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FANTASTICAL REALITY IN J. R. R. TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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Dedication

First and foremost, I won't be able to give enough thanks to my beloved parents who swarmed me with nothing but care, love and support. I ask Allah The Almighty to grant them health and paradise.

Second, to all my friends who supported and encouraged me to conduct my research even in the darkest moments, I would say thank you for being there with me.

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Those who wander the realm of knowledge

will never be lost.

Abstract

The current dissertation undertakes an analytical research that aims at discerning fantastical reality in John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). To fulfill this aim, this dissertation will also attempt to demonstrate that Tolkien's novel, which was written in the midst of the rational thinking and experimentation, embodies and reflects the author's attempt to reject a mode of depicting reality that is inherent in the Enlightenment philosophy and espoused later by modernism. Thus, the current research seeks to investigate the author's use of peculiar literary mechanisms as a means to construct his imaginative world as fantasy proves to be an effective way to approach and reflect on the real world. As a postmodern fantasy novel, *The Lord of the Rings* defies the typical perception of fantasy genre as merely entertaining or escapist; however, what this research argues is that Tolkien uses his fantasy work as a tool to blur the line between fantasy and reality. In this regard, an analytical approach is used in order to critically read the significance of concepts like history, religion, good and evil in stitching fantastical reality in the novel.

Keywords: Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Fantastical reality, History, Religion, Good and evil.

List of Abbreviations

LOTR: The Lord of the Rings

FR: Fellowship of the Ring (being the first part of The Lord of the Rings)

TT: The Two Towers (being the second part of The Lord of the Rings)

OFS: On Fairy-Stories

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General Introduction

The legacy of a given society is not necessarily treasures of gold and silver, for it could be simply a well-constructed piece of writing for an intellect who spent years to form his vision of the world, maybe it took him even longer time and more effort to put those experiences and wisdom comprehensively into a written material, and that is the difference between history and literature. It is through literature that the reader could see places, hear voices and experience pain and joy of those people. Even though the beliefs of the writer imbedded in his works may seem, sometimes, complicated for the reader to understand especially if the events are not set in the real world, his aim remains to mirror the world which he had seen and experienced.

With that in mind, during the modern era, an idea flourished of the individual perception of the world as Einstein came up with his theory of relativity. Yet, this does not mean that those who rejected the modern thought had similar perspectives. The intellectuals of the twentieth century had different strategies of how they explained their insights in works of literature, especially those of the fantasy genre, for a debate was raised concerning this kind of works on whether they depict reality or not. *The Lord of the Rings (1954)* is an example of those novels which rose a debate on whether it is a representation of the real world or it was written just for the sake of entertaining the reader.

The Lord of the Rings is a high fantasy written by one of the most celebrated authors of all time, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. It was recently named 'The book of the century' and hundreds of millions of copies were sold worldwide since its publication in 1954 after it was translated into many languages. It is no secret that such work of fantasy grabs readers of all ages. Furthermore, it is argued that Tolkien's masterful narrative style, the depth of his characters and the ravishing power of the story are what give this epic its charm. Yet, the uniqueness of *TLOR* lies in the richness and the vastness of the created world, Middle-Earth,

with its marvelous geography and its dazzling mythologies. What is more intriguing about this masterpiece is the races that dwell this world. Each race has a history, a language and a way of living; in other words, each race has an identity. Reading for Tolkien will, therefore, make the reader absorb this secondary world as second belief without breaking from the first belief that is of the real world in which its rules defy the rules of the secondary world of fantasy.

Anyone who is familiar with the works of Tolkien would definitely notice that they do not fit the era in which they were written, the modern era. *TLOR*, and *The Hobbit* for instance were written during the time when modernism was the dominant mode, a time when encouraging the newness through experimentation dominated the styles of the writings. Tolkien created a whole world called Middle-Earth not just for the plot of the *LOTR* to take place, but for other back stories which can be more significant than the *LOTR*. In this sense, *LOTR* is considered one of the largest works in the history of literature. *LOTR* was not written to know those back stories, yet to make readers believe they do exist, and when one finishes reading *LOTR*, he would be left with so much to discover about the real world, and that is the mastery of Tolkien.

Moreover, what is fascinating is that Tolkien spent so many years in creating his mythology, and he declared in the foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring* being the first book of *LOTR*, that his work does not denote any realistic events. However, when comparing his characters, places, and even the themes used in the story, one would find that Tolkien is contradicting or luring the reader not to think that this work is allegorical not to mention that Tolkien's insights in the novel defy the modern belief that discarded history and religion for being old fashioned and do not construct the individual's future. What is more fascinating about the work at hand is language. The study of language and its history was the profession of Tolkien, as he is considered one of the masters of philology. He literally created new languages

for the races of his world, and the most common tongue is Elvish. and in so doing, Tolkien wants his imaginative world to approach reality in the very way possible. In this sense, our research seeks to understand Tolkien's imaginative literary project that tends to approach reality using elements which transgress the circumscription of the 'real'

Nevertheless, Many critics have read Tolkien's work *LOTR* and most of them agreed on the fact that it is not a simple work for the sake of entertaining the reader. The most common book that contains the most interpreted concepts of Tolkien's is *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* for Michael D. C. Drout where he gives endless interpretations of terms, places, names, and even the Elvish language that Tolkien created. Even though the writer provides a direct explanation and without analysis, this book is a reference to which any Tolkien reader would refer and connect to a common ground between history and literature. Another author studied Tolkien's work from a religious perspective is Joseph O'Day. He wrote a book entitled *The Ring of Truth: Truth and Wisdom in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings* where he gives all the religious references in the book related to characters and events considering the fact that Tolkien was a Christian, and modernists reject religion because it deals with the metaphysical aspects which science cannot explain, and more importantly, it is in religion that the everlasting struggle between good and evil was introduced for the first time. In *Tolkien: The Medievalist*, Jane Chance provides a detailed explanation about what contribution that Tolkien's works give to the medieval languages as Tolkien was a professor of the ancient languages at the university of Oxford. The relevance of this book lies in the fact that Tolkien fancied the ancient and old languages especially those of the medieval times, and he created a whole new language originating from them to preserve what modernism had rejected, all the traditional aspects including old languages.

Modernism has deemed fantasy to be the genre that deals with minor things since it cannot depict reality as modernists celebrated reason over imagination. Furthermore, modernists believed that the individual can relate to the real world without having the latter defined by history or religion, since both of these concepts are displaced from the position of power to a state of doubt. However, Tolkien wrote his novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, during the modern age, in sometime between 1937 and 1949, an age when most of people no longer believed in the power of history and religion in defining their reality. While engaging with the text of Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, which is not just fantasy, but a high fantasy novel, one finds that it is a mastery in depicting and mirroring the world of reality, a world that is full of religious allusions, and gives history significance at the same time. Another element to demonstrate Tolkien's willingness to challenge modernist view regarding fantasy genre as impotent to depict reality, is the fact that Tolkien acted against the newness brought by modernism, he emphasized on the importance of the traditional aspects of the individual throughout his novel, and he took up the everlasting struggle between good and evil, a struggle that is inherent in the real world, as a central theme in his novel *The Lord of the Rings*.

All of the above mentioned works tend to interpret Tolkien's writings, including the novel at hand *LOTR*, as an imaginative work that renders the power of its mythmaking instead of making-believe. Even though these authors are well aware of the fact that Tolkien did not mean for his works to be allegorical, they tend to interpret his works while approaching and conceptualizing them in the context of certain historical events like the First World War.

Accordingly, the significance of our humble dissertation lies in approaching and conceptualizing Tolkien's fantasy work through the lens of fantastical reality. The latter, as this research assumes, is a concept that defines Tolkien's imaginative project as depending heavily on the idea of making-believe rather than mythmaking and that is what seems to escape most

researchers. His unique vision of making-believe entails, having Tolkien aware of the power of fantasy genre in rendering reality in unconventional ways that transgress the realm of reality. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to identify the ways whereby Tolkien reflects reality in his masterpiece. So, reality and fantasy seem to be very substantial notions in the act of reading fantastical reality in Tolkien's novel. Therefore, our research rests on the assumption that Tolkien's, being an overwhelmingly prolific writer, work is replete with critical accounts of fantastical reality.

