

Re-enchanting Nature: Mythic and Medieval Environmentalism
in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium

By

Dylan McCollum

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in English

Middle Tennessee State University

April, 2023

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Martha Hixon, Chair

Dr. Rhonda McDaniel

Dedicated to my mother.

Thank you for supporting me, believing in me, and tolerating me as I wrote this.

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine the ways in which J.R.R. Tolkien uses the literary theory of enchantment, as described in “On Fairy Stories,” in order to dramatize environmental destruction and the relationship between humanity and nature. Inspired by Patrick Curry’s work placing Tolkien’s use of enchantment within Max Weber’s theory of disenchantment, I seek to highlight the way enchantment is connected to environmentalism and disenchantment with industrialism, commodification, and ecological destruction. Following the work of Jefferey Jerome Cohen, who proposes medieval literature and philosophy as a source of inspiration for stories that inspire enchantment and environmentalism, I draw a direct line between Tolkien’s environmentalist stories and the medieval traditions, myths, and folklore that inspired his mythopoetic fantasy. I then propose that Tolkien uses fantastic actions within his stories as a way to re-enchant both his characters and his readers, allowing them to see nature as something with inherent value.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1: Building a Tower.....	8
Chapter 2: Enchantment.....	31
Chapter 3: Disenchantment.....	49
Chapter 4: Re-Enchantment.....	68
Conclusion.....	88
Works Cited.....	91

Introduction

J.R.R. Tolkien's mythopoetic fantasy is filled with nature that is beautiful and ravaged. *The Silmarillion* describes landscapes as they shift from pristine creations into war-torn kingdoms; *The Hobbit's* Wilderland contains soaring mountains, flower-filled meadows, and dark forests that lie between Bilbo and the dragon-scarred fields of Dale; and *The Lord of the Rings* contrasts the rich green fields of The Shire and Rohan against the fiery wastelands of Isengard and Mordor. Far from just set dressing, these environments are living reflections of their inhabitants' relationship with nature, which is itself a reflection of their morality. To live beside nature as an ally, protecting and caring for it, is unquestionably good in Middle-earth, while destroying nature for personal gain is the greatest evil. It is a deceptively simple morality that is complicated by the fact that the green spaces appear to be shrinking as the civilizations of Middle-earth rise and fall, each cutting into forests and digging into the earth for wealth and war. This steady decline reveals a growing distance between nature and the mortal races that, if allowed to continue, threatens all life.

This thesis proposes that the decline of nature in Middle-earth mirrors the threat of climate change in our own world. Inspired by Patrick Curry's work placing Tolkien's use of enchantment in "On Fairy Stories" within Max Weber's theory of disenchantment, which proposes that the modern world has become disenchanted (therefore losing a sense of morality) with the rise of rationalism and an over-reliance on science, I argue that Tolkien uses fantastic actions within his stories as a way to re-enchant his characters, allowing them to see nature as something with inherent value. These stories also prompt

readers to re-examine their own relationship with nature by using fantasy to remind us that nature is alive and holds an inherent right to life.

Chapter one discusses the problems of addressing climate change in narratives and explains how the language of enchantment can be used to represent humanity's relationship with nature. Furthermore, by following Jeffery Jerome Cohen's claim that medieval literature and philosophy may serve as sources of inspiration for stories that inspire enchantment and environmentalism, I suggest that the medieval myths, folklore, and literature that inspired Tolkien's writing are also foundational to the way his stories explore environmental concerns, primarily through using the idea of the "fallen world." I then suggest that Tolkien's academic arguments concerning the power of fantasy literature suggest that fantasy allows us to look backwards into mythic-history in order to consider the world before and during the fall.

Chapter two examines the idea of enchanted characters within Middle-earth as characters who existed before the fall or those who have managed to resist falling. These characters display a close relationship with nature through their ability to listen to and speak with the environment around them through a connection to the divine music used to create the world. This ability to communicate with nature is connected to the ability to care for the world, as well as the ability to communicate nature's needs to the disenchanted. These enchanted characters thus serve as catalysts for environmental action with Tolkien's works.

Chapter three presents a close reading of the falls of Melkor and Fëanor in order to display the connection between disenchantment, commodification, industrialism, and environmental destruction. Tolkien's language of Art and the Machine, used to describe

the difference between divinely inspired sub-creation and evil magic, is placed within Boethian philosophy to argue that commodification and industrialism are born out of misguided good intentions and desires. These misguided desires lead to destruction and corruption, as evil is not capable of creation or healing.

The final chapter argues that encounters with the enchanted allow characters who have been corrupted by disenchantment to see the world anew. The act of re-enchantment thus motivates Tolkien's characters to ally themselves with nature against the forces of disenchantment. This theory is also employed to explain the difference between Merry and Pippin's reactions to the Old Forest and Fangorn in order to counter critiques of Tolkien's environmentalism.

Tolkien's mythopoetic fantasy does not lend itself well to reduction. It is a complex tapestry woven with such skill that its intricacies often disappear when readers are lost within the narrative. One wishes to follow the elves, hobbits, dwarves, and men on their adventures to see how things turn out in the end, and to be lost within their world. Tolkien referred to fantasy's allure as Enchantment, "the elvish craft" that pulls us into a secondary world ("On Fairy Stories" 143). To focus too much on one thread in this tapestry threatens to break the spell of Enchantment. On the other hand, singling out certain patterns throughout the work allows us to better appreciate the depth, allure, and morals within the story. Tolkien's environmentalism is one such thread, and this thesis seeks to follow this thread throughout Middle-earth in order to examine how these "fairy stories," *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, may inspire environmental awareness in both its characters and its readers.

Chapter 1: Building a Tower

On the day after the battle on Pelennor fields, Gandalf gathers the leaders of Gondor and Rohan for a council concerning their next move. The united forces were only just able to repel Mordor's attack, and a full-on assault on the enemy seems impossible. Gandalf admits this by quoting Denethor, the fallen steward of Gondor, who fell to despair after seeing the full force of Sauron in the Palantir. "You may triumph on the fields of the Pelennor for a day," claims Denethor, "but against the Power that has now arisen there is no victory" (*The Lord of the Rings* 878). Gandalf quickly follows this with mild reassurance: "I do not bid you despair, as he did, but to ponder the truth in these words" (878). Gandalf admits that the threat is real, that Denethor was not entirely delusional, and that the forces of good are facing insurmountable odds. Nevertheless, the wizard councils the gathered kings, princes, and captains to act.

Gandalf warns that if they do not act now, Sauron will likely find the hobbits and the Ring, and "[i]f he regains it, your valour is vain, and his victory will be swift and complete: so complete that none can foresee the end of it while this world lasts" (878). This is no mere personal or political matter. This possible defeat is not a question of shame, loss of power, or the shifting of borders on a map, but rather a change that may never be undone. Sauron's victory will forever change the world for the worse, and its form is heralded in the descriptions of his current domain.

Mordor is described first in the repeated line of the Ring poem as the land "where the Shadows lie" (50). That poetic description is fleshed out when the hobbits are scrambling across the corrupted fields surrounding Mount Doom. The narrator states that "Mordor was a dying land, but it was not yet dead . . . here things still grew, harsh,

twisted, bitter, struggling for life,” most notably the “great writhing, tangled brambles” with “long stabbing thorns” and “hooked barbs that rent like knives” as well as “shriveled leaves of a past year . . . grating and rattling in the sad airs” adorned with “maggot-ridden buds” (921). In the distance, the hobbits see the apparent source of this rot: “they saw Mount Doom, its feet founded in ashen ruin, its huge cone rising to a great high, where its reeking head was swathed in cloud” (922). Sauron’s kingdom, thrust beneath the constant shadow of Mount Doom’s eruption, has become hostile to life. According to Ann Martinez, this rot is because the “pursuit of power—unrestrained, all-encompassing power over all the peoples of Middle-earth—prompts a disregard for the environment and requires the exploitation of natural resources” (34). Sauron threatens the rest of the world with this same hostility and exploitation as exists in the land currently under his control.

When the war between Gondor and Mordor first escalates before the siege of Minas Tirith, Sauron stokes the fires of Mt. Doom and “a great cloud streamed slowly westward from the Black Land, devouring light, borne upon a wind of war” (*The Lord of the Rings* 807). The dark cloud reaches west across Gondor to hover over the riders of Rohan, where Merry is fooled into believing that the sun has not risen, to which the man waking him replies that it “will not rise today . . . [n]or ever again, one would think under this cloud” (800). Under that cloud, Merry perceives that the “very air seemed brown, and all things about were black and grey and shadowless; there was a great stillness,” as “[o]verhead there hung a heavy roof, somber and featureless, and light seemed rather to be failing than growing” (800). One is left to imagine that, with enough time, the dark cloud of Doom would corrupt the rest of Middle-earth as it has corrupted Mordor, turning

the green fields of Rohan and the Shire, the forests of Fangorn and Lothlorien, and the lush river lands of Gondor into the same grey and dying lands as Mordor.

Sauron, among many things, is an ecological threat to Middle-earth—a threat to life of all kinds, not only in his ability to slaughter and enslave, but also in his ability to render the world unlivable. This is the key to Gandalf’s concerns in his council after Pelinnor. If allowed, Sauron would corrupt the world so thoroughly that his work could not be undone until the world ends. Gandalf ruminates on this possibility as he comes to his conclusion:

Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary. Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule. (*The Lord of the Rings* 878)

While this passage may be read purely as extended metaphor, describing Sauron as a particularly nasty weed that must be uprooted to save the field (i.e., the world), it is also a rather literal description of the matter at hand: Sauron is a threat to all fields, current and future, as his rule guarantees a great withering. In order to guarantee the existence of future life, which requires clean earth, uncorrupted soil to till, and pure water to drink, the great source of corruption must be uprooted. The last line, concerning the weather of future generations, can similarly be read both literally and as a metaphor. Gandalf is claiming that we cannot get hung up on the possible existence of future evils. The defeat of Sauron will not lead to the end of all future evildoers. Evil will continue to exist, but we cannot fret over that, as we cannot do anything about it. On the literal end of things, Gandalf simply states the truth: we cannot rule the weather, neither future weather nor the weather of our own time. But, placed alongside the previous remark about Sauron, he

suggests that we can influence it. The reign of Sauron guarantees dark and decay, a pattern of weather that leads to death and despair. The defeat of Sauron will not guarantee that weather will never again disrupt the lives of Middle-earth, but it promises that weather will continue in its natural variety, and therefore life will be able to continue.

In this speech, Gandalf brings an oft-forgotten victim into the war room by grounding his council in concern for the natural world. Of course, Gandalf is also concerned for the generations to come, but these two things are connected: future generations cannot flourish without a healthy world. Gandalf therefore highlights the connection between humankind and nature, as well as the suggestion that mankind can be responsible for the health of the world.

In *The Natural Contract*, philosopher of science Michel Serres argues that the humanity has been ignoring their impact on the world for far too long. Serres uses Francisco de Goya's *Fight with Cudgels* as a metaphor for humanity's relationship with nature: the two men are so absorbed in their fighting that they do not realize the quicksand that has risen to swallow their knees, as "the belligerents don't notice the abyss they're rushing into; from outside, however, we see it clearly" (1). According to Serres, it is all too easy for anyone caught up in a conflict, a struggle for life and death, a war, to forget the world around them, but the outside observer, free from any threat, can easily see the quicksand made violent by the combatants' movements. And the outward observer is more likely to be concerned, as the fighting is likely to disrupt nature in such a way that the war will affect them. Battlelines are laid out across real land, and a bombshell destroying a forest rids the world of more trees—not much, on its own, but a

tally that quickly adds up across wars, and when added to the day-to-day of peacetime destruction.

The problem is that the outside observer is rarely given the chance to consider nature's role within narratives. In most stories, according to Serres, "the adversaries most often fight to the death in an abstract space, where they struggle alone without marsh or river" because "[o]ur culture abhors the world" (3). Humanity therefore disconnects itself and its actions from nature. The conflict becomes entirely human, and so it becomes easy to believe that the only important thing at stake are the humans. It becomes easier to argue for weapons of ecological destruction like napalm, nukes, or chemicals such as Agent Orange, because nature becomes an abstract barrier between sides. To wipe out the forest is to give one side a better chance of victory, and it is unlikely that they would stop to consider the consequences.

Eco-critic Rob Nixon describes this collateral damage as "slow violence," meaning "the illusive violence of delayed effects," which takes place gradually over the course of years, if not decades and centuries, making it difficult to "turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention" (3). It is difficult to draw attention to the small catastrophes, as they often cause little harm on their own, or they may only affect a small area. A patch of forest destroyed, a single river polluted, a field rendered unsafe by unexploded cluster bombs and mines—each of these only harms those living closest to them, for a while. They are likely the utmost importance to the direct victims, but what of the delayed victims? How can we convince the distant observer that each small wound

adds up and contributes to a larger scale climate destruction that will eventually harm their own lives, or the lives of the generations to come?

Nixon proposes that authors who hope to inspire change need to “plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time” by “devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse these symbols with dramatic urgency” (10). The symbol of a dark cloud, for example: a shadow that reaches out from a dying land, a land blasted by destruction; a harbinger of war and its fallout. At first the cloud only darkens the sky of the nearby kingdom. It serves as both a psychological weapon, to dishearten the people it overshadows, but also as a boon to the attacker, protecting them from the damaging sun. But there is a greater threat made clear through connection to its source: if allowed to linger, this cloud would spread and wreak havoc on every ecosystem it darkens.

Through symbols such as the dark cloud of Mordor, J.R.R. Tolkien’s fantasy stories serve as a shining example of an eco-conscious narrative by embodying the worst of modernity, of rampant industrialism and war, in each of the villains within all of his stories. Tolkien not only highlights the destructive forces of slow violence and general apathy towards nature, but he also provides several stories pondering the development of this apathy. The long, gentle slide into humanity’s disconnection from nature is displayed as an independent force within the history of Middle-earth, influenced and leveraged by the forces of evil but sometimes seen within the forces of good. It is an internal force that must be overcome, but which often leads those among the forces of good into nihilism and despair. Sauron may exist as a symbol of great evil in Middle-earth, but he alone cannot be blamed for Boromir’s pride, Theoden’s fall, Denethor’s madness, the greed of

dwarves, humanity's building distrust of the elves, Rohan's separation from the Ents, nor the hobbits' destruction of the Old Forest.

Furthermore, Sauron is no more the source of evil than he is the only evil in Middle-earth. Gandalf can warn the council with surety that new evils will rise after Sauron because Sauron was not the first, nor was he initially evil. The *Silmarillion* states that Sauron "[i]n his beginning was of the Maiar of Aulë" (The *Silmarillion* 23). Sauron was originally a kind of angelic being (the same as Gandalf and Saruman) who served the Valar (the divine beings who act as a kind of pagan pantheon in Middle-earth, though they serve the monotheistic god, Eru). Sauron was specifically a servant of Aulë, whose domain includes the earth and all things in it (ores and gemstones), as well as craftwork of those things. Sauron falls into the service of Melkor (later called Morgoth), the most direct rival of his former master. Due to the similarity between Aulë and Melkor, "there was long strife between them, in which Melkor ever marred or undid the works of Aulë, and Aulë grew weary in repairing the tumults and disorders of Melkor" (18). The great difference between the two lies in the way they treat their own work, for "the delight and pride of Aulë is in the deed of making, and in the thing made, and neither in possession nor in his own mastery; wherefore he gives and hoards not, and is free from care, passing ever on to some new work" (7-8). Melkor, on the other hand, "coveted Arda," the world, "and all that was in it, desiring the kingship of Manwë," leader of the Valar, "and dominion over the realms of his peers" (22). Melkor is therefore a kind of dark mirror to Aulë: they possess the same powers, yet one creates only for the joy of creation, while the other creates in order to control.

Aulë also differs from Melkor in his companionship, as he is married to Yavanna, the Vala of nature and, more specifically, trees. The relationship between these two Valar reveals a great deal about Aulë's thoughts concerning nature. After he confesses his creation of the dwarves to her, Yavanna tells Aulë that "thy children will have little love for the things of my love," and that "[m]any a tree shall feel the bite of their iron without pity," to which Aulë responds "[t]hat shall also be true of the Children of Iluvatar," meaning the mortal races, "for they will eat and they will build. And though the things of thy realm have worth in themselves, and would have worth if no Children were to come, yet Eru will give them dominion, and they shall use all that they find in Arda: though not, by the purpose of Eru, without respect or without gratitude" (*The Silmarillion* 39). Aulë may value mining and smithing—as we see well in the works of his children, the dwarves—but he also values nature, and he hopes that this value may be carried forward in the mortal races, so that they may use nature's bounty with respect. Aulë thus represents a healthy relationship between civilization (represented by the desire to create) and nature, while Melkor and his servants display a blatant disregard for nature.

