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J. R. R. TOLKIEN, WAR, AND NATIONALISM

by

AMANDA J. JOHNSTON

Under the Direction of Dr. Margaret Mills Harper

ABSTRACT

Tolkien may not have intentionally created his fictive nations to mirror real nations, but his world certainly bears the scars of his experiences of war. The World Wars heightened his fear of losing everything that he loved about his local culture through literal obliteration or assimilation into another culture in the event of England's losing. Tolkien saw the nation as a social construct that potentially could minimize losses, if not wholly protect local culture from the forces that threatened to destroy it. Yet he also perceived the nation's limitations in its ability to protect

culture. A nation could grow too large for itself, becoming obsessed with consuming other nations. For Tolkien, national property-amassing leads to a loss of the cultural identity that nationhood aims to preserve. When the forces threatening individual nations become overwhelming, those nations often need to join forces to prevent being taken over by other, more powerful countries. An examination of Tolkien's fiction and numerous other sources, including essays and personal letters, suggests that he felt that separate nations should co-exist without imposing on one another, and that the nation taking over others would lose its own identity, whether gradually or suddenly. Despite Tolkien's efforts to distance himself from what he felt modernity represented, his fiction (whether consciously or not) grapples with the mid-twentieth century ideological conflicts surrounding the nation. The resulting sense of loss and powerlessness underlies much of Tolkien's fiction and leads him to a concept of the nation as an imperfect protector of culture, tempered by its need to rely on other nations.

INDEX WORDS: Tolkien, Nationalism, World War I, World War II, National identity, National memory, Internationalism, Individualism, Modernism

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AMANDA J. JOHNSTON

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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J. R. R. TOLKIEN, WAR, AND NATIONALISM: INTRODUCTION

In a 1951 letter to friend Milton Waldman, J. R. R. Tolkien famously wrote of his disappointment with early English mythology:

> I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff. (*Silmarillion* xi-xii)

Twice in this passage, Tolkien labels his country poor because of its lack of its own distinctive mythology. He wrote fiction partly to fill this void he found in English legends. As numerous scholars have mentioned, early in his writing career, Tolkien's intent was to "make a body of more or less connected legend . . . which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country. It should possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our 'air'" (xii). Tolkien admits that by the time of his writing this letter (1951), he had relinquished this lofty aim, to the extent that he finds it laughable (xii). Tolkien later asserted that he had written the *Lord of the Rings* only for his own enjoyment, without much thought about reception (*Letters* 211). Possibly, he dismissed his early ambition because he felt that he had failed, or simply because he was a private man and averse to forcing his personal views on others. Regardless of the changes in his ultimate goal as a writer, Tolkien's concern about English identity as expressed in (and formed through) myth permeates all of his work.

National identity, particularly English national identity, is a complicated issue and raises a host of difficulties, from defining "nation" in general to the problematic history of England and

nationalism. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson admits, "[n]ation, nationality, nationalism – all have proven notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse" (3). He defines the nation as a type of "imagined community," though he takes pains to separate the "nation" from the "state," which he sees as an official entity that does not necessarily reflect a country whose inhabitants viewed themselves as a unified whole. The "nation," on the other hand, is so perceived as a unified whole (41-2). Ania Loomba observes in *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* that nations have historically defined themselves in exclusionary terms, typically through race, though occasionally nations have defined themselves as multiracial (118-19). For Tolkien, the term "nation" simply suggests a shared language and land ownership (*Silmarillion* xi-xii). "Nationalism" reflects pride in one's national identity and as Loomba points out, often leads to or provides an excuse for imperialism (187-89). In "Nationalism: Irony and Commitment," Terry Eagleton adds, "[t]hose of us who happen to be British, yet who object to what has been done historically to other peoples in our name, would far prefer a situation in which we could take being British for granted and think about something more interesting for a change" (26). Tolkien likewise wanted to be free of the British Empire and its atrocities, but he also hoped that through myth he could find a uniquely English identity to celebrate.

Tolkien's interest in myth and national identity preceded the two World Wars, but their arrival necessarily influenced the formation of his mythology. As Janet Brennan Croft notes in *War and the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Tolkien even worked on his languages while stationed in France during the First World War (15). In fact, he wrote to his son, Christopher, in 1944 that he had worked on the languages "by candle light in bell-tents, even some down in dugouts under shell fire" (*Letters* 78). He later denied that he had spent much time crafting imaginary

languages while under siege (Croft 15). Still, his early mythmaking in the midst of trench warfare, however much or little time it took, reinforced for Tolkien the precariousness of his nation's existence. He began creating Middle-earth and writing early legends soon after his return from battle (16).

By the time the Second World War broke out, Tolkien was keenly aware of the fragility of his nation's identity. As Verlyn Flieger notes in "There Would Always Be a Fairy Tale," the Second World War posed a "threat to European national identities if Germany should prevail" (27). Tolkien recognized that the war would forever change England's identity, regardless of the outcome. In 1944, he wrote to Christopher, "when it is all over, will ordinary people have any freedom left (or right) or will they have to fight for it, or will they be too tired to resist?" (*Letters* 89). He also feared that after the war ended, England would continue to adopt a "mass-produced" culture, casting aside nuanced works in favor of the mainstream (89). He viewed writing, at least partly, as an outlet for his feelings about war, good and evil (78). In *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation*, Jonathan Rose writes, "[h]istorians of the book all share the working premise that, in literate societies, script and print are the primary means of preserving memory, disseminating information, inculcating ideologies, distributing wealth, and exercising power" (1). In writing his mythology, Tolkien aimed, as Rose suggests all writers do, to preserve a sense of his nation's self, albeit his own version of that self (*Silmarillion* xii).

When Tolkien began creating his own English legendry, a longstanding tradition of rebuilding national identity through folklore already existed. As T. A. Shippey observes in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, several European folklorists labored to piece together national bodies of literature during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (xv). Shippey

specifically mentions Elias Lönnrot, of Finland, who compiled Finnish songs and lays into a unified whole; Nikolai Grundtvig, who gathered sagas and epics in an effort to reshape Danish identity; and most famously, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, who collected fairy tales, legends, and myths, while also constructing a German dictionary and grammar (xv). As Shippey suggests, the successes of Lönnrot, Grundtvig, and the Grimms inspired Tolkien to undertake an English version of their projects. In "A Mythology for Finland: Tolkien and Lönnrot as Mythmakers," Flieger notes the similarities between Tolkien's declared intent to create a mythology for England and a passage in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (278-79). She cites both the character Margaret Schlegel's regret at England's lack of a mythology of its own and Tolkien's similar lament as parallel responses to Lönnrot's Finnish mythology, *Kalevala* (279). Both *Howards End* (1910) and "The Voyage of Eärendel" (1914), Tolkien's early foray into mythmaking, were written during the later portion of this period of intense interest in building national myths (278).

Of these national mythmakers, Flieger pinpoints Lönnrot as more influential on Tolkien than the others because of the effect of *Kalevala* on Finnish identity:

> Lönnrot in effect gave Finland its own myth and mythic identity equal to that of Greece or Scandinavia. He gave it its own prehistory and its own cultural individuality apart from the overlordship of Russia and Sweden, both of which had annexed Finland at one time or another. *Kalevala* became an extended rallying cry in Finland's struggle for nationhood. (279)

While he denied wanting to change England on any grand scale, Tolkien was inspired by this concept of literature acting as a catalyst for developing or reforming a nation's self image. His desire to follow in the footsteps of Lönnrot in particular poses an interesting conundrum because while *Kalevala* appeared in the wake of Finland's struggles to free itself from colonial rule,

England had long been the aggressor in such battles. This discrepancy raises the question of why Tolkien felt so strongly that England needed its own mythology. Possibly he simply wanted England to take part in what had become an international trend. Certainly, the coming of the two World Wars heightened this desire, particularly since Tolkien greatly feared German occupation.

Tolkien's position as a writer in the early to mid-twentieth century complicated his desire to fashion his authorial persona as an English Lönnrot or Grimm. He had from his youth been inspired by myth and folklore, yet he also knew that twentieth century trends placed far greater value on the modern than the traditional and dismissed fairy tales as childish. Because Tolkien wanted to write for adults as well as children, he had to contend with a world that disdained fantastical elements in stories for adults. In a clear departure from his peers, Tolkien rejected the idea that fantasy and myth were inherently false or subordinate to modern stories. In his essay, "On Fairy-Stories," he reflects on the nature of writing fantasy, a term which for him was almost interchangeable with folklore and mythology (122, 138). Here, he conceives of authors as "sub-creators," raising the act of writing to a quasi-divine level (122). For Tolkien, "sub-creation" is a form of magic (122). In this construction of authorship, Tolkien answers opponents of the fantasy genre, imbuing "fairy-stories" with special value.

Yet he is not immune to the pressure to disassociate his works from fantasy, picturing himself as a historian of sorts: "always I had the sense of recording what was already 'there', somewhere: not of 'inventing'" (*Silmarillion* xii). Tolkien further works to give credence to myth by emphasizing its enduring relevance: "I believe that legends and myths are largely made of 'truth', and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always reappear" (xv). In this conception of myth, he argues against the modern dichotomy of reality and myth, viewing myth

as encompassing both truth and imagination. However, as Shippey observes, Tolkien's "truth" is stronger than a sense of "universal truth," at times bordering on belief in his world's actual existence (*J. R. R. Tolkien* xv).

In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Shippey helpfully clarifies Tolkien's conception of himself as a kind of historian:

> However fanciful Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth was, he did not think he was *entirely* making it up. He was 'reconstructing', he was harmonizing contradictions in his source-texts, sometimes he was supplying entirely new concepts (like hobbits), but he was also reaching back to an imaginative world which he believed at once really existed, at least in a collective imagination. (xv)

For Tolkien, myth incorporates history and raises it to a higher level. In "On Fairy-Stories," he proposes that fairy-stories, while in many ways incompatible with history as a genre, contain historical elements, only these elements do not appear in their historical form (126). Rather, they are made "more potent, more beautiful, comic, or terrible than they were in themselves (considered simply as figures of history)" (126). Despite the lack of strict historical accuracy in fairy stories, Tolkien still argues that such stories should not be dismissed on the grounds that they are not "real" (132). He suggests that as long as a fairy story causes its readers to suspend disbelief, the world of that story is, in a sense, real (132). It is for this reason that Tolkien disliked dream or vision frame stories: the awakening of the protagonist diminishes the value of the fairy world in exposing it as unreal (116).

Tolkien also responded to the conflict between his own desire for his fictional world and the pressure to write realistic stories by taking measures to make Middle-earth into an historical location. In *Master of Middle-earth*, Paul Kocher discusses Tolkien's conception of himself as a

sort of historian, writing that Tolkien poses as a compiler of records, rather than strictly an inventor (2-3). Tolkien creates Middle-earth as a "real" place in his effort to give his world more credibility (2-3). Kocher finds in Middle-earth numerous elements linking it to our planet Earth. He notes that the same planets and constellations are visible from Middle-earth as are seen from Europe (7). Additionally, Middle-earth houses many of the same animals as does Earth and also experiences the same seasons (8). Kocher posits that Middle-earth is a very early Europe, prior to the separation of the continents (3-4). He even goes so far as to pinpoint the interglacial period as the time of Middle-earth's existence (6).

Tolkien did not label this specific time as the time of Middle-earth's existence, but he clearly believed that his audience would take it more seriously if it represented the actual Earth and not an entirely fictitious place. In his response to W. H. Auden's review of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien further explains his conception of his writings bordering the fantasy and history genres. As befitting a philologist, he argues for the existence of Middle-earth on linguistic grounds: "I am historically minded. Middle-earth is not an imaginary world. The name is the modern form (appearing in the 13th century and still in use) of *midden-erd* > *middle-erd*" (*Letters* 239). Tolkien explains that these earlier forms of the word "Middle-earth" represented to the original users of the word, "the objectively real world, in use specifically opposed to imaginary worlds (as Fairyland) or unseen worlds (as Heaven or Hell)" (239). In other words, the act of bestowing on his imaginary world a name associated with the actual world enables him to believe that his invention is real. He concedes that though he means for his readers to view Middle-earth as a physically real place, in fact the world they themselves inhabit, that the "historical period is imaginary" (239).

In "Middle-earth, the Middle Ages, and the Aryan Nation: Myth and History in World War II," Christine Chism argues that the historical aspect of Tolkien's writing is strong enough to virtually eclipse the myth in it (63). She proposes that the *Lord of the Rings* functions as a "renunciation of myth" and a "consignment to history" (63). According to Chism, Tolkien's awareness of the extreme nationalism present in both Germany and England repulsed him to the point that he rejected myth altogether (65-6). She writes, "it is no accident that the writing of this renunciatory narrative occupies dark night after dark night, during a time when Germany was mobilizing and recasting heroic 'Germanic' ideals to articulate and impose its own terrifying new world" (64). Given Tolkien's lifelong love of myth and his consistently passionate defense of it in lectures, essays, and letters, it is unlikely that he intended for his fiction to act as a complete "renunciation of myth" (63). It is more likely that he wanted to incorporate historical elements into his mythology to make it more powerful. As Michael D. C. Drout suggests in "A Mythology for Anglo-Saxon England," Tolkien "had made medieval myth relevant because it was no longer only myth, but was bound up in the constitution of history and valued literature" (242). However, Chism's point does illustrate that Tolkien's blending of fantasy and history was tied not only to the pressures of modern values, but also to his wariness of the connection between myth and extreme nationalism.

Yet Tolkien was also clearly invested in producing works specifically connected to his national identity. In "A Mythology for Finland," Flieger discusses why the works that Tolkien spent his career studying would not suffice for the mythology he wanted to create. She cites *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Crist* as especially influential works for Tolkien, but ones that he did not believe to work as strictly English myths (281). As Flieger notes, Tolkien could not accept *Sir Gawain* as an English myth because it contains references to Arthur

and is "therefore Celtic or British rather than English" (282). In his letter to Waldman, Tolkien explains that, as he sees it, this body of legends "is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain, but not with English; and does not replace what I felt to be missing" (*Silmarillion* xii). Flieger adds that Tolkien found *Beowulf* lacking as an English myth because it centers on Scandinavian characters and location (281). For Tolkien, myth must be simultaneously related to the geographical location of a nation and to its language to be an authentic expression of that nation's identity. *Crist* was explicitly Christian; while Tolkien was himself a Catholic, he also believed overtly Christian stories to be "too explicit for an invented myth" (281). He still found ways to incorporate elements of these works into his own mythology, but he wanted his mythology to be distinctively, exclusively English.

Tolkien's beliefs about what constituted "Englishness" were peculiar and at times conflicted. Naturally, these ideas were influenced by the time during which he was writing as well as his personal prejudices. He admittedly created the Shire and the hobbits to resemble rural England and its inhabitants (*Letters* 235, 250). At one point, he suggested that the similarities were unplanned, and that they occurred inevitably in the writings of an Englishman (235). Intentional or not, Tolkien's association of Englishness with the countryside clearly reflects his personal aversion to modernity. World War II also aided Tolkien in defining Englishness. He explained somewhat cryptically to Waldman in 1951 that he wanted his mythology to "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)" (*Silmarillion* xii). Here, Tolkien defines Englishness by what it is not, specifically pitting English identity in opposition to Italy and the East (xii). His conceiving of English identity in direct conflict with Italian and Eastern identities, only a few years after the end of the war, cannot be coincidental.

Tolkien's dichotomizing of East and West in his fiction reflects not only his experience of World War II, but also the local geography of his ancestral region. In a 1955 letter to Auden, Tolkien wrote,

> [I]f you want to write a tale of this sort you must consult your roots, and a man of the North-west of the Old World will set his heart and the action of his tale in an imaginary world of that air, and that situation: with the Shoreless Sea of his innumerable ancestors to the West, and the endless lands (out of which enemies mostly come) to the East. (*Letters* 212)

In a global sense, the "North-west of the Old World" is England, and the "endless lands . . . to the East" include the Far East, or in the context of the War, Japan (212). Locally, the West, for Tolkien, is West-midland England, to which Tolkien traces his ancestry and to which he attributes his love of what he calls the "North-western air" (213). The East is the immediate northeast of England, or Scandinavia, from whence England's historical enemies came.

Tolkien's desire to develop a specifically English mythology was not greatly motivated by a sense of superiority. On the contrary, Tolkien detested England's history of imperialism. Tolkien notably felt ambivalent about England's historical position in the world and longed for an English identity separate from the Empire. In a 1943 letter to his son Christopher, he wrote, "I love England (not Great Britain and certainly not the British Commonwealth (grr!))" (*Letters* 65). In a 1944 letter to Christopher, Tolkien reiterated his disdain for empire, stating, "I should have hated the Roman Empire in its day (as I do), and remained a patriotic Roman citizen, while preferring a free Gaul and seeing good in Carthaginians" (*Letters* 89). Here, Tolkien argues that a person can identify as a loyal member of a nation without rejoicing in its domination of other nations. Tolkien's critique of empire becomes a recurring theme in his fiction.

In “English and Welsh,” a 1955 lecture given at Oxford, Tolkien expressed admiration for the Welsh for having “loved and cultivated their language for its own sake (not as an aspirant for the ruinous honour of becoming the lingua franca of the world)” (166). This statement reveals two aspects of Tolkien’s beliefs about national identity. In wanting to create an English mythology, which he viewed as inseparable from language, Tolkien did not wish for the English language to dominate other languages. He also opposed attempts to suppress the development of other languages and national identities. He notes the irony of the Tudor “legal oppression of the Welsh language,” despite their boasting of their own Welsh heritage (165). Rather than perceiving the development of the Welsh language and identity as a threat to England, he admired the way the Welsh valued their language and heritage. He believed that both nations could flourish without one dominating the other.

Not all of Tolkien’s constructions of Englishness were based on juxtapositions of England and various Others. Erich Gruen argues in his lecture, “Identity Theft in the Ancient Mediterranean,” that historically speaking, national identity has not only been constructed based on the binary oppositions of the nation and Others. Gruen points to numerous examples of nations intentionally appropriating cultural elements of other nations as part of their own fictive identities. The Romans borrowed the Trojan War as part of their myth of national origin, most famously in Virgil’s *The Aeneid*. According to Gruen, these assimilations do not simply arise of necessity when multiple groups share the same living space. Rather, nations borrow elements of other nations they admire. Tolkien was no exception to this pattern. As a philologist, he strongly identified Englishness with the English language. Tolkien emphatically defended the connection between the Englishness of the Shire and its place names. He wrote to both Dutch and Polish translators of *The Lord of the Rings*, insisting that they leave the place names in the

book untranslated (*Letters* 250, 299). Tolkien argued that if a Dutch work with Dutch place names were translated into English, substituting English place names would not make the places English, nor would the places be truly Dutch anymore; the places would be "just homeless" (250). Yet he also admittedly borrowed from Finnish language and myth in the creation of his "English" mythology (214-15). This seeming contradiction makes understanding what Tolkien meant by "English" more challenging.

Another issue that complicated Tolkien's depiction of Englishness was religion, specifically Catholicism. From a broad perspective, the twentieth century saw a decrease in religiosity, and Tolkien keenly felt the lessening religious faith of his fellow Englishmen and women. He longed for his country to identify itself as a part of what Anderson calls the "imagined community of Christendom" (42). More specifically, Tolkien was a Roman Catholic, and England has since the reign of Elizabeth I been connected to anti-Catholicism (739). This aspect of Englishness did not escape Tolkien's notice. He personally faced numerous instances of anti-Catholic prejudice. As Humphrey Carpenter points out in *The Inklings*, Tolkien's mother was ostracized by relatives after her conversion and shortly before her death (51). As an adult, Tolkien had to listen to derogatory comments about Catholics coming from close friends (51). These were not the peculiar prejudices of a few individuals, but rather reflected a much more widespread belief in England. This antagonism between the more common "English" (non-Catholic) identity and Tolkien's private religious identity complicated his attempts to create an English mythology.

Tolkien's faith also prevented him from indulging in a simplistic view of the moral superiority of his own nation, as well as from entirely demonizing his country's enemies. As a devout Catholic, Tolkien firmly believed in the Fall of Man, and deeply feared the potential of

his country to fall. In a 1944 letter to Christopher, Tolkien explicates his views on the nature of evil. He emphatically states that his creation of Uruks, the creatures that exist solely to attack the rest of Middle-earth, was an invention and not a reflection of human evil (90). He believed that while human evil would always exist, it did not inevitably have to continue, that humans are capable of change. Still, in this letter, Tolkien admits that he believes some humans become "so corrupted as to be irredeemable . . . short of a special miracle" (90). He adds that "abnormally many" corrupt people reside in Germany, but that such people also exist in England (90). At this point, Tolkien reveals the underlying root of his fear of indulging in the creation of his mythic world. He recognizes that evil and ignorance exist in England, though not, he hopes, in the quantities found in Germany. He wistfully writes to Christopher of his hope that, "at least in our beloved land of England, propaganda defeats itself, and even produces the opposite effect. . . . I bet it is so even in Germany" (89). He struggles against his knowledge of the capacity for evil in his own nation, preferring to believe that the efforts of extreme nationalists would not influence the public to the extent as had happened in Germany.

Despite his persistent attraction to mythology and his desire to believe that the English could avoid the destructive side of nationalism, Tolkien feared the potential of myth to be used for extreme nationalist purposes. He was only too aware of the aftermath of earlier mythologies. Specifically, he knew of Hitler's use of Germanic mythology as part of his manipulation of the German public. In a 1941 letter to his son, Michael, Tolkien wrote of Hitler's use of Northern mythology in the German Third Reich, "I have in this war a burning private grudge . . . against that ruddy little ignoramus Adolf Hitler . . . [for] [r]uining, perverting, misapplying, and making for ever accursed, that noble northern spirit" (*Letters* 55-56). In this letter, Tolkien compares his own knowledge of Germanic mythology to that of Hitler, writing, "I have spent most of my life

. . . studying Germanic matters. . . . I was much attracted by it as an undergraduate (when Hitler was, I suppose, dabbling in paint, and had not heard of it)" (55). Tolkien recognized that because the mythic tradition from which he drew was relatively obscure, the general public was unlikely to perceive inaccuracies. He found beauty and truth in Northern mythology. However, after witnessing Hitler's ruinous misuse of these legends, Tolkien became more tentative about the connection of his own works to Northern mythology and "cautioned against calling his work 'Nordic,' a word he associated with 'racialist theories'" (*J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* 454).

Despite his concerns, Tolkien obviously did write an English mythology of sorts. The works he created reflect his attempts to reconcile his conflicting beliefs about England and nationalism. To analyze the various issues related to nationalism in Tolkien's writings, this dissertation is divided into four main chapters that each explore a different angle of national identity, including borders, national memory, internationalism, and individualism. Because Tolkien's feelings about nationalism were conflicted, his writing cannot be labeled accurately as nationalist, internationalist, or individualist, but all of these ideologies play important roles in Tolkien's fiction.

Following the introduction, chapter two, "Borders and Land Ownership" examines Tolkien's beliefs about borders and land ownership, and analyzes how these convictions play out in his writing. Both Tolkien's fiction and personal letters reveal that he placed a great importance on borders between regions, an emphasis that is particularly evident in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. His characters' border-crossings are nearly always momentous occasions, at times even turning points in the plot. The borders appear in the form of human- (or hobbit- or orc-) built structures, such as gates, or natural structures like mountains or rivers. At times, they take on magical qualities. The connection of peoples to their lands is also an

important issue for Tolkien. Lands are so intertwined with the people that own them that the lands take on characteristics of their owners. Yet these borders are in part necessitated by the circumstances of war, and at times Tolkien appears to critique their excessive use.

The third chapter, "National Memory and Myth," examines how nations in Tolkien's fiction build national memory to create and maintain a sense of who they are as a people, despite external threats like war. This national memory-building involves collecting and sometimes losing artifacts and written records of history and folklore. At times Tolkien incorporates traditionally imperialist icons like the museum as part of his characters' efforts to maintain their national identities, but he reenvisions them as having the sole purpose of perpetuating culture instead of symbolizing hegemony. This chapter also explores Tolkien's incorporation of the Atlantis myth into his fiction. The Atlantis myth has a long-standing tradition of being used for extreme nationalist purposes. Governments promoting nationalist ideologies, including the German Third Reich, have often linked the Atlantis myth to their own modern societies in an effort to convince citizens of the superiority of their nation over others (Vidal-Naquet 323). The inhabitants of Atlantis become something of a divine race. This myth also appears in *The Silmarillion* and has important implications for Tolkien's beliefs about nationalism in that he does seem to link the later generations in his fiction (Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings*) to a great past race (the Atlantis of *The Silmarillion*). Tolkien's use of this myth in some ways takes on the qualities of the nationalist versions of the myth, but in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, he also shows his discomfort with naïvely associating a nation with an idealized past generation. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of national memory loss in the healing of the Shire after the War of the Ring.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation, titled "War and Internationalism," looks at the ways that Tolkien establishes relationships between his fictional nations. His portrayal of international issues in many ways reflects the real-world ideological tensions surrounding these issues during the interwar and early post-World War II periods. Tolkien's fictional "good" nations depend on alliances to survive when Mordor threatens to subsume them. Conversely, nations that isolate themselves are vulnerable to attack. This chapter also studies Tolkien's depiction of characters that travel beyond the boundaries of their own nations and subsequently adopt some of the traits of the cultures they encounter. Additionally, Tolkien's creation of a common language in large part leads to increased interaction between cultures and greater understanding of marginalized groups in Middle-earth. Despite the at-times overwhelming support that Tolkien seems to lend to internationalism in his fiction, he also shows apparent misgivings about the ability of internationalism to protect individual cultures, particularly in light of the homogenizing effects of mass culture.

The final chapter, "Individualism and Nationalism," discusses the manifestations of the competing ideologies of individualism and collectivism in Tolkien's fiction. During the mid-twentieth century in England, individualism and collectivism came to be associated commonly with capitalism/democracy and fascism/communism, respectively. However, these divisions were not so simple; beliefs about the primacy of the self or the group often overlapped. This chapter examines Tolkien's own conflicting views of individualism and collectivism, focusing on his conceptions of national service, individual reason, self-sacrifice, and individual rights. The chapter concludes with a brief study of the necessity of the construct of the nation to protect individuals, as evident in the character of Tom Bombadil. In writing this dissertation, I hope to tie together some of the widely varying arguments about Tolkien's views of national identity,

showing that many of these assertions have validity despite their contradictions: opposing ideas could and did coexist in one person and in his influential writing.

BORDERS AND LAND OWNERSHIP

Introduction

In *National Identity*, Anthony D. Smith elucidates the "peculiarly Western conception of the nation," noting its heavy emphasis on land ownership (9). He writes,

> According to this view, nations must possess compact, well-defined territories. People and territories must, as it were, belong to each other. . . . But the earth in question cannot be just anywhere; it is not any stretch of land. It is, and must be, the 'historic' land, the 'homeland', the 'cradle' of our people, even where, as with the Turks, it is not the land of ultimate origin. (9)

Smith further explains that under the Western construct, a nation must be a "fairly well demarcated and bounded territory" (9). Tolkien's depiction of nations in his fiction consistently reflects this ideology. All of his nations are surrounded by clearly marked borders, both natural and human-, hobbit-, elf-, or orc-made. His characters recognize and frequently verbalize the precise point at which they cross over from one group's land to that of another. For Tolkien, borders are not simply arbitrary divisions of land. The lands within the borders, and even the borders themselves, are imbued with characteristics of the landowners.

Tolkien's depiction of nations and warfare at many points reflects his copious study of medieval language and literature. National defense in Tolkien's fiction in many ways is clearly pre-modern, conceptualized at ground level. In most of the regions of Middle-earth, gates, hedges, and natural obstacles (such as mountains and rivers) impede invasion. Warfare takes on a specifically medieval tone in that the characters fight on horseback or on foot with medieval weaponry, including spears, and bows and arrows, and they wear chain mail as protection (Croft 116-7). Likewise, the various regions of Middle-earth have many medieval characteristics.