For the purpose at hand, the present research looks up to examine how fantastical reality helps understand Tolkien's vision of making-believe that encompasses his willingness to depict reality in a work of fantasy. In this sense, to undertake a proper academic investigation, we tended to raise and try to answer this question:

Can fantasy, which represents the genre of the imaginative realms, depict the real world like any other genre of the realistic fiction?

Many other questions had to be set forward as well:

- 1- Being a high fantasy work, how is reality approached and depicted in Tolkien's epic TLOR?
- 2- How does his making-believe vision promote his imaginative accounts of reality?
- 3- In what ways does fantastical reality represent the author's willingness to challenge modernist views regarding concepts like history and religion?

To provide answers to these questions, we consider it necessary to depend in our interpretation on an analytical approach that comprises describing and analyzing a wide range of critical insights dealing with a postmodernist and historical reading of the novel. This research is divided into three chapters. First, the first chapter provides a theoretical background in which the reader will find definition of the genre of fantasy and what aspects were added

to it in the postmodern era, followed by an introductory glimpses about the events that led to the change of the literary writing style putting the First World War as a central factor. In the second chapter, which is the link between the first and the last chapters, the reader will form a valid knowledge about who Tolkien is, and his contribution to the world of literature in general, and to the genre of fantasy in specific. As for the third chapter, I will show how Tolkien, even though his work *The Lord of the Rings* is of the fantasy genre, was successful in depicting, not only the society, but the whole world during that era through a fantastical tale.

Chapter one

The Resurgence of Fantasy in Postmodern Literature

I.1. Introduction

The world as we know it today went through many incidents to be in this current shape. It is true that history provides us with the knowledge needed to know of this fact, yet it is because of literature that we took a deeper understanding of the world, because history is written by the victorious, and literature is written by the intellects that have no interests but to

make the world understand the real world. It all started by the Enlightenment, the age of reason, and the thinkers of many fields who agreed upon each other that only by excluding traditions that the world would be a better place, along with history, religion, and metaphysics that were to be removed from the contemporary subject's mind as well. Providing science as replacement, the philosophers were somewhat victorious in taking the absolutes of the twentieth century. There are, of course, those intellects who rejected what this new system had brought, and rebelled against what it had been taken! Those intellects' rebellion was not violent, yet it caused violence. Their pieces of writing moved the audiences from within, for they knew how to speak to their minds. One example of those authors is J.R.R. Tolkien, father of fantasy. He is well known for his fantastical writings, which made huge impact on the subject of the twentieth century who was emptied from within by the beliefs of modernism that was somewhat an extension to the Enlightenment.

This chapter serves as an background to the thesis where I provide a historical somewhat critical insights about the reasons behind the emergence of postmodernism, and what it brought upon the western world during many events that shaped the world such as the First World War. First of all, I will define some of the concepts that are related to the main theme such as 'the genre of fantasy' along with their historical backgrounds. Then, I will emphasize on the events that led to the shift from the Victorian era to the modern era, and then to the postmodern era, mentioning the literary and social features of every period.

I.2. The Genre of Fantasy in a Postmodern Era

It seems easy to determine that a specific literary work can be classified under a specific genre, to pick a relevant genre label with all its themes and features. However, the fluidity of genres definitions as they merge together in terms of the interconnected features among them makes it somewhat hard for the analyzer to do so, the thing that is considered new in the world

of literature. When we talk about genres, we can't help but to mention the fantasy genre, because of its importance in all eras as long as literature is concerned. Though Fantasy literature nowadays is of a great significance, and its popularity acceded all expectations, fantasy was not that popular recently until the publication of J. R. R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in the summer of 1954 onwards (Carpenter 211). The perception of the reader of the postmodern era changed radically about fantasy, for Tolkien gave a whole new perspective for it.

Genre simply means a 'type'. When it is seen from a literary scope, genre becomes a whole text that serves a specific interest¹. The early century was marked by many new ideas, philosophies, as well as schools of thought, and the word "genre" was among the new things that emerged then especially in the twenties. Another definition given by Montgomery in his book *Ways of reading: Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature*, "In its most general sense, 'genre' simply means sort or type ... The word comes from the Latin word 'genus', meaning 'kind' or 'type' of anything, not just literature or artistic works" (41). In the English Language, it is until the beginning of the 20th century that the term 'genre' was used in the field of literature and literary criticism. From the moment the term 'genre' was used, many genres were formed, and others discovered. The later ones are to be a classification of the previous works, while the former ones, the formed ones, are new types of writing, or a polishing of the previous types. Even though the 'genre' means the classification of the text according to specific elements, these elements are not clear what makes the boundaries between genres not clear (41). This idea of interconnection between genres created a kind of uncertainty in deciding whether the text belongs to this genre or the other. It is true that genre is to make a label for making difference between one work and another, yet dealing with the text as an individual work is just as important.

¹ This definition is provided by Merriam Webster Dictionary.

Fantasy is "Something produced by imagination"¹. Stories that speak of magical creatures such as unicorns and dragons date back to the Greek and Roman civilizations before the printed literature (Clute, and Grant 921). Their contribution to the modern fantasy is vast and significant. Romanticism is the literary movement of the 18th century during which fantasy flourished. The movement rejected the rationalism of the Enlightenment, theory of reason (821). Many literary works were produced in the form of gothic fiction, and many of them resemble the Victorian era such as folklore, and mythology. The rehabilitation and evolution of such writings was of great contribution to the emergence of what we call today 'modern fantasy' that took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from adopting the word fantasy to the English language that roots back to the Greek word 'Phantasia' (Brinck 5).

Psychologically speaking, fantasy is "the process of imagination", because the images that the human mind creates about sensible objects are nothing like the objects themselves before observing them (Stableford xxxvii). Thus, the word 'fantasy' nowadays is associated with the unusual bizarre notions that have nothing to do with the everyday life experience as well as to refer to fantasy literature.

Many of the early writers tended to use elements of parody, but later on the style changed to a more serious tone, as it is the case with J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* in the 20th century. His first book, *The Hobbit*, was more of a children book; the tone used in it is not as dark and serious as in his later book, *The Lord of the Rings*. From that moment when Romanticism rejected the beliefs of the age of reason onwards, fantasy as a genre was born to become one of the most important pillars of Literature.

By the rise of Postmodernism, Tolkien introduced his epic to the world which was already reaching the point of abandoning this genre because of the wave of the modern thought,

¹ Merriam Webster Dictionary.

because fantasy was the feature of children books only (Stableford xxxvii). Though Tolkien was amongst those who rejected the modernist belief, and he was cast out from being a modernist, he used one of the modernist techniques as he was crafting his piece of work which is experiment. Experimental literature was a common feature of the modern era, and Tolkien used this technique in *The Lord of the Rings* while representing the creatures of the ancient Greek mythology, the thing that he was famous for, along with other countless features of the discussed book. From the Publication of *The Lord of the Rings* onwards, the view to the fantasy genre changed, and so many works were influenced by Tolkien's work unlike any other work before or after. The Definition that Tolkien provided about fantasy and how it should be constructed when producing a piece of writing was new to the subject of the postmodern time, the thing that will be further discussed in the coming chapters.

I.3. Reality in a Postmodern Context

From the very beginning, literature was and still in a constant change. This change may not be quick, yet it will have many and massive effects on many levels. It can take a year, decades, or even more; the period it takes differs according to the situation and circumstances at hand. Yet, when the shift takes place, there must be two categories of people: those who adopt the change, and those who reject, and revolt against it.

I.3.1. History and Religion as Traditional Aspects

Postmodernity is a term used by many historians to mark the historical period of this movement. The era started to take its full shape after the Second World War. Even though there is no agreement upon which date it started, yet its characteristics were definitely different of those of the modern period, or even defying. The term postmodernism, on the other hand, is the aesthetic movement that witnessed the changes that happened in the western society which

were on so many levels: art, philosophy, architecture, and of course literary criticism. The postmodernists rejected, even though the term 'reject' is not entirely accurate, the beliefs of the modernists, those of the overreliance on the mind and reason. Modernism, too, was an extension of the Enlightenment that was marked by the encouragement to use reason rather than being dominated by what the church dictated (Murray and Tew 12). The beginning of the Enlightenment belief started by defying the two dominant powers: religion, and the monarch. They taught them that the natural phenomena were a sign of a higher power's wrath upon them, and it is by a divine right to be a subject of the monarch. The thinkers of that time considered this a kind of enslavement, and consequently, they sought to "free mankind from subservience" (12), and this freedom was found only in rationality.