The blasted domain of Mordor and the works of Sauron and Melkor show no shared love of nature. Instead, Melkor and Sauron revel in corruption and destruction, as already seen in Sauron's cloud, the description of Mordor, and Melkor's desire to destroy his rival's work. Sauron's betrayal of Aulë can then be read as a shift from the belief in using nature with respect in order to create for the joy of creation into an opposing view that abuses nature in order to create for the sake of domination. These two views on nature seem to reveal Tolkien's own perception of humanity's relationship with nature:

that humanity contains the capacity to create and live alongside nature and the potential to destroy nature for the sake of power.

In 1962, Tolkien sent a copy of his short story “Leaf by Niggle” to Jane Neave, his aunt, along with a letter that provided some biographical context behind the story—a surprising addition from Tolkien who usually, even in this very letter, bemoaned “modern critics” who “value a piece of ‘literature’ solely in so far as it reveals the author” (*Letters* 321). As a kind of explanation for Niggle’s interest in trees, Tolkien recalls a memory from 1944 when he lived close to “a great tree—a huge poplar with vast limbs—visible through my window even as I lay in bed” and “a foolish neighbor” who, fearing that the tree may damage her property, “was agitating to have it felled” (321). In describing the tree, he states that “I loved it, and I was anxious about it,” and that while “[e]very tree has its enemy, few have an advocate” (321). A similar sentiment appears in Tolkien’s letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* written in 1972, in which he claims that “[i]n all my works I take the part of the trees as against their enemies,” namely “the destruction, torture and murder of trees perpetrated by private individuals and minor official bodies” (*Letters* 419).

In both of these letters, Tolkien is frustrated with the human desire to cut down a tree. In the first, he perceives a kind of hatred for trees in most humans, stating that “[t]oo often the hate is irrational, a fear of anything large and alive, and not easily tamed or destroyed, though it may clothe itself in pseudo-rational terms” (321). In the latter, he writes that “[t]he savage sound of the electric saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing” (419). Both of these statements depict an image of humanity (again, Tolkien seems to believe that most of us are anti-tree) that is self-centered and looking

for just about any excuse to kill a tree—in other words, a picture of humanity in line with Melkor and Sauron. Opposite of these tree-murderers are the trees themselves and their few advocates, those who follow the path of Aulë and Yavanna.

For a tree to have an advocate, there must be the belief that a tree has a desire to live, or that the life of a tree has inherent worth. By believing in and advocating for a tree's right to life, Tolkien can be seen as supporting the core tenets of "deep ecology," defined by eco-critic Greg Garrard as a stance that "demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature" (24). This very belief comes across clearly in Aulë's response to Yavanna: "the things of thy realm [nature] have worth in themselves" (*The Silmarillion* 39). There are many approaches to supporting deep ecology, but the majority of them identify "the dualistic separation of humans from nature promoted by Western philosophy and culture as the origin of environmental crisis" and demand some kind of "return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere" (Garrard 24). Therefore, deep ecology opposes anthropocentrism, or the "system of beliefs and practices that favors humans over other organisms" (206). As the above anecdotes from his letters indicate, Tolkien's deep ecological stance is in opposition to his anthropocentric neighbor, who believes the security of her property is worth more than the life of a tree. In other words, the tree is a threat to the neighbor's dominion, and they desire the power to fell it as a Morgoth-ian act of domination over the world. Unfortunately, this is a mindset that Tolkien finds widespread among his fellow countrymen, and it is one that he claims in his response to the *Daily Telegraph* to oppose in all of his works. Therefore, following this claim, it could be argued that Tolkien's

fantasy works are deeply concerned with trees, with nature, and with opposing anthropocentrism.

Naturally, this leads Tolkien's works to reflect on humanity's turn from nature. If we were meant to exist as Aulë suggests, with respect for nature, then why has the world grown so comfortable with deforestation, with climate destruction, and with industrialization? Tolkien apologist Patrick Curry sees a connection between Tolkien's environmentalism and his socio-literary theories concerning enchantment. Curry argues that though the greater part of Tolkien's mythos was written before the official development of "deep ecology" in the 1960s and 1970s, "Tolkien's prescient ecologism . . . anticipates, in many ways, both 'social' and 'deep' ecology" due to the way in which it suggests, as Curry puts it, "that whatever their differences, humans share with other living beings a profound common interest in life, and whatever aids life" (18). Curry further proposes that Tolkien felt that this environmentalism is tied to a deep cultural need for enchantment, as he theorizes in "On Fairy Stories." Curry argues that *The Lord of the Rings* is about an enchanted, pre-modern world under the threat of "the technological and instrumental power embodied in Sauron . . . and the epitome of modernism gone mad" (14). This statement echoes Tolkien's own critiques of the modern world as "an age of 'improved means to deteriorated ends'"; a "Robot Age" filled with products that combine "elaboration and ingenuity of means with ugliness, and (often) with inferiority of result" as well as "progressive things like factories or the machine-guns and bombs that appear to be their most natural and inevitable, dare we say 'inexorable,' products" ("On Fairy Stories" 150-1). If modernism is defined by its guns, bombs, and industry, all of which destroy nature, then, according to Curry, it may only

seem obvious that Tolkien sees promise in the past, and in “ancient myth, with its feeling of a time when the Earth itself was alive” (50).

Instead of recognizing Tolkien’s historic approach as an appeal to conservatism, Curry refers to it as a kind of “emotionally empowering nostalgia,” or a “liberating perception that things might have been different, and therefore could be different now” (15). By reading stories from the past, we may therefore find inspiration for the future—or at least the hope that things have changed before, and so they might change again. Tolkien identifies this as one of the key appeals of enchantment, or the effect of reading fantasy: escapism, or “the escape of the prisoner” from “the noise, stench, ruthlessness, and extravagance of the internal-combustion engine” and from “hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death” by providing “satisfaction and consolation” (“On Fairy Stories” 151). In their escape, an enchanted reader may imagine many things, but he draws special attention to imagining what it is like “to converse with other living things,” a desire that is, according to Tolkien, “as ancient as the Fall” (“On Fairy Stories” 152). Tolkien’s support of escapism and enchantment are therefore not related to surrender, nor to a desire to prevent all change, but rather to see the world as it was before industry, before modernization, or even before the Fall of Man.

In focusing on the conflict between past and present, Curry brings Tolkien’s use of the term “enchantment” into contact with early sociologist Max Weber’s theory of “disenchantment,” which proposes a breaking point in human history when civilizations become disenchanted due to the rise of rationalism and scientism, a monotheistic faith in science marked by “increasing intellectualization and rationalizing” without “an increased general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives” (Weber 139).

According to Weber's essay "Science as a Vocation," the cultural dominance of scientism leads to a world in which "civilized man, placed in the middle of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life'" (140). Quoting Tolstoy, Weber states that "science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: 'what shall we do and how shall we live?' That science does not give an answer to this is indisputable" (143). In contrast, Weber imagines "Abraham, or some peasant of the past," who "died 'old and satiated with life' because he stood in the organic cycle of life" (140), a description strikingly similar to the *Silmarillion's* account of the death of Bëor, one of the first men to encounter the elves, who "lay dead, of no wound or grief, but stricken by age" and "relinquished his life willingly and passed in peace" (*The Silmarillion* 173). In other words, Weber's image of the modern, disenchanting person is surrounded by the benefits of science (though they may not entirely understand them), disconnected from the "organic cycle of life," dissatisfied, and tired. On the other hand, the people of the enchanted past were scientifically ignorant, but satisfied and in sync with the world around them, dying at peace like Bëor.

Alkis Kontos reads further into Weber's proposed image of enchanted people of the past standing within the "organic cycle of life" by theorizing that:

For Weber, the enchanted world not only reaches a certain plateau in self-perception; it can also be spoken of retrospectively, from the perspective of a disenchanting world, as the world of Nature. The enchanted world then is treated by Weber as one in which a symbiosis, an organic unity, is struck between humans and Nature. In an enchanted world, Nature provides a meaningful, stabilizing foundation to existence; it moderates and gives orientation to life activity; it secures existential satisfaction. Mental and psychological anxiety does not prevail. Satiation and, above all, meaning reign supreme. Human existence so

embedded in the bosom of Nature is possible only when and where Nature is imbued with the life of divine spirits. (228)

In this line of thinking, supporting the importance of enchantment, of fantasy and fairy-stories, becomes one and the same with taking “the part of the trees against their enemies,” since Tolkien writes that these stories “open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside of Time itself, maybe” (“On Fairy Stories” 129). By stepping outside of our own time, we are perhaps able to better understand the past, shake off disenchantment, reimagine ourselves within that “cycle of life,” and therefore see worth in the natural world.

In this attempt to reach back into an enchanted past, Verlyn Flieger argues that Tolkien is also working within the philological theories of his colleague and fellow Inklings, Owen Barfield. In *Splintered Light*, Flieger reads Tolkien’s work in the context of Barfield’s Theory of Semantic Unity, which “holds that myth, language, and humanity’s perception of the world are interlocked and inseparable” (*Splintered* 37). Barfield wrote that a majority of the vocabulary in modern language relies on metaphor, but that “once upon a time words could really be the expression on the face of concrete reality” (Barfield 54). Over time, language evolved “[f]rom being mere labels for material objects . . . into magical charms,” or “all that we know today as ‘poetry’” (58). Due to this evolutionary past, Barfield states that language has two natures: one that “marks the differences” between things in order to understand what they are not, and one that “is interested in knowing what things are” (80). This second nature is related to poetry, and poetic thinking led to the creation of myth, which “is intimately bound up with the early history of meaning” (81). Barfield (like Tolkien) rejected popular theories

surrounding the development of myth (such as Max Müller's claim that myth was a "disease of language" or the "naturalistic" idea that myths were merely attempts to logically explain natural occurrences) and instead proposed that myth and the poetic language that created it were inherently tied to mankind's perception of the world.

According to Barfield, myths were not backwards-formed explanations of occurrences, but instead the starting position from which earlier people understood the world in a time when meaning was still "suffused with myth, and Nature all alive in the thinking of man" (Barfield 86). It is a worldview that Barfield admits as being impossible to understand in the modern day due to the dominance of "prose" in modern language and thinking. Barfield claims that "prose comes naturally into being out of the growth of that rational principle which, with its sense-bound abstract thoughts, divorces man's consciousness from the life of Nature" (144). However, true poetry "brings about a change of consciousness" that can "evoke a feeling of the past, when language was more poetic" (149). It is then possible for modern authors to form a connection back to Barfield's theoretical past, when human understanding was still steeped in myth and humanity still understood itself as part of nature.

Flieger uses this theory to explore the importance of light and darkness and its connection to language in Tolkien's fantasy, specifically in relation to the history of the elves in *The Silmarillion*. She writes that Tolkien's "approach is to first restore to words their primal unity of concept," to go back into Barfield's theoretical past when words were tied to concrete things, "and then to set up a progressive fragmentation of both word and precept as these express a changing relationship to the fictive world and a diminishing reflection of its light" (*Splintered* 49). Essentially, Flieger reads the

evolution of elven language in *The Silmarillion* as a story of refracting light—each descendent inherently weaker than the last, though still connected to the root: the word, as spoken by God in the beginning (or, in this case, Ilúvatar’s “Eä!”) (52). This theory, when applied either to real or fictional history, presents a story of a diminishing world in which humanity, alongside the evolution of language, is growing further from the truth, from nature, and from divinity. But, according to Fleiger’s interpretation of Barfield and Tolkien’s implementation of his theory, it is possible to use “fantasy to particularize and make manifest fragments of original truth,” and it is the “task of the poet” to “bridge that separation” that stands between modern, rational people and the poetic, mythic past (47). With this in mind, Tolkien’s fantasy is not only an attempt to resuscitate the past, but an attempt to connect modern readers back to the legendary enchanted worldview itself in order to express (and possibly recover) some fraction of truth about humanity and the world that has been lost to the prosaic, disenchanting, and rational modern world.

Fantasy scholar Brian Attebery argues that this is a key element of all fantasy writing, that “writers use fantasy to reframe myth: to construct new ways of looking at traditional stories and beliefs” (*Stories About Stories* 2-3). Attebery, approaching something similar to Barfield’s arguments (though his argument is not concerned with all of language and poetry, only fantasy), states that we “moderns” (those of us living in a modern, predominantly Western Enlightenment affected world) have lost all touch with mythology, which was once a living, breathing way of viewing the world, and that “fantasy, as a literary form, is a way of reconnecting to traditional myths and the worlds they generate” (*Stories about Stories* 9). By attempting to represent myth to the modern world, Attebery argues that “[f]antasy can be used to weigh the claims of myth against

those of its modern rivals: history and science” (21-22). We may then see Tolkien’s fantasy as a series of mythic claims offered up against those modern rivals.

However the goal is not to displace science and reason. As Tolkien writes, “[Fantasy] certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity”; instead, “creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it” (“On Fairy Stories” 144). Fantasy and enchantment are simply offered up as another way to view the world alongside science, so that we may cross examine our actions with both head and heart. Neither can work very well on its own, a fact that can be seen in modern cries for climate justice that rely heavily on the hard science behind global warming and other forms of human-centric ecological destruction. As Weber notes, we live in a society that can produce such scientific evidence, but most of us cannot truly claim to understand the science. For some, this ignorance is enough to distrust all evidence of climate change.

Additionally, the scientific evidence alone is not enough to claim that these things are necessarily “bad,” or that they should be stopped. The science provides us only with the cold fact that these things are happening, that environments will die, and that people will likely follow, but also that these things will happen in the future, and (for a time) only in certain places. The hard, scientific truth is therefore still not enough. As Curry writes, “‘reason’ alone will never suffice to save what is rare and fair, both human and natural, in this world. Arguments from pure utility have already conceded the central ground to the forces of destruction . . . the things, places, and people we love will be saved for their own sakes or not at all; and that is ultimately a religious valuing” (107).

We must see a tree and believe that it is alive, and that it deserves to live—not just for human desire, either for aesthetics, future lumber, or the air we breathe, but because it, too, is a living thing and therefore deserves to live.

So we return to Rob Nixon's call for a "figurative shape to formless threats" (10). In his desire to shape his mythopoeic world and to give structure to the vague threat of mankind's fall from grace and from nature, Tolkien turned to his studies. Tolkien was, first and foremost, a philologist—a professor and student of language, history, and literature, especially relating to Old and Middle English (though he was also deeply interested in Old Norse, Finnish, and Welsh, among other languages). According to preeminent Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey, "'Philology' is indeed the only proper guide to a view of Middle-earth 'of the sort which its author may be supposed to have desired'" (8). This is because Tolkien's fantasy stories are rooted in language. In a letter to Milton Waldman, one of Tolkien's publishers, Tolkien writes "[b]ehind my stories is now a nexus of languages," some of which he claims to have been developing since childhood: "I have been at it since I could write" (*Letters* 143). The most important and fully realized of these are the various branches of Elvish languages, but the importance of language, and the historic development of languages, is key to every part of Tolkien's legendarium.

Shippey argues that Tolkien's mythopoeic works are not far from the kind of works produced by the philologists who came before him, such as the Grimms' attempts to reconstruct Germanic culture by piecing together folk and fairy tales or Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*. In the introduction to his English translation of the *Kalevala*, Keith Bosley describes Lönnrot's work as "shaping existing material into new wholes," a task

achieved by compiling a collection of oral stories, detecting the themes shared within those stories, and then subtly shifting the language and content of the source poems so that they may be presented as a unified piece” (xxxii-xxxiii). The act creates a literary chimera—something not entirely historic, nor entirely modern.

It is important to recognize that the Grimms and Lönnrot were both working in the 19th century, a time of rising nationalism and nation-forming. The Grimms, especially Jacob with his attempts to reconstruct German’s ancestor language, Gothic, had hoped to unite the German-speaking people of Europe by re-introducing them to Germanic stories. To the north, Lönnrot’s work played a major role in the creation of the modern Finnish state, as it provided a cultural anchor for the Finnish people as they sought to break away from Russian and Swedish control. In a sense, these early philologists were attempting to identify (through collection) and shape (through reconstruction) the characteristics of their countrymen.