Bree-land, for example, exists as one land with its own people and a culture separate from those of neighboring lands (*Fellowship* 146). In some ways, the towns within Bree-land do not seem to form a unified whole. Most notably, the village of Bree is defended separately from the larger Bree-land; having its own hedge and multiple guarded gates, Bree recalls a medieval walled city (146). At the same time, the inhabitants of Bree-land identify as a collective unit separate from the Shire-hobbits and the Rangers that travel through the area (146-7).

Numerous aspects of Middle-earth warfare and nationhood bring to mind the historical medieval Europe. Yet Tolkien was also undeniably influenced by the modern period in which he lived. In *Tolkien and the Great War*, John Garth enumerates a variety of elements of Tolkien's imagined war that resemble characteristics of World War I, even when Tolkien's versions of these elements are "superficially *un*realistic" (312). Garth includes in his list of Great War influences "the sweeping surveillance of the Eye of Sauron, the moments when reality shifts into dream during those long marches, or into nightmare in the midst of battle, the battlefield dominated by lumbering elephantine behemoths and previously unseen airborne killers" (312). The flying Nazgûl, while fantastic, introduce a form of aerial warfare to a world only prepared to defend itself on the ground (312). The prevalence of echoes of Tolkien's modern world in his Middle-earth means that the distinct regions of Middle-earth cannot be viewed as simply medieval. Rather, they are the product of a writer who was indelibly affected by both his medieval studies and his modern physical surroundings. Nonetheless, Tolkien weds these medieval and modern elements in fictive "nations" that are pre-global in terms of their emphasis on division of lands and peoples.

Tolkien created Middle-earth during the early to mid-twentieth century. At this time, the British Empire was starting to diminish, and internationalism began to be championed, both of

which challenged traditional ideas about national borders (Kumar 235; Navari 84). Perhaps not surprisingly, Tolkien's fiction shows a preoccupation with borders, typically focusing on protection. In "War, Violence, and the Westphalian System," Richard W. Mansbach and Franke Wilmer observe that:

> . . . security or the regulation of violence—the raison d'être for the state and its monopoly on the legitimate use of force—consisted of protecting 'us' and 'our' property and interests against threats generated externally by 'them.' During the twentieth century, the acceleration of state interdependence, and with it the increasing interpenetration of people's identities and interests, has both rendered state boundaries more contestable and the state less effective as a provider of security. (51)

Tolkien's fiction consistently reflects a need to have decisive borders, perhaps as a response to the real-world precariousness of borders.

Maps, Gates, and the Natural Order of Things: The Shire and the Wild

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson characterizes the map as an "institution" that, along with the census and the museum, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion— the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (164). Anderson enumerates several particularly Western features of the map. As aspects of Europe began to be assimilated into Southeast Asian cultures, Asian maps began to adopt Western features such as the "bird's-eye view convention" and the demarcation of borders (172). He adds that "[b]oundary-stones and similar markers did exist [in Southeast Asia]. . . . But these stones were set up discontinuously at strategic mountain passes and fords. . . . They were understood horizontally, at eye level, as extension points of royal

powers; not 'from the air'" (172). Anderson notes that an important feature of Western maps was their tendency toward "totalizing classification" (173). And as Loomba suggests, "[m]aps claim to be objective and scientific, but in fact they select what they record and present it in specific ways, which are historically tied in with colonial enterprises" (78). Anderson adds that maps in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served as "geometric grid[s]" in which explorers and militaries could mark off conquests square by square (173).

While he strongly objected to imperialism, Tolkien was drawn to maps and classification (*Letters* 65, 89). Croft discusses Tolkien's experience with map-making during World War I:

> Map-making seems to have been one of the skills Tolkien most enjoyed learning, judging by the many maps of Middle-earth on which he lavished so much time and effort. One map he drew during World War I survives and is reproduced in *The Tolkien Family Album*; it shows an area of trenches, drawn after October 17, 1916, based on information from prisoners and aerial photographs (Tolkien and Tolkien 40). Although Carpenter does not mention it, it is almost certain that Tolkien learned military map-making during his officer training, if he was assigned to create such a map. (108)

Whether or not he drew maps as part of his wartime service, Tolkien clearly valued maps as a means of processing and understanding the world in which he lived. This proclivity, as Croft points out, led him to pour a great amount of energy into making maps of the fictional lands he was creating (108).

Tolkien was by no means an expert in mapmaking. During *The Hobbit's* preparation for publication, he wrote to Allen and Unwin employee Susan Dagnall about his self-perceived lack of talent: "what I have done is I fear poor enough. I have redrawn two items: the chart . . . and

the general map. I can only hope – as I have small skill and no experience of preparing such things for publication – that they may possibly serve" (*Letters* 14). As Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull assert in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Artist and Illustrator*, Tolkien had considerably more talent than he let on (92). His insecurity likely stemmed from the lack of professional experience to which he refers in his letter to Dagnall. Despite his relative inexperience, Tolkien clearly heavily relied on mapmaking as part of his creative process. Hammond and Scull note that Tolkien "found it essential to draw maps, plans, and views as working guides to the complex geography he was creating" (164). According to Hammond and Scull, Tolkien believed that "one cannot make a map after the narrative, 'but must first make a map and make the narrative agree'" (164, 167). To Tolkien's thinking, a story could not coalesce unless its author had already resolved on paper the boundaries of the fictional landscape.

In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Tom Shippey argues that Tolkien's maps are larger than the plot of his stories, as opposed to merely illustrating the layout of the fictional setting (68). Shippey writes, "When Tolkien drew his maps and covered them with names, he felt no need to bring all the names into the story. They do their work by suggesting that there is a world outside the story, that the story is only a selection; and the same goes for the hints of other creatures unaffected by and uninterested in the main plot" (68). In this sense, Tolkien's maps take on a relatively modern character, despite their references to lands and borders that often appear medieval in the text. P. D. A. Harvey writes in *Medieval Maps* that on the infrequent occasions when maps were created during the medieval period, they rarely functioned as the general reference that modern maps typically are (7). Rather, medieval maps normally had a specific, limited purpose, which was *not* to show "landscape or the world in a cartographic way"

(7). Tolkien's maps, by contrast, are bird's-eye views of large regions of Middle-earth and frequently, the borders between them.

Borders of lands are nearly always clearly designated in the text of Tolkien's fiction, as well as on his maps. In *The Hobbit*, borders for the most part are natural and serve only as markers. When Bilbo and the dwarves leave the Shire to go on their adventure, there is no more than an implication of border-crossings: "At first they had passed through hobbit-lands. . . . Then they came to lands where people spoke strangely. . . . Now they had gone on far into the Lone-lands" (29). Yet no matter how subtle the border-crossing, it almost always merits a mention. Lands have noticeable borders, even when the presence of one is unexpected. Midway through the group's journey, Bilbo and the dwarves ask Gandalf where they are going, and he replies, "You are come to the very edge of the Wild, as some of you may know" (44). "The Wild" is by its nature untamed, but even it has a clearly distinguishable beginning and end (44). Curiously, on the map of the Wild, also called Wilderland, at the end of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien designates the "Edge of the Wild" with a straight line extending from the top to the bottom of the page. The *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* attributes the lack of life-like messiness in Tolkien's maps to "illustrators [who] tend to straighten rivers, tidy swamps, square-up mountains, and simplify coastlines, which erodes a map's credibility as a representation of natural landforms" (408). Still, Tolkien clearly intended to indicate a precise beginning to the Wild. On the hobbits' return trip, he describes the border of the Wild as a "river that marked the very edge of the borderland of the Wilde" (268). For Tolkien, it is natural that wilderness should be bounded, even as more developed land is.

In *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the* Oxford English Dictionary, Peter Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall, and Edmund Weiner posit that for Tolkien, the term "wild" may have been related to

the Old English *weald* or *wald*, meaning "forest" (217). The authors indicate that Tolkien "worked on the etymologies of WILD and WOLD when he was on the staff of the *OED*, is known to have preferred this etymology, and criticized the *OED*'s treatment of WILD in a written review after he had left the staff" (217). Yet the term also logically connotes *wilderness* (217). Tolkien's Wilderland is not entirely "wild" in the modern sense of the term, though it does contain a good deal of uninhabited forest. Various parts of it are settled, including Rivendell. The Wilderland map also shows a couple of gates: the Goblin-gate by Eyrie and the Forest Gate. The Old Forest Road runs from one edge of the Mirkwood Forest to the other. All of the rivers and mountain ranges have names. The map in the end pages of the book not only functions to orient the reader with reference to the locations of the different settings of the novel; while Gandalf, Bilbo, and the dwarves travel through the Wild, they consult a map (184). The group has to pass through mountain gates and river gates. Gates, paths, and place names all point to land that has been carved out and has had ownership assigned to various groups. The existence of the map of Wilderland suggests that the area has been at least somewhat well traveled, as someone has had to mark down all of the rivers, mountain ranges, and towns as well as estimate the distances between them.

Gates have an even stronger presence in the *Lord of the Rings.* Though the Shire is in many ways tied to nature (hobbit homes are tunnels cut into hills), it is also much concerned with artificial divisions and borders between tracts of land. Perhaps this detail should not be surprising, as the Shire was modeled on England (*Letters* 235, 250). Hobbit holes are hidden behind gates; just before Bilbo Baggins' eleventy-first birthday party, he places a prominent sign on his gate, announcing, "no admittance except on party business" (26). The gate is not merely decorative but is intended to control which hobbits enter Bag End and which cannot, to point out

to them which property belongs to Bilbo (and hence not to them). Likewise, for Bilbo's birthday party, he has a large tent set up with a tree growing underneath it (26). The tree branches hold lanterns, and an open-air kitchen is established (26). Again, the natural landscape is intertwined with hobbit building. Yet Bilbo also orders the building of "wide steps and a large white gate" (26). All of the hobbits are permitted entrance to the party, so the gate does not necessarily exist to exclude hobbits. Still, as Bilbo personally greets the guests as they pass through, the gate clearly signals to them that they are leaving public hobbit property and entering Bilbo's private land (26). These internal borders do not really protect the hobbits from attack; they simply exist because as larger regions of Middle-earth are divided among different groups, so are smaller tracts of land among individual owners. Fences and gates are part of the natural order.

These clear distinctions between smaller plots of land also appear between nations in Tolkien's fiction, often in the form of literal fences. In *The Ethics of Territorial Borders*, John Williams labels "territorial borders as 'fences' between sovereign spaces" (20). Roy J. Eidelson and Ian S. Lustick differentiate between territorial and cultural borders in "National Identity Repertoires, Territory, and Globalization":

> [w]e consider territorial borders as institutionalized demarcations of territory, usually associated with the officially sanctioned boundaries that separate one state from another. In contrast, identitarian or cultural borders, although they *may* correspond to territorial divisions, arise only from differences in the identities of clusters of inhabitants within a physically undivided space. (97-98)

Conversely, Tolkien almost without fail designates the physical borders of his nations as also cultural borders. The coinciding of territorial and cultural borders is evident both in the

characters' awareness of every time they cross a border and in their viewing of groups outside of their national borders as other.

The Shire is surrounded by a large hedge and gate that designates the end of the hobbits' land (108). As Shippey notes in *The Road to Middle-earth*, the hobbits harbor a "distrust of 'outsiders'" (102). The hedge forms a protective barrier around the Shire, for the most part shielding them from strangers. Hence, the hobbits' crossing this national border is a momentous occasion: the hedge "was closed by a gate of thick-set iron bars. Merry got down and unlocked the gate, and when they had all passed through he pushed it to again. It shut with a clang, and the lock clicked. The sound was ominous" (108). When the hobbits have passed through the gate, Merry punctuates their border-crossing, saying, "There! . . . You have left the Shire, and are now outside, and on the edge of the Old Forest" (108). Merry tells Sam, Frodo, and Pippin about the danger facing them outside of the protective border of the Shire (108). They not only must avoid the Black Riders, but also the trees, which have in the past attempted to attack the Shire (108). They have not been really safe in the Shire anymore, as the Black Riders have been hunting them, but Tolkien emphasizes this lack of safety by their realization that they are not outside the hedge and gate that formerly protected them. This early border-crossing in the *Lord of the Rings* establishes a pattern that continues through the rest of the novel: characters are always aware of the precise moment at which they have crossed into land owned by another group, and the crossing typically has important implications for the characters.

Despite their significance, borders have necessary limitations, even for Tolkien. While he viewed reinforced borders as necessary for national defense, he also recognized that nations have only limited control over them. In "Nation, State and Identity at International Borders," Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan explain that,

> Borders and their states are separate but related political structures, each somewhat dependent on the other for their power and strength. . . . Borders are always domains of contested power, in which local, national and international groups negotiate relations of subordination and control. Although an international border is a structure of the state, this does not mean that states can guarantee their borders' security from foreign influence. In many cases the central state is unable to control its border regions. (10)

For Tolkien, this inability to maintain power over national borders does not simply refer to having an influx of immigrants, but to the wartime fear of having the entire nation wholly taken over by another nation.

Such a take-over plays out in *The Lord of the Rings*. Near the end of the novel, when the hobbits return to the Shire, they find that numerous gates have been added to the one at Buckland (974). These gates visually signal to the group that hobbits no longer control the Shire and reflect what they will find inside. On either side of the Brandywine Bridge lies a "great spiked gate," along with houses "two-storeyed with narrow straight-sided windows, bare and dimly lit, all very gloomy and un-Shirelike" (975). Here, the border is no longer intertwined with nature, as was the hedge with its less obtrusive gate, and the new houses rise far above the hills rather than blending in (975). The nefarious "spiked gate" signifies the evil that has come to the Shire as well as a shift in political power. A sign on the gate reads, "No admittance between sundown and sunrise" (975). This sign mockingly mirrors the one on Bilbo's gate early in the novel: "no admittance except on party business" (26). The hobbits return to a Shire no longer jovial and community-oriented, but fearful.

When Frodo and his friends return to the Shire, the Shire-hobbits are consumed with a fear not only of strangers, but of one another. Frodo and his friends attempt to enter the gate and discover that the gate-guards are old friends who have known them from youth, yet these friends will not allow them to enter their homeland (975). One of the gate-guards explains, "I'm sorry, Master Merry, but we have orders" (975). Here, gates serve not to protect the inhabitants of the land, but to divide them through the hobbits' efforts to ingratiate themselves to the new governors. As such, Tolkien suggests that clearly defined borders are part of the natural order of things, and they must be fortified in some way to protect the nation against invasion, but they can be abused.

War, National Defense, and Fear of Strangers: Bree

The region of Bree-land in many ways functions as a border, both between other regions of Middle-earth and between segments of the plot. Prior to entering the land, the hobbits must cross the Brandywine River. In Appendix F following *The Return of the King*, Tolkien writes that the "older hobbit-name was *Branda-nîn* 'border-water'" (1112). In selecting this early name for the river, he clearly sets its purpose as signaling a division of land. He writes in *The Fellowship of the Ring* that the Brandywine River "was the original boundary of the land eastwards," establishing that the separation between the Shire and Bree-land has been in place for a long time (96). In *The Road to Middle-earth*, Shippey states that "'Bree' means 'hill' in Welsh. . . . Tolkien borrowed the name for its faint Celtic 'style', to make subliminally the point that hobbits were immigrants too, that their land had had a history before them" (109). Yet because Tolkien, through his naming of the river, has connected this arrangement of land ownership to an antiquity of sorts, he has given the "nation" of Bree the legitimacy to which Smith refers in *National Identity* (9). Smith suggests that "the earth in question cannot be just

anywhere; it is not any stretch of land. It is, and must be, the 'historic' land, the 'homeland', the 'cradle' of our people, even where, as with the Turks, it is not the land of ultimate origin" (9). Likewise, the ownership of Bree is "historic," even if the land originally might have belonged to another group (9).

The hobbits encounter another border when attempting to enter the village of Bree, a town that in some ways resembles a medieval city. It is comprised of the "stone houses of the Big Folk" built on the side of a hill (147). Around the side of the village,

> running in more than half a circle from the hill and back to it, there was a deep dike with a thick hedge on the inner side. Over this the Road crossed by a causeway; but where it pierced the hedge it was barred by a great gate. There was another gate in the southern corner where the Road ran out of the village. The gates were closed at nightfall; but just inside them were small lodges for the gatekeepers. (147)

This initial description of the hedge and gates surrounding the village of Bree resembles the border around the Shire (108). The connection between the two reinforces that, for Tolkien, the existence of such borders is necessary and natural.

Tolkien describes the town of Bree as a crossroads upon which "Men and other folk of various sorts had travelled much" (147). The townsfolk of Bree are an amalgam of Bree-hobbits (distinct from Shire-hobbits) and humans, or Big Folk (146). Tolkien characterizes these groups as separate but living harmoniously together: "[t]he Big Folk and the Little Folk (as they called one another) were on friendly terms, minding their own affairs in their own ways, but both rightly regarding themselves as necessary parts of the Bree-folk. Nowhere else in the world was this particular (but excellent) arrangement to be found" (146). In a footnote to one of Tolkien's

letters to Milton Waldman, Humphrey Carpenter notes that the Big Folk and Little Folk of Bree-land easily live together in the region in part because hobbits are "meant to be a branch of the specifically *human* race (not Elves or Dwarves)" (158). The two groups share a blood tie, if remote, and thus more easily accept their connection to one another.

Despite frequent interaction between the inhabitants of Bree and the travelers passing through, the Bree-folk also exhibit an increasing hesitance, if not outright fear, toward strangers. In former days, Shire-hobbits and Bree-hobbits interacted much more regularly, but by the time Frodo and his friends arrive at Bree, contact between the two groups has become rare (147). The Shire-hobbits view Bree-hobbits with suspicion:

> The Shire-hobbits referred to those of Bree, and to any others that lived beyond the borders, as Outsiders, and took very little interest in them, considering them dull and uncouth. . . . Some, doubtless, were no better than tramps, ready to dig a hole in any bank and stay only as long as it suited them. But in Bree-land, at any rate, the hobbits were decent and prosperous. (147)

Likewise, inhabitants of Bree are cautious of travelers from the Shire. Though Bree has long been accustomed to seeing strangers passing through, the gatekeeper is suspicious when Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin want to pass through. The hobbits must explain three times why they want to enter Bree before the gatekeeper will let them through the gate (148). Other residents are also reluctant to welcome outsiders into their land. Rangers, strange dark men that wander in the wild, visit Bree from time to time recounting tales about other parts of Middle-earth (146). The Bree-folk enjoy listening to these strangers, but they do "not make friends with them" (146). They accept the presence of the Rangers only at a distance.

In *The Ethics of Territorial Borders*, Williams states, "territorial borders must be about delimiting ownership, about delimiting authority, about establishing defensive lines and marking the difference between 'us' and 'them'" (1). The borders at Bree starkly reflect this way of thinking about national borders. Bree is characterized by loss and bears the mark of the impending war of Middle-earth. The region is isolated from the rest of Middle-earth, but not in the idyllic sense that the Shire is isolated. Tolkien describes the region as being "like an island in the empty lands round about" (146). Here, he hints at the devastation Sauron has already begun to cause. Visitors from all directions once passed through Bree, but they no longer come from the north, as "the Northern Lands had long been desolate, and the North Road was now seldom used: it was grass-grown, and the Bree-folk called it the Greenway" (147). South of Bree has not fared much better than the North. At the Prancing Pony, men and dwarves converse about men from the South moving north to escape the troubled regions (152). Tolkien characterizes the Bree-folk as "sympathetic, but plainly not very ready to take a large number of strangers into their little land" (152). Carpenter notes that by late 1938 Tolkien had written *The Lord of the Rings* through the hobbits' visit to Bree (191). As such, if the issue of refugees relocating to Bree reflects Tolkien's actual experience, it must be tied to his observations during the First World War (Croft 16-17). Yet as Croft points out, this issue "was reinforced" for Tolkien during World War II, as his family took in refugee families, and it repeatedly recurs as a theme throughout the *Lord of the Rings* (17). As a result, Bree becomes a turning point in the plot, alluding to the widespread effects the War of the Ring will have.

Bree is a turning point in the plot in other ways as well. In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion*, Richard Purtill observes that Frodo simultaneously exhibits immature behavior in revealing too much information "by 'showing off' at Bree" and also has to take on a

leadership role for the first time (52-53). Additionally, the hodgepodge of travelers and varied inhabitants of Bree that the hobbits encounter establish a tone of fear and distrust. Everyone here is mysterious, all have secrets, and none is clearly good or evil. The gatekeeper suspects the hobbits, and Aragorn ponders whether the gatekeeper could have aided the Black Riders (148, 171). The hobbits must choose whether or not to trust Aragorn, with only a late-arriving letter from Gandalf supporting their decision to take him as their guide (167). Aragorn, in turn, has to choose to trust the hobbits. He admits that he has been watching them: "I did not intend to tell you all about myself at once. I had to study *you* first, and make sure of you. The Enemy has set traps for me before now" (167). All of the characters are close enough to their homes that they could easily turn back, but all must make a choice at this juncture.

As with the Shire, in his portrayal of Bree, Tolkien also reveals a cynicism about the efficacy of borders and national defense, however indispensable they might be. The gate at Bree is meant to keep the town safe, but this protection proves illusory. There is no stone wall around Bree, only a hedge (147). The gate itself does not protect the town either. When the hobbits arrive, the gatekeeper informs them that "There's queer folk about. If you go to *The Pony*, you'll find you're not the only guests" (148). The gatekeeper's comment suggests that despite the efforts of the Bree-folk to control who passes through the gate, unsettling visitors still enter (148). More disturbingly, when the hobbits later meet Strider (Aragorn), he indicates that he has not only overheard their conversation outside the gate and knows who Frodo really is, but that he also "slipped over the gate just behind them" (161). Frodo and his friends gain a stark awareness of their potential fates when the Black Riders effortlessly pass through the gate and destroy the beds in which the hobbits were to have slept (173). The hedge and gate ultimately do not protect

the town; the only visitors who seem to be impeded from entering Bree are the hobbits, who mean no harm.

The later portrayal of Bree demonstrates the results of war. Though the battles of the War of the Ring are fought far from the borders of Bree, the little region is still deeply affected by the war and the consequent movement of strange people through its land. When Gandalf and the hobbits arrive at the South-gate on their return trip after defeating Sauron, they find the gate locked and have to call out many times before the Gate-keeper answers (967). He holds a large cudgel and "look[s] at them with fear and suspicion" (968). The town of Bree is nearly deserted; its inhabitants stay inside with their doors locked (970). The group passes a boarded-up house and find themselves nearly the only guests at the Prancing Pony. Barliman Butterbur, the innkeeper at the *Prancing Pony*, informs the group that thieves and murderers had come to Bree, and five of the townspeople had died (970). The Bree-folk suspect that Harry Goatleaf, a former Gate-keeper, and Bill Ferny, a Bree resident, let the intruders through the gate (970). These encounters with enemies intensify the fear of strangers in Bree. Butterbur tells Gandalf and the hobbits that "we don't want no outsiders at Bree, nor near Bree at all. We want to be let alone. I don't want a whole crowd o' strangers camping here and settling there and tearing up the wild country" (971). As Croft comments, England saw a similar "temporary influx of refugees" following both World Wars, which led in some ways to the "dilut[ing]" of the local culture (62).

The rest of Bree evidently shares Butterbur's fear of refugees moving to the region, as the townsfolk have all locked themselves in their homes and rarely go to the Prancing Pony to intermingle with visitors (968). The war has changed Bree substantially, and not for the better. In early days, it was a crossroads through which numerous travelers passed (147). They met at the inn and shared beer and conversation. After the war, the Prancing Pony sits nearly empty,

and the gates have been made more secure; traitors have been thrown out of town (967, 970). The townspeople had been a little wary of strangers before, but now they are isolating themselves. The Bree-folk want to keep out strangers of every kind, not only hostile ones. Gandalf tells Butterbur that the King and his "fair folk" will some day ride again in the lands near Bree (971). Butterbur responds simply, "so long as he lets Bree alone" (971). Gandalf tells him about Aragorn's riders as encouragement, but Butterbur wants nothing to do with any strangers at all, friendly or hostile (971). Because the borders proved so ineffectual before, the region has reinforced them; the perceived need for them has been magnified. The fear of the Bree-folk mirrors the reaction of many English people to the refugees moving into England after the two World Wars. The Bree-folk do not appear unreasonable, yet their land lacks the jovial quality it once had. For Tolkien, borders are only useful to a point, and simply excluding others does not really prevent a nation from becoming worse.

National Defense and Myth: Rivendell

The border at Rivendell presents a stark contrast to the one at Bree in that it succeeds in preventing enemies from entering the land. This river-border is also markedly dissimilar from real-world borders, which "are contentious and controversial in their location, but not in the role they play. Disputes about territorial borders focus on where they are to be drawn, producing some of the most bitter and intractable political conflicts in international relations. Ways of containing, if not resolving, these disputes have a chequered history" (Williams 20). Real-world borders often change, and even when they remain relatively stable, agreement about rightful ownership of a particular piece of land is rare. On the contrary, the border at Rivendell is decidedly natural and indisputable, not only because it is literally part of nature, but because it is imbued with mythical power.

The elves did not build any sort of wall or gate around Rivendell; not even a hedge exists to keep intruders out. Rivendell's border is simply a river called the Ford of Rivendell. The river serves not only to mark where Rivendell begins but also to protect the inhabitants of the region. The ford much more effectively holds out intruders than do the guarded gates at Bree. After leaving the Prancing Pony, Aragorn and the hobbits encounter the Black Riders, one of whom leaves Frodo mortally wounded (191). Aragorn attempts to heal the wound with the *Athelas* plant, but he has no power over Frodo's injury so that Frodo must travel to Rivendell if he is to have any hope of being cured (193, 198). When Frodo approaches the Ford, riding on a horse from the elf Glorfindel, several Black Riders pursue him (207). Frodo easily crosses to safety on the Rivendell side of the bank, but the Black Riders are swallowed by a sudden flood in the river (209).

This miraculously timed washing away of enemies has literary precedents. During the late 1930s, Tolkien was working on a translation of the Old English *Exodus*. As Carpenter observes in his biography, Tolkien worked on this translation for a long time and in fact never finished it because he could not make it into a condition he found acceptable (144). Tolkien's tendency to spend years, even decades, meticulously refining translations and drafts indicates that he invested a great deal of energy in pondering themes and selecting words. It is not surprising that some of the themes of the *Exodus* should have seeped into his fiction. The Old English poem, like its biblical analogue, centers on an epic border crossing over a body of water. Though the story of the Israelites fleeing from Egypt recounts the migration of an entire people and gives little indication of individual identity (apart from the figure of Moses), the events at the Red Sea relate to those at the Ford of Rivendell in several important ways. In the Old English

and biblical *Exodus* narratives and the *Lord of the Rings*, the border-crossing is precipitated by a chase scene, and Frodo, like the Israelites, easily passes to safety.

In all three narratives, a water-border cuts a precise line between danger and safety. In both *Exodus* narratives, the Israelites escape the Egyptians simply by making it across the Red Sea faster than the Egyptians. Frodo survives similarly. As Glorfindel leads Strider and the hobbits toward the Ford, he tells them, "Our peril will be greatest just ere we reach the river . . . for my heart warns me that the pursuit is now swift behind us, and other danger may be waiting by the Ford" (207). Glorfindel recognizes that even just outside Rivendell's border, they are not safe. Frodo fears that he is still in danger once across the Ford. He crosses without hindrance and believes the Black Riders will do so as easily (208). The path from the river's edge into Rivendell is unstable, and Frodo loses consciousness once he has crossed to the other side; he has no hope of escaping if the Riders cross the river (208). Frodo neither outwits nor outruns them; he escapes simply because he has crossed the border.