Literature is not so different, for it is two the result of many incidents that happened before. So, many are the things that led to the rupture of the individual of the contemporary time from everything that had a relation to the Victorian forbears. All what was once known as pillars of the society such as religion and history were lost. War and technology as well as science, which were the fuel of both, are what led to the cultural change to take place (4). Time, the concept which we all feel and know, yet can't touch, changed as well. Means of transportation such as railways made the distance between people shorter, the thing that changed the social relations, and consequently, the perception of time. And this can be the most representative image of modernism (4). In modernist texts, there is always a reference to the railways and how they shaped the landscape, and how time became sometimes subjective, and other times objective. In the previous pieces of writing, the setting used to be in one place, and the plot in a linear development, but not anymore. Many places, and many voices that narrate the story, and the shift forward and backward in time are what modernist literature is famous for. Thus, the writings became chaotic and the reader responded accordingly that led to a more chaotic society.

Philosophically speaking, the thinkers of the 18th century are the ones who drew the beginning of the this age of new thinking. It first started by the Enlightenment, an era that was characterized by the rational discourses that favored reason and mind over the metaphysical belief, which was a rejection of the traditional ways of organizing thought, and introducing an autonomous subject (11). This means that people started to break from what was called collective consciousness that dictated the laws and beliefs of a given society, as they were shifting to a more individualistic and personal one. Even though many modernist writers questioned the new beliefs brought by the wave of Enlightenment into the shores of the society, their reaction itself took them into a whole new phase: postmodernism (12). Their reaction of rejecting the principles of reason did not bring back the Victorian values, yet it resulted a third wheel to instruct the society, a society which was already disarmed from the beliefs that once made it whole, and exposed what was Truth to doubt. That made the subject of the contemporary time perceive things subjectively no matter how fundamental they were. J.R.R. Tolkien, being the author discussed in this paper, was among those who rejected the newness brought by the Enlightenment and modernism. He lamented all what was modern as he celebrated all what was ancient and antique (Wood 334).

Religion, being the guide from which people extract their rules and ways of living, was questioned. "Things fall apart" as Yeats described it, and religion was among these things that fell. The leaders of the 18th century wanted to get rid of all "the myths and holy ideas" (Powell 9), and they succeeded. One of the most influential philosophers who put his fingerprint, as far as religion is concerned, is Fredrick Nietzsche. People were already questioning the Victorian values, and with Nietzsche's 'God is dead', every holy aspect and belief was gone (9). As the contemporary subject rejected all that is traditional, religion was simply considered as one of those traditions, and each person became his own priest and god to decide his own religion

based on his own principles and beliefs. The Enlightenment, and modernism swarmed the society with the highest levels of individualism, so that the society was no longer secure.

I.3.2. War and Science

Before delving into more details of postmodernism, it would be preferable to draw some of the features that led to the appearance of such movement. Even though the thinkers were of a big contribution to the change that happened, the First World War's impact was huge. Many wars were fought before the Great War, yet their effect was not that immense, for it was the bloodiest war in the history. The Aftermaths of the First World War were unimaginable; around 9 million deaths, 750000 were British. The use of science in the 4 years warfare made the military more powerful. No longer were weapons made to kill individuals, yet to wipe out whole armies and civilians (Murray, and Tew 27). The Great War had its effects, either directly or indirectly. The families of the lost soldiers had to live with those scars for their whole lives, and the injured ones changed any belief of patriotic ideas after seeing what horrors could be brought by the warfare. "Despite the gains of some of the civilians population, the overwhelming legacy of the war was one of trauma and loss" (28). The impact of the Great War brought back a sense of trauma that took place twenty years before the First World War, the deaths of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. The modernist's reaction towards war was nearly of the same taste of loss and crisis of the successive deaths of Queen Victoria and Edward VII (8).

Between the first and the second world wars, people became more individualistic. No longer was 'Truth' something to be formed and agreed upon collectively, yet each has his own truth. Richard Rorty, one of those who adopted modern beliefs, clarifies that one have to give up on his idea that there are some unchangeable facts that should be preserved for eternity (xvii). The contemporary intellect found himself in two minds: either he stick to what is

traditional and old that represent the legacy of his forbears, or he seeks his own truth and reality though the new ways of thinking were brought by the Enlightenment and transformed by modernism. This diversity can be counted for the philosophers who succeeded in planting their seeds to be grown later, and bloom even after their death. Rorty's idea, for instance, is to make Truth, as people used to see it, not as one absolute truth, yet it differs according to each individual, and that what is called relativism. Yet, this way of thinking, led only to more chaos, because modernist belief was marked by the 'rupture from the past', the contemporary individual started to distance himself from all the historical contexts that once shaped what was known as 'absolute' (Murray, and Tew 3). The modernist's reference became his reason and emotions what made him regard traditions as 'naïve' including religion. The paradox that the contemporary subject found himself in is that he couldn't replace what he rejected, the thing that led to uncertainty rather than truth.

I.4. Situating Tolkien Within a Postmodern Fantasy Tradition

The postmodern era began in the mid-twentieth century, the time when the Enlightenment peaked (Griesinger 4). As Ralph. C. Wood defines it, "postmodernism as a rejection of the chief modernist assumption: the notion that, from some allegedly neutral stance, we can deliberately distance ourselves from any particular past or received tradition that we now regard as naïve" (Wood 335). The Enlightenment took 'absolutes' and never replaced them, and instead of bringing the society into one collective truth, the Enlightenment led the contemporary individual to more questions what prevented him from forming neither the collective nor the subjective truth. Modernism responded to the Enlightenment by breaking from all what seemed to be traditional to form the first pillars of individualism, and by this, a shift to the postmodern era became clear. As shifting towards postmodernism, the contemporary way of thinking started to take uncertainty as last decision, and people started

distracting themselves only by finding truths to keep them satisfied before their death, because they were convinced that with all the scientific advancement, they cannot escape the marked end.

I.4.1. Beyond Good and Evil: Tolkien's Insights

J. R. R. Tolkien, as one of the intellectuals who witnessed the massive change in his society, remained true to the traditional aspects. He produced his piece of writing *The Lord of the Rings* while reason and science betrayed the contemporary subject. He introduced the contemporary reader to an unexpected fantastical tale that represented Tolkien's ideologies and beliefs which were completely different from those of chaos and destruction.

Tolkien believed, according to Wood, that languages and cultures cannot be parted from time and place, and where people live effects the way they speak and act. He also confirmed that Tolkien believed that people's first literary product are their myths and folklore (341). The creation of the myth of *The Lord of the Rings* with all the races and their histories to which they are bonded, languages which they cherish, and homelands to which they long and fight for, proves that those like Tolkien, who did not absorb the modernist beliefs, were the ones whom the society needed the most. *The Lord of the Rings* "captured the imagination and influenced the thinking of several million readers" (Carpenter 111). This fantastical piece of art, written by a philologist that left a huge influence was written differently from any realistic work. The readers were in need of such literature to provide them with an alternative Truth, or reality. Tolkien didn't hesitate to put his own ideologies and insights into his text.

It is true that Tolkien influenced his surroundings, yet the surroundings had their influence on him as well. Tolkien rejected what have been said by many modernists that there should be a separation between the past and the present as used his text as a tool to shed the

light on the fact that the connection with the past is always evident, and it is something that the readers cannot break from.

The legacy of the Enlightenment endured till the emergence of postmodernism. Metanarratives was the literary aspect of the Enlightenment that remained in the modernist time, yet it was rejected by postmodernism. Metanarratives of the Enlightenment was all about industrialization, science and human nature, as modernist literature grew more difficult by time. The modernist intellects of the twentieth century rejected the straightforward and rational flow of the story such as T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce (Powell 16). The chaos of the world was reflected in the writings of such intellectuals. As their writings became more complicated, their audiences became narrower. Then, postmodern era came to reject the kind of narratives that praised science and undermined religion and metaphysics. In this sense Jean François Lyotard perceived and summarized the skeptic view of postmodernism as showing "Incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv).