In his letter to Waldman, Tolkien seemingly admits to a similar goal—though he states that his “crest has long since fallen,” suggesting that he may have given up on achieving it (*Letters* 144). He writes that he hoped to create “a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story . . . which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country,” a collection which would “possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our ‘air’ (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East), and, while possessing . . . the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic . . . it should be ‘high’, purged of the gross, and fit for the more adult mind of a land long now steeped in poetry” (144-5). In other words,

Tolkien seems to suggest a work very similar to the *Kalevala*, or a piece of writing that unifies “English” poetry and myth—an undertaking that would require monumental amounts of reshaping and rewriting to bring each disparate piece into a unified whole—a task that Tolkien claims to have abandoned by 1951, but perhaps not entirely.

Instead of a mythology built on purely geographical boundaries, Tolkien seemingly found inspiration for ecological change in his academic studies of medieval language and literature. His work may therefore be seen as a kind of tapestry of influential medieval thought, combining elements from both the Christian/Latin traditions and the Northern/Pagan works. Better yet, to use Tolkien’s own metaphor for *Beowulf*, the mythos of Middle-earth is like a new tower built from old stones. In “The Monsters and the Critics,” Tolkien uses otherwise disdained allegory to describe *Beowulf* as such, imagining the author as a man who built such a tower from “an accumulation of old stone, part of an old hall” (7). The author/builder’s friends then knock the tower over, some out of desire to look for “hidden carvings and inscriptions, or to discover whence the man’s distant forefathers had obtained their building material,” others “suspecting a deposit of coal under the soil” (8). Everyone fails to see the author/builder’s purpose for building the tower: “to look out upon the sea” (8). In other words, the tower allowed the builder to glimpse a different place, just as *Beowulf*, itself a combination of Christian and Pagan sentiments and scraps of lost tales, allows the reader to perceive a different world. Tolkien’s own tower of fantasy allows readers to perceive a vision of the medieval world, made distant through time and mixed with a handful of modern sentiments. This vision of medieval thought may not be entirely historically accurate, but that is not the point. Instead, it offers a vague glimpse into a medieval mindset, likely the way in which

Tolkien perceived medieval thought as presented to us in surviving manuscripts, and seeks to use it in order to come to grasp with modern problems.

It is a dangerous thing to speak of “medieval thought” as a singular monolith. For my own purpose, “medieval thought” has nothing to do with the day-to-day beliefs of the average medieval person but rather what C.S. Lewis refers to as the “mental Model of the Universe,” the attempted unification of a “very heterogeneous collection of books; Judaic, Pagan, Platonic, Aristotelian, Social, Primitive Christian, Patristic” (Lewis 11). This is the model of concentric spheres with earth in the center; water, air, and fire above; and aether, the planets, and the stars further out, all set in movement by the Prime Mover. This model is not only concerned with mapping the cosmos, as it also proposes the existence of Fortune, guiding the fortunes of mortals with the spinning of her wheel, allusions to which are “exceptional in their frequency and seriousness” in surviving medieval literature (Lewis 82). It also includes the feminine embodiment of Nature, created by God as a “viceregent” in all things under the moon, with “Her own lawful subjects” who are “stimulated by rebel angels” so that they “disobey her and become ‘unnatural’” (Lewis 39). Here we can see similarity with Tolkien’s Yavanna—if not with all of the Valar—as an agent of God set against the actions of fallen angels, such as Morgoth. This model also includes a belief in astrology, as Lewis writes that even “Orthodox theologians could accept the theory that the planets had an effect on events and on psychology, and, much more, on plants and minerals” (103). While Tolkien is relatively quiet on the topic of planets visible in Middle-earth’s night sky, the role of the stars, and their matron, the Vala Varda, or Elbereth, and the story of Eärendil, the mariner who bears the last Silmaril into the sky as a morning star, suggest that the stars play an

active role in the stories expressed by the joy and comfort of their light to the good and their power against the wicked.

There is much more to the model, of course, and elements of it will be further expounded upon below, but there is one last piece that should be considered now in the context of fantasy, towers, and looking backwards: the basic medieval view of history, according to the model, “which sees divine judgements in all disasters—the beaten side always deserved their beating—or the still more elementary sort which holds that everything is, and always was, going to the dogs” (Lewis 176). This comes from both Christian and Pagan elements, and Tolkien speaks more directly to the latter in *Beowulf* when he describes the world within the poem as “the *eormengrund*, the great earth, ringed with *garsecg*, the shoreless sea, beneath the sky's inaccessible roof; whereon, as in a little circle of light about their halls, men with courage as their stay went forward to that battle with the hostile world and the offspring of the dark which ends for all, even the kings and champions, in defeat” (“The Monsters and the Critics” 18). This sense of guaranteed diminishing and defeat is captured in Galadriel’s history of her relationship with Celeborn: “He has dwelt in the West since the days of dawn, and I have dwelt with him years uncounted; for ere the fall of Nargothrond or Gondolin I passed over the mountains, and together through ages of the world we have fought the long defeat” (*The Lord of the Rings* 356). By naming two of *The Silmarillion*’s greatest fallen kingdoms, Galadriel places herself and the Fellowship within a larger, darker timescale—one in which their quest and the battles to come are not part of a new war, but rather another step in an ancient, losing war.

If history is a record of constant loss, then the act of looking back through time may be seen as an attempt to recover what was lost. Whether it is reaching back to capture Barfield's mythic sense of poetry or to look for Weber's lost enchantment, the act of building the tower subtly suggests that there is a need to look at the sea, to perceive another time and another world, to see how things were done, or how they might have been done, and how they might still be done today. This, ultimately, is one answer to Nixon's call for a "figurative shape" to the threat of ecological violence: to suggest that something went wrong in the past, and, due to this, humanity has separated itself from nature, grown disenchanted, and allowed itself to run rampant. In scaling the tower, Tolkien seems to suggest that we might consider our past in a mythopoeic mirror that mythologizes our history and our relationship with the environment—how we were once united with, how we separated from, and, possibly, how we may re-enchant ourselves and reunite with nature to prevent further catastrophe.

Chapter 2: Enchantment

Tolkien's works only just glimpse Arda's furthest past, when Barfield's sense of poetry dominated Middle-earth's language, a time of deep enchantment and unity between the world and its inhabitants. The most direct examples of this come near the beginning of *The Silmarillion*. There is, of course, the brief moment of cosmic simplicity, when Eru, the monotheistic god of Tolkien's mythos, is alone in the void, followed by the creation of the Valar, which leads to the first cracks: the fall of Melkor. But these are the affairs of divine beings, and these earliest chapters so mythologically ambiguous that it is difficult to bring much out of them that feels related to the discussion at hand. For the purpose of re-outlining the morals at stake: Melkor, the most powerful of the Valar, falls due to a desire for "the Imperishable Flame," the power of creation held only by Eru, "for desire grew hot within him to bring in Being things of his own," and during his seeking in the void he had "begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren" (*The Silmarillion* 4). This original fracturing leads to Melkor's dissonance in the music of creation and to the destruction of his former companions' work as they attempt to form Arda. The Valar "built lands and Melkor destroyed them; valleys they delved and Melkor raised them up; mountains they carved and Melkor threw them down; seas they hollowed and Melkor spilled them; and naught might have peace or come to lasting growth, for as surely as the Valar began a labour so would Melkor undo it or corrupt it" (11). Melkor's frustration with Eru, an angel's impatience with God, leads to the first acts of ecological destruction.

The world is ravaged from the beginning, as it is already scarred with war between the Valar and Melkor when the elves, the first (semi-)mortal race, appear. The

first days of the elves are peaceful: “Long they dwelt in their first home by the water under stars, and they walked the Earth in wonder; and they began to make speech and to give names to all things that they perceived” (*The Silmarillion* 45). The beginning is akin to the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden, naming all things—an act charged with poetry, according to Barfield, since it is the use of language that is primarily “interested in knowing what things are” (80). But the elves only name themselves when they realize that they are different: “Themselves they named the Quendi, signifying those that speak with voices; for as yet they had met no other living things that spoke or sang” (45). Following Melkor’s first defeat, the Valar debate over the fate of the elves and whether they should be brought west to live among them. Aulë suggests that “the Quendi should be left free to walk as they would in Middle-earth, and with their gifts of skill to order all the lands and heal their hurts” (47-9). The two attributes of the elves are again given importance: Aulë directly refers to their power to speak and name, but indirectly mentions the power of their song to heal.

This connection between song and healing is based on the theories of the model, specifically in reference to things such as the “music of the spheres,” described by Boethius as a harmonious sound that can “join the diversities and opposing forces of the four elements” and “gives birth to variety of both seasons and fruits in such a way that it nevertheless imparts one structure to the year” (*Fundamentals* 9). Bradford Lee Eden argues that this belief, alongside the rest of the Classical theories concerning music inherited by the medieval world through Boethius, are present throughout Tolkien’s stories. According to Eden, Boethius breaks music into three parts: “the music of the

universe,” or the aforementioned “music of the spheres,” “human music (vocal),” and “instrumental music” (184).

The “music of the universe” is evident in the creation of Arda, when the Valar sing to Eru, laying out the blueprint for the world to come through the “creative and omnipotent force of music” (Eden 185). This is the music that is the beginning of everything, and it is the same music that the Valar use to afterwards create the world. An echo of this music can still be heard, as “in water there lives yet the echo of the Music of the Ainur” (*The Silmarillion* 7). At the moment of their creation, the elves hear this echo and grow attached to the sound of water. The world is built upon music, and this music resonates through water to the elves, who identify themselves in part through their ability to mimic that sound through singing the music of nature.

The first music is not entirely without discord, since Melkor interferes with the song of creation, but Melkor’s meddling is overcome when Eru creates a new sound which harmonizes with Melkor’s discord (*The Silmarillion* 3-5). Melkor brings destruction through discord, but harmony conquers discord and restores the music of creation. If the elves understand themselves first as speaking and singing creatures, then it is perhaps not too surprising that Aulë believes that they hold the power to heal the world.

Yet the songs of the elves belong to the second class of music, the music of the voice, not the divine power of the music of creation. Nevertheless, Eden argues that “it becomes increasingly apparent as the reader is drawn into *The Silmarillion* that music is the ultimate power in the cosmological history of Middle-earth, largely due to “the relationship between musical song and events in nature” related to the songs of elves—or

more specifically, the songs of Luthien (188). To this point, Eden draws our attention to the first meeting between Beren and Luthien, when her song “released the bonds of winter, and the frozen waters spoke, and flowers sprang from the cold earth” (*The Silmarillion* 193). Though the song is elf-made, and therefore not entirely divine, it seemingly carries an echo of that divine music and the first sound, as it is able to set the seasons in motion.

The power of man-made music, and even more so of harmony, in medieval thinking is displayed in the Middle English poem “Sir Orfeo,” a poem which Tolkien drew inspiration for many aspects of his fantasy. After banishing himself from his own kingdom, Orfeo wanders in the wilderness with little more than his harp. According to Tolkien’s own translation, when Orfeo plays the harp “Through all the wood the sound did thrill, / and all the wild beasts that there are / in joy approached him from afar, / and all the birds that might be found / there perched on bough and bramble round,” yet when Orfeo stops, “no beast or bird would near him bide” (“Orfeo” 178-9). Orfeo later uses his music to win his queen back from the faerie king, a scene in which music’s direct power is perhaps more impressive, but here, in the wild, Orfeo brings peace. From the moment that Orfeo makes music, the world returns to an Edenic state in which humanity and nature reunite. We may therefore see in Aulë’s hope the belief that the elves may achieve a similar outcome: that their music may capture the echo of divine music, the blueprint and foundation of the world, and return everything to an original state of harmony and perfection.

A similar power is also seen in Tolkien’s most enigmatic character: Tom Bombadil. Whatever Bombadil may be, he is a being mostly defined by his songs. They

are his introduction and his main form of communication; they hold the power to bring peace and cast out evil. When the hobbits first hear Bombadil's song, a "long string of nonsense-words (or so they seemed)," they stand "as if enchanted" and the surrounding trees, whipped into an "anger that ran out over the whole Forest" by Frodo and Sam's attempt to set fire to Old Man Willow, returns to a neutral state: "the leaves hung silently again on stiff branches" (*The Lord of the Rings* 118-19). When the hobbits tell Bombadil that their friends are being devoured by an angry tree, he responds "[t]hat can soon be mended. I know the tune for him," suggesting that there is a specific song for dealing with trees, willows, or perhaps even Old Man Willow itself (119).

Whatever the case, this mysterious response tells us that Bombadil has knowledge of the world and how to directly communicate with it. Bombadil knows the divine music, or an echo of it, and can sing the poetry of enchantment. With this power he is able to set nature back aright. After singing to Old Man Willow, Bombadil chastises the tree, smacking it with a stick and *reminding* it: "What be you a-thinking of? You should not be waking. Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep!" (*The Lord of the Rings* 120). Bombadil tells the tree to act as a tree should act; to return to the original pattern of the first song.

Later, Bombadil explains to Frodo why Old Man Willow was driven to violence: "Tom's words laid bare the hearts of trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers," and due to this building resentment, Old Man Willow's "heart was rotten, but his strength was green; and he was cunning, and a master of winds, and his song and thought ran through the woods on both

sides of the river” (129). That trees should think, much less hold grudges, is a departure from the medieval model of thought, which holds that there are “four grades of terrestrial reality: mere existence (as in stones), existence with growth (as in vegetables), existence and growth with sensation (as in beasts), and all these with reason (as in men)” (Lewis 93). While humankind has reason, the ability to think and therefore grow resentful, a tree would only possess a vegetal soul, which only allows for mere existence and growth. But Tolkien’s trees can think, hold a grudge, and enact revenge. Here, Tolkien seemingly departs from the canon traditions of medieval European philosophy and turns towards myth and folklore.

Bombadil’s description of the violence done to trees is reminiscent of Yavanna’s own declaration that “[m]any a tree shall feel the bite of [the dwarves’] iron without pity,” as well as the grievances of Tolkien’s letters quoted earlier regarding the all-encompassing sound of the electric saw (*The Silmarillion* 39). It is therefore a familiar refrain for Tolkien, but it also shares a striking similarity to a passage from the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, in which a tree declares “I was formed for hardship / was put here for evil days— / to be chopped up for stacking / to be hewn down for faggots / to pine away for kiln-wood / to be felled for slash-and-burn” (Lonnot 171-2). The speaking tree lives a difficult life and presents an even more complicated moral quandary. Humanity has long required wood to sustain itself—timber for homes, firewood for cooking, paper for enlightenment. But at what cost? In our own world, we are left to reckon with deforestation on our own terms, and so we have often chosen to believe that trees cannot reason, think, or feel, as suggested by the model. This thinking feeds into anthropocentric narratives, because it suggests that humanity is special on this earth due to the ability to

reason, and therefore grants an easy dominance over the unthinking. By giving a tree the ability to think, we are forced to imagine how we treat them from their perspective: as living beings that are killed for the sake of clearing land and producing goods. But even still, it seems as though most in Middle-earth cannot hear the grumbling of the trees, only the few who know how to speak with them. Those who can still listen and speak to the trees, those few enchanted intermediaries such as Bombadil, have the ability to hear their complaints and share them with those who cannot.

But it seems as though Bombadil is only a power within the boundaries of his domain. Shippey labels him as a “*genius loci*,” a spirit of a place, specifically the Old Forest, who is akin to Sir Gawain’s Green Knight, though in this case a living representative of “the river and willow country of the English midlands” (Shippey 108). If the Green Knight may be understood as a figure steeped in pagan imagery, a bewitched green man who rises from a wild chapel to rattle the Christian and civilized in Camelot, then we may see Bombadil as an equally pagan figure, though a much milder one, here to aid those passing through his land and to act as intermediary between travelers and the trees.

Goldberry, Bombadil’s equally enigmatic wife, tells the hobbits that “He is the Master of wood, water, and hill,” but that the “trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves” (*The Lord of the Rings* 124). Instead of a mastery of domination, the great sin of Melkor, Sauron, and all other evils in Middle-earth, Goldberry seems to suggest that he is a master in means of skill related to his ability to interact with nature. “No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest,” she continues, “wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and

shadow. He has no fear” (124). Justin T. Noetzel suggests that this description “defines Bombadil’s connection to the landscape as if he himself is an animal, but a proud and powerful creature that walks, wades, and leaps without fear of being captured” (171). Bombadil is an animal, he is the forest, he is nature, but he is also a separate thing, a human-shaped being with reason and thought, belonging to both spheres of nature and humanity and therefore obliterating the line that distinguishes the two. He is so deeply in tune with the natural world that he can hear the echo of the music of creation and sing it, like the elves, in order to communicate with all things, bring peace, and dismiss evil.