None of these floods happens by coincidence. In the Old English *Exodus*, the un-parting of the Red Sea occurs because the "true God by Moses's hand gave room unto its wrath" (30). Tolkien translates the description of the death of the Egyptians in the Old English *Exodus* graphically: "Wide then it ranged, sweeping with deadly arms outflung. Foaming was the flood. Doomed men went down. Sea fell back upon the ground. The sky was shaken. The embattled walls gave way; the billows burst; the towers of the sea crumbled. . . . [M]any it destroyed, shrieking, horrible" (30). In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Ford of Rivendell washes away the enemies as a result of magical control over nature. Neither Frodo nor his companions, following some distance behind him, cause the flood, though Frodo tries to do so (209). When the Black Riders begin to step into the water, Frodo waves his sword and yells to the Riders to return to

Mordor. The Riders, undeterred by Frodo's commands, mock him and threaten to take him to Mordor. Frodo then swears by Elbereth and Lúthien, but it is not the power of this oath that conjures the flood. Rather, as Gandalf later informs Frodo, Elrond has commanded the flood from afar: "[t]he river of this valley is under his power, and it will rise in anger when he has great need to bar the Ford" (218). Gandalf himself adds his own power to the flood, causing the waves to resemble horses.

For Tolkien, the use of magic to manipulate the natural world relates to the modern use of machinery but may or may not have the same negative attributes he typically associates with modern technology. In a letter to Waldman, Tolkien links the machine and magic because of the propensity of both to serve the "desire for Power, for making the will more quickly effective" (*Simarillion* xiii). He adds that the "Machine is our more obvious modern form though more closely related to Magic than is usually recognized" (xiii). Magic in Tolkien's fiction clearly gives its possessors the capacity to perpetrate great evil, most obviously in their potential to use the ring to gain power. Yet magic for Tolkien also has a more benevolent side. He admits to Waldman that "I have not used 'magic' consistently, and indeed the Elven-queen Galadriel is obliged to remonstrate with the Hobbits on their confused use of the word both for the devices and operations of the Enemy, and for those of the Elves" (xiii). He asserts that the term "magic" has both positive and negative connotations and that evil magic at times "can and does arise from an apparently good root, the desire to benefit the world and others" (xiii). This lack of a precise separation of types of magic permits Tolkien to give Elrond and Gandalf the power to control the Ford of Rivendell without diminishing either the threat posed by Sauron or the danger of the "good" characters falling prey to the lure of the ring.

In evoking the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea, Tolkien imbues the border at Rivendell with mythic elements, increasing its importance. The Old English *Exodus* emphasizes the border-crossing even more than does the biblical Exodus. In *Old English Verse*, Shippey discusses the symbolic import of water in the *Junius Manuscript*, in which *Exodus* is found. He notes that unlike the biblical Exodus, the Old English *Exodus* centers almost entirely on the crossing of the Red Sea (136). In *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, Nicholas Howe describes the numerous words the OE poet creates by melding *mearc*, Old English for "border," with various other words throughout the text (83). Near the sea lie "*mearchofu*, 'houses of the border region,'" Moses accompanies a "*mearcþreat*, 'army of the border region,'" and the Israelites are pursued by "*mearcweardas* . . . or 'border-beasts of battle'" (83). Shippey argues that the crossing of the Red Sea symbolizes "baptism, a process which (as Augustine says) blots out sins like the water covering the Egyptians. . . . The Exodus-passage gives a fine analogue for baptism itself, as the Israelites (or Christian souls) pass out of Egypt (the sinful world), through the waters (of baptism), to the Promised Land (of Heaven)" (137). Certainly, the flood that sweeps over the Ringwraiths cannot directly correlate to baptism, as the Ringwraiths are only temporarily disarmed and not obliterated, and Frodo is not healed simply by passing through the water. Yet the more general theme of water overcoming evil evokes baptism while also demonstrating the strength of the defenses of Rivendell. In this way, Tolkien links this border to his Christian faith as well as to an early English national myth.

Alliances, Morality, and Land Ownership: Moria

In *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Donnan and Wilson argue that "[j]ust as borders may be both bridge and barrier between these spaces, so their crossing can be both enabling and disabling, can create opportunities or close them off. Since borders are used to

mark difference, those who cross potentially threaten to undermine and subvert the distinction between 'us' and 'them'" (107). Though most of Tolkien's borders clearly distinguish between two cultures, one of them was originally designed to foster intercultural friendship and regular crossings-over. The borders of Moria, ancestral home of the dwarves, once served the dual function of protecting wealth and encouraging the alliance between the dwarves and the elves.

Moria consists of mines and tunnels dug through the Misty Mountains. In times of peace, a path led to the walls, and the Gate-stream, which "used to be swift and noisy," ran just outside the wall (292-3). A gate stood near the stream (293). Plants lined the outside of the walls: "Holly was the token of the people of that land, and they planted it here to mark the end of their domain. . . . Those were happier days, when there was still close friendship at times between folk of different races, even between Dwarves and Elves" (295). The door to enter the mines of Moria fostered this friendship. Gimli tells the Fellowship that "Dwarf-doors are not made to be seen when shut . . . their own masters cannot find or open them, if their secret is forgotten" (296). Yet as Gandalf points out, "this Door was not made to be a secret known only to Dwarves" (296). This door is so secure that it cannot be seen by any enemies. It becomes visible and opens only when a password, the Elvish word for "friend," is spoken (300). In days of peace, both the dwarves and the elves knew the password and could enter Moria at will (300). Moria's external borders as they were originally conceived presented an ideal: a border that could simultaneously defend the nation and foster friendships with other nations.

By the time the Fellowship arrives at the Dimrill Gate, all traces of this harmonious relationship have disappeared. The walls and the path leading to the door lie in ruin, and the password has long been forgotten (292, 299-300). The Gate-stream, called Sirannon, scarcely runs anymore (293). In its place a grimy, stagnant lake stands behind a dam (293-4). No light

shines on this lake, and its murky waters fill the once-green valley (293). The Dimrill Gate represents a forgotten alliance and in many ways a forgotten people. The "broken and decayed" path suggests that none have entered or exited this door for a long time (292). In place of the holly that once warmly and lightheartedly marked the beginning of dwarf territory, "[s]tumps and dead boughs were rotting in the shadows" (295). In the stagnant lake lives a giant water-monster who nearly drags Frodo into the lake and crushes the entrance to Moria just as Gandalf remembers the password and hurriedly ushers the group into Moria (300-1). This turn of events reinforces the originally idealistic portrait of Moria's border; the alliance was necessary for the nation to thrive. Once the alliance is broken, the nation stagnates.

As Jane Chance notes in *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*, the dwarves eventually lose their ownership of Moria because of their moral failings (157). The interconnectedness of morality and national flourishing begins long before the Fellowship travels through the mines. In the first appendix following the *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien chronicles the history of the dwarves' ownership of Moria. In early days, the dwarves prospered financially (1046). Tolkien writes that the "power of Moria endured throughout the Dark Years and the dominion of Sauron [his first reign], for though Eregion was destroyed and the gates of Moria were shut, the halls of Khazad-dûm were too deep and strong and filled with a people too numerous and valiant for Sauron to conquer from without" (1046). In this period, Moria is all but invincible; Sauron and his orcs cannot penetrate Moria's borders because of the dwarves' courage (1046). Even though the dwarves begin to decrease in number, they remain in control of Moria (1046). As long as they are good, the dwarves do not lose their right to their ancestral mines.

Prior to the ultimate loss of Moria, the dwarves lose some of their wealth as a result of their greed in *The Hobbit*. In the beginning of the story, the dwarves ally themselves with elves

and at least one hobbit, Bilbo Baggins. One of the dwarves, Thorin Oakenshield, toasts Bilbo, calling him a "friend and fellow conspirator, this most excellent and audacious hobbit" (16). Thorin then proceeds to label Gandalf "our friend and counsellor, the ingenious wizard" (16). The dwarves at this point have long known Gandalf but have only just met Bilbo (16). It is not they who resist the friendship, but Bilbo. When they arrive at Bag End, Bilbo becomes upset, as "he liked to know them [visitors] before they arrived, and he preferred to ask them himself" (9). The dwarves nonetheless befriend him and drag him along on an expedition to steal the hoard of the dragon Smaug. As Garth observes, Smaug has decimated the land surrounding the Lonely Mountain, in which he dwells, destroying all green things in the traditional manner of dragons in the *Volsunga Saga* (267, 308). Garth describes these dragons as "carnal monsters who 'love lies and lust after gold'" (267). The dwarves overcome Smaug but then take on similar attributes in their attempt to hold onto their newfound wealth. They turn on Bilbo when he secretly gives the immensely valuable Arkenstone to a group of men preparing to attack the mountain in which the dwarves have barricaded themselves (247).

Men from the nearby Lake-town approach the dwarves, and one man calls out, "Hail Thorin! Why do you fence yourself like a robber in his hold? We are not yet foes" (236). This man's reaction to the dwarves' barricade signals its excessiveness and clearly links the excess to the dwarves' greed. A battle ensues and grows to include elves and goblins as well as dwarves and men (251). The goblins are drawn to the battle after hearing of the death of Smaug. Bilbo fears that the goblins will capture the treasure and prefers that "Smaug had been left with all the wretched treasure, than that these vile creatures should get it" (255). One act of plundering out of greed leads to war, numerous deaths, and the awakening of an enemy more terrible than the one destroyed. In the end, Thorin comes to regret the greed of his people, telling Bilbo, "Since I

leave now all gold and silver [in death], and go where it is of little worth, I wish to part in friendship with you" (258). In this instance, some of the dwarves survive and learn from their disastrous mistake, but the greed of a later generation of dwarves does not turn out so well.

The dwarves eventually lose ownership of Moria, as Chance argues, when their moral strength gives way (157). Tolkien explains in Appendix A of the *Lord of the Rings* that the "Dwarves delved deep at that time, seeking beneath Barazinbar for *mithril* [a priceless metal]. . . . Thus they roused from sleep a thing of terror that, flying from Thangorodrim, had lain hidden at the foundations of the earth" (1046). Their outer borders (the gates and doors leading into the mountain from outside) are not penetrated; this enemy comes from below the tunnels under the mountain (1046). This border is primarily protected by the dwarves' goodness. They literally have to dig deep into the earth to release the Balrog, but there is also a moral element, as they are digging in search of more *mithril* (and exponentially increasing wealth) (1046). After the Balrog has entered the mines, "the glory of Moria passed, and its people were destroyed or fled far away" (1046). Kocher notes that the Balrog is the "spiritual opposite" of Gandalf, who must battle with him (72). In *The Ring of Words: Tolkien and the* Oxford English Dictionary, Peter Gilliver, Jeremy Marshall, and Edmund Weiner indicate that the first part of the word "Balrog" comes from the Old English *bealu*, meaning "evil" (207). This creature is labeled "evil" and appears in the form of fire and shadow (*Fellowship* 321). These elements link the Balrog to hell and reinforce the connection between the dwarves' loss and their sin.

The dwarves' greed weakens their borders and causes them to lose ownership of Moria, driving them into exile (1047). Dwarves periodically fight the orcs that have taken up residence in the mines, but they continue to lose (1046-50). When the Fellowship enters the mines, they find the bones and broken swords of the dwarves who once lived there (313). The mines are

dark, though they once were "full of light and splendour" (307). Gandalf reads from decaying pieces of a book of records and discovers that orcs had invaded Moria and killed the dwarves (314). The dwarves had barred the entrance to the mines, to protect both themselves and their treasure, but in the process they trapped themselves (314). Hauntingly, they wrote in their record book, "We cannot get out. We cannot get out. . . . they are coming" (314). The borders of Moria, though reinforced with magic, cannot keep its enemies out. The hidden, password-protected door still stands to impede the Fellowship's entrance, despite the mines' having been overtaken by orcs. The devastation of Moria reveals Tolkien's evident belief that strong borders alone are not enough to protect a nation; the inhabitants can only continue to own their ancestral land so long as they live morally. With this turn in the plot, Tolkien inverts the imperialist view his nation historically espoused. As Robert Gildea observes in *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914*, "imperialism was defended as sanctioned by high moral principle, as a vehicle of peace, Christianity, and civilization" (341). Rather than portraying the dwarves as expanding their borders and thereby proving their moral superiority, Tolkien shows them losing the land they already have as a result of their diminishing morality.

Land Ownership and Destruction: Mordor

In the introduction to *Identities, Borders, Orders*, Yosef Lapid argues that "[b]orders, for instance, are in many ways inseparable from the identities they help demarcate or individuate" (7). Similarly, the borders and the internal landscape of Mordor reflect its ownership. As befitting the "land of the Enemy," the border surrounding Mordor is the most ominous and the least passable of all the borders in Tolkien's fiction (622). The region's landscape establishes a sense of loss and hopelessness. Several mountain ranges encompass Mordor, including the "gloomy range of Ephel Dúath, the Mountains of Shadow," and the "broken peaks and barren

ridges of Ered Lithui, grey as ash" (622). The mountains form a barrier around the "mournful plains" and the "bitter inland sea" of Mordor (622). This land in part serves as a commentary on its owners; Sauron and his orcs and Uruk-hai destroy both human (and hobbit, elf, and dwarf) lives and nature in favor of machines. In his description of Mordor, Tolkien warns against the willful destruction of nature, making the end result sound as bleak as possible. The depiction of Mordor also functions as a convenient warning to the side of Good. Unlike actual warfare, in which battles are waged on lands more or less indistinguishable from one another, this "land of the Enemy" unmistakably cautions to trespassers that they are not on friendly territory. It also prevents them from feeling empathy for the Enemy, a frightening but perhaps necessary moral bracing if they are to destroy the ring, and hence, Mordor.

The northwestern border of Mordor is a gate that sits between two "black-boned and bare" towers, the Teeth of Mordor (622). Tolkien's description of this gate in *The Two Towers* is haunting:

> Across the mouth of the pass, from cliff to cliff, the Dark Lord had built a rampart of stone. In it there was a single gate of iron, and upon its battlement sentinels paced unceasingly. Beneath the hills on either side the rock was bored into a hundred caves and maggot-holes; there a host of orcs lurked, ready at a signal to issue forth like black ants going to war. None could pass the Teeth of Mordor and not feel their bite, unless they were summoned by Sauron, or knew the secret passwords that would open the Morannon, the black gate of this land. (622)

The password protection of the Black Gate recalls the entrance to Moria, but without the memory of an alliance evoked by Moria's password, "friend" (*Fellowship* 300; *Two Towers* 622). Mordor's Black Gate gives no hints or riddles about its passwords, ensuring that only those

approved by Sauron will ever enter through it. The "hundred caves and maggot-holes" in which orcs sit ready to attack intruders also suggests an insurmountable degree of protection.

The magnitude of Mordor's defense at the Black Gate becomes further apparent when Aragorn leads his army to challenge Mordor. As Kocher writes in *Master of Middle-earth*, this army is woefully inadequate to face Sauron's legions (157). Aragorn and his soldiers are so greatly outnumbered that they can only serve as a "decoy knowing they are bound to be overwhelmed unless Frodo and Sam are still alive . . . and can first throw the Ring into Mount Doom. Destroying it even an hour too late will not save the little army outside" (157). The reinforcements at the Black Gate prove so intimidating that a number of Aragorn's soldiers must be reassigned to "posts of lesser terror" (158). However minimal the odds of a positive outcome, the battle waged over this border in part determines the outcome of the larger war. As Kocher notes, the army draws Sauron's minions out of Mordor, and in doing so, they "give the Ring-bearer his maximum opportunity by distracting Sauron's attention for the longest possible time" (158). Because of Sauron's heavy focus on the northwestern border, a failing which Aragorn and his army exploit, Sauron fails to notice the infiltration of Sam and Frodo through another entrance.

However intimidating the Black Gate appears, Mordor ultimately is not as invincible as it initially seems. Sauron pours all of his energy and resources into guarding the northwestern border of his land in the most efficacious manner possible. When Aragorn and his soldiers approach the Black Gate, "[a]ll was silent but watchful. . . . Yet they knew that all the hills and rocks about the Morannon were filled with hidden foes, and the shadowy defile beyond was bored and tunnelled by teeming broods of evil things" (869). Despite this extreme vigilance, Sauron does not waste resources: "the Enemy had no more force than would suffice for the

manning of the gate and wall alone" (869). Yet he ignores the other entrance, a decision which proves to have disastrous consequences for him. At the Black Gate, the "army could not assault with hope" of victory, but the other entrance is guarded only by some orcs and Shelob, a giant spider (869). Shelob, a formidable opponent in her own right, devours orcs and renders Frodo unconscious, but once she is defeated, Sam easily crosses into Mordor (879). The text reads simply, "At once the road turned left and plunged steeply down. Sam had crossed into Mordor" (879). Sam and Frodo eventually are able to dispose of the ring because Sauron's attention is fixed elsewhere.

Even the name, "Mordor," is revealing. As Chance explains in *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England,* the word "Mordor" comes from the Old English word, "morðor," meaning "murder or slaying" (46). She adds that the "split self, division, homicide, symbolizes the quality of existence in the land ruled by Sauron" (46). Inhabitants of Mordor kill enemies and even one another. One particular scene in Mordor depicts murder as a cannibalistic act, in that one orc stabs another and then licks the knife (886). The land mirrors this association of murder with consumption: the Black Gate is flanked by two towers called the Teeth of Mordor, and the mountain range near where Sam crosses over the border is "jagged with crags like fangs" (879). Sauron and his orcs not only destroy lives but also land, through their excessive use of machines. The land reflects this destruction in its absence of any kind of vegetation and the widespread presence of fire (879). When Sam enters the land in search of Frodo, who has been captured by orcs, he sees the "inner ring of the fences of the land" surrounding a distant "lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires" (879). Smoke rises above the lake and hangs over the entire expanse of the Mordor (879).

Fire is not always associated with evil in Tolkien's fiction. As Purtill discusses, Gandalf uses fire as a form of magic in several instances in both *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* (102). Ordinary (non-magic) fire is also used to defeat evil. In the *Fellowship of the Ring*, as several of the Black Riders are swept away by the Ford of Rivendell, a few of them attempt to turn back (218). But Aragorn and the elf Glorfindel meet them with fiery torches and force them into the flood. Fire, like magic, is not inherently an evil for Tolkien, despite its prevalence in Mordor. Fire is powerful and has the potential for destruction, for good or ill. Purtill explains that for Tolkien, both magic and machines can be vehicles for good or evil, based on the motives of the users (103). He adds that Tolkien believed the "use of machinery or technology to control the material world is dangerous: it makes our action on the world more rapid and more powerful, thus enormously 'amplifying' mistaken or malicious choices" (103). This fear of losing control over machines perhaps explains Tolkien's depiction of Mordor as a sort of hell on Earth, with its pockets of fire burning atop a lake.

The lake bears only a portion of the fires of Mordor. Mount Doom, the Mountain of Fire, holds an enormous amount of fire, in the form of lava:

> Ever and anon the furnaces far below its ashen cone would grow hot and with a great surging and throbbing pour forth rivers of molten rock from chasms in its sides. Some would flow blazing towards Barad-dûr down great channels; some would wind their way into the stony path, until they cooled and lay like twisted dragon-shapes vomited from the tormented earth. (879)

The lava that flows from Mount Doom in part shapes the barren land of Mordor. Curiously, this feature of the landscape is natural and not a result of Sauron's reckless treatment of the earth.

Yet the fires of Mount Doom engulf Mordor and destroy Sauron after the ring is destroyed, perhaps as a form of the earth retaliating for Sauron's mistreatment of his land.

After Gollum and the ring fall into the fires of Mount Doom, smoke and lava pour out and cover the land (925-26). The lava devours the entire land of Mordor, ending with its borders: "The Towers of the Teeth swayed, tottered, and fell down; the mighty rampart crumbled; the Black Gate was hurled in ruin" (928). The identity of the physical land has become so intertwined with that of its evil owners that the destruction of the ring of power must result in the destruction of the entire land. The connection between the land and its owners is so all-encompassing that when the land is subsumed, Sauron, the orcs, and the Nazgûl are destroyed as well, despite that they are interspersed among Aragorn's troops or in the air (928-29). Many of them are fighting outside the borders of Mordor when they die (928-29). The land belonging to Sauron is defined by its boundaries to such an extent that the borders are destroyed along with the land, and no land beyond them is harmed (928-29).

Conclusion: A Gateless Bree and Mordor?

Christopher Tolkien's *History of Middle-earth* series contains various early drafts of J. R. R. Tolkien's works, including the *Lord of the Rings*. The earliest accounts of the entrances at Bree and Mordor demonstrate that Tolkien more than once toyed with the idea creating a nation without a fortified border. Part VI of the *History of Middle-earth*, *The Return of the Shadow*, contains several drafts of the hobbits' arrival at Bree. In the earliest existing version, no gate is mentioned at all: "When our four hobbits at last rode into Bree they were very glad. The inn door was open" (134). Here, the hobbits cross the border at Bree with little more than a hint that they have done so. There is no indication of a gate or guard, or any other hindrance to

strangers entering Bree at will. Even the door of the Prancing Pony is left wide open for anyone who wishes to enter (134).

In a later draft, Tolkien more explicitly ponders having a borderless Bree. When the hobbits first approach Bree, Frodo comments, "It's airier . . . and safer too in wilder country. There is no fence around Bree that I can see" (333). The text abruptly ends here. In an editorial insertion, Christopher Tolkien writes, "Here my father stopped; probably at that moment he decided that this was improbable. In the completed text of the chapter dike, hedge, and gate appear" (333). The text after this commentary immediately picks up with:

> Frodo and his companions came at last to the Greenway-crossing and drew near the village. They found that it was surrounded by a deep ditch with a hedge and fence on the inner side. Over this the Road ran, but it was closed (as was the custom after nightfall) by a great gate of loose bars laid across strong posts on either side. (333)

This passage closely resembles the version of the text that made its way into the *Fellowship of the Ring*. The primary difference between the two is that the final version names this entrance to Bree the West-gate, suggesting the existence of multiple gates (148).

Tolkien later made another attempt to imagine a nation without a defended entrance. Part VIII of the *History of Middle-earth*, *The War of the Ring*, contains an early version of Sam and Frodo's first attempt to enter Mordor. This draft initially conceives of a Mordor with no Black Gate: "No rampart, or wall, or bars of stone or iron were laid across the Morannon; for the rock on either side was bored and tunnelled into a hundred caves and maggot-holes. A host of orcs lurked there" (122). Christopher Tolkien indicates that "[t]his was changed in the manuscript as soon as written to the text of TT [*The Two Towers*], introducing the rampart of stone and the

single gate of iron" (122). As with the border at Bree, Tolkien briefly flirts with the idea of not having a gate at all. Clearly, with its numerous orcs waiting in caves to attack any would-be invader, Mordor's border is not defenseless. Yet it is telling that Tolkien immediately halted after creating a gateless Mordor and changed the text to include both the cave-dwelling orcs and the impenetrable Black Gate. He cannot conceive of a nation with an open entrance, even if that open entrance has a host of guards standing ready to attack would-be invaders.

Tolkien's prolific depiction of clearly defined borders demonstrates his need to designate separate identities, both of individuals and nations. Land ownership legitimates and reinforces national identity through the lands' mirroring characteristics of the owners. All lands have clearly marked borders, some natural and some artificial. Rivendell has its magical river, the Shire and Bree have their hedges and gates, and the domesticated lands are even separated from the Wild by a clearly marked straight line. When Tolkien attempts to imagine a land without a border, he almost immediately abandons the draft and revises his depiction to include a gate. For Tolkien, borders are a part of the natural order of things. These boundaries serve to protect inhabitants of a land not only from their enemies, but also from their own desires. Borders point out to owners not only where their land *actually* ends, but where it *should* end. When the Dwarves excessively mine in Moria, they surpass the natural boundary of their property, motivated by greed for greater wealth. Consequently, they unleash the demonic balrog, and many of the Dwarves die in the midst of seeing their ancestral land taken over by orcs.

Tolkien's depiction of borders is complex, and he reveals an awareness of the potentially harmful repercussions of nations' excessively building up borders. The Dwarves have such airtight external defenses that when attacked from the inside, they cannot leave, but their internal (moral) boundaries are left unguarded (*Fellowship* 314). When the hobbits return to the Shire,

they find it surrounded by high walls and multiple guarded gates that previously did not exist. Former friends refuse them entry to their homeland out of a fear of the new government (*Return* 975). Similarly, the Bree-folk reinforce their own gates and will only admit the hobbits after much questioning. While physically in the same location as before, Bree is no longer the crossroads and meeting point of cultures that it once was. The changes to the borders of the Shire and Bree occur as a result of the war and so in some ways simply reflect the need for heightened security during wartime. Yet these reinforced borders also create a sharp sense of loss in the hobbits, particularly when they find the new gates at the Shire. These spiked, high-walled gates connected to two-storey watch towers alter the nature of the Shire, with its low homes tunneled through small hills. For Tolkien, clearly marked borders play an important role in defining national identity, but they have their own limitations in usefulness.

Despite his consistent emphasis on the necessity of visible, often fortified borders, Tolkien also shows wariness about their ability to protect inhabitants of an area or to enable them to hold onto their land permanently. Early in *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn and the Ringwraiths easily pass over the border at Bree unseen (161). The heavily guarded Black Gate at Mordor and the spiked gates at the Shire do not prevent the hobbits from entering either region (879). Most significantly, the presence of the airborne Nazgûl introduces an aerial warfare of sorts to Middle-earth (Garth 312). Hedges, gates, and even mountains cannot hinder these creatures from flying into lands. Attacks from above are now possible, and the ground-level defenses that the borders have long provided increasingly lose their effectiveness.

Tolkien has painstakingly tied the lands of Middle-earth to their inhabitants through longtime ownership and features of lands that mirror those of the owners. Yet land ownership in *The Lord of the Rings* is not necessarily permanent, even when landowners do not lose their land

out of moral failing. Gandalf hints to Frodo that Rivendell may not always belong to the elves, telling him, “Indeed there is a power in Rivendell to withstand the might of Mordor, for a while” (217). Gandalf’s “for a while,” tacked onto his more encouraging assessment of Rivendell’s strength, gives the elves’ ownership of Rivendell a temporary quality (217). Gandalf’s prophecy of sorts comes to fruition, as the elves must leave Rivendell along with Frodo, in a permanent journey to the Grey Havens. With this ending, Tolkien both concludes that all land ownership is temporary and reinforces his depiction of clearly defined borders. Frodo and the elves cross one last border as they pass into a land not visible to the hobbits watching them from the shore: “the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he [Frodo] beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise” (1007).

NATIONAL MEMORY AND MYTH

Introduction

Tolkien learned from his early experience of war that continuity is by no means guaranteed and felt the weight of the need to preserve the voices of friends who died before they could fulfill their own potential. In *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, Carpenter discusses the losses Tolkien suffered during the First World War. During his youth, Tolkien and several friends at school formed a group called the Tea Club and Barrovian Society (T. C. B. S.) (53). In this society, they shared with each other their various budding areas of expertise, and in doing so the four primary members developed a tight friendship (53-4). All four served in the war, but only Tolkien and one of the other three members survived (92-3). Carpenter relates a letter that one member, G. B. Smith, wrote to Tolkien during the war: "My chief consolation is that . . . there will still be left a member of the great T. C. B. S. to voice what I dreamed . . . may you say the things I have tried to say long after I am not there to say them, if such be my lot" (93-4). Smith died not long after writing this letter (93).