People became aware that the system brought by the Enlightenment was not satisfactory. "So when people no longer believe in the metanarratives that legitimized science, science is then forced to legitimize itself" (Powell 31). The truths they sought after they abandoned the old one was only a mist. Science which was supposed to be a means of development and progress, caused only destructive warfare and constant fear. Even religion was questioned by this false system, as people had nothing to believe in and became empty vessels without any faith.

The theme that may be the most dominant in the novel is the everlasting struggle between good and evil,. Good and evil are not only fictional concepts to be read in novels, yet they are an embodiment of the world. This concept was studied for centuries before. For Aristotle, only tragedy that represent people just who we are unlike comedy and epic, and *The*

lord of the Rings is considered both epic and tragedy because it include people who are better than we are and others who are just like us, weak to the temptations of the evil desires (Basham, and Bronson 97).

The perspective of evil for which Tolkien provides a whole new perspective by alluding to evil in the very beginning of the novel which is the title ‘The Lord of the Rings’. Evil in TLOR is manifested in many aspects, persons like Sauron, things like The One Ring, and places like Mordor. Some scholars believe like that Tolkien’s view of evil reflect the Manichean idea that states that there two balanced powers in the world; of good and of evil, and the struggle between the two is on a constant state for eternity¹. Tolkien’s representation of evil did not come from the void, for he experienced the division of the world into two sides during the world wars. Each side regards himself as the righteous one. Tolkien lived in a country that took part in the world wars, and the enemy must be regarded as evil. In the story, the good and evil are embodied as in the real world and in us, and this view did not change for hundreds of years.

I.5. Conclusion

The wave of the Enlightenment endured for so many years that the impact dug deep into the twentieth century. It took decades to heal the subject from the false ideas brought by this false system. The impact did not stop by rejecting the Victorian values, yet it went further to cause many fundamental elements to fall apart. As a reaction for the Enlightenment, modernism was an extension of the Enlightenment with some differences. This can be seen in the styles of writing. Those who wrote before and after the Great War, for instance, didn’t have the same vision of war; so many writers changed their perspectives when they saw the horrors of war.

¹In their book *The Lord of the Rings and philosophy*, Basham, and Bronson believe that it can be true by giving the example of the struggle between one and his self when putting the Ring of power, the bearer either can not remove it nor can he keep it on.

Tolkien was taken as an example of those who rejected the break from the past as being traditional aspect of one's identity. Tolkien chose fantasy as genre for his work TLOR and made his touch clearly be seen by so many writers and readers for so many years after his death. Along with many authors of that time though having different views, Tolkien used literature to act against the beliefs that made the modernist subject shallow and empty. The Modernist's beliefs were backed by science to replace the fallen absolutes, yet not for a long time. True that science flourished at that time, yet it was not enough to fill the huge gap left by the absent absolutes. Intellectuals fought back using pieces of writing that gave back the subject what he lost under the banner of modernism. This reaction against modernism was somewhat successful that led them to another phase in the history, postmodernism. Postmodernism was characterized by questioning the principles of modernism, and its rationality, the thing that Tolkien reinforced and helped to be solid and valid through his contemporaries.

Chapter two

Tolkien and Fantastical Reality

II.1 Introduction:

For so long, literature was and still considered a bridge to connect, not only the past with the present, yet even distinct ideas and merge them together in order to create a whole new one that is different from the original ones. Fantasy, as a cornerstone of literature, contains a variety of styles of writing that makes every piece of writing completely distinct from any other work, for every author has his own imagination what makes him unique and different. It is true that a fantastical tale is set in a completely other world that is different from ours, and it contains magic and other elements that cannot be understood if set in our world governed by reality. Yet, there is more reality in a fantastical tale than it seems. It is through fantasy that the author can explain and even put his personal insights yet subtly. The familiar world, as we perceive it, cannot offer what the human mind desires, the thing that is provided by fantasy literature.

Considering this fact, this Chapter aims at highlighting why fantasy is such an important element of literature, especially after the publication of the successful groundbreaking text *The Lord of the Rings*, being the discussed book in this thesis, because the author, Tolkien, the father of fantasy as he is named, lived in that era when reason had been the dominant mode of literature, and Tolkien helped creating this solid ground for the fantastical novel to be considered as important as any other genre, and even studied and analyzed academically.

First of all, I will provide a brief biography about the author in order to know why he chose fantasy as a genre for his book, and what influence his life had brought upon his writing style, and on the making of his book as a whole. Second, because Tolkien is the concerned author, I will discuss one of his most important essays that he had written *On Fairy-Stories* that gives his insights, and definitions about fantasy as a concept and as a genre. Then, I will differentiate between concepts of literature that many make mistakes using them. Yet the main discussion will be about whether reality can be explained through fantasy or not, in relation to the novel at hand

II.2. From Childhood to Adulthood: Tolkien Between Two Eras

If we could imagine literature of the twentieth century as a sky at night, works such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* would be the stars of that night. The modernist narratives excluded those who wrote about creatures that we know do not exist, and heroes whom we know cannot be found, and condemned them to be escaping from reality (Shippy 5). Yet, this is not the case, for when nowadays literary historians look back to the century; they will notice such pieces of writing, just like a sky full of stars.

II.2.1. Early Years

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on January 03 1892, and he was christened one month later in Bloemfield Cathedral, South Africa (Carpenter 16). He lived with his widowed mother in a small village called Sarehole, England. The three years that young Ronald spent there were of a great impact on his perception of the world. From a small village surrounded

with farms and vast green plains, Ronald, aged eight, moved along with his family to a near district to city center to be a pupil of King Edward's School, Birmingham, from 1900 till 1911 (Rosebury 134 – 135). Tolkien noticed what the industrial revolution had brought upon the world, the thing that stuck in his mind since childhood. One of the main reasons that he rejected all aspects of modernity is this image that he formed about the noisy, and polluted industrialized world. His passion toward languages started in a very early age, in 1912, and by the year 1915, this passions grew into emotional, and impressive responses to languages, especially old English (138). As a result of this fascination to languages, he became a philologist¹ what affected his writings and, of course, the novel discussed. A further aspect that let a huge influence on Tolkien is his experience in the Great War. From July to October 1916, Tolkien served as a signaling officer. This experience helped a great deal in the creation of many important elements of *The Lord of the Rings*, and other writings of his (139-140).

The time that Tolkien grew during and the time he lived as an adult were totally different. He spent his childhood within the nature and total quietness. Furthermore, even when he was introduced to the new world of the dominant machines, he fancied the old-fashioned small world that he had known as a child, and reminded him of the Victorian yesteryears. As a child Tolkien dwelled in a peaceful world, to find himself later enlisted in the bloodiest war in the history. The early years of Tolkien were not so pleasant, for he was in two eras at the same time; his nostalgia for the old times traveled with him through the newness brought by modernism, and even the horrors of the Great War couldn't make him forget what his heart longed for. Tolkien's creation of Middle-Earth did not come from the void, for the incidents of his life are present in every chapter of the story of the one Ring. Tolkien wrote his book full of

¹ A philologist is the one who studies languages and their development through time.

traditions, history, and all what modernism had rejected, reminding the world that there is a strong tie with traditions that will remain no matter what changes brought upon the world.

II.2.2. Tolkien's Modernist Perspective

According to many critics, Tolkien is not a modernist writer at all even though he lived in the twentieth century (Nayden 9). This assumption, maybe, was made because Tolkien's use of the medieval literary writing style in a time when "Make it New" was the brand. Furthermore, his image that stuck into his audience's imagination; that image of the pipe in his mouth, is what will first come to one's mind when mentioning his name. Middle-Earth is what he is remembered for, and not modern Britain, and that is a good reason why he was not considered a modernist writer. Carpenter describes him in his book *Tolkien: A biography*, the only authorized biography about Tolkien, "He resembles the Archetypal Oxford Don" (10). Tolkien was a professor at the University of Oxford, and this image spread about him is what he wanted exactly, for the word he chose to describe him when he was asked is "Philologist" (Shippy 7).