We see such power again when Bombadil rescues the hobbits from the barrow wights with yet another song: “Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight! / Shivel like the cold mist, like the winds go wailing, / Out into the barren lands far beyond the mountains! / Come never here again! Leave your barrow empty! / Lost and forgotten be, darker than the darkness, / Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended” (*The Lord of the Rings* 142). Bombadil reminds the wights that, as mortal men, “[d]eath is their fate, the gift of Ilúvatar”; humans are meant to die, and their spirits are meant to leave this world to one day “join the Second Music of the Ainur” (*The Silmarillion* 36). Bombadil knows the purposes of all things, perhaps due to his knowledge of the music of creation, and with this knowledge he is able to banish the supernatural, for “at these words there was a cry and part of the inner end of the chamber fell in with a crash. Then there was a long trailing shriek, fading away into an unguessable distance; and after that silence” (*The Lord of the Rings* 142). The state of things is corrected, nature is restored, and the unnatural undead are banished.

This use of song is likely grounded in the medieval model, but it is also reminiscent of Barfield's theory of poetry and the belief that "once upon a time words could really be the expression on the face of concrete reality," devoid of metaphor and related to "a solid, sensible object, or some animal (probably human) activity" (54-55). According to Barfield, language lost this quality in exchange for metaphor. For example, "tree" no longer refers only to the bark-covered thing with limbs and leaves but is infused with all kinds of meaning—a map of descendants (a family tree), an improper course of action (barking up the wrong tree), something that obscures (as one cannot see the forest for the trees). Tolkien supercharges this pre-metaphoric language, combines it with the folkloric idea of "naming" as a way to wield power over something, and expands on it. Knowing the original speech, the divine song, is not only a matter of command but also correction, gifted only to those who are in tune with the natural world. When Bombadil speaks, or sings, his language states how things should be in their realist sense and without metaphor. A "tree" is a *tree*, and so it should behave as such. A "Wight," from Old English *whit*, is a "creature" or a "being" (Bosworth and Toller). A being, in this case a human being, is meant to die, and so the wight dies.

Flieger argues that Tolkien's approach in *The Silmarillion* is "to first restore to words their primal unity of concept and then to set up a progressive fragmentation of both word and percept as these express a changing relationship to the fictive world" (*Splintered* 49). This is most apparent in *The Silmarillion*, in which we see the power of a word ("Eä!") to bring everything into being before language fragments and splits into various elvish, human, and dwarven branches that hold diminishing power, but it is also echoed, like the divine music, through the rest of Tolkien's works, as through Bombadil's

power to use language as a thing that defines nature, and therefore compels nature to act within that original definition. Furthermore, it is used as a kind of shorthand to signal those who are closest to nature, those who are still enchanted and in harmony with the music of the spheres.

Aside from Tom Bombadil, Beorn, the bear-man of *The Hobbit*, is perhaps the clearest example of enchantment. However, Beorn is clearly connected to humanity, as Gandalf tells Bilbo that “[s]ome say that he is a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains that lived there before the giants came. Others say that he is a man descended from the first men . . . I cannot say, though I fancy the last is the true tale” (*The Hobbit* 116). If we trust Gandalf’s judgment, then Beorn is not only a man, but a descendant of the “first men.” The specificity here suggests a closer relation than most, as all humans may descend from the first, but Beorn seemingly shares a deeper, or closer, connection to those primal ancestors.

We are first introduced to Beorn when Gandalf vaguely mentions him in relation to the Carrock—the stone upon which the adventuring party is placed by the eagles.

When questioned about the name, Gandalf says that “He [Beorn] called it the Carrock, because carrock is his word for it. He calls things like that carrocks, and this one is *the* Carrock because it is the only one near his home and he knows it well” (*TH* 115).

Marjorie Burns suggests that this name is “is not an invented term but an Old Welsh and hence Celtic word for rock,” *carrecc* (39). Beorn therefore calls a thing what it is: he names the big rock “rock.” While this may, at first, suggest a kind of unimaginative simplicity, it may instead be the first suggestion of Beorn’s connection to nature, like Bombadil and the elves, through his ability to understand and use the language of nature,

or the echo of the divine music. This is further implied when it is revealed that Beorn can also speak to animals: “as a man he keeps cattle and horses which are nearly as marvelous as himself. They work for him and they talk to him” (116). Most of the characters in Tolkien’s works who possess the ability to speak with animals are somehow divine in nature, like Gandalf or (possibly) Bombadil, or they are elves. Despite his skin-changing abilities, Beorn is a human, one who “who is under no enchantment but his own” (116). In addition to this, he is closely connected to the “first men.” His ability to speak with animals therefore hints at an ability once shared by all humans, though now seemingly lost to all but those who happened to remain enchanted.

In “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien comments on “the desire to converse with other living things. On this desire, as ancient as the Fall, is largely founded the talking of beasts and creatures in fairy-tales, and especially the magic understanding of their speech” (152). According to Tolkien, there is a sense in fairy-tales that humanity has separated ourselves from beasts, and that this separation was “a severance” from which “a strange fate and guilt lies upon us” because “[o]ther creatures are like other realms with which Man has broken off relations, and sees now only from the outside at a distance, being at war with them, or on the terms of an uneasy armistice” (152). This line of thinking suggests a view of human history in which humankind could speak with animals before the Fall, in the Garden, but seemingly due to Original Sin, the decision to act against God, we have lost the language. Yet it even seems as if it may have not been an immediate thing—the “strange fate and guilt” of “breaking off relations” suggests a separate, deliberate decision to declare ourselves separate, to willingly disenchant ourselves and go deaf to the original poetry.

Tolkien provides no specific account of the original Fall of humans in Middle-earth. There is only a vague suggestion in *The Silmarillion*, when Bëor the Old tells Felagund what little he knows of humanity's past: "A darkness lies behind us . . . and we have turned our backs upon it, and we do not desire to return thither even in thought" (163). When the story of the first days of Men is told again in the *Akallabeth*, we are told that they "came into the world in the time of the Shadow of Morgoth, and they fell swiftly under his dominion" and that "they listened to his evil and cunning words, and they worshipped the Darkness and yet feared it" (309). Tolkien's precise choice of words here—that men *fell* under Morgoth's dominion—has the potential to suggest two things: the most direct is that humanity was dominated by Morgoth, but the other is that humankind fell from grace under Morgoth, much like the Fall of Man at the hands of Satan. Whatever may have happened, we are left to wonder how the relationship between Beorn and Bëor may be mapped out. Bëor also exists closely to the "first men," yet he holds no power over enchanted language like the elves who take his people in, nor can he change shape. Could it be, then, that Beorn is something of an atavistic character? One whose lineage and ability suggests a man from the time before the Fall, but who has somehow avoided the larger part of the outcome, evidenced by his deep connection to nature?

In an attempt to better understand Beorn, many scholars have identified several sources of literary inspiration behind the shapeshifter. The most obvious inspiration is Tolkien's beloved *Beowulf*, whose name ("Bee-Wolf") is a kenning for bear, and whose monster-slaying matches Beorn's defeat of the goblin king (Burns 37-8). There is also Bothvar Bjarki, a character from a lost Nordic poem who appears within several

preserved stories as a man who can transform into a bear like Beorn, slay monsters like Beowulf, and heroically turn the tide of a losing battle (Rateliff 300-2). Alternatively, there is a possible Anglicized Celtic-Nordic inspiration from Bertilak de Hautdesert of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, who embodies an isolated Nordic wildness within the English countryside and is also revealed to be a shapeshifter (Burns 34-5). There is even a possible connection to Irish mythology suggested by Justin Noetzel, who identifies Beorn's connection to his surroundings and battle-rage as something similar in nature to the myth of Cúchulainn (169). All of these sources may provide some aspect of Beorn's character, but Marjorie Burns' suggestion that "Beorn's particular form of skin-changing belongs to the Norse berserker tradition more than it does to any form of the feat" is perhaps the most fruitful for this particular discussion (40). It is also a compromise, as it may be argued that Beowulf and Bothvar Bjarki both belong to the berserker tradition as men with temporary bouts of superhuman strength and ability. Aside from this fact, it is the cultural role of the berserker in the saga tradition which perhaps reveals the most about Beorn.

According to Rebecca Merkelback, stories of berserkers in the Icelandic Family Sagas are "not focused on physical Otherness, hybridity, or deformity, but on social disruption" (85). Instead, the berserkers of the Family Sagas are terrifying for the ways they inhibit civilization through disrupting normal lives and nascent economies (92). They are able to harass society due to their inhuman strength, inherited through a direct connection to the mythologic past. This strength is often linked with trolls, as seen in the leading family of berserkers in *Egil's Saga*, who are said to have descended from Hallbjorn Half-troll. What this means, exactly, is hard to say. The term "troll" is difficult

to pin down in the sagas, as the word is describes a wide range of things. Ármann Jakobsson proposes five possible characteristics that may determine whether a character is a troll, but they all revolve around a central idea: that the troll, and therefore the berserker to a lesser extent, is someone or something that is an outsider, a sub-human, or someone who was once considered human, but has abandoned societal norms (32-3). Furthermore, the supernatural powers of trolls and berserkers “do not originate with the power of God,” meaning that they are connected to something pre-Christian; something from the pagan past that the Sagas’ Christian authors claim to chronicle (32). Therefore, the berserker, a human with access to troll-strength, is often a difficult character—a threat lurking in the wild who opposes civilization, a pagan monster who seeks to disrupt Christian life, a human who has been lost to nature and is now part animal.

These fears represent a fear of nature as something that is actively working against civilization, therefore making a fair enemy for ecological war. We have already seen, however, that these destructive impulses are treated as aberrant in Tolkien’s work. Old Man Willow may despise all life that can move and plot a secret revenge, but Tom Bombadil, a pagan-esque being in his own right, is there to remind the tree that these are not the things which trees should concern themselves with. Bombadil does this through the power of his enchanted song, an echo of the divine one that created the world, and so it can be theorized that, in the world of Arda, mankind should not fear nature as long as room is left in the wild for those who are still enchanted. While Bilbo may at first feel somewhat distressed in Beorn’s company, this is likely due to his own fear that Beorn may be something like the berserker of Icelandic legend: a threat to his adventure.

Instead, Beorn is a subversion of the type, as he is not corrupted by nature, but rather pure due to his association with it.

Bilbo's fear of Beorn can be understood within the context of the medieval model, as Boethius, one of the leading architects of the model, writes that "wickedness deservedly imposes subhuman status on those whom it has dislodged from the human condition," so that "you cannot regard as a man one who is disfigured by vices" (*Consolation* 78). Boethius describes the shape of this disfiguration in the context of beasts: "A man who in seizing the possessions of others is consumed by greed is comparable to a wolf. The aggressive and restless man who devotes his tongue to disputes can be considered a dog. The underhand plotter who rejoices in stealthy theft can be likened to young foxes," and so on, as "he who abandons goodness and ceases to be a man . . . is transformed into an animal" (78). Boethius clarifies that this transformation is strictly related to "the quality of their minds," and that evil men do not actually turn into animals (79). Nevertheless, the point remains: if Tolkien's development of Bilbo's worldview is based on the medieval worldview, the appearance of a man who can shift into an animal might lead one to question that man's morality.

Yet Gandalf guarantees Beorn's goodness when Bilbo learns that Beorn has gone off into the mountains and begins to panic: "What shall we do . . . if he leads all the Wargs and the goblins down here? We shall all be caught and killed! I thought you said he was not a friend of theirs," to which Gandalf responds "So I did. And don't be silly!" (130). Gandalf's frustration is likely due to how easy it should be to tell that Beorn has a deep-seated hatred of the goblins who have conquered the Misty Mountains, which

Gandalf supposes to be his original home, as he has heard Beorn “growl in the tongue of bears: ‘The day will come when they will perish and I shall go back!’” (*TH* 116).

The enmity between Beorn and the goblins may also be understood by comparing their descriptions. Beorn cares for animals, but “[h]e does not eat them; neither does he hunt or eat wild animals. He keeps hives and hives of great fierce bees, and lives most on cream and honey” (*TH* 116). Beorn cultivates life, cattle, horses, and bees, as well as gardens of flowers, but despite his animal half, he does not kill and eat them. On the other hand, the narrator tells us that the goblins of the Misty Mountains

. . . make no beautiful things, but they make many clever ones. They can tunnel and mine as well as any but the most skilled dwarves, when they take the trouble, though they are usually untidy and dirty. Hammers, axes, swords, daggers, pickaxes, tongs, and also instruments of torture, they make very well, or get other people to make to their design, prisoners and slaves that have to work till they die for want of air and light. It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them, and also not working with their own hands more than they could help . . . (62)

The goblins are altogether different from Beorn. Whereas his home is made of hand-shaped wood surrounded by carefully tended nature, the goblins prefer machines and murder in their dirty mines. Beorn may use wood to build, but due to his kindness towards animals, we may intuit that he is nonetheless “on the side of the trees,” while the goblins, whom Tolkien blames for the designs of machines, likely with the loathed electric saw in mind, are most definitely set against the trees. In the grand scale of things, Beorn is therefore good, as he stands against The Enemy and its desire to destroy and dominate nature.

Burns theorizes that Beorn may be interpreted as a “good pagan” (32). This, perhaps, best summarizes the shape-shifter, who is seemingly born from a combination of several pagan influences, or stories that find a pagan uneasiness in nature, yet still fights for good through maintaining God’s creation, or Eru’s Arda, the natural world, through the use of his enchantment. If he can be understood as a pagan, then we might consider Shippey’s theory that Tolkien, despite his devout Catholicism, may have believed that pagans who worshipped nature “were not so very bad in doing so. After all, if they had not Christ to worship, there were worse things, many worse things for them to reverence than ‘stocks and stones,’ rocks and trees, ‘merry Middle-earth’ itself” (222). There is a loophole, then, to suggest that this kind of nature-worship indirectly returns to God, or Eru in Middle-earth, as it is the worship and love of his creation.

None better understand that creation than the enchanted, such as the elves, Bombadil, and Beorn. All three are deeply connected with the world through their ability to communicate with it, to hear the original music of creation, to sing and to speak with power, and to cross boundaries between humanity and nature. With each crossing, this boundary is weakened and questions are raised. If beings, spirits, and even mortal men exist that can cross it, then is the boundary even there? Or is it of our own construction? Would the enchanted even recognize such boundaries? Their care for the natural world suggests a kinship that transcends any idea of anthropocentrism and instead champions a shared interest in life, whether it be man, animal, or tree.

But the world of Arda grows darker as the long defeat marches on. As we see them in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the enchanted are all hidden in the wilderness. The elves keep primarily to their glades, Bombadil to his woods, and Beorn

in his meadow. By the end of *The Hobbit*, the wilderness is tamed. The dragon is slain, the goblins defeated, and the dangerous edges of the world are made safe. The dwarves retake their home in the Lonely Mountain, and the Kingdom of Dale is resettled. Yet these alterations to the northeast region of Middle-earth create a chain reaction of ecological change according to the theory of “deep ecology,” which states that nature is thoroughly interconnected—damage or change to one environment also leads to damage or change to distant lands (Martinez 36). Civilization stretches out towards the Misty Mountains, and Beorn’s home becomes the foundation of a new community. The goblins may have been defeated, and their machines may no longer be an immediate threat; however the world still advances, albeit at a slower pace, with the return of the dwarves. Nearing the conclusion of the novel, the narrator tells us that Beorn becomes a chieftain and begins a family, and that “for many generations the men of his line had the power of taking bear’s shape”; but over time, they grow “less in size and strength” (*TH* 296). The rise of civilization brings modernity and destroys the wilderness; the day is won, but the beauty and strangeness of the wild is lost, nature diminishes, and those who embody it fade into the past.

Chapter 3: Disenchantment

Tolkien never clarifies Bëor's vague description of the darkness that overshadowed the earliest days of humanity in Middle-earth, though it is connected with the first rising of the sun. *The Silmarillion* states that mankind awakened with the first sunrise, and that "the opening eyes of Men were turned towards it," and due to this they felt compelled to wander westward, away from eastern regions in which that awoke (115). The west is therefore associated with light, the east with darkness, and mankind strives to reach the safety of the light—an idea reinforced by the statement that Melkor's power was "checked by the sudden coming of great light" (116). Across Tolkien's mythopoetic works, the forces of evil are weakened, if not altogether destroyed, by the light of the sun, and so they seek the darkness, especially by delving underground. If mankind awoke in darkness and strove towards the light, we can therefore assume that they encountered evil hiding in the shade. Combined with Bëor's suggestion that the earliest men preferred to forget their time in the darkness, we may extrapolate that something happened in the dark, perhaps connected to the "strange fate and guilt" that Tolkien associates with humanity's disconnection with nature, original sin, and The Fall ("On Fairy Stories" 152).