Even before Smith's death, Tolkien felt a drive to carry on the personal missions of any of his T. C. B. S. friends who did not live through the war. In a 1916 letter to Smith, Tolkien shares his hope that "the TCBS may have been all we dreamt – and its work in the end be done by three or two or one survivor and the part of the others be trusted by God to that of the inspiration which we do know we all got and get from one another" (*Letters* 10). Of course, these words were written in the midst of war and as such represent a heightened emotional state, not necessarily a long-term reaction to the deaths of his friends. Still, Tolkien certainly had to face from a fairly early age the realities that not all ambitions are satisfied and that knowledge

and talents can be lost. These were not his first encounters with death: Tolkien had lost both of his parents in childhood and was well aware of the temporariness of life.

This awareness repeatedly shows up in Tolkien's letters and fiction and informs his ideas about national identity and memory. Nations form a consciousness of their identity and attempt to preserve that identity by constructing a collective memory. In *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Andreas Huyssen writes,

> The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. . . . The temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not, as some naive epistemology might have it, the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is dependent on some past event or experience. It is this tenuous fissure between past and present that constitutes memory. (3)

Memory does not show the past as it actually was; rather, it represents a reconstruction of the past that supports the identities of present societies (3). Likewise, Tolkien records prolific histories from which his fictional nations piece together their identities. These histories, for the most part, appear in the form of fragmented records and legends, rather than historical events as they actually happened. In this way, the histories become memories, or representations of the past that aim to protect the nations of Middle-earth from losing the past altogether.

National Record-Keeping and Preservation of Cultural Artifacts

A central aspect of the creation of national memory is the documentation of lives and events important to the nation. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson likens national record-keeping to that of individuals. He points out that because people cannot remember every event

of their own lives, they amass "documentary evidence (birth certificates, diaries, report cards, letters, medical records, and the like) which simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and emphasizes its loss from memory" (204). From these various sheets of paper, individuals are able to string together bits of information about their lives into a whole identity (204). All of these documented details inform how the individual views his/her identity, even though he/she cannot remember the actual experience of many of them, such as the date of birth (204). Anderson suggests that nations also maintain records to preserve a sense of continuity and develop their identity (205).

In *History and Memory*, Geoffrey Cubitt adds that "literacy . . . introduces the concept of a record, as something distinct from a memory" (189). According to Cubitt, a society that orally transmits cultural information relies on the memories of members of the society to accurately preserve that information; such memories can only be known to others through questioning people who directly experienced an event or heard about it from someone else (189). Any memory lost is permanently lost without having records as a means of retrieving it. Record-keeping aims to prevent important figures and events from disappearing from the collective consciousness of a nation.

Tolkien's writing often focuses not only on moving a plot forward, but on establishing a past for each of his nations. He gives each group in his fictive world painstaking histories and genealogies. He rarely introduces or ends a story without an explication of the history of the region and its people. At times, these narratives are quite lengthy. Of the more than 100 pages of his appendices tacked onto the end of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien writes, "The legends, histories, and lore to be found in the sources [outside of these appendices] are very extensive. Only selections from them, in most places much abridged, are here presented. Their principal

purpose is to illustrate the War of the Ring and its origins, and to fill up some of the gaps in the main story" (1009). After writing his novel of more than 1,000 pages, he still felt that the narrative had "gaps," apparently because of its primary concentration on present events (within the context of the story) (1009).

Underlying much of this focus on recording the histories of his nations is a fear of their disappearance. An early representation of Tolkien's fear of cultural loss appears in his incorporation of the Atlantis myth in *The Silmarillion*. In *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*, Flieger proposes that Tolkien's need to write multiple versions of an Atlantis story arose from his apprehension about myths becoming increasingly changed over time (125). Tolkien describes the fall of his Atlantis, Númenor, in detail in *The Silmarillion*:

> In an hour unlooked for by Men this doom befell, on the nine and thirtieth day since the passing of the fleets. Then suddenly fire burst from the Meneltarma [a holy mountain], and there came a mighty wind and a tumult of the earth, and the sky reeled, and the hills slid, and Númenor went down into the sea, with all its children and its wives and its maidens and its ladies proud; and all its gardens and its halls and its towers, its tombs and its riches, and its jewels and its webs and its things painted and carven, and its laughter and its mirth and its music, its wisdom and its lore: they vanished for ever. (279)

In this passage, Tolkien shows a concern for the people that are lost as well as for the loss of their culture and the material objects that might have left evidence of that culture.

Additionally, the "King and the mortal warriors that had set foot upon the land of Aman were buried under falling hills: there it is said that they lie imprisoned in the Caves of the Forgotten" (279). This theme of obliteration not only of people but also of nearly all vestiges of

a culture is a frightening one, and it seems to prove more than Tolkien can bear. He permits the faithful Númenóreans to survive by boarding ships with their families prior to the flood (276). The families bring along articles of their culture: "Many things there were of beauty and power, such as the Númenóreans had contrived in the days of their wisdom, vessels and jewels, and scrolls of lore written in scarlet and black" (276). By adding the escape of a few Númenóreans, Tolkien allows himself to imagine a circumvention of the annihilation of Númenórean culture. By the time he writes that Númenor's "things painted and carven, [. . .] its wisdom and its lore: they vanished forever," Tolkien has already ensured that some of these elements of Númenórean culture will survive to be passed on to future generations. In *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, Liliane Weissberg connects the need to document the past with a belief that "[w]ritten documents and recorded facts [. . . would] aid a personal and often oral memory in crisis" (11). She suggests that objects from the past inevitably signify a "sense of loss" – objects only represent past events and lives; they cannot literally bring them back (11). Documentation aims to fill in the gaps left by objects and gives at least an appearance of objectivity (11). By including scrolls among the relics rescued from the Númenórean flood, Tolkien gives some stability to the Númenóreans' cultural information, moving it from the realm of oral memory to that of written history.

Tolkien's cynicism will not allow him to rest secure in an easy reliance on future generations to maintain an interest in the past. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's fictive nations often stumble in their efforts (or lack thereof) to record their histories. Despite having a large repository of ancient writings that document their national history, the Gondorians, descendants of the Númenóreans, repeatedly forget or fail to record important figures and events in their shared past (*Two Towers* 655). As a whole, Gondorian citizens have little knowledge of their

own history and folklore. Faramir tells Frodo,

> We in the House of Denethor know much ancient lore by long tradition, and there are moreover in our treasuries many things preserved: books and tablets writ on withered parchments, yea, and on stone, and on leaves of silver and of gold, in divers characters. Some none can now read; and for the rest, few ever unlock them. I can read a little in them, for I have had teaching. (*Two Towers* 655)

Ancient Gondorians had recorded their history and legends, but the stories have been nearly lost, not physically, but through neglect. Faramir's acknowledgment that he is able to read some of the texts shows that the loss of their contents is not inevitable (655).

Faramir later states that Gandalf "got leave of Denethor, how I do not know, to look at the secrets of our treasury, and I learned a little of him, when he would teach (and that was seldom)" (656). It is unclear in these passages whether the Gondorians also have to ask permission to view the documents, or if Faramir simply is surprised that Gandalf was allowed access because Gandalf is a foreigner. Yet that the documents have restricted access and few ever see them suggests that no formal system exists to educate Gondorians about the history and lore inscribed on the scrolls. Since Gandalf has quite a bit of learning that he evidently is not willing to share often, the fate of much of Gondor's knowledge is tied to Gandalf's fate. After learning that Gandalf has fallen (and presumably died) in Moria, Faramir tells Frodo, "An evil fate seems to have pursued your fellowship. It is hard indeed to believe that one of so great wisdom, and of power – for many wonderful things he did among us – could perish, and so much lore be taken from the world" (*Two Towers* 655). Faramir focuses not so much on the loss of Gandalf's friendship as on the loss of the information that only Gandalf knew. Of course,

Gandalf has not actually died, and his return allows Tolkien to avoid imagining Middle-earth without any surviving memory of the stories that only Gandalf seems to know.

The hobbits do not fare much better in remembering their own history. They have some written records of the modern history of Middle-earth in large part because Bilbo and Frodo write down their experiences of the war (*Return* 1004). The hobbits know little of the earlier history of the Shire. In articulating the similarities between hobbits and humans, Tolkien admits that "what exactly our relationship is can no longer be discovered. The beginning of Hobbits lies far back in the Elder Days that are now lost and forgotten" (*Fellowship* 2). In *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium*, Patrick J. Geary suggests that record-keeping (and record-losing) is often purposeful, asserting that "what we think we know about the early Middle Ages is largely determined by what people of the early eleventh century wished themselves and their contemporaries to know about the past" (177). Because not every record could be maintained, medieval archives underwent a "pruning" process, and any records not deemed "useful" were discarded (114). Certainly, many records were lost despite efforts to preserve them, but a system to select and maintain records existed nonetheless. The hobbits, by contrast, lose parts of their history and culture through neglect. Tolkien seems to blame the hobbits for the loss of this knowledge, observing that "[o]nly the Elves still preserve any records of that vanished time, and their traditions are concerned almost entirely with their own history, in which Men seldom appear and Hobbits are not mentioned at all" (2). Each Middle-earth nation's records focus primarily on local history, and so the ones who do not maintain accounts of their own histories eventually witness the disappearance of important pieces of their national memories.

The war in Middle-earth does have a side effect of fostering a new interest in local history and record-keeping in the Shire. In the prologue to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes,

> At the end of the Third Age the part played by the Hobbits in the great events that led to the inclusion of the Shire in the Reunited Kingdom awakened among them a more widespread interest in their own history; and many of their traditions, up to that time still mainly oral, were collected and written down. The greater families were also concerned with events in the Kingdom at large, and many of their members studied its ancient histories and legends. By the end of the first century of the Fourth Age there were already to be found in the Shire several libraries that contained many historical books and records. (*Fellowship* 13-4).

War has made the hobbits aware of the possibility of cultural loss, as the Shire was temporarily taken over and filled with spiked gates and two-storey buildings (*Return* 975). The act of writing down hobbit traditions and housing them in (previously non-existent) libraries allows the hobbits to feel more certain that the traditions will continue to be passed down to future generations.

Tolkien's novels themselves function as records of Middle-earth histories and traditions. In an effort to ensure that these stories survive, Tolkien turns Bilbo and Frodo into historians of sorts. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are not written in the format of a diary or memoir. Still, Tolkien labels *The Hobbit* Bilbo's diary, envisioning it as having been "compiled by Bilbo Baggins from his own observations and the accounts of his friends" (1004). The latter novel does not even always focus on Frodo's perspective, but near the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien re-imagines both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* as cultural artifacts. Frodo

follows his uncle's lead, creating *The Lord of the Rings* to document events surrounding the war (1004). Bilbo also translates Rivendell's Book of Lore (1004). By translating the elvish lore and bringing it to the Shire, Bilbo preserves the memory of Rivendell, despite the disappearance of the elves, who have sailed for the Grey Havens (1007).

Yet Tolkien cannot allow the hobbits or the reader to believe, naïvely, that records will always stay intact, or that every important event will be remembered. The diary that Bilbo keeps is added to later and comes to be a historical reference called the Red Book (14). According to Tolkien's notes on the history of the Shire in the Prologue to The Lord of the Rings, a portion of the Red Book becomes *The Hobbit* (1). However, Tolkien states that the "original Red Book has not been preserved, but many copies were made" (14). He then adds that the Thain's Book, which he labels the "most important copy" of the Red Book, "contained much that was later omitted or lost" (14). He gives no details about what happened to this volume; he simply acknowledges that despite its importance in preserving the history of the Shire, a lot of information does not survive (14).

Not all significant events are documented at all, particularly when the events do not relate directly to hobbits. Tolkien writes, "It is said that Celeborn went to dwell there after the departure of Galadriel; but there is no record of the day when at last he sought the Grey Havens, and with him went the last living memory of the Elder Days in Middle-earth" (15). The last elf's departure from Middle-earth signifies the ending of an era, but it is scarcely noticed by the remaining inhabitants (15). The hobbits choose which recorded histories they want to remember: "At Great Smials the books were of less interest to the Shire-folk, though more important for larger history" (15). The materials at this library cover the histories of other groups on Middle-earth, so the hobbits take little notice of them (15).

Aside from written records, the hobbits also keep artifacts in a museum. As Elazar Barkan writes, in *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, museums traditionally have displayed archaeological finds later "reevaluated as 'appropriation' and 'domination'" (xxxii). Tolkien describes the hobbits' museum in a much different manner:

> So, though there was still some store of weapons in the Shire, these were used mostly as trophies, hanging above hearths or on walls, or gathered into the museum at Michel Delving. The Mathom-house it was called; for anything that Hobbits had no immediate use for, but were unwilling to throw away, they called a *mathom*. Their dwellings were apt to become rather crowded with mathoms, and many of the presents that passed from hand to hand were of that sort. (*Fellowship* 5)

Unlike many real-world museums, the hobbits' Mathom-house does not hold artifacts used to define and subordinate the colonized groups from whom they were absconded. Tolkien detested imperialism (*Letters* 115). In this respect, the hobbits' museum may show Tolkien's image of what a museum should be – simply a reflection of a nation's own culture, without a need to build the nation's identity based on superiority. Yet Tolkien also specifies that the hobbits store only items they rarely use, particularly weapons (5). The museum functions more as a storage closet than as the hobbits' conscious attempt to document their history for future generations. The hobbits' lack of purpose in arranging their museum increases the likelihood that parts of their culture will be lost.

In "'And All the Days of Her Life Are Forgotten': *The Lord of the Rings* as Mythic Prehistory," John D. Rateliff relates the losses of cultural memory in Middle-earth to those that Tolkien lamented in English culture. Rateliff posits that Tolkien's medieval studies predisposed

him to notice these losses, as he wrote scholarly essays on the "'Beowulf-poet,' the 'Gawain-poet,' and the equally anonymous author of the Ancrene Wisse, brilliant writers whose names are forever lost to us" (80). Through his studies, Tolkien was aware that individuals as well as entire groups often do not survive in modern memory. In writing their stories, he preserves their (fictive) memories and does not allow their lives to cease to matter. Yet all of the details embedded in Tolkien's description of record-keeping in Middle-earth remind the reader that despite this copious "documentation" of the histories of Middle-earth nations, memories of traditions and events are incomplete, having been either lost entirely or remembered only by select groups.

National Memory and the Atlantis Tradition

Tolkien's fear of cultural disappearance repeatedly manifests itself in his incorporation of the Atlantis myth into his work. His linking Atlantis to the origin of one of his fictional nations, Gondor, follows centuries-long traditions of Western nations appropriating Atlantis. In "Atlantis and the Nations," Pierre Vidal-Naquet discusses what he terms "Atlanto-nationalism," the role of the Atlantis story in the formulation of numerous European nations' identities (313). In many instances, the imagined connection to this fictional land was taken very seriously. During the Enlightenment, proposals appeared linking Atlantis to Italy (321). In the 1930s and 40s, the Nazis, and Heinrich Himmler in particular, devoted resources to the search for an historical Atlantis, which naturally was thought to be the ancestral land of Germany (323). Vidal-Naquet argues that so many nations earnestly attached themselves to Atlantis in an effort to endow themselves with "the primacy that every imperial power believes itself to possess" (315). The Atlantis myth allows nations to feel legitimate, even superior to others.

Tolkien was aware of the use of the Atlantis myth in other nations. In a 1961 letter to Mrs. E. C. Ossen Drijver, he wrote,

> The legends of Númenórë [Tolkien's Atlantis] are only in the background of The Lord of the Rings, though (of course) they were written first, and are only summarised in Appendix A. They are my own use for my own purposes of the Atlantis legend, but not based on special knowledge, but on a special personal concern with this tradition of the culture-bearing men of the Sea, which so profoundly affected the imagination of peoples of Europe with westward-shores. (*Letters* 303)

Tolkien was drawn to the Atlantis myth, but he did not necessarily believe it to be historically true. Of Atlantis, he wrote in a 1954 letter to Naomi Mitchison, "That seems to me so fundamental to 'mythical history' – whether it has any kind of basis in real history . . . is not relevant – that some version of it would have to come in" (*Letters* 198). Yet Tolkien found the story compelling enough that he incorporated it into his own mythology on numerous occasions.

In *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*, Flieger examines Tolkien's efforts to incorporate the Atlantis myth into his legendry, revealing his indebtedness to various other flood narratives. She argues that in addition to the more obvious Platonic Atlantis story, Tolkien also alludes to flood traditions with origins closer to home: "The Welsh, the Bretons, the Irish, and the Cornish all have stories of sunken or engulfed lands, not improbably the remnant of a time within memory when the level of the sea may have risen and covered low-lying lands" (126). Flieger notes that while many of these flood stories have different particular causes, they share certain similarities, such as the frequent location of the floods on the western coasts of the islands (126). Tolkien's portrayals of his Atlantis include some of these features (126).

Tolkien's Atlantis, which he names Númenor, appears in a variety of sources, including the unfinished works *The Notion Club Papers* and *The Lost Road*, as well as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*. In addition to probable allusions to more local myths, Tolkien incorporates biblical elements from both Genesis and Exodus into the Platonic tradition of an island destroyed by a flood. Originally, Númenor is an island "removed from the dangers of Middle-earth" (*Return* 1011). The Númenóreans receive "knowledge and many gifts" to enjoy on their island, but are given one command – to refrain from sailing to the Undying Lands, where they would become immortal (1011). Tolkien also states that originally the inhabitants of Númenor had an average lifespan "thrice that of lesser Men," but they would eventually die (1011). Aside from their mortality, the Númenóreans live on an island that strongly resembles the Eden of Genesis, particularly in the existence of a single forbidden act in a land otherwise idyllic. Tolkien adds, "Later when they [the Númenóreans] became powerful they begrudged the choice of their forefather . . . desiring the immortality within the life of the world that was the fate of the Eldar, and murmuring against the Ban" (1011). The Númenóreans then begin to rebel, led by Sauron, and consequently suffer the "Downfall of Númenor and the ruin of the ancient world" (1011).

Similarly to the version of Númenor found in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion* Númenor is a near-paradise in which its inhabitants enjoy health and long life, so long as they keep the one command not to sail for the Undying Lands (261-2). The reason given for this command is that "the design of Manwë was that the Númenóreans should not be tempted to seek for the Blessed Realm, nor desire to overpass the limits set to their bliss" (262). As with the Genesis account of the downfall of humanity, the rationale for the forbidden act is never stated

explicitly – the people must not disobey simply because God (or in this case, Manwë) has set limits to their actions (262).

As the Númenóreans increasingly dread their impending deaths, Sauron deceives the King of Númenor, saying that Melkor, the Lord of Darkness, could make the people more powerful than the Valar [guardians of the world] (271-2, 353). Sauron tells the King that the Valar had lied about Ilúvatar and that in fact Melkor was the "Lord of All, Giver of Freedom" (271-2). The Númenóreans turn to the evil powers as a direct result of this deception, reminiscent of the serpent's deception of Eve in Genesis. After Númenor is buried under the sea, there no longer exists on Middle-earth "any place abiding where the memory of a time without evil is preserved," the emphasis being on the destruction of memory (279). The final destruction of Númenor recalls the story of Noah's ark and the great flood. The land is consumed by a massive flood, and the few remaining Númenóreans that have not turned to Melkor are permitted to board ships to sail to safety and are spared the fate of the unfaithful inhabitants (275-6). As with the Genesis account of Noah's ark, the remaining faithful ones bring their families aboard the ships (276).

Tolkien also weaves elements of Exodus into his depiction of Númenor. The Edain, as the Númenóreans are named originally, follow the Star of Eärendil "as a guide over the sea" to the island of Númenor, "the land that was prepared for them" (260). Númenor becomes a sort of Promised Land for the Edain. One of its kings, named "Pharazôn," is said to have "hardened his heart," as the Egyptian Pharoah also "hardened his heart" in Exodus (Ex. 8:15). When the Númenóreans grew discontent with their lot in life, they "began to murmur, at first in their hearts, and then in open words, against the doom of Men, and most of all against the Ban which forbade them to sail into the West" (264). In the King James version of the Bible, the verb

"murmur" repeatedly appears in Exodus to signal the Israelites' growing restlessness (Ex. 16:2, 17:3). Some of these similarities are more striking than others, but the combination shows that Tolkien wanted to connect his Atlantis, the ancestral home of Aragorn and the Gondorians, to biblical stories.

Vidal-Naquet indicates that the relation of biblical narratives to national genealogies historically occurred fairly frequently in Europe prior to the Enlightenment, and occasionally was connected to the Atlantis myth (308). Most people during the Renaissance "generally accepted that all men were descended from Noah, but, to adapt George Orwell's expression, some were descended better and more directly than others" (307). Nations with more direct connections could consider themselves superior to others. Two sixteenth century Italians, Giovanni Battista Gelli and Annius of Viterbo, claimed Noah as founder of their respective hometowns (308). In 1578, Guy Le Fèvre de la Broderie "declared that Gaul was the first piece of land to emerge from the Flood," and specified that Noah had traveled to Atlantis (308). Approximately one hundred years later, Pierre Audigier claimed that not only did Noah found Gaul, but two of his sons, Japheth and Shem, were ancestors of the kings of France, a connection which allowed the French to claim relations to Jesus and Mary (308).

In *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Anthony D. Smith discusses the link between religion and the development of national identity. He centers his discussion on the historical formation of many nations' identities based on the concept of the people having a special relationship with God (49). As part of this relationship, God and the people would form a covenant through which God would bless the people, and they in turn would obey His commands (49). The covenant would make the nation exalted above other peoples (49). The idea of chosenness frequently has had a direct link to imperialism. Smith suggests that "indeed,

Victorian Britain's imperial mission was, from one angle, merely an extension of this belief in national chosenness" (48). The covenant often was conditional: if the people "fail in their witness and adherence, they will be punished by God withdrawing His favour from the people" (50). Tolkien creates between the Númenóreans and Manwë a covenant under which the Númenóreans live in a utopian world as long as they do not sail for the Undying Lands (*Silmarillion* 261-2). The covenant ceases as soon as the Númenóreans fail to keep their side of the agreement (275-6). Tolkien founds his "chosen" nation on a covenant that demands keeping within the nation's own boundaries and *not* exploring or taking over other lands (261-2). His Atlantis serves as a counterpoint to England, for whose imperial past Tolkien had nothing but disdain (*Letters* 115). The Atlantis myth allows him to critique his own nation and simultaneously to incorporate elements of his religion into his fictional world.

The concept of Atlantis initially came from Plato, so a nation incorporating Atlantis into its origin myth could potentially claim a link to Judeo-Christianity or to Ancient Greece (Vidal-Naquet 310). The Atlantis story lent a sense of legitimacy to nations by portraying them as older than they actually were as well as by giving them "important" ancestors. The myth initially appeared in *Timaeus* and *Critias*, the first two volumes of Plato's never-finished trilogy. In *Timaeus*, Plato describes early Athens, envisioning it as a utopian society that excels in war and government (36). He goes so far as to have the character Critias call Athens "the finest and best race of men that ever existed" (36). Nearby Atlantis is a corrupt island state that attempts to dominate other lands, enslaving their peoples (37-8).

The story of Atlantis warns readers of the dangers of imperialism. In *Critias*, the second volume of the planned trilogy, the character Critias tells his friends, "Once upon a time the gods divided up the Earth between them [Athens and Atlantis] – not in the course of a quarrel; for it

would be quite wrong to think that the gods do not know what is appropriate to them, or that, knowing it, they would want to annex what properly belongs to others" (129-30). Land ownership in Plato's imagined world is determined by gods and hence should not be altered. Yet the catastrophe that destroys Atlantis is not a simple punishment for the state's crime: "At a later time there were earthquakes and floods of extraordinary violence, and in a single day and night all your fighting men were swallowed up by the earth, and the island of Atlantis was similarly swallowed up by the sea and vanished" (*Timaeus* 38). Athens, the "good" state, is not spared from natural disaster either, though a few escape and form the Athens of Plato's time (35-6).

In *Critias*, Plato suggests that the flood and earthquakes were punishments sent by Zeus after the people mixed too much with mortals (143). Though Athens is clearly held up as the superior state, saving the rest of this area of the world from slavery, its citizens mostly perish along with Atlantis (*Timaeus* 37-8). Though a few Athenians endure, Plato portrays the state as inferior to its ancestral land because its original culture does not survive (35). Critias states that after such disasters, only "unlettered and uncultured" mountain-dwellers remain, while city-dwellers in the valley are subsumed (35). Consequently, the remaining Athenians "have to begin again like children, in complete ignorance of what happened in our part of the world or in yours in early times" (35). Critias indicates that only in geographical areas less prone to flooding do long-standing traditions last (35).

Tolkien's Atlantis story does not end with the complete loss of the Númenórean culture. He devises two methods through which their traditions may continue to be passed down. In one method, he allows several Númenóreans to board ships and sail to the land that will eventually become Gondor (*Silmarillion* 276). Unlike the "unlettered and uncultured" peasants who live to rebuild Athens in Plato's Atlantis, Tolkien's survivors are literate and carry, among other things,

scrolls on which Númenórean knowledge has been recorded (*Timaeus* 35; *Silmarillion* 276). These scrolls enable the Númenóreans to build a new society in Middle-earth while maintaining a sense of their historical identity.

In "Between Memory and History," Pierre Nora proposes that "society . . . has changed so radically that it has lost its memory and become obsessed with understanding itself historically" (14). He calls the modern world's penchant for amassing documentation a "hypertrophy of memory, inextricably intertwined with our sense of memory's loss and concomitant institutionalization" (9). In Nora's view, modern society has become fixated on collecting written evidence for everything. Without a more internal form of memory, national memory resorts to a heightened "need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists" (8). Nora asserts that this change in focus signifies the diminishing of "immediate" memory, or as Cubitt phrases it, "the crumbling away of memory as something genuinely rooted in social experience" (Nora 8; Cubitt 244).

In several of his works, Tolkien addresses this idea of the insufficiency of memory (in the form of documentation) to preserve the past. While Tolkien clearly valued the material traces of the past, he also recognized that they represented the end of things that once were and that objects and documents were unlikely to exist forever without damage or loss. And so he creates a second form of preservation of Númenórean culture, a way for his characters to maintain a sort of living memory of the past via inherited memory. In "Do the Atlantis Story and Abandon Eriol-Saga," Flieger discusses Tolkien's integration of the Atlantis myth in both *The Lost Road* and *The Notion Club Papers*. Flieger notes that in an outline of the never-finished *The Lost Road*, Tolkien planned for father and son characters to time-travel to different historical periods, ending up in the time of the Númenórean flood (45). She points out that this time-travel story is

unique in its mode of transportation across the centuries: "the vehicle for their travel would be no Wellsian time-machine, but instead their ancestrally transmitted memories of a past they could not have experienced in their own personae" (45). Tolkien later wrote an almost entirely new time-travel story, *The Notion Club Papers*, carrying over only the "concept of inherited memory leading to the destruction of Atlantis/Númenor" (46).

He did not simply use inherited memory as an intriguing plot device. In 1964, he wrote a letter to Christopher Bretherton, detailing his "Atlantis-haunting": "In sleep I had the dreadful dream of the ineluctable Wave, either coming out of the quiet sea, or coming in towering over the green inlands" (*Letters* 347). Tolkien seems to have believed that this preoccupation with Atlantis was transmitted to him by his parents. In a 1955 letter to Auden, he elaborated:

> I have what some might call an Atlantis complex. Possibly inherited, though my parents died too young to transfer such things by words. Inherited from me (I suppose) by only one of me children. . . . I mean the terrible recurrent dream (beginning with memory) of the Great Wave, towering up, and coming in ineluctably over the trees and green fields. . . . I don't think I have had it since I wrote the 'Downfall of Númenor' as the last of the legends of the First and Second Age. (*Letters* 213)

Tolkien apparently felt that his connection to the Atlantis story was so strong in part because of the relationship of the story to his parents and his children (213).