Shippy considers it unfair to call Tolkien an escapist, for he was involved in the most traumatic event in the century, the Great War, the thing that is depicted in his book, *The Lord of the Rings* (5). Even though Shippy defends Tolkien when he was considered an escapist, he was one of those who excluded him from being a modernist. Tolkien's reputation was not that spread back in the twenties, yet it had risen remarkably lately, especially after the production of the film version of *The Lord of the Rings* directed by Peter Jackson (Rosebury 1). In Tolkien's defense, even though he denies including his personal life into his writings, "the nearby farms, and the mills by the riverside . . . its dell with blackberries was an obvious model-to-be for certain aspects of Hobiton and The Shire" (134) is a scene that is nearly identical to where Tolkien lived the first years of his life. The affection of Tolkien for the old times is obvious in his piece of art *The Lord of the Rings*, the thing that he was excluded for from being

a modernist, not to mention the choice of fantasy as a genre for his book, where there must be tradition, myth and history while modernists reject all of them. Tolkien's view of escaping is totally different from what he was accused for. His theory of the fantastical tale was about three steps: Recovery, Escape, and Consolation, the thing that will be discussed later in this chapter.

II.3. Tolkien's On Fairy-Stories

The Writings of Tolkien on his created world Middle-Earth are more than the work itself. *On Fairy-Stories* is an essay written by Tolkien where he provides the reader with his definition of fairy stories which, according to him, this term can be used equivalently to the term fantasy (Havirova 37). He asserts that Fairy stories do not contain simple plots for young readers only, yet it is also included in high fantasy of significant literary works. Even though Tolkien speaks of fantasy in his essay, he speaks so little of his works.

II.3.1. Tolkien's Definition of Fantasy

From the title of the essay *On Fairy-Stories*, one could think that a fairy story must contain fairies, the thing that Tolkien denies completely. According to him, a faery is a created world where magical creatures dwell. *The Lord of the Rings* is set in Middle-Earth, a whole new world, where the reader meets the elements of the fantastic in the details of this world such as: elves, dwarves, and orcs. Tolkien's perception of the created world is to create what he calls the Secondary Belief:

That state of mind had been called willing suspension of disbelief. But this does seem to me a good description of what happens. What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of

that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. (Tolkien, OFS12)

Tolkien states here that a good story-teller must create another fact and makes it evident into the reader's mind. If the author, according to Tolkien, fails to put the Secondary Belief into the reader's mind, he would definitely fail to make him enter his Secondary World, the world created for the Story.

Tolkien's definition did not come from emptiness, for he came up with it from his own experience creating his imaginary world Middle-Earth (Havirova 38). Indeed, The world of Middle-Earth is full of details that no reader would miss while discovering the plot, for he provides the Secondary Belief in a form of histories of the setting and characters for whom he created distinct languages. The historical aspect of the land Middle-Earth gives depth and credibility to the plot and the story as a whole which is noticed in the songs, and myths of the land told by the characters themselves.

Even though fantasy existed long before Tolkien, and other authors produced many remarkable pieces of writing that cannot be neglected, it was Tolkien's Middle-Earth that stood strong to be remembered till now, it was Tolkien, who wrote his epic that touched the hearts of millions, he was the one who put the cornerstones of modern fantasy through his Hobbits and Nazgul, and traveled with our minds from the Misty Mountains to the Mines of Moria. Tolkien redefined fantasy in his own terms and gave it a new flavor that came to literally dominate the world of fantasy, so that to be named the "Tolkienesque fantasy"¹.

II.3.2. Fairy Story's role:

¹ George. R. R. Martin Talking about how Tolkien defined fantasy in the introduction of Haber Karen's *Meditation on Middle-Earth*.

Tolkien's perception of fantasy is that the elements of the fantastic starts by ordinary objects and the author put them into new or different context, both concrete and abstract elements such as honor, loyalty, and friendship. The author is the one who puts the raw materials of the real world (primary world) into fantastical ones. Tolkien mentions in his essay three main roles of fantasy (fairy story): Recovery, Escape and Consolation. The writer of fantasy must consider them while crafting his story.

The first role of Tolkien's theory fantastic story is recovery. "The main purpose of this aspect is 'regaining a clear view' of the primary world" (Havirova 41). Tolkien asserts that fantasy is giving birth to new vision out of the real world. The writer takes what is known to the reader and gives it a whole new perspective. One example on that is Tolkien's shift of the reader's view of the Ring, in *The Lord of the Rings*, from an ordinary ring to the Ring of power, a small piece of metal that can control the world. This aspect according to Tolkien is Recovery.

The second feature is Escape, and By escape, Tolkien means that the reader's need for escaping is not because the lack of loyalty, yet the reader escapes the harsh reality. He asserts that many critics use the term Escapist interchangeably with the term Deserter, and that's not entirely true. For him, many heroes of the stories escape today to fight tomorrow, and they are the heroes, so what can be said about the ordinary man who only wants to close his eyes from seeing the horrors caused by another ordinary man, but has more power and dominance over him?

The Third feature that a fairy story should include is Consolation. After the author had grasped the reader's mind and attention, he became a part of the story. Many unpleasant events that form the plot affect the reader, and to make consolation for him is very important. The Consolation in the story, for Tolkien, is happy ending (Havirova 42). Thus, unsurprisingly,

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* fits all what Tolkien thinks about the requirements of good fantastic tale, or what he calls a Fairy-Story.

II.4. Fantasy or Reality

Fantasy literature provides the reader with fictional universes through which he relates to his own experiences and insights of the world known to him, and the writer himself puts his own in his piece of writing while he includes elements of the fantastic that do not exist in the world we know. It is up to the reader to make the relation between what is real and what is fantastic, even though these two terms seem paradoxical.

II.4.1. Contemporary Realistic Fiction and Modern Fantasy

The two terms are widely used in the field of literature, and many use them interchangeably while they are different. The realistic fiction genre contains stories of animals, and adventurous tales full of mysteries, and sometimes humor. Furthermore, the events in the realistic fiction are restricted by the margins of possibility, and based on actual events that can happen in the real world with slight differences. The use of the fancy words of literature and the style of telling the story is what gives the story its charm (Sharron, Mcelmeel 50).

On the other hand, modern fantasy is taking the realistic fiction into a higher level. Authors of fantasy add the supernatural element to their characters, and make the reader easily wander the realm of the fantastic. Unlike the realistic fiction, modern fantasy personifies the animals, and gives the real people supernatural experiences and the plot must be based on the magical powers which are used to solve the problems in the story (50). That means that the events and the settings cannot take place in our world of reality. Fantasy is a big title under

which non-realistic literature would be placed. Contemporary, or modern fantasy, is a subgenre of fantasy that dates back to the ancient times as it is mentioned earlier. The difference is that who created what we recognize today as fantasy looked to it as reality, and should be kept as heritage (folklore). Nowadays, even though fantasy is characterized by the break from reality, authors lure their readers to different perspectives of viewing the world of the real. They create hypothetical situations as a platform for the reader to connect his own perception of reality with the situations provided.

Reality is totally different from fantasy, for it can be a representation of the everyday life situation. Modernists' perception of reality was different of any other before it. They consider reality as being relative and not stable for all. Thus, in literature, we find that realism is the true companion to the real life, for it represents what is obvious and puts the reader in real situations which he himself could have experienced before, unlike fantasy that deconstructs the real, and makes new reality governed by its laws. All these characteristics are summarized in one concept, that is, verisimilitude.

II.4.2. Mythmaking in fantasy literature

A piece of fantastic literature must include myth as a central theme. In most cases, myth is an extension of the folklore of a particular culture, and it is easier for the reader to relate the literary work to a background that is already known to him. "These elements can be as simple as a recognizable plot structure or the use of idioms and sayings from our world by characters of the secondary world" (Anglaskor 76). Myth and folklore are important elements in the fantastic piece of writing, because they make the unfamiliar world of fantasy easy to understand to the reader. From the definition of reality mentioned before, the folklore and myths of a particular culture, even though they contain the element of the supernatural, they are reality to this culture, and the author includes them in the fantastic work as realistic factors.