Though the original fall of humanity in Middle-earth is shrouded in darkness, Tolkien describes several more falls in his works in great detail, and each of these falls is associated with a changing relationship between the fallen and nature. In his 1951 letter to Milton Waldman, he summarizes *The Silmarillion* with the statement that "all this stuff is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine" (*Letters* 145). Tolkien explains that life is defined by Mortality but, in the desire to create and grow, humanity

“may become possessive, clinging to the things made as its own,” so that “the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation,” leading them to “rebel against the laws of the Creator—especially against mortality” (145). Mortality is therefore linked to the original sin of Melkor: the desire to create for the sake of domination, against the will of Eru, or God. It is the desire to reach out beyond one’s natural limits in order to gain divine power, domination, and/or immortality.

Action against God requires power “for making the will more quickly effective,” leading the rebel “to the Machine (or Magic),” or “all use of external plans or devices (apparatus) instead of developments of the inherent inner powers or talents—or even the use of these talents with the corrupted motive of dominating: bulldozing the real world, or coercing other wills” (*Letters* 145). This creates the difficult divide within Tolkien’s work, as there are many things which appear “magical,” but are not magic according to this definition. As Galadriel tells Sam: “For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy” (*The Lord of the Rings* 361). Magic, or the Machine, is inherently evil, as it is power and ability that is not directly granted by God. Gergely Nagy suggests that this view of magic and inherent ability is informed by “the medieval ‘great chain of being,’” in which “everyone has their place in descending order, and with these places come knowledge and innate power” (165). In ‘the great chain,’ God sits at the top, followed by angels, then humans, beasts, and plants. In Arda, the Valar and Maiar take the place of the angels, and elves sit slightly above mankind. These “magical” characters are therefore not magical; as Tolkien writes: “their ‘magic’ is Art, delivered from many of its human limitations . . . [a]nd its object is Art not Power, sub-

creation not domination and tyrannous reforming of creation” (*Letters* 146). The powers of Gandalf and Galadriel are not magic, as they are provided by Eru. As one of the Istari, one of the five Maiar sent to Middle-earth by the Valar, Gandalf is equivalent to an angelic being, and so he has divine powers. As stated above, the elves have a deeper connection to the song of creation, and therefore limited power over the natural world. These beings use their Art to “influence the world with their innate power,” which is granted by their higher place in the chain (Nagy 166). Magic, or the Machine, is external power and therefore, as Galadriel suggests, evil by nature. It is the tool of one who wishes to climb the chain, and therefore act against God.

In his letter to Waldman, Tolkien seems to suggest that this defiance cannot come without destruction, without “bulldozing the real world,” and that “The Machine,” as in technology, “is our more obvious modern form though more closely related to Magic than is usually recognized,” suggesting that our own technology, such as the electric saw, is part of a kind of magic that allows humanity to overcome its natural, divinely ordained boundaries (*Letters* 146). As a tool of power, Tolkien writes that the Machine is primarily used for the purpose of domination, as the “Enemy in successive forms is always ‘naturally’ concerned with sheer Domination, and so the lord of magic and machines” (146). But this does not mean that the Machine is easy to spot, or that it will always appear as evil, as Tolkien warns that “frightful evil can and does arise from an apparently good root, the desire to benefit the world and others—speedily and according to the benefactors own plans” (146). The electric saw may guarantee more wood with less work, therefore allowing for more homes to be built at a quicker pace, but how do we

decide when we have taken enough. What begins as a helpful invention thus reveals itself as the Machine when we seek to use it to use it too much.

Despite good intentions, the Machine always leads to corruption as it is a means to overthrow Mortality, and so it leads one to the Fall and the destruction of nature. Tolkien's explanation of Mortality, the Machine, and the Fall all seem to connect with the Neoplatonic philosophies that laid the foundation for much of medieval Catholic theology through the works of Augustine of Hippo. These ideas were thoroughly explored by Boethius in *On the Consolation of Philosophy*.

According to the embodiment of Philosophy which speaks to Boethius in *Consolation*, all mortals seek happiness, yet despite the shared desire for good, "error diverts them off course towards false goods" (41). Philosophy explains that "[w]hat in nature is simple and undivided is split by human error, which diverts it from the true and perfect towards the false and imperfect," and so true happiness is shattered by humans who seek it in the wrong way—the singled-out desire for power becomes tyranny, the isolated desire for pleasure turns into lust, and the desire for satiation alone turns into greed (53). Together, balanced and within reason, each of these things creates happiness, but people mistake them individually as happiness and goodness, and so "good things can be sought in a bad way, or bad things sought for good" (60). Within this philosophy, unified happiness can only be sought by following God's will or, using Tolkien's terminology, by staying within the bounds of Mortality.

Nevertheless, humanity makes mistakes and seeks the wrong kinds of good, or chases after them in the wrong way. Lady Philosophy states that "good men seek it by natural exercise of the virtues," or in Tolkien's case, their innate power, their Art,

“whereas evil men try to acquire it through desires of one kind or another, and not through the natural faculty of attaining the good” (*Consolation* 74). Evil forces, such as Melkor and Sauron, use the Machine to seek what they perceive to be good: power and domination. Evil is therefore born from this error, as “God cannot commit evil . . . [a]nd so evil is a nothing, for there is nothing he cannot do, but he cannot commit evil” (*Consolation* 67). Evil is therefore the absence of good and a void with no real power of its own to create, as only God, or Eru, holds the power of creation. This idea is restated in *The Silmarillion* when Melkor “creates” the first orcs by corrupting elves because he lacks the power to create life (*The Silmarillion* 47). Melkor turned to evil in the time before creation, and so he lacks the power of creation that is exclusive to goodness. Instead, he corrupts the good, destroying it and expanding the void of his own evil through the workings of the Machine. The narrator of *The Silmarillion* claims that the corruption of the orcs “was the vilest deed of Melkor, and the most hateful to Ilúvatar” (47). In seeking to overcome his own divinely imposed limitations, the lack of power to create new life, Melkor uses the Machine to corrupt Eru’s creation and therefore Falls further from grace.

Melkor’s corruption is not exclusive to life, as his works also corrupt the land itself. When Melkor returns to Middle-earth after his first captivity, he rebuilds Angband, his fortress, where “life and light were strangled” and “all waters were poisoned,” and from “the gates of Angband filth and desolation spread southward for many miles” (*The Silmarillion* 105;134). Here, he “delved anew his vast vaults and dungeons” and “reared the threefold peaks of Thangorodrim, and a great reek of dark smoke was ever wreathed about them” (86). Elsewhere, Thangorodrim is described as “made of the ash and slag of

his subterranean furnaces, and the vast refuse of his tunnellings . . . black and desolate and exceedingly lofty; and smoke issued from their tops, dark and foul” (134). Like Sauron, Melkor uses this dark smoke as a weapon by “sending forth great reek and dark cloud” (111). It is an action that is repeated in *The Silmarillion*, usually before Melkor’s attacks, and seen again when “[i]n the pits of Angband he caused vast smokes and vapours to be made, and they came forth from the reeking tops of the Iron Mountains . . . staining the bright airs in the first mornings of the world” and “darkening the new Sun” before “they fell, and coiled about the fields and hollows, and lay upon the waters of Mithrim, drear and poisonous” (123). Melkor goes further at the beginning of “The Battle of Sudden Flame,” when he causes Thangorodrim to erupt “fires of many poisonous hues, and the fume of them stank upon the air, and was deadly,” an act that kills several elves and devastates the surrounding grassland: “Ard-galen perished and fire devoured its grasses; and it became a burned and desolate waste, full of choking dust, barren and lifeless. Thereafter its name was changed, and it was called Anfauglith, the Gasping Dust” (175). Melkor’s weapons do not discriminate between the enemy and the land, and so his fortress destroys everything.

It is here, deep in the subterranean halls of Angband, where Melkor breeds orcs, balrogs, and dragons. Every lesser evil in the world is traced back to this one spot, which is described using the language of pollution. The peaks of Thangorodrim seem almost like smokestacks and artillery, which billow out smog and fire as their architect creates new evils below. The pollution spreads, poisoning land and water while Melkor poisons life. This seems to be the working of Melkor’s Machine: the dark magic that allows him to wield a modicum of divine power, which he uses to form weapons and monsters. It is

industrial in nature, like an arms factory combined with folkloric images of a volcanic hell carved into the earth. It is an image which combines the spiritually corrupted with the physically polluted.

Sociologist Ulrich Bech suggests the need for a kind of spiritual language for handling pollution when he describes the spreading toxicity of the modern world as a “new ‘shadow kingdom,’ comparable to the realm of the gods and demons in antiquity, which is hidden behind the visible world and threatens human life on this Earth” (72). Since many toxins are invisible to the eye, Bech suggests that their threat is similar to a spiritual one with an “imperceptible and yet omnipresent latent causality” which requires a kind of “double gaze” that allows us to see “a second reality,” one of pollution and radiation which is “only existent in thought and yet concealed in the world” (72). Hidden everywhere, these “pollutants and toxins laugh and play their tricks like devils in the Middle Ages” (73). Bech uses the language of religion to depict pollution as a threat to mortal life, but Tolkien treats it as the fallout of a fallen soul: those who act against God will kill his creation. Melkor falls entirely from grace, and so he creates Bech’s toxic devils, made real in Arda as orcs, balrogs, and dragons.

By placing Melkor and his works within Boethius’ conceptualization of evil as merely misguided good, Melkor’s fall can be read as a commentary on modern pollution presented through a medieval framework. Melkor represents an extreme evil, and his desire to dominate the world is deeply opposed to the tenets of deep ecology. Instead of existing alongside nature and following God’s will, Melkor attempts to bend the world to his will, therefore corrupting and polluting it. Since Melkor’s desire is a complete betrayal of the divine (God or Eru) this corruption is not only presented as an undesirable

side-effect of industry, but the ultimate evil. According to Boethius, evil is nothing, and so nature wilts and dies underneath the dark cloud of Thangorodrim. Melkor thus destroys the world by trying to control it.

Melkor's influence is a growing void within Arda, and his fall sets off a cascade of lesser falls which follow a similar pattern. Each is grounded in a desire, a single element of Boethius' proposed happiness, which the fallen seek to control entirely. The greatest of these evils is greed, Melkor's own sin, which leads to downfall and then destruction. Aside from Melkor, this can also be seen in the fall of Fëanor, a fall which haunts *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Despite dying fairly early in the mythos, Fëanor's actions spark a change in the world of Arda that directly leads to thousands of years of war culminating in the destruction of Beleriand.

Fëanor's story begins with the story of the Noldor, the group of elves ruled by his father, Finwë. The Noldor are noteworthy for their "skill and knowledge," and they are the first to create letters "for the recording of speech and song," an act that places these elves highly within Tolkien's mythos (63). Flieger notes that their name, related to "gnome" (Tolkien's original name for them) suggests that they "are 'the Wise,' yet only wise in the sense of possessing knowledge, not in the sense of possessing sagacity" (*Splintered* 100). The Noldor are therefore a people built on the idea of valuing intelligence more than good judgment—a people handmade for the pitfalls of Max Weber's disenchantment; a society which values scientific advancement at the cost of happiness and their connection with nature.

The story of the Noldor begins within the "Noontide of the Blessed Realm," a utopic time in Valinor, the western continent of Arda and earthly home of the Valar.

Here, the elves live and learn alongside the divine beings. The troubles of the Noldor are heralded first by their mentors: Aulë and Melkor. Under the tutelage of Aulë, the Noldor begin “quarrying in the hills after stone,” where they “first discovered the earth-gems, and brought them forth in countless myriads; and they devised tools for the cutting and shaping of gems, and carved them in many forms” (*The Silmarillion* 59). The act of quarrying is itself destructive, but the Noldor can be forgiven, at first, as “[t]hey hoarded them [the gems] not, but gave them freely, and by their labour enriched all Valinor” (59). The Noldor flourish in their Art, which Tolkien describes to Waldman as the act of “sub-creation not domination” (*Letters* 146). In creating and sharing new forms of beauty, the Noldor mimic their mentor, Aulë, who enjoys the “deed of making, and in the thing made, and neither in possession nor in his own mastery” (*The Silmarillion* 7-8). It can then be assumed that the Noldor originally followed the divine plan. They take from the earth, but not too much, and what they take is used to create new beauty for the benefit of all.

This begins to change, however, after the end of Melkor’s first imprisonment. After providing a false apology, Melkor is allowed to roam Valinor, where he begins to advise the Noldor. When the Noldor begin to trust Melkor, he subtly begins to suggest rebellion against the Valar for the purpose of dominating Middle-earth (69). This rebelliousness escalates until Melkor “spoke to them concerning weapons; and in that time the Noldor began the smithying of swords and axes and spears” (71). It is thus suggested that the fall of the Noldor is brought about by Melkor, who teaches them to create weapons that will in turn destroy the world—the weapons of Melkor’s designs seemingly always bring about environmental destruction.

Fëanor's fall comes shortly after his creation of the Silmarils, the namesake for *The Silmarillion*. The Silmarils are described as living things: crystal bodies filled with the fire of creation, which is "made of the blended light of the Trees of Valinor," the light-source of Arda before the creation of the sun and moon (*The Silmarillion* 68). The Trees of Valinor were sung into existence by Yavanna, the Vala of nature, Tolkien's version of a "Mother Nature" figure, who created all vegetation in Arda, but the Trees of Valinor "have most renown" (31). The light of the Silmarils is therefore the captured light of the greatest creation of nature: a light made out of divine love for the world.

Yet Fëanor begins to covet his own creation, "to love the Silmarils with a greedy love," and locks them away, straying from the path of Aulë's practice of creation for the joy of creation and forgetting "that the light within them was not his own" (*The Silmarillion* 70). Here Tolkien echoes Boethius' *Philosophy*, who claims that "if their brilliance is something out of the ordinary, their brightness is the property of the jewels, not of the men who own them," and that "jewels can claim a measure of beauty at the lowest level, as being the work of the Creator with their own distinctive quality" (29). The Silmarils should therefore be cherished as a creation of Eru, as they are a composite of his works: the gemstones of the land and the light of the Trees, sung into existence in an echo of the music of creation. While Fëanor may have brought these elements together, he is still only a *sub*-creator, and so his creations are built off of the works of others; works that do not belong to him. In this vein, Lady Philosophy tells Boethius "none of the possessions which you count as yours actually belong to you," as they truly only belong to Fate, and by extension God, who decides who possesses them (30). Fëanor's attempt to claim ownership over the Silmarils is therefore perilous, as it is not

his decision whether they stay within his possession. To proclaim himself as the sole possessor of his sub-creation is to challenge God.

In considering the desire to own things, Philosophy reminds us: “You might have appreciated them on their own account, without making them part of your possessions” (Boethius 30). But Fëanor covets the Silmarils, and then Middle-earth, as things that rightfully belong under his control. This causes discord in Valinor, leading to the end of the utopic Noontide. As the Noldor begin to question the divine, the western continent is plunged into darkness when Melkor, with the assistance of Ungoliant, mother of all spiders, destroys the Trees. All is not lost, at first, as Yavanna announces that the “Light of the Trees has passed away, and lives now only in the Silmarils of Fëanor,” and that “had I but a little of that light I could recall life to the Trees, ere their roots decay; and then our hurt should be healed, and the Malice of Melkor be confounded” (*The Silmarillion* 82). Fëanor is given the chance to heal nature and restore the trees, if he is willing to sacrifice the Silmarils. But Fëanor instead chooses to believe that all of the Valar are like Melkor, and that they only seek to dominate everything in the world. Thus he tells them: “This thing I will not do of free will” (83). Fëanor tests the Valar, to see if they will command him to act against his will, but they do not—it is, after all, not their place to decide who owns Eru’s creations.

Following this, Melkor’s destruction of the Trees and Fëanor’s refusal to heal them is labeled as “the Marring of Arda” (83). Fëanor thus breaks from the divine purpose of the elves as first suggested in their earliest days, that they would “order all the lands and heal their hurts” with their “gifts of skill” (*The Silmarillion* 47-9). Fëanor instead chooses to ignore the destruction of nature for the sake of his own greed. In a

karmic twist, it is revealed that Melkor has stolen the Silmarils just as Fëanor refuses to sacrifice them. This is the inciting action of the wars for the Silmarils, the greater part of the story of *The Silmarillion*, founded in Fëanor's desire to possess jewels. It is a desire that sets off thousands of years of war, and a story that seems strikingly similar to the Classical idea of The Former Age, a story that was passed down to the medieval world in works such as Boethius' *Consolation*.