Tolkien's recurring dream of a flood overwhelming a land reflects his anxiety about part or all of his own culture disappearing. The idea of inherited memory permits him to conceive of a way around the potential for cultural annihilation that he so feared. If individuals could pass on actual memories of events important to a nation, then the pressure on written records and

artifacts to preserve the identity of a culture would be alleviated. The lack of care with records in the Shire and the inattention to cultural inheritance in Gondor, in the end, do not condemn their nations to "begin again like children, in complete ignorance of what happened in [their] past" (*Fellowship* 2; *Two Towers* 655; *Timaeus* 35). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien bestows the gift of inherited memory on Faramir, who has a recurring dream-memory of the Númenórean flood: in a 1956 draft of a letter to Mr. Thompson, Tolkien wrote, "For when Faramir speaks of his private vision of the Great Wave, he speaks for me. That vision and dream has been ever with me" (*Letters* 232). Though the Gondorians rarely read their scrolls and cannot remember some of the language, the flood narrative will not be forgotten because Faramir remembers it for the others in his nation.

National Memory and Collective Guilt

For Tolkien, national identity is not created solely by the ways in which a nation remembers itself, but also by the ways in which a nation is remembered. Nations in Tolkien's works are often remembered based on their morality, most strikingly observed in his depiction of evil. The nature of evil in Middle-earth drives how the evil nations and their leaders are memorialized. Evil is not an inherent part of Middle-earth; it is something that inexplicably, repeatedly enters individuals and often spreads to whole nations. In *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World*, Flieger observes the prevalence of this pattern in both *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. She points to Elrond's comment to Frodo in *The Fellowship of the Ring*: "Nothing is evil in the beginning" (116). Flieger notes that even the most evil characters in Tolkien's fiction are created good but become corrupted (116). These characters often then perpetuate divisiveness and hate in their people. Flieger gives the example of Fëanor, who in *The Silmarillion* becomes increasingly greedy and as a result negatively

influences his people: “his need to possess it [light] to the exclusion of all others, divides families, sows mistrust and hatred, and engenders feud and revenge. When they return to Middle-earth, the Noldor are a divided people” (117). This pattern recurs numerous times throughout Tolkien’s work (116).

Even Sauron himself, the “main representative of Evil” in Middle-earth, was not originally evil (Letters 190). In a 1954 letter to Peter Hastings, Tolkien calls Sauron a “‘spirit’ corrupted by the Prime Dark Lord (the Prime sub-creative Rebel) Morgoth” (190). Sauron’s moral descent happens gradually; early in the Second Age, he “was not indeed wholly evil, not unless all ‘reformers’ who want to hurry up with ‘reconstruction’ and ‘reorganization’ are wholly evil, even before pride and the lust to exert their will eat them up” (190). Sauron evidently once had good intentions, but at some point, under the influence of Morgoth, lost his desire to follow a moral path (190).

Tolkien describes the orcs to Hastings as “fundamentally a race of ‘rational incarnate’ creatures, through horribly corrupted, if no more so than many Men to be met today” (190). In “Orcs, Wraiths, Wights: Tolkien’s Images of Evil,” Shippey reiterates that the orcs are not inherently evil. He points to a conversation between Shagrat and Gorbag, the orcs who find Frodo after he has been stabbed by the spider Shelob. Shippey notes that these orcs have a sense of humor and they clearly believe that it is a detestable act to leave a wounded friend to die, as it appears to them that Frodo’s friends have (184). Shippey concludes that “what the episode with Shagrat and Gorbag reveals is that orcs are moral beings, with an underlying morality much the same as ours” (184). The presence of a sense of humor provides another parallel between orcs and humans: “orcs may be well down, or even off, the scale of humorous acceptability, but it is

the same scale as our own; and humor is . . . a good quality in itself, though like all good qualities it can be perverted" (185).

Some of Tolkien's evil creatures do not show even the miniscule amount of goodness of the orcs. In his letter to Hastings, he muses about the nature of the trolls that appear in *The Hobbit*: "when you make Trolls *speak* you are giving them a power, which in our world (probably) connotes the possession of a 'soul'" (191). Tolkien allows that this group has a *possibility* of goodness, even if they do not ever make morally sound choices. His granting them speech and "probably" souls suggests (albeit uncertainly) that they are inherently moral beings capable of judging between right and wrong (191). However, the trolls do not capitalize on this ability; Tolkien writes,

> I do not agree (if you admit that fairy-story element) that my trolls show any sign of 'good', strictly and unsentimentally viewed. I do not say William [a troll] felt *pity* – a word to me of moral and imaginative worth . . . . Pity must restrain one from doing something immediately desirable and seemingly advantageous. There is no more 'pity' here than in a beast of prey yawning, or lazily patting a creature it could eat, but does not want to, since it is not hungry. (191)

Whatever their capabilities, these trolls are wholly evil, and any action that may on the surface appear to be a good quality occurs only because the troll's drive toward evil action has already been satiated.

In *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien explores how leaders are able to control an entire people. He gives an account of the fall of Morgoth (also called Melkor) and the subsequent fall of numerous other spirits who followed Morgoth. Tolkien explains that "of the Maiar many were drawn to his

[Morgoth's] splendour in the days of his greatness, and remained in that allegiance down into his darkness; and others he corrupted afterwards to his service with lies and treacherous gifts" (31). In another episode, Tolkien indicates that Morgoth "had secret friends and spies among the Maiar whom he had converted to his cause . . . [and] he gathered to himself spirits out of the halls of Eä that he had perverted to his service" (36). These two accounts of Morgoth's leadership suggest that both the leader and the people play a role in their collective downfall. Tolkien makes numerous mentions of Morgoth's control over other spirits: Morgoth "corrupted," "converted," and "perverted" the spirits who followed him (31, 36).

Still, he did not control them without their permission. Some of them were simply duped by Morgoth's clever lies, but many of them witnessed his fall and still did not protest or otherwise rebel in any way (31). Rather, they "were drawn to his splendour," and they "remained in that allegiance" after Morgoth's fall (31). The role of Morgoth's followers is passive but significant nonetheless. Initially, they follow him because of his goodness, but even at this early point they take a passive role (31). Instead of *seeking*, *choosing*, or *electing* Morgoth, they "were drawn" to him (31). Thus, the dynamic of the relationship between Morgoth and his subjects is established early on as one of authoritarian rule and unquestioning submission. This dynamic explains why the spirits do not rebel against Morgoth when he turns evil, even though what had first attracted many of them had been his good qualities. When they "remain[]" in Morgoth's service, they are not making a carefully weighed decision; rather, they are refusing to consider any alternative to the pattern to which they have grown accustomed.

Yet Tolkien insisted that his characters possessed free will and were not automatons. In 1958 he wrote a letter to Forrest J. Ackerman detailing 34 objections to a script for a film version of *The Lord of the Rings*. In point 34, Tolkien writes,

> Z is altogether too fond of the words *hypnosis* and *hypnotic*. Neither genuine hypnosis, nor scientifictitious variants, occur in my tale. Saruman's voice was not hypnotic but persuasive. Those who listened to him were not in danger of falling into a trance, but of agreeing with his arguments, while fully awake. It was always open to one to reject, *by free will and reason*, both his voice while speaking and its after-impressions. Saruman corrupted the reasoning powers. (*Letters* 277)

Tolkien argues here that poor leaders do not hold their nations captive or *make* them evil. Saruman is a wizard, but he does not use magic to overpower Isengard. He is himself corrupt, and he corrupts his nation with effective rhetoric.

Individual characters can choose not to follow Saruman, as does Gandalf. Saruman repeats several times that he and Gandalf could share power: "I said *we*, for we it may be, if you will join with me" (*Fellowship* 252-3). Saruman reminds Gandalf of Saruman's higher ranking and attempts to entice Gandalf with promises of power, increased wisdom, and freedom from "weak or idle friends" holding them down (252-3). Yet Gandalf responds perceptively, "I have heard speeches if this kind before, but only in the mouths of emissaries sent from Mordor to deceive the ignorant. I cannot think that you brought me so far only to weary my ears" (253). After another plea from Saruman, Gandalf says, "only one hand at a time can wield the One, and you know that well, so do not trouble to say *we*!" (253). Saruman resorts to imprisoning Gandalf, but Gandalf still does not acquiesce (254).

These exchanges are revealing. Gandalf has free will, as he chooses not to go along with Saruman. In some respects, his free will is enhanced by his knowledge: Saruman is only able "to deceive the ignorant" (253). Because Gandalf has been exposed to the deceptive speeches of

representatives of Mordor, he can answer all of Saruman's arguments successfully, as he recognizes the strategies Saruman is using (253). Yet Saruman also has knowledge; he "long studied the arts of the Enemy himself" in order to prevent Sauron from overtaking Middle-earth (251). At some point, Saruman chose to stop fighting Sauron; he was lured by the promise of tasting some of Sauron's power, even though as Gandalf says, Saruman *knew* that power could not be shared (253). For Tolkien, knowledge can be a tool for rebelling against evil authorities, but it can also be ignored fairly easily if the false promises are attractive enough.

Whatever choices Gandalf makes, the rest of Isengard and all of Mordor choose to follow Saruman and Sauron, and the War of the Ring ends not simply with the defeat of the evil nations, but with their ruin and the scattering of the survivors (*Return* 927-8). Isengard and Mordor evidently do not remain intact as nations, a fate which contrasts with that of the totalitarian nations of the 1930s and 40s. Barkan examines the "rewriting of memory and historical identity" that took place in Germany after the Second World War (xviii). He labels Germany's post-war memory "schizophrenic," as it struggled to reverse its international image through reparations paid to Israel and attempts to reeducate German youth while simultaneously "willfully eras[ing] from memory" its own guilt (10-11). Huyssen adds that Germans have had to continue redefining their national identity for decades after the war's end (5). In the late twentieth century, they had to contend with issues related to Germany's reunification that led to the war and the country's division (4, 38).

Barkan's and Huyssen's discussions highlight the messiness as well as lengthiness of the process that a nation goes through in its efforts to repair its damaged image to the international community. Germany has been able to reshape its national identity because it was not destroyed when it was defeated. Because Mordor's inhabitants either die or flee after the defeat of Sauron,

Mordor never has the chance to reevaluate its identity. The worst point in Mordor's history forever defines it because its inhabitants have become irreparably corrupt (*Return* 927-8; *Letters* 90). The other nations of Middle-earth, excluding the Shire, memorialize the defeated nation through an annual holiday celebrating Sauron's death and through Frodo's memories, as recorded in *The Lord of the Rings* (*Return* 1004, 1084-5). This ending only allows for the image of Mordor as evil or for its loss from memory.

Tolkien certainly did not equate Mordor with the totalitarian nations of his day:

> Urukhai is only a figure of speech. There are no genuine Uruks, that is folk made bad by the intention of their maker; and not many who are so corrupted as to be irredeemable short of a special miracle, and that there are probably abnormally many of such creatures in Deutschland and Nippon – but certainly these unhappy countries have no monopoly: I have met them, or thought so, in England's green and pleasant land. (*Letters* 90)

While at the war's end he felt that many citizens of Nazi Germany had become corrupt almost beyond hope of change, Tolkien did not desire or advocate the ruin of the nations defeated in World War II. In a 1945 letter to Christopher, he wrote, "The destruction of Germany, be it 100 times merited, is one of the most appalling world-catastrophes" (111). Tolkien's not allowing the fictional Mordor to survive does not reflect his beliefs about real-world national crime and punishment, but it does grant the other nations of Middle-earth a sense of security, at least for the time being, since they have no immediate need to fear a resurgence of power in Mordor. But this safety is misleading: as Barkan writes, "(h)istory spares the public the need to make subtle choices or recognize complex situations or to see that good and evil inhabit the same space" (xxxi). In destroying Mordor, Tolkien both reveals his own cynicism about the possibility of

rehabilitation and allows his "good" nations to maintain their self-image without forcing them to adapt their memory of the "evil" nations or to critically examine the complexities of their own or other nations' identities.

Conclusion: National Memory Loss

In his classic 1882 essay, "What is a Nation?" Ernest Renan explicates the role of forgetting in forming a nation's identity:

> Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial. Unity is always effected by means of brutality . . . (11)

Renan points out that the details of a nation's history that are left out often are no less important than the details remembered, but that unflattering events frequently are suppressed (11). In "DissemiNation," Homi Bhabha states Renan's idea in another way, suggesting that "[b]eing obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification" (311). Citizens are "obliged to forget" the negative aspects of their history in order to sustain an image of a nation with which they will they will want to identify, and so the act of forgetting becomes a crucial part of their national memory (311).

At several points in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien incorporates scenes that acknowledge that nations' constructed histories often omit significant details in order to perpetuate a more positive self-image. During the Council meeting in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Elrond recounts

the story of the ring being taken by Isildur, an early ruler of Gondor (237). Boromir responds with surprise, as this part of the story had not survived in the lore of Gondor: "If ever such a tale was told in the South, it has long been forgotten. I have heard of the Great Ring of him that we do not name; but we believed that it perished from the world in the ruin of his first realm. Isildur took it! That is tidings indeed" (*Fellowship* 237). Elrond gives his own account of Gondorian history, stating that "the race of Númenor has decayed, and the span of their years has lessened" (238). Not wanting to accept that others might not perceive his homeland as being as great as he had been taught, Boromir passionately defends his nation against Elrond's negative depiction: "Believe not that in the land of Gondor the blood of Númenor is spent, nor all its pride and dignity forgotten. By our valour the wild folk of the East are still restrained, and the terror of Morgul kept at bay; and thus alone are peace and freedom maintained in the lands behind us" (239). Boromir views the Gondorians as valiant warriors, not as moral and physical weaklings.

Aragorn also broadens Boromir's vision of their shared homeland:

> If Gondor, Boromir, has been a stalwart tower, we have played another part. Many evil things there are that your strong walls and bright swords do not stay. You know little of the lands beyond your bounds. Peace and freedom, do you say? The North would have known little but for us. Fear would have destroyed them. But when dark things come from the houseless hills, or creep from sunless woods, they fly from us. (242)

Of course, Aragorn's portrait of the Dúnedain rangers in some respects is nothing more than an attempt to one-up Boromir. Yet through these characters, Tolkien admits that people have a limited perspective of the nature of their own nation, and as Renan and Bhabha suggest, often forget the negative defining moments in their nations' histories.

In a more detailed examination of national memory loss, Tolkien portrays the hobbits as having a selective memory of their history. In many ways, their existence in the Shire is idyllic. Alluring as this world is, Tolkien subtly undermines this vision of the Shire by admitting that it remains idyllic in part because of the hobbits' ignorance of the larger world. He states that "they heeded less and less the world outside where dark things moved, until they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk" (5). Tolkien adds that along with the presence of outside evils, the hobbits have lost sight of "the Guardians, and of the labours of those that made possible the long peace of the Shire" (5). The hobbits have constructed their collective identity as one of abundance, joviality, safety, and anti-modernity. But the hobbits are able to identify this way primarily because of their good fortune in stumbling upon fertile land in ancient days and because they benefit from the toiling of anonymous "Guardians" that keep "dark things" at bay for them (5, 242). Without this assistance, the hobbits would likely have had to confront the evils of Middle-earth with much more regularity, and certainly the advent of the War of the Ring demonstrates to them their vulnerability.

While nations sometimes purposefully erase pieces of their past, in general, forgetting is considered negative, something to be avoided or repaired. In *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, Weissberg points out that since the nineteenth century, forgetting has been pathologized: "[m]emory loss turned into a serious personality disorder, a fractured sense of self to be countered and possibly cured by hypnosis, psychoanalysis, or, more recently, pharmaceuticals" (10). In the absence of such cures, forgetting erodes the individual's identity (10). At the national level, history (documentation and other forms of memorialization) seeks to avert cultural memory loss and the presumed negative effects of such losses (11). Cubitt

observes that for followers of Freud, forgetting is a surface-level act that never wholly removes the effects of what has been forgotten; rather, what is forgotten "continue[s] to exert an influence" (77). However, Tolkien's depiction of post-war national forgetting suggests an alternative to the perception of forgetting as pathological.

In portraying the post-war Shire, Tolkien uses fantasy as a vehicle to imagine forgetting as something positive, literally capable of wiping out the effects of the war. Memory loss plays a critical role in the healing of the Shire after the War of the Ring. The hobbits are able to return to their former way of life, with little sign of having survived a war, because of a magical gift from Galadriel (*Return* 999). Initially, the hobbits, particularly Sam, lament the war's damages to the landscape; Sam estimates that "this hurt would take long to heal, and only his great-grandchildren, he thought, would see the Shire as it ought to be" (999). Miraculously, Sam recalls a box of magical dust Galadriel had given him and sprinkles it on newly planted seeds all over the Shire (999-1000). By the spring, the Shire brims with new life, and the land is wiped clean of the effects of the war: "[n]ot only was there wonderful sunshine and delicious rain, in due times and perfect measure, but there seemed something more: an air of richness and growth, and a gleam of a beauty beyond that of mortal summers that flicker and pass upon this Middle-earth" (1000). The Shire's magical healing allows the hobbits to avoid the long-term suffering nations normally face after war. In this respect, the resolution of the Scouring of the Shire seems to act as a form of wish fulfillment for Tolkien – it permits him to imagine what it would be like not to have to struggle through years of rebuilding after a war.

The magical re-growth of the trees and other plant life in the Shire hastens both the hobbits' healing and their forgetting of the war. They do not memorialize the war, choosing to name a new row simply, the "New Row," rather than the previously contemplated "Battle

Gardens" (999). While the rest of Middle-earth begins annually celebrating the heroism of Frodo and the victory over Sauron, "[t]here is no record of the Shire-folk commemorating either March 25 [the date of Sauron's death] or September 22 [Frodo's birthday]" (1084-5). The hobbits do not just move on after the war; they deliberately remove reminders of the war.

In *Crises of Memory and the Second World War*, Susan Rubin Suleiman discusses Adorno's differentiation between psychoanalysis and "a mere 'turning the page' on the past" (77-8). Suleiman suggests that unlike psychoanalysis, which requires thorough self-examination to purge the wounds of the past, simply moving forward is "actually a desire to wipe it [the past] from memory. That kind of working up is false and ineffective, as well as deceptive" (78). The absence of thoughtful examination does not allow for genuine healing. The hobbits' return to a near-utopia without having to confront the causes or the role they played in the war seemingly follows the pattern that Suleiman describes. Their prior ignorance of the conflicts occurring outside of their borders and their lack of experience with national defense made them vulnerable to attack; it would follow that their rapid forgetting of the results of their ignorance would not turn out well for them (*Fellowship* 5).

The hobbits do not entirely forget the war – their historians at least superficially recall the Battle of Bywater by memorizing the names of all the hobbits who fought in it (*Return* 992). Yet at a deeper level, forgetting enables the survival of the nation and its people. The Shire's continued regeneration depends on the hobbits' ability to leave the war behind and focus on rebuilding and replanting. Frodo is unable to forget and, therefore, cannot survive. He wears a white jewel on a chain around his neck that Arwen has given him to assuage his angst "[w]hen the memory of the fear and the darkness troubles" him, lamenting that because of the absence of the ring, "all is dark and empty" (*Return* 1001). He tells Sam, "I am wounded . . . it will never

really heal" (1002). He is not able to bear this burden indefinitely and goes to the Grey Havens with Gandalf and the last remaining elves (1007). Later, just before leaving Middle-earth with Frodo, Galadriel tells Sam, "I hear and see that you have used my gift well. The Shire shall now be more than ever blessed and beloved" (1005). The Shire's rapid healing ensures that the hobbits will not become mired in their suffering. Psychoanalysis does not play a role in their healing process; rather, the hobbits' ability to evade the painful process of self-examination leads to Galadriel's pronouncement that the Shire will "be more than ever blessed" (1005).

Tolkien's experience of both war and the rapid industrial progression that occurred during his youth made him especially sensitive to potential for loss. The damages the Shire sustains reflect not only his experience of war, but of modernity (Foreword xv). Tolkien states that his portrayal of the post-war Shire, for instance, has its roots in a much earlier period of his life: "It has indeed some basis in experience, though slender (for the economic situation was entirely different), and much further back. The country in which I lived in childhood was being shabbily destroyed before I was ten, in days when motor-cars were rare objects (I had never seen one) and men were still building suburban railways" (xv). Industrial growth and war both indelibly altered the landscape, increasing Tolkien's apprehension about losing the aspects of his nation that he loved the most. His preoccupation with preservation, defense, and memory is palpable in much of his work. Yet Tolkien did not aim only to preserve; he also desired transformation, specifically in the reformulation of England's identity as an entity valuable for its own sake, not for its world power. Tolkien wanted to imagine a way for nations to preserve their unique identities without needing to expand or take over other nations.

WAR AND INTERNATIONALISM

Introduction

War in many ways encourages nationalism. In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Eric Hobsbawm cites war as one of the most effective means of uniting a nation into one collective unit: "nothing stimulated nationalism on both sides as much as international conflict" (91). Yet, paradoxically, the two World Wars also in some ways propelled the movement toward internationalism. In *Internationalism and the State in the Twentieth Century*, Cornelia Navari describes the progression:

> If nationalism was the predominant organising concept of the age, war was the forcing medium of the nation. Many of the twentieth century's new nations were born through war. . . . But the war experiences of the twentieth century also revealed the fissures within nations, the limits of national economies and the limits of national self-sufficiency. . . . [T]hey also demonstrated that social capacity was finite, that social cohesion was conditional, and that economic and political technique had in-built structural demands which could not be altered at will. (84)

However much citizens of a nation took pride in their national identity, the World Wars showed them that isolated nations were not sustainable. While nations might remain autonomous, they had to rely on other nations to maintain viable economies and to keep from being subsumed by other nations (84).

For some theorists, internationalism by its nature opposes nationalism. In *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought*, Carsten Holbraad explains, "[p]rimarily concerned about sovereignty, it [nationalism] champions national rights, interests

and values and opposes internationalist ideas, programs and manifestations that appear to threaten national independence" (2). Holbraad defines internationalism "as the ideology of international bonding," which occurs at both the individual and national levels (1). Internationalist efforts may be present between governments or nongovernmental groups, for the purposes of connecting sovereign nations or transcending national boundaries.

During the early to mid-twentieth century, a number of international organizations were formed, making interactions between nations more regular and increasingly institutionalized. Navari notes that during the late nineteenth century, only around 300 international groups were functioning, but by the mid-twentieth century, over 20,000 were (1). In addition, the formation of international organizations like the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations contributed to nations beginning to view themselves as parts of an "international community" (2). Though many involved in the various movements toward internationalism may have envisioned a transition from nationalism to internationalism, such a transition has not happened – both have continued to exist simultaneously (in their myriad forms). In fact, Tom Nairn suggests that internationalism is simply "a way of adapting to the nationalist world" (273).

In the midst of the ideological tensions between nationalism and internationalism in the mid-twentieth century, Tolkien was writing *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. In *Defending Middle-earth*, Patrick Curry briefly raises the issue of nationalism in Tolkien's work. He cites feminist critic, Catherine Stimpson, founding editor of *Signs*, who in 1969 scathingly assessed Tolkien as an "incorrigible nationalist . . . [who] celebrates the English bourgeois pastoral idyll. Its characters, tranquil and well fed, live best in placid, philistine, provincial rural cosiness" (qtd. in Curry 40). Curry counters that Stimpson ignores

that the Shire is only a small part of Middle-earth, positing that "any degree of English nationalism that the hobbits represent is highly qualified" (40).

Indeed, Tolkien's loyalty toward his country was at times tempered by his misgivings about certain aspects of England's identity. For all that Tolkien loved his country and wanted to build its mythology, he also at times recoiled from its identity, particularly what he perceived as its penchant for domination. He expressed his intense repulsion from imperialism in a 1945 letter to Christopher:

> Though in this case, as I know nothing about British or American imperialism in the Far East that does not fill me with regret and disgust, I am afraid I am not even supported by a glimmer of patriotism in this remaining war. I would not subscribe a penny to it, let alone a son, were I a free man. It can only benefit America or Russia: prob. the latter. But at least the Americo-Russian War won't break out for a year yet. (*Letters* 115)

A year earlier, Tolkien wrote to Christopher, "I should have hated the Roman Empire in its day (as I do), and remained a patriotic citizen, while preferring a free Gaul and seeing good in Carthaginians" (*Letters* 89). Tolkien's firm belief that one could maintain one's identity as a member of a particular nation without needing to impose that identity on others informs much of his depiction of international relations.

Internationalism and Alliances

Navari observes that alliances played a significant role in the internationalism of the mid- to late twentieth century (312). She points out, however, that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, formal alliances were not eagerly undertaken – in fact, following the First World War, many European nations were reluctant to engage in long-term alliances because "it

was believed that alliance commitments had dragged countries into a war which they might otherwise have avoided, besides increasing its ferocity and extending its duration" (313). Navari cites the French alliances with several Central European nations as the "only inter-war alliance system worthy of its name," suggesting that other inter-war alliances were, for the most part, hastily put together just before the outbreak of the Second World War (313). Navari indicates that "by contrast with the pre-war pattern, the post-war alliances were numerous, wide in scope and intended for the duration of the Cold War conflict and beyond" (314). The twentieth century preoccupation with alliances repeatedly manifests itself in Tolkien's writing both before and after the Second World War.

As *The Silmarillion* follows the creation and settling of Middle-earth, the various cultures within it are only just forming, and consequently, their identities and allegiances are likewise only beginning to develop. Nevertheless, several of the aspects of alliances in *The Lord of the Rings* also appear in *The Silmarillion*. The Middle-earth of *The Silmarillion* faces a nearly unstoppable evil force, in this case, Morgoth. Because of Morgoth's great strength, his opponents have to come together to defeat him at multiple points in time (150). Tolkien writes of the Noldor elves, "their unaided war upon him [Morgoth] was without final hope" (150). Prior to a later battle, Maedhros, the son of Fëanor, puts together a "league and union of the Elves," knowing that "Morgoth would destroy them all, one by one, if they could not again unite" (188-9). Recognizing the strength of the union between the Elves, Men, and the Noldor, Morgoth attempts to dismantle it (190-1). He only is able to overcome his enemies by creating divisions among them: "Great was the triumph of Morgoth, and his design was accomplished in a manner after his own heart; for Men took the lives of Men, and betrayed the Eldar, and fear and hatred were aroused among those that should have been united against him" (195).

At a later point, a man named Tuor earns a following during the Battle of Unnumbered Tears and afterward creates "the second union of Elves and Men" (241). As Kocher observes in *A Reader's Guide to* The Silmarillion, elves and men from several kingdoms form an alliance to defeat Sauron's alliance of orcs, trolls, and ringwraiths (223-4). This particular union "came to be known as the Last Alliance between Elves and Men because never again were the Elves left on Middle-earth numerous enough to attack the Enemy with arms" (223). This pattern of forming allegiances, breaking them apart, and rebuilding them (at times in other forms) occurs at numerous points in *The Silmarillion*, showing both the necessity and the frailty of such relationships.

In multiple instances in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien shows a similar distaste for isolationism through his portrayal of war. He depicts separation from other nations as potentially dangerous and not sustainable in the long term. Without outside aid, Rohan, for one, would certainly have fallen. Ironically, Rohan's isolation is intended for its protection. When Aragorn, Gimli, Gandalf, and Legolas arrive at Meduseld, the hall of Rohan's King Théoden, the guards greet them cautiously (*Two Towers* 497). One guard explains,

> It is the will of Théoden King that none should enter his gates, save those who know our tongue and are our friends . . . None are welcome here in days of war but our own folk, and those that come from Mundburg in the land of Gondor. Who are you that come heedless over the plain thus strangely clad, riding horses like to our own horses? Long have we kept guard here, and we have watched you from afar. Never have we seen riders so strange . . . Say, are you not a wizard, some spy from Saruman, or phantoms of his craft? Speak now and be swift! (497)

The guard makes clear that Théoden wishes Rohan to remain almost entirely isolated from other nations, save for the single alliance with Gondor (497). Because the guards do not recognize the members of the Fellowship that appear on their doorstep, they assume that the strangers are enemies (497). Rohan's separatism aims to protect them from infiltration by Saruman's spies (497).