Another view given by Tolkien about creating the myth is that when a writer produces his piece of writing, it is highly recommended that he creates the otherworld (78). His Middle-Earth is the best example, for he remained writing about his world for nearly half of his life, “Middle-Earth is the most comprehensible case of fictional world-building by a single author in the history of literature” (78). Tolkien wrote about *The Lord of the Rings* more than he did about any other of his works; the appendices that Tolkien provided about it are so numerous and in volumes, where he answers all the questions that may come to any reader's mind about places, characters, and even the myths of his created world. He even provided a detailed family tree for each character especially the hobbits, the thing that gave depth to the story as a whole, and it is considered a high fantasy that is not based on any other myth as far as the world Middle-Earth is concerned. Tolkien’s world became a cornerstone of fantasy and mythmaking, and many writers took it as a reference to their works.

There are other aspects that the fantasy writer may want to consider while creating his work. One aspect is contextualizing reality into fantasy. The author has to provide the reader with alternative laws of this imagined world. He can achieve this by gradually introducing the reader to new beliefs and make them situated in his mind by moving from a realistic context to the world of fantasy. For instance, in Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, being the first part of the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*, he starts narrating by ordinary person announcing that there is a birthday party, and it is until you know of this person that you would understand that this person is not an ordinary human, and later on there will be talk about elves and dragons. Another aspect, which is mastery for Tolkien, is language. It is the tool by which the author gives more credibility to the world he builds. Being a philologist, Tolkien created new languages for elves, dwarves, and orcs. By doing that, he gives identity to the characters, because language is a part of identity. Furthermore, A solid and well-presented setting is necessary for the reader to visualize easily the landscape of the story (79). Tolkien’s world is

the best example when it comes to the description of the setting. When describing Mordor, the land of evil, Tolkien gives the reader the impression that it is the land of literal darkness. A description of Mordor is one example of Tolkien mastery of this field.

It passed the ruined bridges of Osgiliath, the grinning gates of Minas Morgul and the haunted mountains, and it looked upon Gorgoroth, the valley of terror in the land of Mordor. Darkness lay there under the sun. Fire glowed amid the smoke. Mount Doom was burning, and great a great reek rising. Then, at last his gaze was help: wall upon wall, battlement upon battlement, black immeasurably strong, mountain of iron, gate of steel. (Tolkien, FR 523)

The strong description that Tolkien provides for the reader makes it easy for him to imagine the landscape and the details of the setting. This is one strong aspect of mythmaking.

Fantasy and reality are two sides of the same coin. Realistic fiction can provide the reader with a description of reality, yet the reader would not be fully satisfied. While realism is the extensive representation of reality, fantasy fuels the reader's imagination and fills the desire of the adventurous life by conveying complex contexts and ideas that would be difficult to do so otherwise. Furthermore, fantasy provides a whole different perspective on the realistic world. Writers such as J. R. R. Tolkien are the ones who caused fantasy to be celebrated till nowadays, because of their unique style of introducing the realm of fantasy.

Reading for pleasure, or reading academically, either way, the text will have its influence on the reader. The authors of high fantasy tend to use the myths of the world as we perceive it real, in order to give depth to their works. And to facilitate the understanding of the messages conveyed in the pieces of writing. Literature has indeed helped us to form a kind of understanding of reality whether using myth or realistic fiction.

II.5. Conclusion

Some believe that to look into the author's biography is insignificant, and not crucial to the literary analysis. Even though Tolkien himself did not approve of a biography, and believed that the investigation into the author's personal life is not relevant while approaching his work (Carpenter 6), Tolkien's life has a considerable influence on his writings. His own laws that he put in his essay *On fairy Story* about fantasy shaped the modern fantasy and gave it a whole new perspective, along with his marvelous pieces of writing such as *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* which was phenomenal to write a successful fantasy in the age of modernism.

One of Tolkien's beliefs, considering the fact that he took his experience from his own writings, is that fantasy, or fairy-story, begins from reality. In mythmaking, it is preferable for the author to take elements of the real world and give them the supernatural aspect gradually in a way that puts this new product into the reader's mind as beliefs. This way of forming the myth makes the reader eager to know more and more about this world, just like Tolkien did when writing *The Lord of the Rings*; he provided a solid history for his secondary world that remained, as Tolkien wanted, a history.

Even though there is no fully accepted definition of fantasy, and this thesis provides so little about the variety of definitions, Tolkien's definition is the closest to define fantasy accurately. His work *The Lord of the Rings*, according to Tolkien's view about fantasy, is not a representation of reality, for it would be a realistic work, yet a new scope from which the reader can have an idea about reality of the time when the book was written. As if Tolkien is comparing the Victorian era and its values with the modern time that brought destruction and despair as everyone was seeking Power, the thing that will be discussed later on.

Chapter Three

Fantastical Reality as Reflected in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

III.1. Introduction

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie. (Tolkien, FR v)

The Lord of the Rings tells the story of a hobbit (little people) from the Shire called Frodo Baggins who received a magical ring from his uncle to discover later that this ring is not ordinary, and it must be destroyed in the only place where it was forged by an evil lord called Sauron. The journey begins with the most unlikely creatures, two young hobbits, and seven other companions: a wizard, a dwarf, an elf, and two men, the fellowship of the ring, to Mount-Doom, Sauron's stronghold of Mordor. The multi-volume novel takes place in a fictional world called Middle-Earth where many races dwell, and Tolkien gives an

unprecedented detailed description of his world, and most vivid that the reader could sense the power of such narrative that grabs him into the depth of the story and characters.

To say whether or not a fantastical novel is successful is somewhat harder than to do so for a realistic one. The authors of fantasy tend to use the elements of the supernatural in their pieces of writing, and it can be hard to explain their implicit insights that they put there. Furthermore, many critics can be in an opposing situation while analyzing the same text. However, Tolkien's text left no room for debate even though there are some slight differences in approaching the text. "The irony inherent in works of fantasy is that they are meant to convey truth and wisdom" (O'Day 13).

The purpose of this chapter is to shed the light on how Tolkien, through his high fantastical tale, could represent and depict the real world successfully using the elements of fantasy in a whole newly created world of make-believe.

III.2. Tolkien's Concept of Good and Evil

The everlasting struggle between good and evil can be the central theme of any novel. The good side is represented by good characters that must be seen and known and the same thing goes for the evil side. Many are the new things that Tolkien introduced in his text, such as inventing new languages and the unique representation of the ancient creatures of the Greek mythology, yet the representation of evil was tremendous. One can observe that once he/she knows who is Tolkien speaking of in the title: '*The Lord of the Rings*', for nothing is more important than the thing to put in the very beginning, the thing that will be remembered for centuries to come, and this thing, for Tolkien, is evil. Evil in Tolkien's text is Sauron, and it is unknown for the reader for it does not take a physical form, and he seems irresistible, yet his presence and how it is depicted in the novel can be felt from the first moment it is mentioned.

III.2.1. Reading Religion in TLOR

The most representative image of good and evil can be found in religion, the core element that defies reason in many aspects. Yet, by the coming of the Enlightenment and its newness, all traditions were dropped to be replaced by science and reason, and religion was to be cast out of the social picture as well, especially in the 1920s. Tolkien, as one of those who rejected the modernist belief that was an extension of the Enlightenment, remained true to the

old traditions, and of course religion. His text, thus, holds within its lines numerous religious insights of Tolkien's though implicitly. Tolkien's TLOR "Deals with questions fundamental and limitless, the nature of good and evil, of man, and of God"(O'Day 13). The Christian belief of good and evil is evident in their holy books. They believe that the world is divided into two forces: the good and the evil. And their view of evil is that of immense and irresistible, yet they believe that even with that great power of evil good will prevail at the end.

It is true that Tolkien denies that his greatest work is allegorical; "it is neither allegorical nor Topical" (Tolkien, FR xxv). Yet, some critics believe that even though the author himself made these flat denials, the world's most important events of the first half of the twentieth century had their impact on him. It is clear from the style of writing, the dimension that the characters take, and how they are represented that many religious aspects were present while writing TLOR (Drout 6). Tolkien's Christianity, and many historical events tempt the reader to interpret Tolkien's text as he/she relates to a personal experience or prior knowledge. For instance, it is very tempting for any Christian reader of the trilogy to assume that the falling of Gandalf into the pits of Moria and his return wearing white cloak otherwise than the death-resurrection motif¹. Other fundamental characters can only be seen as a retelling of the history. It is very hard to assume Saruman otherwise than Judas or Technology, Sauron not being the depiction of Satan or Hitler, and Gandalf not being the watchful eye of the divine (7). The description of many places such as The shire and Izengard puts Tolkien in a contradictory state. Izengard was described by Tolkien as being the pits from which smoke was rising, and it changed from the beautiful green plains to a wasteland, because of the wrongdoings of Saruman and the misuse of sorcery. This description, very much, refers to the industrial revolution and what brought upon the world, the same image of sorcery and what it brought upon Izengard.