Following her discussion of greed, Lady Philosophy sings a song about "those earlier days / When faithful fields made men content," a time when humanity "Sated their hunger" with "Acorns at hand," and when "The towering pine afforded shade"; it is a time before greed, as "Not yet did sailors cleave the wave . . . To gather goods from every land," and a time before war, as "No trumpet's savage blare as yet / Called men to war," as "No gain from bloodshed could they win" (Boethius 31-2). The last stanza of the song suggests that things changed shortly after the advent of mining: "Who first, alas, forced spade to yield / Treasures from which harsh dangers spawn—/ Rich bars of gold by earth concealed, / And gems which choose to lurk unknown?" (32). Much like the fall of the Noldor coming shortly after the discovery of the first gems, Boethius suggests that the treasures of the earth are much to blame for the problems of the world as "fires more fierce than Aetna's burn / In men's hot lust to have and hold" (32).

Medievalist Jeffery Jerome Cohen suggests that the myth of the Former Age presents evidence that "[c]lassical and medieval poets discerned in the transition to agricultural modes of civilization and the transformation of gems and metals into coin and marketable goods the advent of modernity," and that these poets were "ambivalent about this transition to commodity capitalism" and "believed that an embrace of wealth

and the transformation of materials into a flow of goods alienated humans from nature” (24). Cohen uses modern terminology and economic philosophies, but it should be clear that neither Boethius, his forerunners, nor his medieval inheritors are speaking directly about modern theories of capitalism. Nevertheless, the point stands: Boethius’ treatment of the Former Age story tells a tale of a peaceful humanity that lived in and was sustained by nature alone. This peace is broken when the world begins to commodify nature. The desire to trade these commodities, to gather capital, to buy, sell, and hoard them, then leads to war.

In discussing the idea of the Former Age in relation to ecocriticism, Cohen points towards Chaucer’s rendition of this in the poem titled “The Former Age” as a prime example of medieval conceptualization of this theme. In describing the time before commerce, Chaucer goes even further to suggest that though “yit nas the ground nat wounded with the plough, / but corn up-sprong, unsowe of mannes hond / the which they gnodded and eete nat half ynough” (650). Boethius’ Former Age is certainly utopic, but Chaucer’s is described as being almost magically abundant, as more grain than mankind could eat sprouted from the ground without the need for labor. Chaucer writes that “No coyn ne knew man which was fals or trewe,” which is expanded upon in the next stanza when he adds that “Ther lay no profit, ther was no richesse” (651). What is suggested in Boethius is then made concrete in Chaucer: the desire for coin, for profit, for riches, is largely to blame for the wars that plague the world, and this coin was not developed until “men first dide hir swety bysinesse / To grobbe up metal, lurking in derknesse . . . than sprong up al the cursednesse / Of coveytyse, that first our sorwe broughte” (651).

Cohen notes that Chaucer specifically mentions that the people of the Former Age lived “in caves and wodes softe and swete,” revealing a “closeness to the earth emphasizing their environmental harmony, before stone became a resource” (Chaucer 651; Cohen 24). Commodification is therefore not only the cause for strife between mankind, but also for mankind’s separation from nature. Nature is no longer a home, but something that can be cut up, reshaped, sold, and possessed. Cohen calls this attitude “rescourism,” or “imagining that nature consists of commodities attending human use” (79). The world is thus nothing more than a means to an end, a raw resource, a field to fight in, and whatever damage it may sustain from our commodification and warfare is a necessary side effect; an attitude at one with the belief that the world was given to us by God to do what we please, the founding myth of anthropocentrism. If the world is only made of things to refine and hoard, then we disconnect from it and turn deaf to nature. It is then easy to ignore the damage that commodification, followed by over-consumption and war over dwindling resources, does to the world. Like Morgoth, civilization begins to destroy the very thing that it wishes to dominate.

In his prose translation of *Consolation*, Chaucer adds a note following Philosophy’s song about the Former Age that tells the reader “That is to seyn, that he that hem firsst up dalf, he dalf up a precious peril; for-why, for the preciousnesse of swich thyng hath many man ben in peril” (416). Chaucer is perhaps using the full meaning of the word “peril” in Middle English, which may be defined as both the threat of physical danger (here created by the war and labor of commodification) or as “spiritual peril, danger to the soul from sin; a state of spiritual peril; sin;” (Middle English Compendium). The threat of commodification is therefore double-edged: it has the potential to harm both

the physical body and the immortal soul. Greed, the central cause of war following the Former Age, is after all a cardinal sin.

This connection between commodification and sin is even more direct in the Old English rendition of *Consolation*, which states that the people of the Former Age “followed the nature which Christ created for them” (79). It can then be surmised that the development of mining and commodification was not part of God’s original plan for mankind. This draws a clear connection between the stories of the Former Age and the story of the Garden of Eden, which both depict humanity at one with nature before they fall. The Fall comes from the desire for more—more knowledge, more power, more things, whether or not God wants us to have it. To return to Tolkien’s vocabulary, it is the desire to overcome Mortality, or God’s own plan, and to accumulate more wealth and power than we were meant to possess. Humanity accomplishes this through the Machine, here represented by mining, minting, and merchandising. This leads to the Fall, as commodification propagates greed and murder, putting our souls and bodies in peril.

Flieger suggests that the Noldor “could stand as a historian’s description of any of the great civilization builders of past ages; closer still to home, it is a telling depiction of our own Western Renaissance and post-Renaissance” (*Splintered* 100). It is a damning comparison, to draw a line between western civilization and the elven kingdom that inadvertently destroys large sections of Middle-earth in a quest revolving around three gemstones, but Flieger has a point. If we read the desire for the Silmarils as a stand-in for the desire for domination and commodification, as suggested by the story of the Former Age, then the Noldor’s desire to plunder and conquer Middle-earth in their war to reobtain the jewels mimics the actions of the West coming out of the Middle Ages. This

is not to suggest that greed or colonization were entirely new to the early modern world, but the west's colonization of the new world set the stage for the modern economy, and it is an economy that flourished with widespread oppression, manifest destiny, and little care for the natural world. Describing this kind of economy, Nixon writes that there is perhaps "something perverse about an economic order in which the unsustainable, ill-managed plunder of resources is calculated as productive growth" (134). Tolkien takes things further by suggesting that the desire to plunder the world is not only a perversion, but one of the greatest sins of all. It is the damning desire of both Melkor and the Noldor.

The Noldor perhaps most mimic the modernizing world for their desire to create new ways of doing things. This is not an evil thing in itself, but in Tolkien's mythos it is presented as easily corruptible. It is the thin line between Aulë and Melkor: the desire to create for the joy of creation versus the desire to create in order to dominate; the difference between practicing one's Art, one's God-given power of sub-creation, versus embracing the Machine, the industrial coded search for power to act against providence. The Noldor are at first pleased with their Art, but Fëanor's fall heralds their turn to the Machine, to the desire to forge swords and spears, skills taught to them by Melkor, in order to slay and take. Connected to both war and industry, the Machine is inherently destructive.

The West's own search for wealth, stained with a monumental amount of bloodshed, is followed by the birth of industry, a new way of doing things that allowed humanity to produce commodities at a staggering rate. But just as the battles between the Noldor and Melkor slowly poisoned Beleriand, the western adoption of industrial power, our own Machine, has similarly poisoned the environment in the search for more. In the

final battle of the wars for the Silmarils, “the tumults of the Fall of Tangorodrim” create “mighty convulsions in the earth, and Beleriand was broken and laid waste; and northward and westward many lands sank beneath the waters of the Great Sea” (*The Silmarillion* 341). A large portion of Middle-earth is lost to the Machine of war and industry. It is a fate that looms over large parts of our own world, in which lands are rendered uninhabitable by weapons and factories.

A portion of the remaining Noldor found a new kingdom in Eregion, where they attempt to return to the practice of their Art. It is here, however, that they are again led to the Machine when Sauron, under the guise of Annatar, “the Lord of Gifts,” teaches them the art of ring-craft with the promise that this new power would grant them the ability to make Middle-earth “as fair as Eressëa, nay even as Valinor” (*The Silmarillion* 344). Sauron thus fools the Noldor with the promise of the power to heal the nature of Middle-earth, making it pristine as the divine lands, which remain mostly as they were originally created. This is a power that the elves already possess, as mentioned above in relation to their power to hear and work with the divine music of creation, but it is a power that has apparently grown weak from neglect among the Noldor. Due to this, they once again embrace the Machine. But it is quickly revealed that though the rings “could ward off the decays of time and postpone the weariness of the world,” their chief purpose, natural to the Machine, is to be dominated by the One Ring (*The Silmarillion* 345).

Patrick Curry compares Sauron and his Ring to “the unaccountable nation-state, capitalism in the form of transnational economic power, and scientism, or the monopoly of knowledge by modern technological science,” which works through “profit-driven and state-protected science” that serves as a “counter-enchantment . . . a secular religion,

literally a bad faith” (67-8). Quoting Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Curry claims that the only thing that these profit-driven forms of science “want to learn from nature is how to use it in order to dominate it and other men” (69). The Noldor, desirous to expand their knowledge and power over the world, once again give in to Weber’s disenchantment under Sauron’s guidance. The lesser rings that they create in the process are bound to Sauron, and so they are incapable of doing true, lasting good because their power is rooted in the domination and destruction of nature. In other words, their power is rooted in the Machine, as Sauron follows Melkor in creating his own industrial volcano-fortress in Mordor. The fall of Eregion can thus be read as a warning to our own world: one cannot heal the wounds of the Machine with the Machine. There is no antidote to be made from its poison, as it is not a natural thing. The Machine offers only the easy path to power, and there are no easy ways to heal the world. Instead, the new Machine, Sauron’s Mount Doom, is able to grow in power so that the world is once again threatened by smoke and fire.

Following the original, the Old English translation of *Consolation* describes the greed of men as burning like the fires of Mt. Etna, but it also adds that “People far and wide call it [Etna] hellfire / because it is always burning / and fiercely burns up other places / round it with consuming flame” (79-83). Greed is like a volcano, like Melkor’s Thangorodrim or Sauron’s Mt. Doom, and it burns everything around it with hellfire. Fëanor’s name, a nickname granted by his mother, translates from Elvish into English as “Spirit of Fire,” a recognition of his fiery passion and a herald of the fiery greed that compels him to act against the Valar (*The Silmarillion* 63). Fëanor meets his end in fire, “wrapped in fire” and slain by “Gothmog, Lord of Balrogs,” Melkor’s demons of fire and

smoke, and the fires of his spirit are so great that they incinerate his body upon death (120). The same creature responsible for the death of Fëanor leads to the doom of Moria, where it is awakened by the dwarves who “delved too greedily and too deep” (*The Lord of the Rings* 317). Fire is again summoned when the dwarves of the Lonely Mountain draw the ire of Smaug the dragon with their hoard of gold and gems.

It then seems as if fire is the natural outcome of the Machine. The Machine scars the land with fire and threatens to incinerate those who attempt to master it. The fires of the Machine are the furnaces of factories and the flames of firebombs. It is the sinful hellfire of greed that erupts from the peaks of Thangorodrim and Doom. It hides beneath the earth and erupts to destroy those who give in to their greed. But just as Chaucer describes the gems of the earth, the Machine is a ‘precious peril,’ one that lures in noble spirits, such as the Noldor, and causes them to fall. A raging fire, the Machine can only destroy—and so it offers no restoration, only further damnation. Instead, salvation can only be found in Art, or the practice of inner power and sub-creation.

Chapter 4: Re-Enchantment

Tolkien describes Art in “On Fairy Stories” as “the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation” (139). As it is used here, Imagination is “[t]he perception of the image, the grasp of its implications, and the control, which are necessary to a successful expression” (138). In other words, Imagination is the power to form a sub-creation in one’s own mind, while Art is the power to express it with “the inner consistency of reality” (139). Tolkien uses these terms to explain his understanding of Fantasy by first recognizing the etymological link between Fantasy and Imagination in regard to “the derived notions of ‘unreality’ (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed ‘fact,’” and then between Fantasy and Fantastic to describe “images of things that are not only ‘not actually present,’ but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there” (139). Fantasy, or Imagination, is therefore the ability to look beyond one’s own surroundings, beyond this Primary World, and to see things that are not there, things that were never there, or even things that used to be there. As Curry suggests, Fantasy provides the ability to imagine “a time when the Earth itself was alive,” and “[i]t whispers: perhaps it could be again” (50). The first step towards such a resurrection of and reconnection with the natural world is to imagine it and use the power of sub-creation to make it appear real.

Ecologist Ingrid M. Parker argues that the greatest challenges to the relationship between humanity and the natural world are “amnesia and blindness,” which make it difficult to understand “our current and past impacts on the species and ecosystems around us” (160-1). As Nixon states in his opening description of slow violence: “The

long dyings—the staggered and staggeringly discounted causalities, both human and ecological that result from war’s toxic aftermaths or climate change—are underrepresented in strategic planning as well as in human memory” (2-3). The generation-spanning nature of ecological destruction not only makes it difficult to perceive, but also difficult to remember. The goalposts of ecological restoration are thus constantly shifting to return the land to how *we* remember it, and, as Parker writes, “[w]e are hampered when we set conservation or restoration goals based on our knowledge of recent times alone, without an understanding of the structure and composition of plant and animal communities even a hundred years ago, nor,” in the case of former colonies, “of the practices of the peoples who interacted with the land before European colonization” (161). The act of healing is thus constricted by our inability to see the world as it was before our time.

Scientific research provides glances at the ecological past, but ecological history dwarfs human history by millennia. Upon viewing such data, most of us, inexperienced in the necessary scientific literacies, may struggle to see a solution and, much like Denethor, fall to nihilism. Worse yet, some may even struggle to see the problem, like the sequestered Theoden before the arrival of Gandalf. As Cohen notes, “[t]hinking of the earth in billion-year spans is utterly disorienting—and the difficulty of comprehending ecological activity over such immense durations likely underlays our inability to address climate change, to formulate the ethics of scale and Long Ecology necessary to achieve something more than the witnessing of catastrophe” (79). We may see the raw data that reports climate change, but the sheer size, both in time and space, renders it difficult to

grasp. It is even more difficult to find hope when we glance into the Palantir and see the might of our own Saurons, bent on domination and destruction.

In looking for a solution to this problem we may return again to Nixon's call for "iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse these symbols with dramatic urgency" (10). If the data alone cannot inspire action, then we need stories that help us to understand, to see what has been lost, and to compel us to action. According to Tolkien, this is the power of mythopoetic storytelling, of Art, and of sub-creation after the fall. He writes that fantasy allows us "to look at green again, and be startled anew," and provides a means of "Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health)" and the "regaining of a clear view," allowing us to see the world around us in a different way ("On Fairy Stories 146). Brian Attebery suggests that Tolkien's use of "Recovery" is tied to the ability to "dispel" the forces that blind us, the "illusion . . . produced by boredom, habit, false sophistication, and the loss of faith" (*Strategies of Fantasy* 16). In the case of recovering our ability to see ourselves within the natural world, Tolkien seems to suggest in his stories that we have been blinded by the Machine, the natural companion to the desire to dominate and overcome our Mortality as discussed above, which leads us away from the divine like Melkor and Fëanor. By employing symbols that combine the divine and the natural—such as the Trees of Valinor and their descendants—Tolkien's stories argue that loss of faith and disconnection from nature go hand in hand.

Fantasy literature therefore holds the power to prevent ecological destruction through Recovery, both in the Recovery of faith and the Recovery of the "clear view." The idea of faith here is ambiguous, however. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, most likely

hoped to inspire a kind of Christian faith, but Chris Brawley argues that the power of mythopoetic literature is that it can “revise our perceptions of the natural world” through the “inculcation of a certain religious or mystical ‘feeling’ of the numinous” (9). Brawley’s use of “numinous” is grounded in Rudolf Otto’s theory of “numinous consciousness,” which Brawley describes as a “state of mind which has at its basis a unique, original feeling-response to the holy,” referring to “that which inspires awe” and “devoid of our modern associations of the holy as a moral category”; Brawley explains that Otto therefore argued that this numinous consciousness was a kind of primordial religious feeling, “non-rational in that it was a ‘feeling’ or ‘experiential’ mode of comprehending the divine reality” (Brawley 15). Placed within Weber’s theory of Disenchantment through the subjugation of feeling to reason, it is easy to see how the modernizing, rational world would distance itself from the numinous.