Yet it is precisely Rohan's isolation that leaves it vulnerable to attack. Théoden has already come under the control of Saruman. Saruman's continued ability to control Théoden (and consequently Rohan) depends on Rohan's separation from potential allies. The true danger to Rohan has come not through the infiltration of strangers, but from the inside, through the influence of Théoden's trusted advisor, Grima Wormtongue (*Two Towers* 508-9). Théoden repeatedly rejects Gandalf's entreating for cooperation, telling him, "with you come evils worse than before, as might be expected. Why should I welcome you, Gandalf Stormcrow?" (501). With each dismissal, Wormtongue stands by Théoden's side, encouraging him (501-2). From following Wormtongue's advice, Théoden has grown suspicious of old friends, has turned on his own nephew, and has been physically transformed into a stooped, elderly man (503-5). Rohan's salvation comes from its alliances. Gandalf warns Théoden about the dangers of isolationism: "Hail, Théoden, son of Thengel! I have returned. For behold! the storm comes, and now all friends should gather together, lest each singly be destroyed" (501). After his release from Wormtongue's control, Théoden recognizes the truth in Gandalf's statement: as Katharyn W. Crabbe indicates in *J. R. R. Tolkien*, Théoden sings to celebrate his freedom, but his song "is not, as we might expect, a song of rebirth in nature, but a call to battle" (106). Through this scene, Tolkien foreshadows the role alliances will play in winning the War of the Ring.

The alliances of the War of the Ring are not new to Middle-earth. In *The Hobbit*, dwarves, elves, and men form an alliance to defeat the united forces of the trolls, goblins, and wolves. In *The Politics of Fantasy: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien*, Lee D. Rossi attributes the formation of this alliance to "the irony of history," noting that though the dwarf Thorin initially only means to call together his relatives for self-centered purposes, the dwarf addition to the alliance proves to be "absolutely vital for the defeat of the goblins and wolves" (103). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Faramir tells the captive Frodo and Sam a little about the history of Gondor and Rohan, emphasizing the necessity of international unity for the survival of both nations (*Two Towers* 662). Gondor was populated by the descendants of the fallen Númenor (662). Faramir informs the hobbits that after Gondor's establishment, "Many became enamoured of the Darkness and the black arts; some were given wholly to idleness and ease, and some fought among themselves, until they were conquered in their weakness by the wild men" (662). Faramir faults the Gondorians' steadily increasing laziness for weakening their nation, arguing that "it was Gondor that brought about its own decay, falling by degrees into dotage, and thinking that the Enemy was asleep" (662). Gondor could not long sustain its nationhood alone; the wild men too easily defeated the Gondorians by capitalizing on the lack of watchfulness into which they had been lulled. The stewards of Gondor recognized the need to join forces with their neighbors (663). In creating this alliance, stewards turned once enemies into their most valuable supporters: "they made a truce with the proud peoples of the North, who often had assailed us" (663). The relationship is reciprocal: the Rohirrim aid in the defense of Gondor, and Gondor relinquish claim to the Calenardhon fields, which later becomes the land of Rohan (663).

These alliances primarily aim to preserve the sovereignty of independent nations, rather than to set up a new system of government not involving nations. In this manner, international

relations in Tolkien's work may reflect the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations following the two World Wars. In *Nationalism and Internationalism: European and American Perspectives*, Erich Hula comments that these two systems "are, fundamentally, variants of one and the same organizational type—the confederate system. Both were conceived by their founders as international bodies composed of sovereign member states, yet charged with the task of upholding the authority of the community of nations as a whole" (139). This view of internationalism as a means of peacekeeping underlies Tolkien's depiction of international relations.

For Tolkien, numbers alone are not sufficient for even powerful alliances to ensure peace; morality plays a role in their efficacy as well. In his 1956 review of *The Lord of the Rings*, Auden comments on the challenges of portraying a constitutive role for morality in an armed conflict: "To present the conflict between Good and Evil as a war in which the good side is ultimately victorious is a ticklish business. Our historical experience tells us that physical power and, to a large extent, mental power are morally neutral and effectively real: wars are won by the stronger side, just or unjust" (par. 10). While Tolkien divides the opponents in the War of the Ring into good and evil (and eventually allows good to triumph), he also recognizes that the victory of the side of good in Middle-earth is not inevitable.

The fear that the war would only be won through physical and not moral strength seems to drive much of Tolkien's portrayal of alliances. Faramir admits to Sam and Frodo that he fears for the future of Gondor:

> What hope have we? . . . It is long since we had any hope. The sword of Elendil, if it returns indeed, may rekindle it, but I do not think that it will do more than put off the evil day, unless other help unlooked-for also comes, from Elves or Men.

> For the Enemy increases and we decrease. We are a failing people, a springless autumn. (662)

Faramir understands the need for alliances in terms of a power ratio: the greater the growth of Mordor, the greater the need for Gondor to have assistance from elves or other men to counterbalance the numbers of the enemy.

In the end, numbers prove not to be the ultimate determiner of the outcome of the war. In *War and the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Croft observes that despite the formation of alliances, the forces of Mordor still outnumber the soldiers fighting for the West (124-5). Likewise, Auden comments that "[i]f Sauron recovers the Ring, his victory will be immediate and complete, but even without it his power is greater than any his enemies can bring against him, so that, unless Frodo succeeds in destroying the Ring, Sauron must win" (par. 11). The allied nations of the West win the war not because they have greater physical strength than do the legions of Mordor – they do not. The West wins in part by collectively maintaining their shared moral values regarding the use of the ring. As Auden suggests, they could have used the ring to defeat Mordor but would have become like Sauron as a result (par. 11). Frodo accomplishes his task because no one in the allied forces ever takes the ring from him, however much individuals might struggle with the temptation to do so.

Despite his at times heavy emphasis on the need for alliances, Tolkien also shows wariness about the possibility of a nation being lured into a harmful union. During the meeting in Isengard, Saruman invites Théoden to create such a partnership between Rohan and Isengard (*Two Towers* 566). Saruman smoothly says,

> But my lord of Rohan, am I to be called a murderer, because valiant men have fallen in battle? If you go to war, needlessly, for I did not desire it, then men will

> be slain. But if I am a murderer on that account, then all the house of Eorl [Rohan] is stained with murder; for they have fought many wars, and assailed many who defied them. Yet with some they have afterwards made peace, none the worse for being politic. I say, Théoden King: shall we have peace and friendship, you and I? It is ours to command. (566)

Théoden dismisses Saruman's empty offer of an alliance between Isengard and Rohan, answering, "[y]ou hold out your hand to me, and I perceive only a finger of the claw of Mordor" (566). In this exchange, Rohan easily escapes an ill-advised union because Saruman's and hence Isengard's true intent is by then clearly visible.

However, such has not always been the case. In Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien recounts Saruman's history in Isengard. About two centuries before Théoden's rule, Saruman forges a friendship with Rohan by "bringing gifts, and speaking great praise of the valour of the Rohirrim" (1045). As Saruman gains the trust of the Rohirrim, as well as of the Steward of Gondor, he earns the right to live in Orthanc, the tower in Isengard belonging to Gondor (1042). The leaders of both Gondor and Rohan initially fully trust Saruman: "Fréaláf [an early king of Rohan] was as glad as Beren [a steward of Gondor] to have this so, and to know that Isengard was in the hands of a strong friend" (1042). Tolkien indicates here that though it is unknown at what exact point Saruman becomes evil, the white wizard does certainly construct Isengard "with the purpose of building up a power of his own" (1042). Rossi notes the importance of this capacity for the "good" to become evil, noting that "[w]ithin the good themselves lurks the lust for power," and so war in Tolkien's work is never "simply a matter of good overcoming evil" (5). Sometimes the good themselves become evil. In the portrait of the long-term relationship between Rohan and Isengard, Tolkien shows some hesitance about

alliances. While they may be needed, one can never rest secure that another nation does or will always have the interests of other nations at heart.

Ultimately, alliances in *The Lord of the Rings* become more or less permanent fixtures. The alliance between Gondor and Rohan does not end with the resolution of the War of the Ring. Tolkien recognizes that despite the magnitude of this war, it is not the last war Middle-earth will endure, and he prepares his characters for the inevitable by planning out their continued alliances. In Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien indicates that "though Sauron had passed, the hatreds and evils that he bred had not died, and the King of the West [Aragorn] had many enemies to subdue before the White Tree could grow in peace" (1045). But Aragorn, also called Elessar, cannot keep these enemies at bay alone: "wherever King Elessar went with war King Éomer went with him" (1045). The partnership between Rohan and Gondor continues after the War of the Ring ends, and allows the nations to keep Mordor and Isengard from resurgence. This desire to construct international ties that would last longer than the duration of one particular war mirrors the real-world post-World War II concerns about the impermanency of alliances (Navari 314).

Cultural Exchanges and Vanishing Borders

During the interwar period, the internationalist movement gained speed, focusing not only on peace-keeping but also on increasing cross-cultural understanding. In *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*, Akira Iriye indicates that during the 1920s, intellectuals in various countries, including England, launched efforts to rewrite textbooks because earlier versions "had fostered a narrowly nationalistic outlook and made it impossible for students to embrace any sort of internationalism" (75). At the same time, a number of foreign exchange programs designed to encourage international awareness were established or expanded, at times

sponsored by the League of Nations (73-4). While cultural internationalism has had what Iriye calls an "often tortured evolution," it played an important role in twentieth century history (149).

As Tolkien's characters from different cultures in Middle-earth come into contact, albeit often through the ironic catalyst of war, they begin to assume characteristics of one another's cultures. The relationship between Gondor and Rohan, for example, does not simply function as a wartime alliance through which the two nations meet each other's defense needs and then part, never to intermingle their identities. Each also profoundly influences the other. Faramir describes the struggle each nation has undergone to preserve its individual identity while also taking on characteristics of the other. He tells the hobbits, "Of our lore and manners they [the Rohirrim] have learned what they would, and their lords speak our speech at need; yet for the most part they hold by the ways of their own fathers and to their own memories, and they speak among themselves their own North tongue" (663). Faramir's account of Rohan suggests the possibility of maintaining a unique national identity despite regular contact with foreign cultures.

Gondor and Rohan, in turn, influence the Shire through the fellowship-hobbits, who absorb certain aspects of those cultures and take them back home. In *J. R. R. Tolkien*, Crabbe briefly discusses the ways in which both Gondor and Rohan express their love of the culture of the warrior. She points to the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, during which the Rohirrim sing joyfully even in the midst of battle, clearly reveling in the heroic aspects of warfare (75). Crabbe compares the attitude of the Rohirrim toward warfare to that of the Gondorians, who "add to the image of the warrior hero a spiritual quality that moves them up the heroic ladder"; the Gondorians' love of knowledge, lore, and wisdom above warfare as setting them apart from the Rohirrim (75).

Frodo and the other fellowship-hobbits take on some of these traits; by the time they return to the Shire, they identify as warriors, when the rest of the Shire has always identified as more or less pacifist (*Fellowship* 5; *Return* 982). Having been exposed to the company of royalty, they have adopted a more formal speech and manner of carrying themselves. Pippin boastfully defends Frodo from an insult of one of the new rulers of the Shire: "I am a messenger of the King . . . You are speaking to the King's friend, and one of the most renowned in all the lands of the West. You are a ruffian and a fool. Down on your knees in the road and ask pardon" (*Return* 982). Twice Pippin links the identity of the Fellowship-hobbits to Aragorn and bases Frodo's worthiness on his international fame (982). Pippin also bares his sword, revealing "the silver and sable of Gondor" (982). Later, when the hobbits must physically fight Sharkey's men to free the Shire, Merry summons his fellow hobbits to aid him in battle by calling out "Gondor to the Mark" (86). Here, he links the hobbits' identity to that of their warrior friends in Gondor. As the hobbits respond to the call of "Gondor to the Mark," they have adopted Aragorn's nationality as part of their identity (86). This scene shows the extent to which the fellowship-hobbits have aligned their own identities with those of the warrior societies they have fought alongside.

Groups in Middle-earth are only able to influence one another because they have a shared system of communication. Having a common language to facilitate international relations was a real-world issue that became especially important during the interwar period (Iriye 76-7). For a time in the 1920s, delegates from numerous countries proposed resolutions to the League of Nations to establish Esperanto as an international language that would allow people to communicate across national boundaries (76-7). Iriye states that "the Esperanto movement never achieved the result it aspired to, but nevertheless it fitted into the overall cultural internationalist

agendas of the 1920s" (77). Though Esperanto did not end up an international language, the need for a means of communicating across borders did not cease. Tolkien was aware of the proposals regarding Esperanto and commented on them in a personal letter decades later. In 1956, he wrote to Mr. Thompson, disparaging Esperanto and other languages created expressly for international communication, calling them "far deader than ancient unused languages, because their authors never invented any Esperanto legends" (231). Nevertheless, he clearly recognized the need for a means of communicating outside the bounds of one's own nation, a concern that appears at multiple points in his writing.

The languages of Middle-earth each have specific details that link them to their speakers. In *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon*, Brian Rosebury comments that "the aesthetic qualities of the invented tongues reinforce our sense of the cultural and even moral character of their habitual users: the Elves literally stop their ears when the inscription on the Ring, in Sauron's Black Speech, is recited" (24-5). That these languages so closely align with the nature of their speakers suggests a strong sense of ownership of the languages. That is, each language clearly belongs to and is an inherent part of the identity of the group that speaks it.

Though each nation has its own language, Middle-earth also has a language that transcends national borders – denizens of Middle-earth call it the "Common Tongue" (*Two Towers* 497). In *The Languages of Tolkien's Middle-earth*, Ruth S. Noel comments that use of the Common Tongue, also called Westron, "became the language of trade, a *lingua franca* . . . of all who had dealings with the Númenoreans" (10). This shared language facilitates interaction and friendship between the various nations of Middle-earth. Gandalf rebukes the guards at Meduseld for not welcoming him and his friends, asking why they do not speak the Common Tongue, considering that the visitors clearly do not come from Rohan (497). The guards' use of

their native language, rather than appearing as a sign of their patriotism or pride in their language, only marks them as hostile toward outsiders (497).

In an earlier version of *The Lord of the Rings*, printed in *The History of Middle-earth* series, Faramir explains to Frodo and Sam how the Common Tongue came to be the international language of choice (*War of the Ring* 159). He tells them that the Common Tongue originated in Númenor and later was adopted by other regions of Middle-earth (159). In one version, Faramir says, "[i]t is this language that has spread through the western world among all that are of good will, and among others also" (159). In a later version, Tolkien changes Faramir's comment: "This language it is that has spread through the western world amongst all folk and creatures that use words, to some only a second tongue for use in intercourse with strangers, to some the only tongue they know" (159). The second version depicts the Common Tongue as a more all-encompassing force, suggesting that this language is not merely widespread, but is spoken everywhere in Middle-earth (159).

Yet the Common Tongue is not really democratic; the peoples of Middle-earth did not somehow collectively create a shared language that would be politically neutral. Rather, the language began in Númenor, the national ancestor of Gondor, and "spread" across Middle-earth, albeit in a form altered by years of use (159). Faramir informs Frodo and Sam of this connection in his assessment of the Common Tongue (159). In the second version of *The Two Towers* found in *The War of the Ring*, Sam exclaims, "But you speak the ordinary language! Same as us, though a bit old-fashioned like" (159). Faramir responds, "Of course we do . . . For that is our own tongue which we perhaps preserve better than you do far in the North" (159). Faramir's answer indicates that he assumed others would know where the Common Tongue originated (159). He also shows a measure of possessiveness toward the international language, calling it

"our own tongue" (159). Faramir reinforces the Gondorian ownership of the Common Tongue by informing Frodo and Sam that what they mistake for "old-fashioned" speech truly is a more precise preservation of an earlier form of the Common Tongue (159). By stating that the Gondorians "perhaps preserve [the language] better than" the hobbits do, Faramir implies that the Gondorians' manner of speaking the ostensibly international language is superior to that of the hobbits (159).

Despite its possible bias toward Gondorian culture, the Common Tongue proves an invaluable means of connecting cultures in Middle-earth and allows for increased cultural understanding, something that would not be possible without a way to communicate. In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Hobsbawm argues that "[t]o be monolingual is to be shackled, unless your local language happens to be a *de facto* world language" (116). His statement particularly holds true for marginalized groups. During the time Tolkien was writing, authors frequently did not give such groups a voice. In "Modernism and Imperialism," Fredric Jameson writes that Western modernist texts often carry "traces of imperialism," though in more subtle ways than did their predecessors (65). Jameson notes that though more recent literature allows marginalized peoples to "speak in their own distinctive voices," modernist literature often represents Others as "exotic," something that entertains or frightens (49). Jameson names the "wild man of the Middle Ages" as one common stereotype that embodied "everything fascinating and frightening about the unbridled id for an agricultural or village society" (49).

One such Other makes a brief but notable appearance in *The Lord of the Rings*. Prior to riding into battle, Théoden forges a new, less conventional partnership with a group living on the fringes of Middle-earth society (*Return* 813-4). Tolkien calls them "Wild Men" and gives them physical attributes associated with landscape – one man is described as being "gnarled as an old

stone" and having a "scanty beard straggled on his lumpy chin like dry moss" (813). These characters elicit fear in the characters raised in the more mainstream societies in Middle-earth. Elfhelm the Marshal scares Merry with tales of the Wild Men hunting other peoples of Middle-earth with poisonous darts (813). Merry's experience of meeting one of the Wild Men about whom he has heard fearsome stories is eye-opening. He scarcely expects the man to be real, seeing him as "one of those old images brought to life" (813). Merry is also surprised to find that the man speaks the Common Speech, "though in a halting fashion, and uncouth words were mingled with it" (814).

The Wild Man, who reveals himself to be a leader named Ghân-buri-Ghân, is a curiosity to the characters unaccustomed to seeing people who would not fit into their more conventional societies (814). Yet Ghân holds his own in negotiating with Théoden and Éomer the terms of the alliance. Ghân understands the nature of his people's identity and smartly defends his people from being coerced into participating in the war in a way that would alter their identity. To Théoden's invitation, Ghân responds, "No, father of Horse-men . . . we fight not. Hunt only. Kill *gorgún* in woods" (814). Éomer insists that the Wild Men need to go to battle, but Ghân firmly answers that they will serve only as watchmen – a valuable service because of their extensive knowledge of that land (814). The Wild Men aid in the war effort, but in the manner in which they choose to do so.

Ghân likewise shrewdly negotiates the reward his people are to receive for aiding Rohan and Gondor. Théoden simply offers Ghân the gift of an alliance with Rohan in return for the Wild Men's services: "If you are faithful, Ghân-buri-Ghân, then we will give you rich reward, and you shall have the friendship of the Mark for ever" (815). Ghân accepts Théoden's proposal, but does not allow Théoden to maintain the moral upper hand (815). He reminds Théoden of the

poor treatment the Rohirrim historically have given to the Wild Men, saying, "Dead men are not friends to living men, and give them no gifts. . . . But if you live after the Darkness, then leave Wild Men alone in the woods and do not hunt them like beasts any more" (815). Théoden and the rest of the company present for this encounter are able to discover the humanity of the Wild Men in good part because of the existence of an international language.

Some outside cultural influences are not welcomed by those who would prefer to maintain their old customs without introducing any new ones. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo returns from his adventures and finds his fellow hobbits unenthusiastic about the friendships he has developed with non-hobbits (271). Because of his association with peoples outside of the Shire, Bilbo "lost his reputation. It is true that for ever after he remained an elf-friend, and had the honour of dwarves, wizards, and all such folks as ever passed that way; but he was no longer quite respectable. He was in fact held by all the hobbits of the neighborhood to be 'queer'" (271). Hobbits typically keep to themselves, so Bilbo's temerity in socializing outside of the Shire (and bringing others into the Shire) causes other hobbits to perceive him as a threat (271). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Faramir admits that the Rohirrim have an identity separate from Gondor that they have no interest in relinquishing, but at the same time, he also expresses some regret at what he feels is a negative influence of Rohan on Gondor. He states, "Yet now, if the Rohirrim are grown in some ways more like to us, enhanced in arts and gentleness, we too have become more like to them, and can scarce claim any longer the title High. We are become Middle Men, of the Twilight, but with memory of other things" (*Two Towers* 663). In both of these cases, influences of other cultures is suspect, whether out of the fear of outsiders or out of the belief that other cultures may degrade one's own culture. Despite the issues related to cultural differences that

continue to plague Middle-earth, international relations form an integral part of Tolkien's work and lead to aspects of the various cultures of Middle-earth spilling over into one another.

The Breakdown of Internationalism

Internationalism in Tolkien's work is at times a powerful force but proves to be insufficient to prevent violence. At the end of the Second World War, Tolkien wrote to Christopher that "Wars are always lost, and The War always goes on" (*Letters* 116). Tolkien clearly did not have any illusions that simply by joining together, nations could eradicate war. In "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," Immanuel Kant argues that "war has no need of a particular motivating reason, but rather seems to have been embedded in human nature" (89). Tolkien constructs war in Middle-earth similarly. In fact, war is such an inherent part of humanity for Tolkien that he weaves it into his creation story in *The Silmarillion*. Ilúvatar and the Ainur create by singing, at first alone and then gradually building a complex harmony together (15). Melkor revolts against Ilúvatar and adds a discordant strain to the melody (16). Ilúvatar then unveils the world to them, saying, "Behold your Music!" (17). The world simultaneously includes harmony and discord (16-7). Later, Tolkien writes, "[i]t is told among the wise that the First War began before Arda (Earth) was full-shaped, and ere yet there was anything that grew or walked upon earth" (35). *The Silmarillion* documents a long series of separate battles without a real sense of progression. In *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*, Flieger lists a number of battles of the elves, stating that "[t]hese names of battles are strung on Elvish history like beads on a string. Some battles are won and some are lost, but all are part of the struggle that shapes Elven lives in Middle-earth" (141). Episodes of war are interspersed throughout the lives of characters in Middle-earth.

Peace exists for some nations in Middle-earth but only when factors outside their control fall into place. Tolkien portrays several nations that identify as peaceful and free in his writing, showing skepticism about their viability in both *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Shire is only able to live peacefully for a number of years because unknown protectors keep enemies away (*Fellowship* 5). Tolkien devises an encounter in *The Silmarillion* that conveys the same idea. Turgon, son of Fingolfin, tells Eöl that the Teleri elves are only free because of the work of the Noldor elves: "By the swords of the Noldor alone are your sunless woods defended. Your freedom to wander there wild you owe to my kin; and but for them long since you would have laboured in thraldom in the pits of Angband" (137). In both novels, a group preserves its identity because unseen defenders prevent that group from being attacked.

Aside from the existence of outside protectors, the ability of nations in Middle-earth to maintain peace depends largely on their geographic location. Rosebury contrasts the pacifism in the Shire with the valorizing of war in Gondor, observing that "the military values of Gondor . . . reflect its position as historical antagonist and neighbor to Mordor. The geopolitical complexity of Middle-earth requires, in fact, if it is to be plausible, a certain variation in the expression and emphasis given to moral imperatives" (44). Gondor is not morally inferior to the Shire for its love of warfare; rather, the value Gondor places on skill in battle arises out of necessity. If Gondorians did not study military strategy and grow up aspiring to be warriors, Gondor likely would not have survived its numerous face-offs with the aggressive Mordor. Had Gondor succumbed to Mordor's advances, Mordor most probably would have reached the Shire earlier, and the hobbits would have been drawn into battle, however much they might have wanted to avoid doing so.

Internationalism in Tolkien's work is necessary but breaks down past a certain point. In "The European Nation-State – Its Achievements and Its Limits," Jürgen Habermas asserts that "the nation-state can no longer provide an appropriate frame for the maintenance of democratic citizenship" (293). Rather, he believes that "[w]hat generally seems to be necessary is the development of capacities for political action on a level above and between nation-states" to prevent the disappearance of "the republican heritage" (293). Much of Tolkien's portrayal of international relations supports this idea that nations cannot survive independently, though he conceives of international relations as a means of maintaining the sovereignty of nations and not of rethinking them altogether. Tolkien seems to fear nations' whole-hearted reliance on others to come to their aid. Sometimes at crucial moments, allies simply fail to show up. At the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, the hobbits return home only to have to engage in another battle, the Battle of Bywater, to free the Shire from the clutches of Sharkey (*Return* 975). All of their fellow warriors have already returned to their various homes, and so the hobbits must fight alongside only other hobbits. Prior to the War of the Ring, the hobbits are able to abstain almost entirely from war. In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien writes, "At no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves" (5). But when the fellowship-hobbits return from the war, the Shire must choose to engage in war or succumb to Sharkey and his minions. The Shire no longer is able to maintain peace because the outside protectors are not at their stations.

Removing outside aid from the hobbits, Tolkien wrestles with the effects on the identity of the Shire. In an early version of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien contemplates having the fellowship-hobbits return from the war more aggressive and quicker to engage in violent fights. When the hobbits first return to the Shire, they meet Saruman, disguised as Sharkey (*End of the*

Third Age 83). Sharkey does nothing more than call Frodo an unflattering name, and Pippin "flashed out his sword and rode forward, casting aside his cloak so that the silver and sable of Gondor which he still wore could be seen" (83). Part of this episode is designed simply to return a measure of power to the hobbits by showing a connection to Gondor and the King. Pippin's quickness to show his sword also suggests that he angers more easily and is ready to respond to verbal provocation with violence. Pippin tells Sharkey, "'Down on your knees in the road, or I'll set this troll's bane in you.' His sword glinted red in the last rays of the sun" (83). Conversely, earlier in the war, the hobbits have, as Rosebury puts it, "essentially 'civilian' temperaments, unsuited to combat and danger yet forced into them by circumstance" (164). By the time they return home, the characteristic hobbit reluctance to fight is gone; Pippin is almost eager to run his sword through Sharkey. By ordering Sharkey to kneel before the hobbits, Pippin also shows a desire to humiliate Sharkey.

Later, the hobbits do more than threaten violence. Frodo and his friends hide in a farmer's house, but are soon discovered by Sharkey and his underlings. The Fellowship-hobbits quickly kill or chase away most of the group. Frodo kills Sharkey by stabbing him in the neck with a sword. The hobbits kill two of Sharkey's henchmen "before they knew they were attacked" (86). Sam rather dismissively says of the incident, "It is like a rat hunt . . . But that's only four and one with a broken nose" (86). Sam effectively removes any sense of humanity from the hobbits' enemies by likening them to rats and citing the death toll as "only four." The hobbits do not only kill when facing the immediate threat of being attacked. After they kill Sharkey and several of his underlings, the rest of Sharkey's men run away. Rather than letting them go, the hobbits kill two more of them: "one more fell to Frodo's sword before he could escape," and Farmer Cotton slays another trying to get away. This violence is not received

soberly, as a grim necessity in times of war, but is heralded. Following the scuffle at Farmer Cotton's home, hobbits applaud Frodo and dance around a bonfire (86-7). This early incarnation of the Scouring of the Shire reinforces a sense of violence as an intrinsic part of humanity and reflects the powerlessness of internationalism to stop it. In *Internationalism and Its Betrayal*, Micheline Ishay argues that following the First World War, "[i]nternationalism remained an empty illusion, an idea condemned to the life of abstraction" (129). Tolkien echoes this assertion in his portrayal of the hobbits as seeming warmongers.