¹In the Christian belief, Jesus brought back to life after he was crucified and buried in the ground.

Tolkien's text is full of providence and divine guidance, and each character has his role to play in the story no matter how small it can be. The depiction of evil, as it is mentioned earlier, is immense and powerful, yet when the shape of the world is remade by the weakest creatures of Middle-Earth, hobbits who "*love peace and quiet, and good tilled earth*" (Tolkien, FR 1), here one understands that there must be a divine care that watch over the land; one that is resembled in Gandalf, the wizard, and the other is resembled in the Christian belief that good will prevail no matter how strong evil can be. Tolkien declared that there are no allegorical insights in his text, yet so many of his own ideologies are so evident in it.

In the Christian belief there are seven sins that constitute all the bad behaviors, they are called: the seven deadly sins. Drout asserts that these seven deadly sins are present in Tolkien's TLOR as the races of Middle-Earth, and they are embodied as follows: Dwarves for Greed, Men for Pride, Elves for Envy, Ents for Sloth (laziness), Hobbits for Gluttony, Orcs for Anger, and Warmtongue for Lechery. Drout's assumption draws a clear picture that Tolkien's Christianity, though not explicitly clear, is always present as the plot develops.

III.2.2. Evil in Tolkien's Text

The world of Middle-Earth is divided into two sides: the evil and the good. The good side is represented by Man and his allies, and the evil side is represented by Sauron, the shapeless Dark Lord of Mordor, the land of evil. Tolkien refers to Sauron as "huge shape of shadow" like in an ancient Christian belief that states that evil has no existence unless good disappears, that is why good is represented by light (Drout 8). Not only Sauron who represents evil, for there are two other characters: Smeagol, and the Ring of power. All of these three elements of evil shape the story and each one have a fundamental role to play.

The Ring of power, the one Ring, or the master Ring, are names to call the ring that the story is all about. The ring is the link between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and

,ironically, it was until very lately of crafting the story that Tolkien knew what the Ring really was (Chance 79). The one Ring was forged by Sauron in Mount-Doom to control the other rings that he gave to the races of Middle-Earth: three for the elves, seven for the dwarves, and nine for mankind. The Ring came to Frodo's possession by chance, yet Gandalf states that Frodo was meant to have the ring¹. Even though, Sauron was the one who forged it and put in it all his cruelty and will to dominate, "a string of coincidences bring the Ring to the unlikeliest creature, a hobbit, to the most peaceful place, the Shire" (Haber 47). A strong message to be grasped from this is that life goes on as it meant by the divine power of God no matter how the human being prepares or plans.

So many are the evil doings of Man back in the twenties and the thirties, and the most malevolent thing ever created was A-bomb (Drout 43). Some critics refer to the One Ring to be a symbolic image of the A-bomb, for whoever wields it possesses a great power, a power to dominate and destroy the world. This assumption is not precise, for the Ring is not just the symbol of evil, it is Evil itself, and has a will of its own, the will of Sauron. Lady Galadriel, the wisest of the elves, tells Frodo of the destructive power of the ring, and how it changes according to the possessor, in addition, the ring is made of gold. Considering these two facts, one could understand that the Ring is a symbol of wealth. Tolkien lived during an age when corruption dug deep into the souls of the politicians of his society. Money and politics are what brought the world to its tragic peek. Warlords are the ones who benefitted the most from the massive number of casualties, and they were corrupt by the tempting charm of wealth, and the dark desire of power. Thus, Tolkien represents the wealth in one little piece of gold, and the politicians are the characters of the story, for the Ring effects each one differently.

¹Gandalf spoke to Frodo in the first book of trilogy "*The fellowship of the Ring*" about the true nature of the ring for the first time.

Another fundamental character of the evil side, while I can say that though evil at first, he was the cause of the destruction of the Ring, is Gollum (Smeagol before the Ring transformed him). 'Smeagol' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'smeagan', and it means to investigate, or to examine (Chance 83). Tolkien's use of his profession in the University, which is philology, is what gives more depth to the text. Smeagol is described in the book as "the most inquisitive and curious minded" (Tolkien, FR 69), and because of these characteristics, Smeagol kills his own friend for the Ring after he saw it in his hands, and consequently, the Ring devours him, consumes him, and lure him into total darkness. Tolkien's use of philology is a rejection of the one of many aspects of modernism, arbitrariness of language. Ferdinand de Saussure and other linguists had their contribution into the modernist's rupture from the traditional ways of thinking. They assumed that language is arbitrary, and there is no logical relationship between the signified and the signifier, the two elements that constitute the sign and therefore language. Tolkien remained on his own traditional beliefs, and was not affected by the shift of the modernist thought from the old one to a new one. The wave of modernism touched all aspects of life, even language so that linguists like De Saussure viewed language as a scientific element, and because they voted for the world to be modernized, they considered language as chaotic and disordered as a way of celebrating the modernist thought.

As a reaction to all of the modernist rationality, Tolkien produced his text defying the society that he deemed wrong. Language and history are two fundamental elements of the individual's identity and modernism considered them old and dealt with them wrongly. In his text TLOR, Tolkien shows that history is as significant as it should be preserved and not neglected. Good and evil, the two forces that shape the world, are well depicted in his piece of art as it resembles Tolkien's own experience in the era when modernism was the dominant theme of the twentieth century.

III.3. History in Tolkien Text

There is no doubt that *The Lord of the Rings* was not that successful for the unique narrative style, and the new representation of mythical creatures only, it was because of fact that it is a retelling of history, and historical events that Tolkien himself witnessed back in the first half of the Century. Indeed, an event such as the Great War would absolutely be read in Tolkien's work, even if he denies including it. "It is very tempting to equate the waste of Mordor with the First World War battlefield" (Drout 7). History which the modernists consider traditional, and there should be a rupture from it, was the Truth that Tolkien glorifies in his text. By creating a historical novel on two levels: the level in which it is a representation of the events of the real life, and on the level on which it has its own histories for the races and setting, Tolkien gives a solid notion of his insights which is that history is a part of one's identity.

III.3.1. Mordor: Where the Shadows Lie

To the Land of Mordor must the journey of the Ring take the two young hobbits, Frodo and Sam. Tolkien's emphasis on the description of the Landscape gives significance to the locations of the land, and, of course, Mordor is one of the important places in Middle-Earth, and his vivid description made him 'the master of landscape'. As it is mentioned earlier, Tolkien fought in the Great War, and the deep scare left in him was greater than not to include it in his most important text . At the gates of Mordor, Tolkien gives a description of that place. A description so vivid that the reader could visualize that the idea that Tolkien is speaking of is a battlefield filled with dead bodies.

Frodo looked round in horror. Dreadful as the Dead Marshes had been, and the arid moors of the Noman-lands, more loathsome far was the country that the crawling day now slowly unveiled to his shrinking eyes.... Here nothing lived, not even the leprous

growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds..., as if the mountains had vomited the filth of their entrails upon the lands about. High mounds of crushed and powdered rock, great cones of earth fire-blasted and poison-stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows. (Tolkien, TT 825)

The time that Tolkien spent as an officer was traumatic, and that can be seen as an aspect of the Lord of the Rings. The reason behind Tolkien's emotional reaction towards the war was because he lost three of his school friends in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, and the work that he started writing before his forty-sixth birthday was already written in his memory when he was a young man (Rosebury 140). The scene that Tolkien drew of the corpses on the ground filled with reek is what the subconscious would bring up to the surface of thinking once he triggers the process of thinking, and such a deep wound of the loss of the friends would definitely be related to Tolkien's work, as it is manifested in the scene of the dead corpses in the gates of Mordor. The picture of the land of evil was given just before Frodo and Sam reached Mordor, because it is until later that the author gives a clear and precise description of Mordor in the novel.