As a theory of early thought, Otto’s numinous consciousness is similar to Barfield’s poetic theory of an earlier form of language in which myth and meaning were deeply connected, represented in Tolkien’s works by the Boethian divine song and language that creates and heals the world in *The Silmarillion* (as discussed in Chapter 1). The enchanted have the power to hear and speak this language, but the disenchanted have gone deaf to it. In this context, numinous consciousness is the ability to hear the divine song at the root of all things and the faith to believe in a world bigger than oneself and one’s own desires. While this concept is often expressed most directly in organized religion, it is a feeling that (according to Otto) predates these structured forms, and so it is not entirely connected to any one religion or faith. Instead, it is as Brawley describes it: a “mystical ‘feeling’” that is not grounded in rational thought.

Such a feeling is necessary for cultivating a healthy relationship with nature. Weber writes that “Natural science gives us an answer to the question of what we must do if we wish to master life technically,” but “it leaves quite aside, or assumes for its purposes, whether we should and do wish to master life technically and whether it ultimately makes sense to do so” (144). Science may tell us that certain actions may guarantee environmental destruction, but it cannot tell us whether such destruction is wrong. Instead, we require another way of looking at the world, another form of judgment, that allows us to see things from a different perspective which sheds off anthropocentric urges and considers the irrational and the mystic. Such a mindset allows us to imagine what nature might desire. What do the trees think? What would they have to say about our decisions to clear a patch of forest?

Brawley argues that mythopoetic fantasy inspires this kind of numinous consciousness through wonder captured by “the subversive representation of the wholly other” (16). This sense of wonder is similar to Tolkien’s belief that fantasy can cultivate a sense of “Enchantment.” Tolkien claims that “[t]o the elvish craft, Enchantment, Fantasy aspires, and when it is successful of all forms of human art most nearly approaches” (“On Fairy Stores” 143). Human art only *nearly* approaches the power of real Enchantment, of producing “a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside” (143). While Tolkien may semi-playfully use “elvish craft” to describe enchantment in his academic writing, it is made real in his fantasy in which wizards may use their Art to shock old kings into action, or in which elves maintain mystical forest kingdoms that change perception.

Before the fall, Art held the power to heal the world in a direct way, still seen in the enchanted remnants hiding in the wilder corners of Middle-earth. But these things are fading fast as the dawn of the Fourth Age approaches. The *Lord of the Rings* is thus dominated by the somber understanding that this world, damaged by centuries of warfare stretching back into the time of creation, is soon to be left in the care of the younger races. Without the power to heal the world directly, the older forces of Middle-earth seek to inspire numinous consciousness and a reconnection with nature through their powers of sub-creation. Not all of these elder powers are so benevolent, however. Those that have fallen to the Machine instead seem to oppose the Enchanted by clouding the vision of the younger races, making it difficult to see the wonder that inspires numinous feeling.

For example, the wizard Saruman comes to believe that he may use the Ring to dominate mankind and “to order all things as we will” (*The Lord of the Rings* 259). Saruman, like Sauron, was once a servant of Aulë in Valinor, but similarly falls to the desire to use his powers of creation to dominate as “Saruman Ring-Maker” and “Saruman of Many Colours” (258). Isengard, the domain of Saruman, is described after the Battle of Helms Deep with the same language used to describe the wastes of Mordor: “a wilderness of weeds and thorns,” where “[b]rambles trailed upon the ground” as “[n]o trees grew there; but among the rank grasses could still be seen the burned and axe-hewn stumps of ancient groves” (553). Before his fall to the Machine, Treebeard says that Saruman used to talk with him and that “[t]here was a time when he was always walking about my woods,” a “polite” guest who seemingly respected the tree-herders and their domain, but Treebeard states that after his fall “[h]e has a mind of metal and wheels; and he does not care for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment”

(473). Brawley describes Saruman's mechanical mind as a "utilitarian mindset in which nature is viewed as property without an intrinsic value in and of itself"—it is the type of thinking that sees wasted potential in a preserved forest, as nature is only seen as a resource to be controlled (113). Saruman thus appears as an echo of Sauron, as they were both servants to the Vala of craft and sub-creation who fell to the desire for domination, the desire of Melkor, and in doing so both created wasteland kingdoms.

As we have already seen, each major fall seems to exert a kind of gravity on the closest people groups—especially those who are primed to turn away from nature. Just as Melkor grooms the fall of the Noldor, Saruman, through his servant Wormtongue, seeks to guide the Rohirrim away from nature. Here, Saruman once again mimics the actions of Sauron, who led the Men of Numenor (etymologically linked to "numinous") to defiance against the divine, and "gainsaid all that the Valar had taught; and he bade men think that in the world, in the east and even in the west, there lay yet many seas and many lands for their winning" (*The Silmarillion* 307). By enticing them with immortality and domination, Sauron guides the Numenorian towards the Machine, and through his deception convinces the last king of Numenor to chop down Nimloth the Fair, the White Tree of Numenor and a descendant of the Trees of Valinor, "a memorial of the Eldar and of the light of Valinor" (307). The Numenorian thus sever their connection with nature and the divine and replace it with a temple to Melkor, in which Sauron uses the wood of the White Tree to kindle a fire. Like Thangorodrim and Mount Doom, the temple to Melkor "issued a great smoke" which rose "without ceasing" (307). A divine symbol of nature is thus replaced with the Machine, here in the guise of a temple dedicated to the desire to overcome Mortality and dominate the world.

The Rohirrim are in the earliest stages of a similar fate when Gandalf arrives in Edoras. They are still wary of Saruman, as seen in their suspicion of Gandalf (who, now in white, strikes a similar image), yet they are unknowingly under his control through the council of Grima Wormtongue, who blinds Theoden, King of Rohan, with tainted council. Theoden is first introduced sitting within his hall, “so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf” (*The Lord of the Rings* 512). The hall itself is described as “dark and warm” and “filled with shadows and half lights” (511). Theoden is kept quite literally in the dark, unaware of the situation outside of his all except for what Wormtounge tells him. The hall also contains “thin wisps of issuing smoke” and “bright sunbeams” that peer in through the roof (511). The mixture of sunbeams, natural light shining down from above, and smoke, a sign of the Machine, suggests the battle within Theoden’s mind and the uncertain allegiance of Rohan.

To side with Saruman would guarantee the total destruction of Fangorn forest and the green fields of Rohan, but (as the readers find out through Merry and Pippin) that destruction is already well underway. Rohan’s troubled allegiances therefore reveal a lack of care for the forest, an indifference that seemingly began before Sauron’s intervention. This is further revealed by Theoden’s shock at the sight of the Ents after the Battle of Helm’s Deep. Gandalf chides the king with a question, “Is it so long since you listened to tales by the fireside?”, to which Theoden responds with a reflection on his people’s history:

Long we have tended our beasts and our fields, built our houses, wrought our tools, or ridden away to help in the wars of Minas Tirith. And that we called the life of Men, the way of the world. We cared little for what lay beyond the borders of our land. Songs we have that tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to children, as a careless custom. (549-50)

In other words, the Rohirrim have gone about the work of modernizing, and as such have become disenchanting. Absorbed with their own day-to-day, they have lost sight of the world around them, and so they have become disconnected from it. They are thus predisposed to fall to the allure of the Machine.

Theoden's response echoes some of Tolkien's key points in "On Fairy Stories," specifically that "the association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history," as fantasy "in the modern lettered world" has been "relegated to the 'nursery' . . . primarily because the adults do not want it" ("On Fairy Stories" 130). Further in the essay, Tolkien writes that "[m]en have conceived not only of elves, but they have imagined gods, and worshipped them . . . but they have made false gods out of other materials: their notions, their banners, their monies; even their sciences and their social and economic theories" (144). Theoden's speech can therefore be understood as a recognition that his society had begun to grow blind to the world due to their preoccupation with materialism. The Rohirrim have lost their numinous consciousness, forgot and belittled their stories about the enchanted world, and therefore suffered a kind of cultural amnesia brought about by a growing focus on industry and war.

This cultural amnesia leads the Rohirrim to confuse the Enchanted with the Machine and to see Art, the cultivated inner power granted by the divine, as the Magic of the enemy. Thus the gatekeepers of Edoras "looked darkly upon Gandalf" when he approaches and ask "are you not a wizard, some spy from Saruman, or phantoms of his craft?" (*The Lord of the Rings* 508). The Rohirrim have grown so fearful of Enchantment under the council of Wormtongue that Hama, the Doorward of Meduseld, is required to

ask Gandalf to leave his staff outside the hall as “[t]he staff in the hand of a wizard may be more than a prop for age” (511). This long growing paranoia also corrupts Rohan’s view of Galadriel and the elves of Lothlorien. Eomer calls Galadriel the “Lady in the Golden Wood” and declares that “[f]ew escape her nets” (432). Wormtongue plays on this fear when he attempts to dismiss Gandalf and company as agents of Galadriel “in league with the Sorceress of the Golden Wood,” from which “webs of deceit were ever woven” (513). The obvious irony here is that Rohan is indeed caught in a web of deceit, but it is woven by Saruman in hopes of ensnaring the Rohirrim and forcing them to serve the Machine.

Theoden’s inability to recognize Wormtongue’s deception represents the troubled state of Rohan: in growing suspicious of the Enchanted, the kingdom risks falling to evil. Placed within Boethius’ philosophy, this blindness can be linked to Rohan’s growing obsession with war and worldly possessions. In growing suspicious of the Enchanted, those who can still hear the divine music of creation, the Rohirrim turn away from “the vision of the divine mind,” therefore falling into “the furthest degree of slavery . . . reached when they devote themselves to vices and abrogate the possession of reason” (*Consolation* 99). While “slavery” is likely used here in reference to being enslaved to one’s own vices, the risk of slavery is quite literal for Rohan. Falling to Saruman would all but guarantee falling to Sauron, the only true master of the Ring, and would therefore lead the Rohirrim towards playing a direct hand in total environmental annihilation.

Aragorn realizes this early upon entering Rohan and tells Eomer to tell Theoden that “open war lies before him, with Sauron or against him” (*The Lord of the Rings* 434). Eomer makes it clear that Rohan has not yet made any alliance with Sauron, but shortly

after wonders aloud: “How shall a man judge what to do in such times?” (438). This moral quandary seems similar to the blindness plaguing Theoden. It is a blindness linked to Disenchantment, as the Rohirrim have begun to dismiss their traditional stories in favor of worldly cares, and so they have lost their numinous consciousness—the irrational feeling of what is right and wrong. According to Boethius, those who turn away from the divine “lower their eyes from the light of the highest truth down to the world of darkness below” and “are shrouded in a cloud of ignorance, and become confused by destructive emotions” (99). In their moral blindness, the Rohirrim risk falling into such destructive urges.

The “world of darkness below” is made real in Meduseld, where Theoden is trapped in darkness. This darkness is lifted when Gandalf re-enchants the king through the power of his Art. After growing impatient with Wormtongue, Gandalf raises his staff and casts the hall into total darkness, in which “[o]nly Gandalf could be seen, standing white and tall,” a clear beacon of divine guidance standing tall in the dark (514). Gandalf’s summoned darkness is like a moment of pure sub-creation in which he alters the world with his Art, bringing those within the hall into a state of Enchantment. When the wizard lifts his staff a second time, a window in the roof opens and “the darkness seemed to clear” (514). Gandalf then declares “Not all is dark” and leads Theoden outside, where the king sees the world anew (514). A storm from the east, representing the shadow of Mordor, passes over Rohan and the land is described in great detail as a sunbeam breaks through the clouds, causing Theoden to speak: “It is not so dark here” (515). Following this, Theoden casts aside his walking stick and seems to grow younger. The king recovers from the darkness and is re-enchanted by Gandalf’s light, which allows

him to see the world with new eyes. This new sight inspires Theoden to muster the Rohirrim in a war against the forces that threaten the natural beauty of Rohan.

Rohan then rides to war with newfound clarity, and it is the same fresh vision that allows Theoden to see the Ents and reflect on his people's ignorance of the world outside of their own interests and desires. But it is not the Rohirrim who save Fangorn. Instead, it is the unlikely effort of two hobbits, Merry and Pippin, who encourage the Ents to march against Saruman. The same hobbits who are nearly eaten alive by Old Man Willow find shelter in Fangorn, which Pippin likens to "the old room in the Great Place of the Tooks," a room in his familial home in which "the furniture has never been moved or changed for generations" (461). While the Old Forest inspired fear, Fangorn feels like home—a contrast that Verlyn Flieger finds so jarring that it leads her to question Tolkien's allegiance to the trees in her essay "Taking the Part of Trees."

While Flieger recognizes the ecological sentiments in Tolkien's works, she argues that to "accept Fangorn Forest as somehow different in quality from the Old Forest, to see the Ents as heroes while at the same time seeing Willow-man as a villain 'filled with pride and malice,' we must ignore the motivation specifically accorded the trees by Tom Bombadil," referring to Bombadil's claim that trees are filled with dark thoughts and hatred for the mortal races discussed above, "and close our eyes to the identical actions taken in their own defense by the two forests" ("Taking the Part of Trees" 152). Flieger thus finds fault in Tolkien's depiction of the two forests and uses that fault as grounds to question the ecological message of *The Lord of the Rings*. Is it possible to side with the trees if one believes that the destruction of certain forests, such as the Old Forest, is justified?

Yet Tolkien never seems to suggest that such destruction *is* justified. Flieger points to the fact that the hobbits of the Shire are responsible for the Old Forest's anger, and this much is true. Upon entering the Old Forest, Merry tells his companions about how the hobbits of the Shire "cut down hundreds of trees, and made a great bonfire in the Forest, and burned all the ground in a long strip east of the Hedge" in order to clear the nearby land (*The Lord of the Rings* 110). Flieger writes that "[w]hat the hobbits do to the Old Forest, cutting down and burning hundreds of trees, is no less than what Saruman's orcs do to Fangorn," and that "what the Old Forest tried but failed to do to the Shire is no more than what the Ents succeed in doing to Orthanc" ("Taking the Part of Trees" 152). She therefore claims that "Tolkien is sending mixed signals" that make it "more difficult to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys than one might wish" (152). But the difficulty may be the point and examining it in the context of Enchantment and Disenchantment may clear any confusion.

The Shire is not an evil place, nor is Rohan, yet both places fall under the sway of Saruman. This is because the Shire, like Rohan, has become disenchanting. The hobbits, caught up in their day-to-day dealings, are suspicious of elves and dwarves. In the beginning of *The Hobbit*, the Tooks are said to be considered less respectable due to the belief that one of their ancestors "must have taken a fairy wife" (2). In the end, Bilbo "lost his reputation" and "for ever after he remained an elf-friend, and had the honour of dwarves, wizards, and all such folk" (303). Not only has the majority of the Shire grown suspicious of the world outside of their own experience, but the worst of the hobbits, represented by the Sackville-Bagginses, are greedy to a fault. While their greed is at first played for humor, it is later revealed that Lotho Sackville-Baggins is partially to blame

for Saruman's control over the Shire. In his desire for more, Lotho falls under Saruman's power just as the last king of Numenor fell under Sauron's control.

Flieger writes that it "is not comfortable for hobbit lovers" to consider the possibility that hobbits are capable of evil and destruction, but this is the sad truth of Saruman's second rise to power ("Taking the Part of Trees" 149). Embracing this discomfort, Marjorie Burns argues that depictions of the hobbits in the end of *Lord of the Rings* show that Tolkien "wants us to recognize that we are—every one of us—creatures of appetite and ego and that simple, instinctive gratification can lead us to overstepping, to excess, to claiming as our own whatever comes our way" (170). The endless appetites of the hobbits and their multiple breakfasts may seem harmless in the context of the "good" hobbits, such as those in the Fellowship, but these are relatively non-standard hobbits within hobbit society—after all, they go on adventures and mingle with elves. Those same appetites in the context of Lotho, who offers the Shire over into the hands of Saruman and the Machine in hopes of securing a comfortable life, may reveal a darkness hiding within the hobbits. This is the same darkness that threatens Rohan (and, according to Burns, threatens us all). It is the risk that seeking ever greater comfort through technology and modernity may blind us to the world, making it difficult to perceive the cost of maintaining such comfort.