Tolkien, however, evidently was not able to sustain this vision of his peace-loving hobbits turned into warriors confidently slaying foes with little hesitation. In a second version of the Scouring of the Shire, he reformulates the confrontation between Frodo and Sharkey in Farmer Cotton's house. The hobbits are more thoughtful in their approach to violence, rather than only reacting emotionally. Prior to going to Farmer Cotton's house, the Fellowship-hobbits discuss the possibility of a violent confrontation. Merry tells the others, "It depends on how many of these ruffians there are . . . If there are a lot, then it will certainly mean fighting, Frodo. And it isn't going to be as easy after this" (96). Merry's comment suggests that violence is not inevitable, though it still appears probable. He approaches the situation with a pragmatic manner, seeming to prefer a non-violent resolution to the conflict but also being willing to use violence if necessary. When Sharkey arrives at Farmer Cotton's house, Frodo does not immediately kill him. Instead, the four Fellowship-hobbits secretly wait for him to enter the house and overpower him. They hold a sword to his neck but do not kill him. Alive, Sharkey can be used in lieu of the mass killing of the earlier version. The hobbits continue to hold the sword to Sharkey's throat, and force him to call out to his followers outside of the house, convincing them not to set it on fire (96-7).

The final version of the Scouring of the Shire, as it appears in *The Return of the King*, presents a more fully developed picture of violence as sometimes necessary but always undesirable. The hobbits are more introspective at points, less self assured, and killing is a last resort. Tolkien includes the scene from the first version, in which Pippin threatens Sharkey with his sword. In this final version, Merry and Sam also unsheathe their swords and back up Pippin to intimidate Sharkey (982). Frodo, however, does not join in and later cautions Pippin and the others about violence:

> 'Fight?' said Frodo. 'Well, I suppose it may come to that. But remember: there is to be no slaying of hobbits, not even if they have gone over to the other side. Really gone over, I mean; not just obeying ruffians' orders because they are frightened. No hobbit has ever killed another on purpose in the Shire, and it is not to begin now. And nobody is to be killed at all, if it can be helped. Keep your tempers and hold your hands to the last possible moment!' (983)

Frodo's speech dramatically changes the tone of the scene. He tempers the swagger of his friends by reminding them of the role of pacifism in the identity of the hobbits. At the same time, he allows for the possibility that violence, even killing, may not always be avoidable. In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Shippey underscores the importance of Tolkien's experience of the two World Wars in making him aware of the naiveté in believing that "evil could be ended 'for ever'" (165).

While the hobbits ultimately cannot avoid violence, they are much more reticent to initiate it in the final version of the Battle of Bywater. At an encounter at Farmer Cotton's house, Merry first verbally warns the intruders that several of their compatriots had already been captured, and one had been killed. The hobbits only start killing their opponents when the

"ruffians" attack them. When the dust settles, close to 70 of the ruffians have died, while only 19 of the hobbits have been slain. The surviving hobbits bury the ruffians and the slain hobbits, the former in a sand-pit and the latter in a hillside grave that they later adorn by planting a garden nearby (*Return* 992).

In the version of the Scouring of the Shire that appears in *The Return of the King*, Tolkien creates another meeting between the fellowship-hobbits and Saruman. In this scene, Saruman taunts the hobbits, mimicking their cry to kill him for being "a villain and a murderer" (995). He threatens them, assuring them that "[w]hoever strikes me shall be accursed. And if my blood stains the Shire, it shall wither and never again be healed" (995). Frodo remains level-headed, neither cowing at Saruman's threat nor lashing out physically at him. Instead, he assures the other hobbits that Saruman is bluffing and at the same time implores them not to kill Saruman, saying, "It is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing" (995). This scenario shows a marked change from the earlier versions of the Scouring of the Shire, in which the hobbits hastily dispose of Saruman after little provocation (*End of the Third Age* 86). Croft observes that Frodo maintains a pacifist response to Saruman, more so than do any of the other fellowship-hobbits but that his efforts minimize the death toll and balance the warrior mentality of Merry and Pippin (130).

Saruman repays Frodo's mercy by trying to stab him with a knife, but Frodo is fortunately still wearing his chain mail, and the knife blade breaks. Several hobbits overpower Saruman, and Sam draws his sword, but still Frodo pleads, "Do not kill him even now. For he has not hurt me. And in any case I do not wish him to be slain in this evil mood. He was great once, of a noble kind that we should not dare to raise our hands against. He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it" (996). Frodo

demonstrates remarkable self-control for having just survived a murder attempt. Implausible as his reaction seems, it shows the depth of Tolkien's distaste for violence and how much he wanted to find a way for victorious nations to respond to their conquered enemies with compassion.

Tolkien praises Frodo's restraint through the lips of Saruman, who responds bitterly to Frodo's mercy: "You have grown, Halfling. . . . Yes, you have grown very much. You are wise, and cruel. You have robbed my revenge of sweetness, and now I must go hence in bitterness, in debt to your mercy" (996). Frodo lets Saruman walk away (996). He extends the same grace to Wormtongue, offering him "rest and food here for a while, until you are stronger and can go your own ways" (996). This merciful response to evil runs counter to the expected response to violence or threats of violence. In "Tolkien's Augustinian Understanding of Good and Evil: Why *The Lord of the Rings* Is Not Manichean," Ralph Wood suggests that "[a]cccording to the warrior ethic of antique Germanic and Scandinavian cultures, the offering of pardon to enemies was unthinkable: they must be utterly defeated," but for Tolkien, with his Christian ethos, enemies must be treated with kindness and compassion (102).

In the end, both Saruman and Wormtongue die, yet Tolkien allows the hobbits to keep their hands clean (996). Saruman dies after mocking Wormtongue, who takes revenge by cutting Saruman's throat (996). Hobbits subsequently shoot Wormtongue with arrows (996). The hobbits and the Shire are decisively victorious over Saruman, Wormtongue, and hence, Isengard. The hobbits do not gloat over the bodies of their fallen enemies but treat them with respect and sobriety: "Frodo looked down at the body [of Saruman] with pity and horror" (997). Sam adds, "A nasty end, and I wish I needn't have seen it; but it's a good riddance" (997). Tolkien concludes the Scouring of the Shire, as it appears in *The Return of the King*, in a manner that

belies the possibility of evading violence altogether, while also revealing the ongoing tension in the identity of this nation that finds itself (at least momentarily) as isolated as it had once thought itself but had never actually been.

Conclusion: Internationalism and Mass Culture

However much he understood the need for nations to form alliances, Tolkien was well aware of the negative manifestations of internationalism. Part of what he found objectionable was the disingenuousness inherent in a lot of the rhetoric of international unity. In a 1943 letter to Christopher, Tolkien writes, "I must admit that I smiled a kind of sickly smile and 'nearly curled up on the floor . . .', when I heard of that bloodthirsty old murderer Josef Stalin inviting all nations to join a happy family of folks devoted to the abolition of tyranny & intolerance!" (*Letters* 65). Tolkien understood that the idea of international unity, while attractive, could be an empty promise, a distraction to keep nations from critically evaluating and acting on (or at least maintaining a safe distance from) the goings-on of other nations.

Aside from larger fears of internationalism becoming a sort of shield for some of the atrocities it sought to eliminate, Tolkien also expresses concerns that building an international community would lead to the diminishing of individual national cultures. In the same letter to Christopher, Tolkien writes about "Americo-cosmopolitanism" and its effects on local identity: "I wonder (if we survive this war) if there will be any niche, even of sufferance, left for reactionary back numbers like me (and you). The bigger things get the smaller and duller or flatter the globe gets. It is getting to be all one blasted little provincial suburb" (*Letters* 65). Tolkien's reservations about the homogenizing effects of American culture on the rest of the world in some respects echo the arguments of Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The latter authors posit that "[c]ulture today is infecting everything with

sameness" (94). The increase in sameness leads to a profound loss of autonomy for individuals, and in turn, pervasive sameness leads to all individuals becoming "absolutely replaceable, pure nothingness" (94-5, 117). Tolkien's primary concern is the loss of each culture's uniqueness, as opposed to that of individuals. Of the movement toward worldwide homogeneity, he writes, "[a]t any rate it ought to cut down travel. There will be nowhere to go" (65). Tolkien's comment here is written tongue in cheek, but it still gives a clear message. If cultures do not have features that clearly distinguish them from one another, their inherent value decreases (they are not worth visiting).

As a philologist, Tolkien especially feared the homogenization of language. Despite his creating a fictional international language, without which the various peoples of Middle-earth would not have been able to collaborate to thwart Sauron, Tolkien expressed misgivings about the real-world phenomenon of English becoming a *lingua franca*. In his letter to Christopher, he writes, "Col. Knox says 1/8 of the world's population speaks 'English', and that is the biggest language group. If true, damn shame – say I. May the curse of Babel strike all their tongues till they can only say 'baa baa'. It would mean much the same. I think I shall have to refuse to speak anything but Old Mercian" (65). Tolkien's imagined return to speaking Old Mercian, while evidently spoken in jest, suggests a desire to hold on to the local. In "English and Welsh," he reiterates his dissatisfaction with English becoming an internationally spoken language and praises the Welsh for not making their language "an aspirant for the ruinous honour of becoming the lingua franca of the world" (166). In describing this "honour" as "ruinous," Tolkien implies a fear that opening up a more localized language to the rest of the world might diminish the quality of the language, as happens with his fictive Westron when spoken by groups outside of Gondor ("English and Welsh" 166; *Return* 1103).

Through his at-times conflicted portrayal of international relations, Tolkien develops a system under which individuals in Middle-earth can maintain loyalty to both their nation and an international community, albeit one held together under the mostly nominal rule of Gondor. Croft comments that "[t]he West at the time of the war was a loose federation of independent states temporarily allied but with no supreme commander; it was not until after the war that Aragorn was crowned, and even then his policy was to allow autonomous home rule in many areas of his kingdom, like the Shire and Fangorn Forest" (125). When the war ends, many of the various regions of Middle-earth are connected through the allegiance they now owe to Aragorn, but because he as king allows them to function independently, they maintain the benefits of having true national sovereignty. Tolkien did not propose this scheme of international governance by one nation in the real world; in fact, he showed "support for Home Rule in Ireland" (Garth 230). However, in his fictional world, such a design provided a relatively tidy means of unifying the different nationalities of Middle-earth while allowing them to maintain their distinct identities.

INDIVIDUALISM AND NATIONALISM

Introduction

While much of Tolkien's fiction suggests a preference for collectivism, emphasizing the need for national and international communities, a host of issues related to individuals arise throughout his fiction. In *Individualism and Collectivism*, Harry C. Triandis defines collectivism as a social framework in which members "are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives," while the individualist society "consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others" (2). These definitions are helpful in terms of developing a basic understanding of the differences between collective and individual societies, but it is also necessary to acknowledge the ways that collective and individual interests may both overlap and conflict within one society, even where one is dominant.

At times competing with the concept of nationalism, individual interests have long held a prominent role in Western political thought. In *Rethinking Nationalism*, Jonathan Hearn indicates that "Modernization is closely associated with the development of a 'civil society'. . . . The crucial point here is a general shift from a society in which social roles and group memberships are strongly prescribed and circumscribed, to one in which individuals are freer to identify, associate and combine as they choose" (87). During the interwar and early post-World War II periods, the values of individualism and collectivism were inextricably related to the major political movements of the time. Generally speaking, collectivism came to be associated popularly with communism and fascism, while individualism was tied to capitalism. Individualism was not new to the twentieth century; as Alan Macfarlane comments in *The*

Origins of English Individualism, Weber connected the development of individualism to the beginnings of capitalism in the sixteenth century (46-7). Yet individualism certainly became much more pervasive in the Western world in the twentieth century (Meyer 214-6). For England, during the Second World War, proponents of individualism competed with supporters of collectivism, the latter being found not only in the English communist and fascist parties, but also in the Labour Party, which sought to meet socialist goals such as welfare reform without allying itself to communism or fascism (Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo 52, 68, 91).

Tolkien's relationship to these political ideologies was complex. He disdained fascism and, perhaps even more so, communism, at one point labeling Stalin a "bloodthirsty old murderer" (*J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* 109; *Letters* 65). At the same time, he also was wary of capitalism: "Tolkien disliked the ugly by-products of 'commerce' as they touched his own life but was obviously aware that commerce was necessary" (*J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* 85). Tolkien's feelings about the competing governmental systems of his day complicated his views of individualism and collectivism.

Although Tolkien clearly valued community, his characters at numerous points stray from their prescribed social roles, leading to both positive and negative results. In *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power*, Jane Chance argues that Tolkien champions the power of the individual to such an extent that Chance calls him "a voice for the dispossessed" (1). She suggests that Tolkien was reacting to the various forces of his day:

> Against the backdrop of the modern age, with which mechanization and the totalitarianism of Big Brother are popularly associated and in which individual freedom may seem to have counted for little, Tolkien wrote his narrative of

> Middle-earth. That is, he responded to an era in which the individual has appeared to become powerless against fate and the universal horror of evil . . . (1)

Tolkien's characters do not typically view their identities as *entirely* separate from their collective cultures; in fact, only Tom Bombadil really lives apart from any collective. Other characters must balance their desires as individuals with the needs of both national and international communities. Tolkien's disdain for modernity has been well-documented. His portrayals of individualism, a decidedly modern concept, are complex and inseparable from the larger political questions of the interwar and early post-war period.

Against Individualism: Denethor

In *Nationalism*, Elie Kedourie elucidates one argument about potential problems with an ideology of individualism:

> Kant argues powerfully that conscience is the final arbiter of morality, and that it judges according to its own self-legislated criteria. But he did not allow for the paradoxical and dangerous possibility that self-legislation, restrained by nothing but itself, can adopt evil as its own good. One of Hegel's deepest insights is that conscience has to be subject to the judgement of its truth and falsity. . . . This is because there is no way of establishing that conscience and goodness automatically go together. (138)

Kedourie gives as an example Eichmann, who at his trial attempted to defend his actions during the war on the grounds that he had simply been doing his duty (138). There is something of an irony in this particular example, as Kedourie is faulting Eichmann's individual reason for being untested by others, but Eichmann's reasoning was based on his perception of his duty to others. And obviously, his perception of his duty was shared by a number of others. This is the core of

the conflict between individualism and collectivism during the mid-twentieth century. Kedourie suggests that if individual reason does not have any external checks, it may lead to evil, but he fails to see that nothing prevents the collective from also being evil. As John W. Meyer observes, the twentieth century witnessed an ever-increasing focus on the individual, with the idea that such an emphasis would necessarily lead to social improvement (214-6). But at the same time, as Kedourie's case in point suggests, the individual will can be suspect in the same way that the collective will may be, and the individual will is often not as separate from the collective will as it purports to be.

Tolkien did not wholeheartedly subscribe to individualism. In fact, most of his characters inhabit societies in which they must meet very particular expectations based on their stations. This is perhaps not surprising, given Tolkien's stated admiration for hierarchical forms of national government. In "King and Hobbit: The Exalted and Lowly in Tolkien's Created Worlds," Marjorie Burns indicates that during a 1965 BBC interview Tolkien "claim[ed] that no other system does better [than monarchy]" (139). However, as Burns observes, Tolkien's political commentary was by no means consistent throughout his life, and in his fiction he frequently undermines his own hierarchies through characters such as Frodo, who earn a place of honor despite their humble origins (139). Tolkien expressed uncertainty about the superiority of monarchy to other governmental systems; in the BBC interview, he waffled a bit before answering that at least no other system had found a better way of managing power (146-7). Still, Tolkien's admiration for the idea of lineal rule repeatedly manifests itself in his writing, not only in the more obvious character of Aragorn but also in Denethor, who holds the position of Steward of Gondor until the king returns to claim the throne. In this respect, Tolkien seems to

show nostalgia for society as it existed before the shift toward individualism that Hearn describes (87).

Denethor ironically fails to fulfill his role by refusing to give it up, with disastrous results. He is both the rightful leader and not the rightful leader of Gondor. He is a steward and not a king; as such, his position from the outset is supposed to be temporary. In Appendix A of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes, "[e]ach new Steward indeed took office with the oath 'to hold rod and rule in the name of the King, until he shall return'" (1028). So that both the stewards and the people of Gondor will remember that a king should rule Gondor, the stewards follow several symbolic traditions: "Stewards never sat on the ancient throne; and they wore no crown, and held no sceptre. They bore a white rod only as the token of their office, and their banner was white without charge" (1028). They participate in ceremonies that regularly, tangibly remind them that they are not the true leaders of Gondor.

In many ways, Denethor is ideal as steward: he "was a proud man, tall, valiant, and more kingly than any man that had appeared in Gondor for many lives of men; and he was wise also, and far-sighted, and learned in lore" (1030). Denethor's bravery, perception, and knowledge should make him an excellent leader of Gondor, but his lineage dictates that he can only ever be a steward. Like the kings, the stewards inherit their position based on their lineage (1028). They are descended from Húrin, a man with Númenórean ancestry, and the "Stewardship became hereditary as a kingship, from father to son or nearest kin" (1028). However, Denethor, like numerous stewards before him, is not content with his assigned role (1028, 1030). He becomes paranoid "and suspected that he [advisor Thorongil] and Mithrandir designed to supplant him" (1031). Denethor cannot accept that his power is temporary. He looks into the palantír to increase his knowledge and his power, and he engages in a mental battle with Sauron (1031).

Denethor resists his inevitable need to give up the rule of Gondor to Aragorn, but his refusal to accept the temporariness of his power is futile, as Aragorn does eventually claim his right to the throne.

In response to Auden's review of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien explains Denethor's motives in rejecting his predetermined path:

> Denethor *was* tainted with mere politics: hence his failure, and his mistrust of Faramir. It had become for him a prime motive to preserve the polity of Gondor, as it was, against another potentate, who had made himself stronger and was to be feared and opposed for that reason rather than because he was ruthless and wicked. Denethor despised lesser men . . .
>
> If he had survived as victor, even without use of the Ring, he would have taken a long stride towards becoming himself a tyrant, and the terms and treatment he accorded to the deluded peoples of east and south would have been cruel and vengeful. He had become a 'political' leader: sc. Gondor against the rest. (*Letters* 241)

Tolkien then compares Denethor's actions during the war to those of the elves, who "destroyed their own polity in pursuit of a 'humane' duty" (241). Frodo's quest, likewise, was "humane" and not "political" (240).

Denethor's attempts to convert his temporary role to a permanent one arise out of selfish motives. Tolkien indicates in the above passage that had Denethor lived and defeated Mordor, he certainly would have continued to place his own ambitions over the wellbeing of others, to the detriment of the rest of Middle-earth. This portrait of Denethor mirrors two of the major criticisms levied against individualism. As Alan S. Waterman observes in *The Psychology of*

Individualism, opponents of individualism argue that too much focus on the self rather than on the community leads to narcissism as well as to excessive competition resulting in "positive outcomes for one" and "negative outcomes for others" (7). Tolkien admittedly shared some of these concerns about the modern trend toward individualism, at one point labeling "self-realization," "self-indulgence" (*Letters* 51).

In the resolution to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien reaffirms the importance of community over individual ambitions by portraying Denethor's death and fulfilling his intended role-relinquishment through his son, Faramir. In *The Mythology of Power*, Chance writes of Denethor's suicide, "this Man of Minas Tirith succumbs to the past, to death, to despair, revealing that the greater enemy is nearly always internal rather than external" (109). After Denethor's death, Faramir becomes the new steward. Yet unlike Denethor, Faramir does not resist yielding his power to Aragorn, telling him, "The last Steward of Gondor begs leave to surrender his office" (945). Aragorn does not immediately accept, responding, "That office is not ended, and it shall be thine and thy heirs' as long as my line shall last. Do now thy office!" (945). Neither is greedy for power; each shows humility in submitting to the other's authority. Ultimately, Faramir asks the crowd, "'Shall he be king and enter into the City and dwell there?' . . . [A]nd all the people cried *yea* with one voice" (946). After Aragorn's coronation, Gondor physically blossoms, mirroring the healing the nation receives as a result of the king's return (947). Aragorn also rewards Faramir for dutifully giving up the stewardship of Gondor. Rather than passively watch Faramir retreat to a subservient, glory-less role in the community, Aragorn gives him the region of Ithilien over which to rule (948). This region is much smaller than all of Gondor and Arnor, but it allows Faramir to retain some of the honor he earned during the war.

Here, Tolkien idealizes a collective society in which individuals subordinate their own desires to their duties to their nation.

Individualism as Service to Nation: Háma and Beregond

While characters such as Denethor imply that Tolkien believed that people should always comply with the duties socially determined for them, numerous other characters divert from their intended roles with more positive consequences. Steven Lukes defines one aspect of individualism as "the capacity of human beings to form intentions and purposes, to become aware of alternatives and make choices between them, and to acquire control over their own behaviour by becoming conscious of . . . the pressures exerted by the norms they follow or the roles they fill" (131). Similarly, some of Tolkien's characters must assess situations and make decisions that at times violate others' expectations or even orders.

The circumstances of war in which Tolkien's characters find themselves heighten the conflict between individualism and collectivism—soldiers and other servants of the state need to obey their superiors but also sometimes have to think for themselves if a leader is clearly making poor decisions. In a 1944 letter to Christopher, Tolkien acknowledges that leaders do not always have the experience necessary to make the best choices: "The last rather seems the idea of some of the Big Folk. Who have for the most part viewed this war from the vantage point of large motor-cars" (89). Here, Tolkien links modernity (in this case, automobiles) with the estrangement of decision-makers from those most affected by their plans. In doing so, he suggests that modern warfare does not lend itself to the kind of leadership that can be trusted.

Any sort of military service arguably requires a degree of unquestioning subservience. Even Kant, who in "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" proposes reason as a means of breaking away from the "great unthinking mass," states emphatically,

> [I]n some affairs which affect the interests of the commonwealth, we require a certain mechanism whereby some members of the commonwealth must behave purely passively. . . . It is, of course, impermissible to argue in such cases; obedience is imperative. . . . Thus, it would be very harmful if an officer receiving an order from his superiors were to quibble openly, while on duty, about the appropriateness or usefulness of the order in question. He must simply obey. (52-3)

Kant then suggests that while the officer must obey orders, he (or she) has the right to critically examine these orders and even publically comment on superiors' errors in judgment, just not while on duty (53).

Tolkien understood that blind obedience in war, while expected and often necessary, at times ends in catastrophe. He examines this issue in a prefatory essay to "The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son," his imagining of what happened after the events of the Old English poem, *The Battle of Maldon*. Of Beorhtnoth's ill-fated decision to allow the Danish to cross a ford during a battle, Tolkien writes, "This act of pride and misplaced chivalry proved fatal. Beorhtnoth was slain and the English routed; but the duke's 'household', his *heorðwerod*, containing the picked knights and officers of his bodyguard, some of them members of his own family, fought on, until they all fell dead beside their lord" (4). Beorhtnoth leads his soldiers to their deaths because of his own foolish choices. In this instance, the soldiers follow their leader's instructions without questioning them. Tolkien does not criticize the soldiers' decision, but in labeling Beorhtnoth's choice an "act of pride and misplaced chivalry," Tolkien clearly blames the leader.

Through the minor characters Háma and Beregond in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien explores the idea of having a subservient *not* follow ill-conceived orders. In *War and the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Croft examines the occasional need for disobedience, explaining,

> While there are several examples of characters simply not doing what they are told, sometimes an order is disobeyed because it is wrong, or because the commanding officer is not on the spot and is unaware of a change in the situation, or because the character perceives some higher good that supersedes the order. . . . And in Tolkien's world, disobedience quite frequently has a eucatastrophic effect in the end. (94-5)

Whereas Kant felt that soldiers should withhold their own judgments until safely away from the battlefield, Tolkien's characters' actions suggest a conception of disobedience as a form of national service.

In *The Two Towers*, Háma serves as doorward outside of Meduseld, Théoden's hall. It is Háma's duty to prevent outsiders from entering the hall with weapons, and for the most part, he faithfully fulfills his responsibility. Before allowing Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli to enter Meduseld, Háma commands all of them to leave their weapons outside the gate. Legolas immediately acquiesces, but the others become a little combative, and Háma has to order them repeatedly to leave their weapons. At one point, he even stands in front of the door and points his sword at the other men (499). Háma clearly knows his role and does not seem inclined to rebel against his master, Théoden.

In "Service," Scott Kleinman links Tolkien's portrait of servitude to Germanic lordship as drawn in Anglo-Saxon literature (138). Kleinman asserts that "such an arrangement comes at a price; the servant's degree of autonomy, combined with his love for his master, can place him

in awkward situations, in particular when he lacks his lord's guidance or doubts his wisdom" (140). When these situations arise, the answer for Tolkien is not always to obey blindly. Kleinman comments that "the lord must discern whether his thegns behave in his interests, and his thegns must make the same judgements about their own autonomous actions, where they run counter to their lords' commands. The potential for ambiguity extends even to those whose fidelity is unquestioned" (140-1). Such proves to be the case for Háma.

Just before permitting the men to enter Meduseld, Háma falters. Gandalf voluntarily lays aside his sword, Glamdring, but still carries his staff. Initially, Háma remains resolute, though apologetically telling Gandalf, "Forgive me, but that too must be left at the doors" (500). Both Aragorn and Gandalf protest that Gandalf needs his staff to lean on as he walks, because of his age. Háma astutely answers, "The staff of a wizard may be more than a prop for age" (500). Then he hesitates and says, "Yet in doubt a man of worth will trust to his own wisdom. I believe you are friends and folk worthy of honour, who have no evil purpose. You may go in" (500). By relying on "his own wisdom" in his decision-making process, Háma violates the duties of his station rather than working as an automaton, robotically observing his master's orders. As Croft notes, this choice "allows Gandalf to strike down Wormtongue and revitalize the king" (98).

Though the reader understands all along that Háma's trust is well placed, his failure to keep Gandalf's staff outside still constitutes disobedience. Wormtongue, for his own obviously self-serving purposes, tells Théoden, "Did I not counsel you, lord, to forbid his staff? That fool, Háma, has betrayed us!" (503). After he is freed from Saruman's control, Théoden understands Háma's motives but still chastises him (though perhaps half-heartedly) for his lack of faithfulness to his role. He tells Gandalf, "Call Háma to me. Since he proved untrusty as a doorward, let him become an errand-runner. The guilty shall bring the guilty to judgement"

(505). Here, Théoden links Háma's act to that of Wormtongue, despite Wormtongue's much longer term disloyalty and more intentionally treasonous motives. Yet in this same statement, Théoden also demonstrates his continued trust in Háma by assigning to him an alternate service role, that of "errand-runner" (505). Not long after, Háma makes another blunder, allowing Éomer to enter the hall carrying his sword. Háma confesses to Théoden, "It is my doing, lord . . . I understood that Éomer was to be set free. Such joy was in my heart that maybe I have erred. Yet, since he was free again, and he a Marshal of the Mark, I have brought him his sword as he bade me" (506). With conflicting instructions from Éomer and Théoden, Háma has no choice but to analyze the situation and determine a course of action based on his own reason.

In many ways, the scene between Háma and the members of the Fellowship who appear before him simply serves to connect *The Lord of the Rings* to Anglo-Saxon literature. In *The Keys to Middle-earth: Discovering Medieval Literature through the Fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Stuart D. Lee and Elizabeth Solopova link this scene to one in *Beowulf*, observing the similarities between the Fellowship-members being questioned outside of Meduseld prior to gaining permission to speak with Théoden and Beowulf's party being interrogated before meeting Hrothgar. They detect that even the description of the pathway in *The Lord of the Rings* resembles one in *Beowulf* (199). In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Tom Shippey also connects the scene with Háma to *Beowulf*, emphasizing the linguistic similarities. Shippey translates a line spoken by the coastguard in *Beowulf* as "A sharp shield-warrior must be able to decide, from words as well as from deeds," adding, "for, unstated, any fool can decide from deeds – it is deciding *before* anything has happened which is the test of intelligence" (95). Through such similarities, Tolkien is able to tie his fictional world to England's past while simultaneously revealing a concern about the individual within the nation.

