandr* and *álfr* meaning "wand" and "elf" (Behind the Name).

Even the names of beasts were the result of Tolkien playing with Old English. For instance, the lord of all horses, Shadowfax is the product of the modern English "Shadow" and the Old English *feax* meaning "hair" or "mane". Smaug the dragon is derivative of the Old English *Smugan* meaning "to squeeze through a hole". Essentially Smaug's nickname, The Great Worm, was more accurate than the characters were aware.

The first hobbit to find the One Ring in the Shire was a hobbit named Deagol. While fishing in a river with his friend Smeagol, Deagol stumbles upon the ring and, after refusing to give it to Smeagol, is murdered by the hobbit he saw as a friend. Smeagol, under the influence of the One Ring slinks away into darkness, becoming the creature Gollum. Deagol soon fades into the secret of Gollum's past, coincidentally *deogol* in Old English actually means "secret". Gollum is repeatedly heard whispering, "I have a secret," a sentence with more than one implication.

In addition, the etymology of Saruman the White and his residence, Isengard, is also quite interesting. On line 406 of the original *Beowulf* manuscript there are the words *searonet seowed smides ordancum*. Broken down, *Saru* becomes the Mercian *Searo* meaning "skilled". When placed beside "man", the meaning becomes clear: "skilled man"; this is also the first word of line 406. This next point become tricky for the word *smides* means "smiths"; this correlates as such: smiths work with iron; "iron" in Old English translates to *isen*. Now, Saruman's lands lay atop the river Isen

and thus are called Isengard; ultimately Isengard translates to “Iron Guard” as the Old English *gard* means “to protect, guard”. Lastly, the impregnable tower at the heart of Isengard, Saurman’s keep, is called Orthanc, a derivative of *ordancum* the final word of line 406.

VII. Monsters, Shapeshifters, and Ricketty Old Men

Tolkien got his ideas for his monsters, shapeshifters, and main character, Gandalf from all over the realm of literature and myth. Dragons, whales, elephants, bears, eagles, and wolves all make appearances throughout Middle Earth.

Dragons are more common in medieval literature as both Beowulf, of *Beowulf*, and Sigurd, of *The Volsunga Saga*, fought and defeated a dragon. In *The Saga of Gold-Thorir*, the hero Thorir Oddsson pillages a hoard of cursed dragon gold. He fell ill to the ways of greed and spite, eventually vanishing along with his treasure. Within the Tolkien Universe, Melkor created the dragons after he realized the numbers of orcs were not enough to conquer Middle Earth. The father of dragons, the previously mentioned Glaurung was the first of these creatures. After the first age, dragons continued to plague the northmen and some time into the Third Age the dwarves were common enemies of the dragons. Tolkien mentions in *The Fellowship of the Ring* that it was perhaps during this time that a few dragons swallowed four of the seven rings given to the dwarfs. One of the more famous dragons was the Great Worm, Smaug, the dragon aforementioned to lay waste to Erebor and was the victim of Bilbo's burglaries.

According to the Bestiary, Dragons were likened to the Devil as when they flew they made the air shine, much like the Devil as he "makes himself appear as the angel of light to deceive the foolish". Overall, dragons are portrayed as clever, smooth of tongue, and patient as seen in their portrayal by Isidore fo Seville: "Not even the elephant is safe from the dragon; hiding where elephants travel, the dragon tangles their feet with its tail and kills the elephant by suffocating it." Tolkien

repeatedly mentions the silky tongue of both Smaug and Glaurung. If one were to merely step into Glaurung's gaze, they would fall prey to his magic.

Although Tolkien's Oliphaunts were rarely involved in battles with dragons (as they primarily lived in the jungles of Far Harad, south of any maps of Middle Earth), they remained beasts of legend among the Westlanders. It was not until the Third Age that Oliphaunts appeared in Middle Earth, as they participated directly in the Siege of Gondor. Used as the muscle behind the war towers and engines of siege against Minas Tirith, they also acted as rallying points for the enemy in the battle of Pelennor fields. These are plays on the Oliphant referenced in the Old English song *The Song of Roland* as "the Oliphant is set to Roland's lips"; Oliphant in this case is pertaining to a horn typically used as a call amongst warriors.