The Shire's destruction of the Old Forest is therefore not justified, as it is merely one sign of the disenchantment of the hobbits that makes them prime targets for Saruman. The very nature of morality in Tolkien's works, based on Boethius' philosophy that there is no true evil, makes it difficult to cleanly separate the good from the bad as the good are always at risk of becoming evil. Bombadil claims that the trees of the Old Forest have a

darkness, but this is only brought about by the desire to survive. Whether or not the Old Forest is evil is therefore a matter of perspective: what is good for the forest is bad for the Shire. One must consider whether it is entirely evil for the forest to feel “hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers” (*The Lord of the Rings* 129). But this requires a degree of numinous consciousness, or irrational thought. It is arguably rational for a civilization such as the Shire to desire growth, which requires more land. But is such growth entirely good? Is it right to destroy a forest in order to expand one’s borders? These questions, which consider the desires of trees and the morality of deforestation, require some amount of irrational thinking.

Most of the hobbits living in the Shire have seemingly lost touch with the numinous, but Merry and Pippin have experienced a great deal between the Old Forest and Fangorn. While the forests are similar, the hobbits have changed, and so it is as if we see two sides to a similar story. Shippey claims that it is a “strong point of Tolkien’s ‘re-creations,’” that is to say, the ways in which Tolkien re-creates elements of folklore, myth, and medieval literature, “that they take in all available evidence, trying to explain both good and bad sides of popular story” (59). We may thus see the Old Forest and Fangorn as two approaches to a similar theme in the works that inspired Tolkien: stories about dark, primordial forests filled with both threats and wonders such as the eerie wood that hangs over Grendel’s mere in *Beowulf*, the forests filled with bandits and outlaws in both Old and Middle English stories and histories, the fairy tale forests found in the Grimm’s collections, or the ancient Gothic forests reconstructed in the fantasies of William Morris.

The Old Forest is a representative for the darker sides of these stories, in which the forest is a threatening place to human interlopers. As young hobbits, still steeped in the culture and traditions of the Shire, Merry and Pippin are only capable of seeing it as an alien landscape, disconnected from their own lives and experiences except for stories about the times in which their fellow hobbits believed that the forest overreached its boundaries. Merry's story of the battle with the forest is rooted in the belief that the forest had grown too close to the hedge that serves as a boundary to the Shire—it is, in a way, similar to Tolkien's own story of the neighbor who cut down a tree that had grown too close to their property. It is a way of seeing the world that is similar to Saruman's "mind of metal and wheels," as it projects the desire to control onto everything. In their desire to maintain a clear boundary to their cultivated land, the hobbits erect a physical boundary that represents the mental walls that they have created to separate themselves from nature. When the forest grows too close, they perceive it as if it were a military invasion, as Merry claims that the forest "attacked the Hedge" in the way an invading army might attack a border (*The Lord of the Rings* 110). In other words, the hobbits feel threatened by the presence of wild nature, and so they attack it with axe and fire.

Merry and Pippin have inherited this fear of the Old Forest, and so it is inevitable that they may feel threatened by the forest. As Sam later tells Faramir: "It strikes me that folk takes their peril with them into Lorien, and finds it there because they've brought it" (679-80). Those who fear elves will likely find trouble in their kingdom, just as those who fear trees will likely find trouble in the forest. This fear prevents the hobbits from feeling any kind of empathy for the Old Forest because they see it as an aggressor. While the Old Forest might be a scary place for any unexperienced traveler, it is only made

worse by the beliefs that Merry and Pippin have inherited. It is therefore difficult for the hobbits to feel anything but “disapproval, deepening to dislike and even enmity” when they enter the Old Forest (111). This begins to change when they encounter the Enchanted. As previously mentioned, Tom Bombadil tells the hobbits that the trees of the Old Forest feel resentment towards those who chop them down. Alongside the hobbits, we are given a glimpse of a worldview that challenges anthropocentric beliefs such as those cultivated in the Shire. Rather than an attacking army, the Old Forest can be seen merely as a forest naturally spreading new growth into empty land. The burned landscape left by the hobbits then begins to resemble the scorched wastelands of Isengard and Mordor, each created out of the desire to control the land through force.

The hobbits’ preconceptions of nature are further challenged in Lothlorien, the forest kingdom of Galadriel. Burns reads the Fellowship’s entry into Lothlorien as a ritual inspired by Celtic myth, in which there are “watery meetings with enchantresses,” as seen in the *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, which are initiated by crossing natural boundaries that are “more momentarily disturbing than deeply frightening” (62). The rivers that separate the Fellowship’s path from Moria into Lothlorien thus represent the forest’s “inviolability and its otherness” (64). Just as Orfeo passes through a natural border that descends into the realm of the Fairy King, the Fellowship descend the mountainside and enter a strange place where time passes differently, a trait that Shippey connects to the folklore traditions of fairy rings and elf hills that transport unsuspecting people into the world of fairies for years that pass like minutes (59-60). Lothlorien is thus another world within Middle-earth—an elven sub-creation with strange boundaries and stranger time that lies within the middle of the map.

Upon entering the otherworld of Lothlorien, Frodo is stricken with wonder at the sight of Cerin Amroth, the original heart of the forest:

It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful. In winter here no heart could mourn for summer or for spring. No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lórien there was no stain. (*The Lord of the Rings* 350)

Frodo's wonder echoes passages from Tolkien's academic writing on enchantment such as the tower in "The Monsters and the Critics" and the restoration of clear vision in "On Fairy Stories." It also seemingly refers to Barfield's theory of language, as the modernized Frodo is unable to find the words to name the light that shines upon the hill. It is a pure and concentrated example of an Enchanted landscape untouched by the greed and brutality of the Machine.

Haldir tells the awestruck Frodo that he feels "the power of the Lady of the Galadhrim," referring to Galadriel (351). This enchanted hill is therefore her work: an expression of her elvish Art that carries the power to heal the world. The sight of her work re-enchants Frodo, placing him upon the tower of story that provides a glimpse of another world, one that allows him to see his own world with new eyes. Brawley refers to it as a "recovery of the sacramental vision" which opens the hobbit's eyes to the numinous (109). For a moment, Frodo is able to perceive the divine and see the world as Illuvitar envisioned it, and to see that nature has inherent worth.

The narrator only specifically mentions Frodo and Sam's reaction to the hill, but all four hobbits pass through Lothlorien, and so it is likely that Merry and Pippin witness these same sights. While we are not granted their first-hand reactions, it is likely this re-enchantment that causes them to see Fangorn with fresh eyes. Merry and Pippin may also feel moved to support the Ents and their trees after seeing what is possible when the elves work alongside nature. Ann Martinez argues that "[i]n warding off decay and restoring nature, the Elves call to mind ecosophy," a portmanteau of ecology and philosophy used by founder of the Deep Ecology movement Arne Naess for a "a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium" (38). She writes that Frodo's experience in Lothlorien, with something like ecosophy, allows him "to understand his coexistence with the green world and connect with it at a deeper emotional level" (39). It is a philosophy that removes the barrier between nature and civilization and instead proposes a future of cooperation between humanity and the natural world. Like Frodo, Merry and Pippin may also be moved to see nature as an ally. At the very least, Galadriel's image of the world unstained likely grants greater meaning to Bombadil's perspective on the Old Forest's grudge. In Lothlorien, the hobbits see what the Old Forest might have been and what it might be again.

Merry and Pippin may therefore feel a greater urge to protect Fangorn from Saruman. Their part is small, as they do not have the strength to tear down the stone walls of Isengard, but it is an important act. Re-enchanted by their time in Lothlorien, the pair are able to listen to the struggle of the trees first hand. They join the side of the trees against their enemies by lending an ear to Treebeard's complaints and by reassuring the ent. Merry promises that "[w]e will come with you . . . [w]e will do what we can," and

Pippin follows by saying: “I should like to see the White Hand overthrown. I should like to be there, even if I could not be of much use” (*The Lord of the Rings* 474). The hobbits recognize that their struggle is shared with the forest—that the same orcs who kidnapped them are destroying Fangorn—and so they choose to work alongside the forest, creating a moment of harmony between hobbit-kind and nature.

The alliance forged between the ents and the hobbits leads directly to the fall of Saruman, as humanity (or, in this case, hobbits) and nature have the power to overcome the Machine when they act as one. As Gandalf tells Theoden upon seeing the ents surrounding Isengard, “[y]ou are not without allies, even if you know them not” (550). The ability to recognize these allies, to see that nature is something to fight for, to work alongside rather than own and destroy, and to overcome the blindness and amnesia of disenchantment, is a direct result of the Art of the Enchanted. We see this in the sub-creative Art of Gandalf and Galadriel which restores the vision of Rohan and the hobbits, re-enchanting them so that they may once again commune with the numinous and see the inherent beauty of the world. Though we are unable to achieve the great works of elves and wizards in our own disenchanted world, Tolkien suggests that the act of writing fantasy is its own form of sub-creation, infused with a lesser power of Enchantment. These stories, weaving together elements of folklore and medieval thought, build a tower that allows us to peer into a secondary world in which the heroes overcome the allure of the Machine in order to reconnect with nature.

Conclusion

The great tragedy of *The Lord of the Rings* is the guarantee that the Enchanted will soon vanish from Middle-earth. The elves, called by the echo of divine music heard in the sounds of the sea, will take the hidden path to Valinor. The ents, separated from the ent-wives, will dwindle into extinction. Beorn's children grow weaker with every generation until they resemble the common man. The fate of Tom Bombadil, as with most things about this enigmatic character, is unknown. Nevertheless, he seems to have little interest in the world outside of the Old Forest, and so he may fade into folklore, perhaps to diminish like the elves. Their works will also diminish, as Galadriel tells Frodo and Sam that Lothlorien will fade once the elves depart. Only the stories of their deeds will remain in Middle-earth.

In one of the final acts of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam, who denied the Ring when it offered him a vision of the world as his own garden, goes about the hard work of replanting trees in the Shire. The narrator tells us that the "trees were the worst loss and damage" from Saruman's rapid industrialization of the Shire, as "they had been cut down recklessly far and wide over the Shire; and Sam grieved over this more than anything else" (1022). Sam uses the gift of Galadriel—a box of dirt and a single mallorn seed—to plant "saplings in all the places where specially beautiful or beloved trees had been destroyed," giving the mallorn pride of place as a new Party Tree (1022). The enchanted dirt of Lothlorien causes the saplings to grow into mature trees in a single year. It is a final act of re-enchantment for the Shire, as the narrator notes that the mallorn would go on to attract travelers from all over to marvel in its beauty.

One can imagine that continued interest in the tree would lead to the constant retelling of the story behind its planting, and of Samwise Gamgee the gardener who acquired elven dirt to restore the Shire. While sitting on the stairs of Cirith Ungol, Sam comes to realize that he is taking part in the same story as Beren and Luthien and the Silmarils. In planting these trees, Sam becomes the antithesis of Fëanor, who refused to sacrifice the Silmarils to restore the Trees of Valinor. Alongside the restoration of the Tree of Gondor, Sam's mallorn is the end of a story that begins with the death of sacred trees. By restoring these trees, Sam and the people of Middle-earth make a new covenant with the divine: one that promises to restore their connection with nature.

Of course, there is no guarantee that this promise will be kept. As Gandalf says after the battle for Minas Tirith: "Other evils there are that may come" (*The Lord of the Rings* 878). But the trees offer the potential of warding away such promises, as they serve as constant reminders of the story that came before them: of the Enchanted who could commune with nature, of the Disenchanted who destroyed nature in their quest to control it, and the Re-enchanted who found a harmony with the world through a spiritual connection to nature.

The power of legacy, of fame, of being remembered, is a dominant theme of the literature of early medieval Europe. Boethius warns against such things, but this is one place in which Tolkien seems willing to disagree. Instead of pride, Tolkien seems to recognize that story's power of remembrance, of climbing the tower and looking back into the thoughts of yonder days, allows us to ground ourselves within our own history by taking a step outside of the world. With this in mind, he sub-created a work of fantasy by

weaving together elements of myth, folklore, and medieval literature so that we may escape modernity and take stock of things.

Many of these elements are related to humanity's relationship with nature, primarily with humanity's falling out with nature, and so they provide metaphors for thinking about the slow violence committed through humanity's desire for control over the world and for unsustainable levels of comfort. At the same time, they present examples of healthier relationships with nature through stories about the Enchanted, which may hopefully open our eyes and re-enchant us so that we can once again reconnect with the world around us.

Tolkien also recognized that story is at risk of being forgotten or belittled. He therefore fought to re-establish the role of storytelling, of Art, sub-creation, and Imagination as an important source of entertainment and recovery for both children and adults. By continuing to imagine and tell stories about mythopoetic worlds, we preserve the legacy of the Enchanted long after their disappearance, thus maintaining their power of re-enchantment in hopes of restoring clear vision to the world.

WORKS CITED

- Attebery, Brian. *Strategies of Fantasy*. Indiana UP, 1992.
- , *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*. Oxford UP, 2014.
- Barfield, Owen. *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*. Barfield Press, 2010.
- Beck, Ulrich. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, translated by Mark Ritter. Sage, 1992.
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by P.G. Walsh. Oxford UP, 1999.
- , *Fundamentals of Music*, translated by Calvin M. Bower. Yale UP, 1989.
- Bosworth, Joseph. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, edited by Thomas Northcote Toller, Christ Sean, and Ondřej Tichy. Charles University, 2014.
- <https://bosworthtoller.com/>
- Brawley, Chris. *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature*. McFarland, 2014.
- Burns, Marjorie. *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle Earth*. Toronto UP, 2005.
- Chaucer. "Boece." *The Wadsworth Chaucer*, edited by F.N. Robinson, 3rd ed., Wadsworth, 1987, pp. 395-470.
- . "The Former Age." *The Wadsworth Chaucer*, edited by F.N. Robinson, 3rd ed., Wadsworth, 1987, pp. 650-1.
- Cohen, Jefferey Jerome. *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*. UP of Minnesota, 2015.
- Curry, Patrick. *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien: Myth and Modernity*. Mariner, 2004.

- Eden, Bradford Lee. "The "Music of the Spheres": Relationships Between Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Medieval Cosmological and Religious Theory." *Tolkien the Medievalist*, edited by Jane Chance. Routledge, 2003, pp. 183-193.
- Flieger, Verlyn. *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*. Kent State UP, 2002.
- , "Taking the Part of Trees: Eco-Conflict in Middle-earth." *J.R.R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, edited by George Clark and Daniel Timmons. Greenwood, 2000, pp. 147-158.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. Routledge, 2011.
- Jakobsson, Armann. "Beast and Man: Realism and the Occult in Egils saga." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2011, pp. 29-44, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23075433>.
- Kontos, Alkis. "The World Disenchanted, and the Return of Gods and Demons." *Barbarism of Reason*, edited by Asher Horowitz and Terry Maley, U of Toronto P, 1994, pp. 223-47. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctt2tts2x.13>.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Discarded Image*. Cambridge UP, 2013.
- Lonnrot, Elias. *The Kalevala*, translated by Keith Bosley. Oxford UP, 2008.
- Martinez, Ann M. "Elvencentricism: The Green Medievalism of Tolkien's Elven Realms." *Studies in Medievalism XXVI: Ecomedievalism*, edited by Karl Fugelso, Boydell & Brewer, 2017, pp. 31-41, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.7722/j.ctt1kgqvzg.8>.

Merkelback, Rebecca. "Eigi í mannligu eðli: Shape, Monstrosity and Berserkism in the Íslendingasögur." *Shapeshifters in Medieval North Atlantic Literature*, edited by Santiago Barreiro and Luciana Cordo Russo, Amsterdam UP, 2019, pp. 83-106.

Middle English Dictionary, edited by Robert E. Lewis, et. al. U of Michigan P, 2018.

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>

Noetzel, Justin T. "Beorn and Bombadil: Mythology, Place, and Landscape in Middle-earth." *The Hobbit and Tolkien's Mythology*, edited by Bradford Lee Eden, McFarland, 2014, pp. 161-80.

The Old English Boethius, edited and translated by Susan Irvine and Malcolm R. Godden. Harvard UP, 2012.

Parker, Ingrid M. "Remembering in our Amnesia, Seeing in our Blindness." *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, edited by Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt. U of Minnesota P, 2017, pp. 155-169.

Serres, Michel. *The Natural Contract*, translated by Elizabeth McArthur and William Paulson. U of Michigan, 1995.

Shippey, Tom. *The Road to Middle-Earth*. Houghton-Mifflin, 2003.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, HarperCollins, 1983, pp. 5-48.

---, *The Hobbit*. Del Rey, 1997.

---, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, edited by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000.

---, *The Lord of the Rings*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002.

---, "On Fairy Stories." *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, HarperCollins, 1983, pp. 109-161.

---, *The Silmarillion*. Ballantine, 1999.

---, "Sir Orfeo." *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Sir Orfeo*, Ballantine, 1980.