Mordor means "Dark Land", and it is situated in the Eastern part of Middle-Earth. No one can have an access to it unless he is an inhabitant of this land (Hakkarainen 2). Taking this into consideration, Hakkarainen, who takes Mordor a representation of the Orient (countries of the east), believes that the distinction while describing the West that resembles good, and the East that represents evil in Middle-Earth represents perfectly our world back then. The east of Middle-Earth is very much the countries that were colonized, mostly Africa, while the west is to be Europe (4). The Image of the primitive backward people of Africa stuck into the mindset of the world from the early contact between the Europeans and the Africans. Tolkien's text

deals with the concept with the primitive land inhabited by primitive people, the Orcs. Furthermore, Frodo and Sam has no map for the land of Mordor, yet they must continue their Journey, as it was the case during the process of colonizing Africa, for there were no existing maps to guide those who went to walk that 'dark continent' (2).

Even though Hakkarainen's view of Mordor is strongly backed by the historical events as they seem to be identical, yet Tolkien's insights about Mordor was otherwise. The political position that Tolkien gives Mordor is far greater than Africa was, and the power of the Mordor is far greater than the rest of Middle-Earth, the thing that Hakkarainen didn't take into consideration while making similarities between Mordor and Africa. If we are to read Mordor in Tolkien's text, it could only be read within the context of the twentieth century, because it is the era in which Tolkien lived, and even more significant events happened in the century such as the Great War.

Historically speaking, the First World War ended by the loss of Germany, and its allies. Tolkien has a good reason to take Mordor as Germany in both the First and the Second World Wars. Mordor fought against the allied forces of Elves and Men before the Ring comes to Frodo in the Shire, and Mordor was defeated. In *The Lord of the Rings* Mordor once again wants to rule over Middle-Earth, and once again it was defeated by the free people of Middle-Earth. These events of fantasy in the story of the Ring are a fantastical representation of the real world, and it was successful. The Second World War was marked by the coming back of Germany, more powerful, and possesses more advanced weapons because of the technological innovations. Germany was led by Hitler, who killed an unimaginable number of people in Europe, and it represented Evil in that time. An evil ruler governing a powerful country situated in the eastern part of Britain is a typical Image of the evil Sauron who rules a powerful army in the land of Mordor situated in the eastern part of Middle-Earth.

It is really challenging to depict reality in a literary work using realistic fiction. What is more challenging is to represent reality using fantasy literature and succeed immeasurably, the thing that Tolkien achieved in his groundbreaking text *The Lord of the Ring*, especially in that era when the majority of the intellects rejected the imagination and the traditions.

III.3.2. Treason of Isengard

Isengard is situated in the center of Middle-Earth, between the East and the West, between the Evil side, and the Good side. Saruman is the lord of Isengard after he took possession of that tower in the early years of the Third Age. Saruman was a friend of the good side, yet he turned against them and joined the forces of evil. The position of Isengard in the maps of the novel is symbolic, as if Tolkien is giving the idea that this tower is suspicious, it is neither with the good side, nor it is with the evil side. And that's the sign of treason. Gandalf tells Frodo of his meeting with his assumed friend Saruman, "Gandalf the gray caught like a fly in a spider's treacherous web" Treason was a common feature of the world wars, and so many are the individuals who chose to reject their homeland and "follow the path of treason" (Weale 11). Because treason was an unforgivable thing, and because its penalty was death, Tolkien, who lost so many dear friends in the war, would definitely include treason as a central theme in his novel.

Saruman, a great and powerful wizard of Middle-Earth, and the wisest of them all, chooses to defy the fact that his allies need such a powerful wizard in their side against the massive strength of Sauron who came back even stronger. It was not Minas Tirith that was at the gates of Mordor, it was not Rohan which suffered the most, yet it was Isengard that was in the heart of Middle-Earth which committed treason. Tolkien positioned Isengard in the middle of the land to convey that the traitors cannot be predicted, and their intentions vary from one to another, yet the most common motif was one of ambition and pride, the two characteristics

that resemble the lord of Isengard citadel, Saruman. The whole plot of the *Lord of the Rings* is to destroy the One Ring, and the task is accomplished by the weakest dwellers of Middle-Earth, hobbits, along with the great contribution of the others. Tolkien, mentions many times that it is not only great power that can defeat evil, it is also the good will and even small deeds of ordinary people are what keeps darkness from thriving. Even by Saruman's betrayal, evil was defeated. In his book *Hitler's Englishmen*, Adrian Weal says:

When Hitler controlled a European empire stretching from the Atlantic to the borders of the Soviet Union, Britain stood alone and resisted his might. It should be a source of great national pride that this picture is largely true. (11)

The British celebrate their success in defeating the Germany even with the betrayals of their own kin.

Tolkien implements many themes in his text, and most of them are known to him as he experienced them in his life. While Tolkien was still alive, treason was an unforgivable act, and its penalty was death, and it was until very recently that the penalty for treason was abolished, in 1998 (Weale 10), and that justifies why Tolkien assured that Saruman dies after his failure even with a mighty army at his disposal.

III.4. Conclusion

It would take years to read Tolkien's work *The Lord of the Rings* and study it academically, and it would take much more time to read the appendices of the book, because after finishing *The Lord of the Rings*, one will remain with unanswered questions about many characters, places, and much more other elements mentioned in the story. And, there where he/she will recognize that this long story of the One Ring was only the beginning of even a longer journey into Tolkien's Middle-Earth. Tolkien's success in describing the real world through an imaginary, deep and rich Secondary World was because of his unique style of narration, and making up his own beliefs to put them into the reader's mind in a way that does not force him to abandon his own beliefs about the real world.

No doubt that the style of writing is what makes such book so interesting, yet it is the allegorical aspects within it that makes the reader so eager to know more about this world as he relates to his personal experience of prior knowledge. The world wars, for instance, were of a great influence on Tolkien's view of the world, and of course, war is a central, if not the most important, theme of the story. As any reader would notice, the wars in story include all the races of Middle-Earth, even the peaceful ones like the hobbits, and that feature in this epic is nothing but another proof that such mastery of representing the world requires a lot more than one writer, yet it is accomplished by one single writer whose legendary work endured long after his death, and most likely will never die.

Another Aspect of Tolkien's remarkable uniqueness is his passion for Languages, especially English language. The created languages for Middle-Earth are the crown jewel of this epic. No one is better than Tolkien when it comes to the history of language, and he puts

his knowledge about this matter into practice in his text, or he created his text to create a place for the language to be, either way, his mastery is well recognized in such an amazingly crafted world.

General Conclusion

The era in which Tolkien, and other authors, existed was the most crucial in the history. They witnessed the events that changed the world and the individual's mindset unlike any before such as the Industrial Revolution, the world wars and the philosophical movements like Modernism. Tolkien was amongst those who stood firm against the waves that struck the shores of their world, and his reaction was a piece of writing that is remembered and studied till nowadays, *The Lord of the Rings*

Tolkien's contribution to literature in general and to fantasy in specific is immeasurable. His mastery of creating and representing the myth is well known worldwide as many modern writers were influenced by his work *The Lord of the Rings*. He radically changed the perception of fantasy from a genre that deals with minor subjects that do not accede the entertaining field to a cornerstone of literature. Therefore, most of today's fantasy authors followed his path as they were influenced by him and the contribution that he provided for literature makes it hard to assume his work to be a mere piece of writing to entertain the reader only

Throughout reading Tolkien's works especially *The Lord of the Rings*; one could notice that Tolkien is alluding to many aspects of the real world, even though he declared quite the opposite. Through demonstrating the struggle between good and evil the thing that is everlasting for eternity as it is mentioned in the religious resources, realistic aspects such as the historical events are well embedded in the story as they reflect Tolkien's vision of the real world back then.

Either consciously or unconsciously, Tolkien crated a world in his novel *The Lord of the Rings* that took the genre of fantasy into a whole new level, and it is the tale, though

fantastical, that depicted the world successfully in its most crucial moments of history. Tolkien 'the author of the century' and father of fantasy is a man who devoted his life to create a world where the reader can find the elements that construct the individual's identity; history, religion, traditions, and language. By doing so, he did not only defy the modernist claim about fantasy and the traditional aspects, but he went further and proved them wrong.

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