There is also the idea of the shapeshifting bear named Beorn, "he changes his skin: sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard" (*The Hobbit*). An extremely similar image is produced in *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* where Bödvar Bjarki transforms into a bear as well as the many other characters within that same saga that have animal traits. Moreover, Beorn actually means "bear" in Old English.

Eagles both in Tolkien and Medieval texts are noble birds, often dealing directly as messengers between men and the gods. The Medieval Bestiary claims the eagle is a bird that may look directly into the sun; they are given this attribute as a representation of "Christ's ability to look directly at God, and as the eagle lifts its young to the sun, so do angels lift worthy souls to God." Within the Tolkien universe, the Great Eagles served as messengers of Manwë and were commonly recorded

transporting the bodies of the heroes from battle, as the lord Eagle of the First age carried Fingolfin's body after his fatal battle with Morgoth. The Eagles also appeared to save Thorin's company in "Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire" chapter of *The Hobbit*. They also make an appearance in The Battle of the Five Armies. Finally, the eagles rescued Samwise and Frodo from the erupting Mount Doom after the destruction of the One Ring.

Tolkien's Wargs, or Wild Wolves, also have their place in medieval literature. Wolves alone are a part of the three types of beasts of battle; however, Tolkien even says in his Letters that the episode of wargs in *The Hobbit* is actually "in part derived from a scene" in S.R. Crockett's novel *The Black Douglas*. Gene Wolfe also mentions wargs in his fiction short story "Trip, Trap": "There was also what looked like a very big dog or wolf, a Warg." Wargs also appear in Old Norse mythology, as the great wolf, or *vargr* in Old Norse, Fenrir is foretold to kill the god Odin during the events of Ragnarök. There is one hound, Huan, where it was prophesized that he could not be killed unless it was by the greatest wolf that ever lived.

Whales also make an appearance in both Medieval and Tolkien literature. According to *The Medieval Bestiary*, the lore behind whales essentially draws the connection between a whale and the devil: "the whale remains floating at the surface for long periods, so its back becomes covered with sand." Approaching sailors believe it to be an island. Eventually, the whale dives back beneath the sea taking both sailors and ship with it. The whale morally represents the devil's deceit as he drags his victims down to hell. Although Tolkien's whale Uin, the great whale

in service of Ulmo, did not lure sailors to their deaths, he did drag the island Tol Eressëa back and forth to take the elves to Aman.

There is also the mighty Odin of Norse mythology, characterized by his wisdom and wide-brimmed hat not unlike Tolkien's Gandalf the Grey, also characterized by his advice and "big pointy hat." Both individuals seem to appear at the best time delivering swords to anyone he deems fit. As Odin drives the sword in Barnstock, Gandalf delivers fate to Bilbo in the form of Sting.

As Tolkien created a world he could actually believe in, his mythology is capable of placement amongst the epic myths of old. At the end of the Third Age, Tolkien notes the elves and wizards leave Middle Earth. Although the main source of evil had been dethroned and destroyed, Tolkien claims there were still evils in the dark places of the world. The *illo tempore* of certain epics (i.e. *Beowulf* and *The Saga of the Volsungs*) resided in the period of history parallel to the Fourth Age of Middle Earth. Although this is purely conjecture, the heroes of *Beowulf* and *The Saga of the Volsungs* would be essentially cleaning up the leftover evil creatures from Middle Earth's Third Age.

VIII. Conclusion

Behind every story there is a point of origin whether or not the author says so and in order to fully appreciate said story, this origin must be understood. When entering into this ordeal I wanted to catch Tolkien with his metaphorical “underwear showing” (Fulton). There were some moments during my research where I found myself both in awe of Tolkien and critical of his use of outside sources. He was a critic and yet he found issue with his work being critiqued. Ultimately I find the mind of Tolkien a fascinating place. He was a writer and what writers do is create a world in which readers may escape; using that point of view Tolkien truly achieved something superb. The ability to combine all of the sources mentioned, all of the languages, and still manage to consistently maintain the level of detail that he did was nothing short of extraordinary. Through the knowledge gleaned through my research and the research of other Tolkien scholars can we see the truth behind Beorn’s transformations and the birth of moon letters; before this, Beorn was just a name and moon letters were simply scratches in special ink. Although the tales he taught might have subconsciously swayed Tolkien, he wove them together with the precision of a true artist inspired by genius.

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