Through another servant-character, Beregond, Tolkien reiterates the necessity of using one's own reason rather than relying on the commands of a superior to decide how to act. Beregond serves as a guard for Denethor, in Gondor. He is, by his own estimation, an ordinary man: "I am no captain. Neither office nor rank nor lordship have I, being but a plain man of arms of the Third Company of the Citadel. Yet, Master Peregrin, to be only a man of arms of the Guard of the Tower of Gondor is held worthy in the City, and such men have honour in the land" (*Return* 750). Like Háma, Beregond does not have the authority to make many decisions because he is low-ranking, though he clearly does not view his position as less important than that of an officer. However, when Denethor loses his mind and attempts to kill Faramir, Beregond has to decide whether or not to follow the obligations of his station. Pippin implores Beregond to "do something to stop any dreadful thing happening" (809). Initially, Beregond hesitates, citing his duty to remain at his post. But Pippin responds, "you must choose between orders and the life of Faramir. . . . And as for orders, I think you have a madman to deal with, not a lord" (809).

At this moment in the novel, Tolkien complicates the relationship between leader and subservient. If the leader is not fit to make decisions, the follower must discern how to act. In portraying a low-ranking subordinate as having better sense than a superior, Tolkien subverts the hierarchy he has established so carefully. This role reversal reflects a Kantian trend in individualism. Niklas Luhmann comments that Kant and some of his contemporaries sought to disassociate reason from class: "[i]n making a judgment, the individual would no longer depend on his social stratum but on the realization of the general within himself" (317).

As it turns out, Beregond must do more than just leave his post (itself a difficult enough decision, as he was assigned to guard the gate of the Citadel in the midst of a siege). Gandalf

and Pippin enter the House of the Stewards and find "the servants of Denethor with swords and torches in their hands; but alone in the porch upon the topmost step stood Beregond, clad in the black and silver of the Guard; and he held the door against them" (833). Denethor's loyal and unquestioning servants carry torches at his bidding, ready to set the still-living Faramir on fire. Such is the extremity of their willingness to follow, quite literally, every command of their master. Beregond thinks about the situation and disobeys Denethor, to the point of killing two of the torch-wielding servants to prevent them from killing Faramir. Croft explains the severity of Beregond's disobedience, observing that prior to that moment, no one had ever been killed in that location (99). Gandalf affirms Beregond's instinct to rebel, telling Denethor, "others may contest your will, when it is turned to madness and evil" (834). Additionally, Tolkien specifies that Beregond still wears the uniform of the Guard (833). Certainly, he would not have had time to change clothes, given the urgency of the situation. Yet the mention of his clothes juxtaposed with his peers calling him an "outlaw and traitor" suggests that Beregond remains faithful to his post (and consequently to his nation) even when he ostensibly is unfaithful.

After Denethor dies and the war ends, Aragorn pardons Beregond, though he had unlawfully killed in the Hallows and abandoned his station (947). According to Gondorian law, the appropriate penalty for these actions was death (948). Yet because Beregond has also saved Faramir's life, Aragorn allows him to live and gives him a place of honor in Faramir's Guard. Tolkien describes Beregond's reaction thusly: "then Beregond, perceiving the mercy and justice of the King, was glad, and kneeling kissed his hand, and departed in joy and content" (948). As with Háma, Tolkien portrays Beregond as having acted wisely but still needing absolution from his superior. Beregond and Háma technically disobey their superiors. As such, they function as individuals in their active use of their reason, but their primary aim is still to preserve the

wellbeing of their nations and not to serve their own interests. As they move away from Kant's "great unthinking mass[es]" (52), they also maintain the existence of those same groups by preventing poor leaders from making decisions that would impair or even destroy them.

Individualism, Self-Sacrifice, and Rights: The Hobbits

Though much of modern Western political rhetoric centers on the freedoms of the individual, such freedoms are limited and in nationalistic terms often relate individual fulfillment to identification with the nation. In *Nationalism*, Kedourie explains the post-Kantian view that developed alongside the rise of nationalism, tying individual rights to the needs of the state:

> Natural rights were the natural rights of the individual, and utility was what he considered useful; likewise freedom meant the individual was free. But if individuals by themselves are unreal, then natural rights and utility became empty sounds. . . . [I]ndividuals, as such, are phantoms; they gain reality in so far as they have a place in a whole. Consequently, the freedom of the individual, which is his self-realization, lies in identifying himself with the whole. (30)

The "whole," in this case, is the nation. In the context of the mid-twentieth century, the connection of individual identity with the nation became increasingly extreme, perhaps most virulently in fascist nations. Conversely, the Fellowship-hobbits' journey takes them outside the confines of their own nation, leading them through solitary, internal struggles that involve identification with the international rather than national community. Their "self-realization" comes about when they transcend the physical and social boundaries of their own nation.

Life in the Shire does not prepare young hobbits to venture out into the world or develop individual identities. Hobbit lifestyles are fairly prescribed, even to the point that hobbits who live on the other side of the Brandywine River are labeled "queer" (Chance 33). In *The Lord of*

the Rings: The Mythology of Power, Chance notes that Hobbiton hobbits disparage Buckland hobbits for riding on boats on the river – not an activity characteristic of *hobbits* (33). While the Shire does not have the same hierarchical structure of many other nations of Middle-earth, social roles are still quite restrictive. In leaving the Shire and adhering to a broader community, the Fellowship-hobbits disregard the narrowly local aspect of their identities as Shire-hobbits.

As they move away from their homeland, the hobbits become part of the Fellowship, symbolic of the new formation of an international community. Frodo embarks on his quest not for his own gain but for that of Middle-earth. He sacrifices himself for the whole of Middle-earth, with the support of the community of the Fellowship. In his response to Auden's review of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien writes,

> I dislike the use of 'political' in such a context; it seems to me false. It seems clear to me that Frodo's duty was 'humane' not political. He naturally thought first of the Shire, since his roots were there, but the quest had as its object not the preserving of this or that polity, such as the half republic half-aristocracy of the Shire, but the liberation from an evil tyranny of all the 'humane' – including those, such as 'easterlings' and Haradrim, that were still servants of the tyranny. (*Letters* 240-1)

Tolkien clearly intended for Frodo's mission to supersede the interests of any one nation. During the Fellowship's brief interlude in Lothlórien, Galadriel tells Frodo, "your Quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little and it will fail, to the ruin of all" (*Fellowship* 348). As Frodo moves from a national community to an international one, his function within his new community is still clearly defined, but his quest eventually isolates him rather than connecting him to other members of the Fellowship.

As discussed in chapter four, the community of the Fellowship ultimately breaks apart, perhaps reflecting Tolkien's stated uncertainty about internationalism's ability to resolve all of the problems its proponents claimed it would (*Letters* 65). Following the demise of the Fellowship, each of the hobbits has to fend for himself. Chance argues that "[w]e have, however, moved inward – *as if* inside the soul itself, whether that of Frodo or Sam: 'But they were far beyond aid, and no thought could yet bring any help to Samwise Hamfast's son; he was *utterly alone*' [Chance's emphasis]" (116-17). As Sam and Frodo move closer to the mountain to destroy the ring, they no longer act as members of a community but as two isolated individuals at war with their own desire to take the ring and use it for selfish purposes.

The hobbits' war between their own desires and the greater good of Middle-earth mirrors the larger questions of balancing individual and community needs. In *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Adorno explains Kant's view of the individual:

> [T]he world is not just something that has to be accepted passively, and obeyed, but that it is something that can be mastered by me. In other words, human beings are the subjects of their world and not just the objects. Kant's critique of reason would not be conceivable in the absence of this idea of the social and political emancipation of the human subject that has ceased to act out a submissive role towards the world. . . . (135)

In the context of *The Lord of the Rings*, this "emancipation" is conflicted, involving both active reason and submission. The hobbits play an active role in choosing a path of which their neighbors in the Shire would not approve, but in doing so they have to submit to a path that seems to have been predetermined for them.

As Ring-bearer, Frodo has a particular role that only he can fulfill. If he had had different personality traits, strengths, and weaknesses, he would not have been successful in destroying the ring and saving Middle-earth. When Frodo asks Galadriel why he cannot read the thoughts of those who wear the rings of power, she answers, "It would destroy you. Did not Gandalf tell you that the rings give power according to the measure of each possessor?" (357). Frodo's strength lies in his weakness. As Galadriel tells him, he "would need to become far stronger, and to train [his] will to the domination of others" to wield the ring (357). That Frodo does not possess such "strength" enables him to carry out his task. Frodo is "meant" to set out on his quest with the ring, but he still must make a choice to do so. In "Providence, Fate, and Chance: Boethian Philosophy in *The Lord of the Rings*," Kathleen E. Dubs argues that both fate and free will are at work in Frodo's decision-making process: "[they] are not incompatible if we view them in Boethian terms, for free will operates within the order of the universe, fate being merely the earthly manifestation of that order" (140). The decisions that Frodo makes "have set the tides moving" (140).

Sam carries the ring for a time in Mordor, and like Frodo, he does not have the strength to wield the ring. While it is in his possession, he imagines wearing it and becoming the "Hero of the Age," overtaking a large land and having "armies flocking to his call" (880). Sam does not put on the ring because "he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden" (881). Though Sam is small and cannot lead armies, he still plays an integral role in Frodo's quest. He hacks off an orc's hand to prevent the Orc from whipping Frodo. The orc then falls through a trap-door (889). Part of Sam's heroism in this instance is accidental – he falls over after cutting off the orc's hand and might not have been able to recover himself in time had the orc not fallen. Sam is by no means a traditional hero, but Frodo cannot succeed without

him. Frodo and Sam have complementary roles in the journey to Mount Doom; each has his own unique strengths and weaknesses and is able to contribute to the quest in a manner in which no one else could.

The other Fellowship-hobbits similarly have important roles in the resolution of the war. After the Fellowship breaks apart, Merry and Pippin have to develop their own identities and use their reason to make decisions that do not always fall in line with expectations. In "The Scouring of the Shire as a Hobbit Coming-of-Age," Jonathan D. Langford writes,

> it is only in this apparently more subservient capacity that the two learn to act as mature individuals, taking responsibility for their actions even when these involve disobedience or disagreement with socially constructed authorities. Merry's oath of loyalty to Théoden and his duty to the larger quest both require him to accompany the king to Gondor and fight beside him there; but in order to do so, he must disobey a direct command from the king. Similarly, Pippin must disregard the wishes of Denethor—and persuade others to do so as well—in order to save the life of Faramir, his son. Each case represents a conscious choice between culturally defined and enforced local loyalties, on the one hand, and a broader duty to the larger community and to a more general conception of right and wrong on the other. (5)

In these instances, as with Frodo and Sam's journey to Mount Doom, individual reason operates, but the self still is sacrificed for a community, albeit the international and not the national community.

Through the hobbits' homecoming, Tolkien reiterates the idea that not all commands should be obeyed, even when coming from an authority figure. When the Fellowship-hobbits

return to the Shire, they find their former friends guarding a newly erected gate. The friends refuse them entry multiple times, despite recognizing them as citizens of the Shire. After they finally are allowed to enter the Shire, the Fellowship-hobbits break several other rules, even angrily tearing down a posted list of rules and using up almost a day's ration of wood (*Return* 977).

While Tolkien portrays the hobbits as taking the law into their own hands in this scene, he actually felt conflicted about giving governmental power to the people of a nation: "I am *not* a 'democrat' only because 'humility' and equality are spiritual principles corrupted by the attempt to mechanize and formalize them, with the result that we get not universal smallness and humility, but universal greatness and pride, till some Orc gets hold of a ring of power – and then we get and are getting slavery" (*Letters* 246). In *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*, Carpenter further explicates Tolkien's views of democracy: "Tolkien was, in modern jargon, 'right-wing' in that he honoured his monarch and his country and did not believe in the rule of the people; but he opposed democracy simply because he believed that in the end his fellow-men would not benefit from it" (132). Tolkien also felt suspicious of the concept of "self-realization," viewing it as "usually a nice name for self-indulgence, wholly inimical to the realization of other selves" (*Letters* 51). In this respect, Tolkien seems to have favored collectivism.

Yet the contentiousness of issues related to individualism and collectivism during the mid-twentieth century did not allow for simple acceptance of one over the other. In "'Set the People Free'? Conservatives and the State, 1920-1960," Martin Francis observes that the conservative party in England during the interwar period at times combined collectivist and individualist ideologies but more frequently opposed collectivism in part because of its associations with the "1917 Russian revolution" and the "unprecedented state intervention during

the First World War" (58-59). The party faced an increasing tension between the desires to promote individual freedom and to establish social moral control (65). Much of Tolkien's writing reflects this tension.

Despite Tolkien's stated dislike of democracy and "self-realization," his portrayal of the Shire belies an occasional need for citizens to rebel against unjust government in order to preserve their individual rights. By the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, the Shire has been turned into a dictatorship. Upon hearing a series of new government restrictions, Sam indignantly says, "If I hear *not allowed* much oftener, . . . I'm going to get angry" (979). Another hobbit, Robin, responds, "If we all got angry together something might be done. But it's these Men, Sam, the Chief's Men. He sends them round everywhere, and if any of us small folk stand up for our rights, they drag him off to the Lockholes" (979). The hobbits subsequently start a grassroots rebellion, the Battle of Bywater, to restore their former governmental system. Though the Shire will likely continue to have very particular cultural expectations, the hobbits are guaranteed much greater individual freedom with the destruction of Mordor and the dispersion of Sharkey's forces in the Shire.

Individualism versus Service to Nation: Niggle

In his short story "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien shows a somewhat uncharacteristic reticence about collectivism and social responsibility. The central character of the story, Niggle, is a painter but can never become really great at his work because of frequent interruptions that come in the form of legally mandated service to his nation, including jury duty and home repairs for an injured neighbor (100, 102, 106). In *Individualism*, Lukes writes, "[i]ntellectual activities, artistic creation, love, friendship are examples: all these may be said to require a private space free of public interference or surveillance in order to flourish" (132). Because Niggle cannot

avoid the many disruptions to his artistic work, he never accomplishes much. He languishes under the intensive observation and regular intrusion of the government into his life (102). Service to country is not reciprocal – Niggle receives no public pension in exchange for any of the work he does, his neighbor does not care for him when he is sick, and no one ever thanks him for any of his labor (102, 105, 109). The one thing that matters to him, his painting, goes unnoticed by most others, and the few who do notice do not care about it because it lacks utilitarian value (102).

"Leaf by Niggle" evidently was close to Tolkien's heart. It is uncertain exactly when he first composed it – in a 1945 letter to Stanley Unwin, he dated the story's origin as "more than 2 years ago," while in a 1962 letter, he indicates that he believes he wrote the story prior to the outbreak of the War but certainly read it to the Inklings as early as 1940 (113). In both versions of the formation of "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien depicts his creation process as dramatically different from that of his other works (113, 320). He apparently wrote the story in one sitting after awakening one morning, making few revisions later (113, 320). Despite its quick composition, the story left a lasting impression – in 1962, he wrote that "I still find it quite moving, when I reread it" (320). Tolkien admitted in an undated letter composed circa 1945 that he and Niggle shared a desire for reciprocity of service from the government: "Like Niggle I want a 'public pension', and am equally unlikely to get one" (114).

The story further reveals Tolkien's apparent cynicism about national service: a driver arrives at Niggle's house and takes him on a government-ordered work trip (107). On the way, Niggle becomes ill and upon arrival has to stay in the Workhouse Infirmary:

> The officials and attendants were unfriendly, silent, and strict . . . It was more like being in a prison than in a hospital. He had to work hard, at stated hours: at

> digging, carpentry, and painting bare boards all one plain colour. He was never allowed outside, and the windows all looked inwards. They kept him in the dark for hours at a stretch, "to do some thinking," they said. He lost count of time. (108)

Here, Tolkien portrays national service as tedious and aesthetically unappealing work, at best. At worst, he likens national service to a form of torture: Niggle is placed involuntarily in a sort of work camp, which is "more like being in a prison than in a hospital" (108). He subsequently must perform laborious tasks in a setting that resembles solitary confinement.

Tolkien's cynicism toward government is milder than that of certain of his contemporaries, most notably George Orwell. While Niggle endures what arguably could be labeled torture, his is a tamer version of torture than what Winston Smith suffers in Orwell's *1984*. The government officials in "Leaf by Niggle" ultimately appear to have Niggle's interests at heart. Niggle and Winston are labeled, respectively, a "bad case" and a "difficult case" in need of a cure; near the end of their incarcerations, they receive fresh clothes, salve for their wounds, and food to restore their energy (Orwell 274; "Leaf" 110, 112). However, Winston suffers brutal beatings and innumerable other torments in addition to being kept in a dark, windowless facility against his will (270-3). His reprieve from pain only serves to remind him of what he could have, should he decide to submit completely to the Party (276-7). Like Winston, Niggle is made to suffer until he comes to appreciate the state. But Niggle's suffering is less intense and ultimately more transient than that of Winston. Two rather paternal government figures (named First and Second Voice, as Niggle only overhears their conversation) finally allow him to enjoy his artwork. After his service is complete, Niggle dies peacefully, and Tolkien conceptualizes his life's end as the beginning of a new journey (112-3).

Tolkien had an indirect connection to Orwell. In *The Same Man: George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh in Love and War*, David Lebedoff indicates that at one point Tolkien taught Eileen O'Shaughnessy, who later married Orwell (79). Aside from this tenuous link, there is insufficient evidence to support that either Tolkien or Orwell influenced the other. It is unclear whether Tolkien and O'Shaughnessy remained in contact after O'Shaughnessy finished her education, and Tolkien does not appear to have met Orwell, though they certainly may have read one another's work. The most plausible explanation for their thematic similarities is that Tolkien's and Orwell's writings reflect anxieties about governmental control common during the 1930s and 40s. Orwell published *1984* in 1949; Tolkien published "Leaf by Niggle" in 1945 and *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954 and 1955, though he began writing it much earlier. In *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon*, Rosebury posits that Tolkien, Orwell and other writers of the period share an apprehension about totalitarian states, as well as nearly ceaseless war: "These preoccupations are inseparable from Tolkien's historical period: an English writer even a few years older or a couple of generations younger, would be very unlikely to have had Tolkien's military experiences, or his perception of the virtual normality of total war" (165).

During the mid-twentieth century, the issues of surveillance and control were pervasive. In addition to the fear of take-over by the extremely controlling fascist and communist parties spreading across Europe, English citizens also had to be careful not to arouse the suspicions of their own government. In "The Security Service, the Communist Party of Great Britain and British Fascism," Richard C. Thurlow discusses the practice of security forces watching the British communist and fascist parties (27). Thurlow asserts that the English government was concerned particularly about the CPGB because of its association with the Comintern, one of whose admitted goals was to overthrow the British Empire in favor of the Soviet Union (27).

While many viewed the CPGB with suspicion, a number also began to distrust the hyper-vigilance of the state (32). The public undoubtedly would not have been privy to many of the details of the state's surveillance activities, but enough was common knowledge for individuals to worry about the possibility of being watched, even when not part of a controversial political party.

Tolkien made several comments in his World War II-era letters that show awareness that personal mail could be read. For instance, in a 1943 letter to Christopher, he wrote, "I am not really sure that its [cosmopolitanism's] victory is going to be so much the better for the world as a whole and in the long run than the victory of -----. I don't suppose letters *in* are censored. But if they are, or not, I need hardly add that them's the sentiments of a good many folk – and no indication of lack of patriotism" (65). Tolkien's decision to omit information and then to hastily reassure his son (and any other reader) that his feelings do not show disloyalty to his country, despite his tentative suggestion that the letter would not be read, shows a caution in making potentially inflammatory remarks, even as a private citizen. This cognizance of being watched and condemned for even marginally non-conformist beliefs permeates "Leaf by Niggle."

Yet Tolkien does not wholeheartedly portray national leaders' motives as suspect. Even Niggle's solitary confinement evidently has the intent of improving him (112-3). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault notes that in the late eighteenth century the English added isolation to earlier models of judicial punishment (122). The logic, he suggests, was along these lines:

> The prison would be too much like a factory if one left the prisoners to work together. The positive reasons followed: isolation provides a 'terrible shock' which, while protecting the prisoner from bad influences [of other prisoners], enables him to go into himself and rediscover in the depths of his conscience the

> voice of good; solitary work would then become not only an apprenticeship, but also an exercise in spiritual conversion. (122)

Likewise, Niggle's incarceration serves as a sort of forced conversion to a more disciplined life. The methods are drastic, even disturbing, but the governmental figures appear to care about Niggle (112-3).

In some respects, Niggle's imprisonment may represent the Catholic idea of Purgatory. In *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Shippey discusses the connection between "Leaf by Niggle" and Catholicism. Shippey notes that Tolkien responded to a request from the editor of *The Dublin Review* in 1944 "for a story which would help his magazine to be 'an effective expression of Catholic humanity'" by sending "Leaf by Niggle" (266). Tolkien's choice of the name "Niggle" is telling – Shippey cites the *OED* definition of the term, "to work or spend time unnecessarily on petty details . . ." (267). As Shippey observes, Niggle's journey is designed to teach him: "He is removed to the 'Workhouse', which is clearly Purgatory. And there he learns to stop niggling, in the *OED* sense given above" (275). Given that Niggle's suffering is temporary and that he indeed learns to complete the kinds of tasks at which he had so often failed during his lifetime, his time in the Workhouse does seem to serve as a kind of Purgatory for him before he is allowed to rest.

Despite perhaps feeling that Niggle needed to learn to comply with his government's obligations, Tolkien, in the end, evidently was unable to accept that Niggle's artistic drive was valueless, despite society condemning it as such. After his death, Niggle travels out to the countryside, where he finds his painting in living form, though his leaves appear "as he had imagined them rather than as he had made them; and there were others that had only budded in his mind, and many that might have budded, if only he had had time" (113). Niggle experiences

a literal version of Tolkien's concept of "sub-creation." In "Joy Beyond the Walls of the World: The Secondary World-Making of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis," David Sandner discusses Tolkien's stated views of art and fantasy, explaining that "[s]ub-creation links the author of a Secondary Realm to Creation itself, asking art to move the artist beyond the medium, the text bound by its covers" (135). Sub-creation theoretically leads to "a return to the world from which we have become estranged. Fantasy expresses a yearning for the world itself, in all its lost (or missing or exiled) fullness" (137). In "Leaf by Niggle," Tolkien conceives of this reunification with the world as happening in death. After passing away, Niggle dwells in the natural world, which he had participated in making. Through this image, Tolkien portrays artistic creation as an act that joins an individual to the Creator.

For Tolkien, imagination and art have a great deal of inherent value, even if they have no evident worth for anyone other than the individual artist. Niggle's art is deemed useless because it exists only for Niggle's enjoyment. Councillor Tompkins comments that art is not worthless in itself – in fact, "[t]here is plenty of scope for bold young men not afraid of new ideas and new methods" (119). Niggle's art lacks value to the state because it is "old-fashioned stuff" (119). Yet Tolkien dismisses the need to please society in this case. In a 1948 letter to C. S. Lewis, Tolkien wrote, "a painter (like Niggle) may work for what the burning of his picture, or an accident of death to the admirer, may wholly destroy. He [Gerard Manley Hopkins] summed up: The only just literary critic is Christ, who admires more than does any man the gifts He Himself has bestowed" (*Letters* 128). "Leaf by Niggle" offers a somewhat cynical view of art and individual fulfillment; Niggle, after all, has to die before he can experience much joy in his creation (113). Through the character of Niggle, Tolkien suggests that external recognition of

artwork (and hence social acceptance) is relatively insignificant, and he raises the importance of the individual artist's work by linking it to the work of God.

Conclusion: Individual Dependence on Nation and Tom Bombadil

Tolkien's setting his characters in various nations on the side of "Good" or "Evil" did not signal a need to make those characters homogeneous. In some notes he wrote in response to Auden's review of *The Return of the King*, Tolkien took issue with critics who he felt tended to reduce his characters to type:

> So I feel that the fiddle-faddle in reviews, and correspondence about them, as to whether my 'good people' were kind and merciful and gave quarter (in fact they do), or not, is quite beside the point. Some critics seem determined to represent me as a simple-minded adolescent, inspired with, say, a With-the-flag-to-Pretoria spirit, and wilfully distort what is said in my tale. I have not that spirit, and it does not appear in the story. The figure of Denethor alone is enough to show this; but I have not made any of the peoples on the 'right' side, Hobbits, Rohirrim, Men of Dale or of Gondor, any better than men have been or are, or can be. Mine is not an 'imaginary' world, but an imaginary moment on 'Middle-earth' – which is our habitation. (244)

Tolkien created multifaceted characters; each individual has a varying degree of morality, just as any person does in real life. Likewise, his societies are not solely individualist or collectivist but are an amalgamation of both.

On the one hand, Tolkien clearly valued collectives and felt that individuals generally should put the needs of their communities ahead of their own desires, as evident in numerous aspects of his fiction and in comments he made in some of his letters, such as his suggestion that

"self-realization" is "wholly inimical to the realization of other selves" (*Letters* 51). Tolkien reinforces his emphasis on collectives, somewhat ironically, through Tom Bombadil, a character who lives apart from the various societies of Middle-earth. This character comes across as a distraction from the rest of the story. In a 1954 letter to Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien asserts that "Tom Bombadil is not an important person – to the narrative. I suppose he has some importance as a 'comment'. I mean, I do not really write like that: he is just an invention" (*Letters* 178). Tolkien understood that Tom plays a fairly negligible role in furthering the plot of *The Lord of the Rings*. He more or less dismisses the character by calling him "just an invention" (178). Still, Tolkien recognized on some level that he had created Tom out of a desire to say something. After his somewhat evasive comment on Tom, Tolkien adds, "he represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely. I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function" (178). Tom is significant, in good part because of how out of place he appears.

In *Hobbits, Elves, and Wizards: Exploring the Wonders and Worlds of J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, Michael N. Stanton suggests that Tom Bombadil "represents a position, both disinterested and uninterested, in the political struggle for power between Good and Evil" (30). Tom is essentially free of the constraints of collective society, neither belonging to another nor owning anything (29). He only lives with his wife, Goldberry. Stanton argues that "Tom as a natural force of sorts does not take sides, but he needs Good to win in order to survive, whether he acknowledges it or not. Tom might survive longer than other entities, but in Sauron's world he would succumb at last" (30). Whatever ideals he might have, Tom never can be completely independent of society. Tolkien never intimates that Tom might have to become more integrated into one of the neighboring societies after the end of the war, but his own admission that Tom

relies on the nations of the West for protection reinforces Tolkien's principle to structure his fictional world with nations.

Tolkien obviously felt that collectives were necessary, but his fiction suggests the possibility of combining collective and individual interests. Tom depends on protection to maintain his lifestyle apart from society, but Tolkien arranges his fictional world in a manner that allows Tom to continue to live in the woods with little to no intrusion from the others who protect him. Conversely, Tolkien portrays the character of Niggle as someone who is forced to learn to serve his nation in the manner in which others have chosen for him. However, Niggle eventually is allowed to enjoy the artistic pursuits that only give him personal satisfaction and have no value for others. From still another angle, the hobbits and Háma and Beregond *choose* not to follow the duties their nations have prescribed for them, and in doing so, they respectively preserve individual rights in the Shire and rescue the nations of Rohan and Gondor. Additionally, collectivism takes the form not only of devotion to nation but of commitment to the international community, as with Frodo, who leaves the confines of his own nation to fulfill a "humane" task rather than one solely for his own gain or for that of his nation (*Letters* 240). The numerous ways in which individualism and collectivism both collide and converge in the nations of Middle-earth embody the struggle of twentieth-century England to reconcile these ideologies without succumbing to their negative manifestations.

CONCLUSION

Tolkien's experience of the early to mid-twentieth century left an indelible mark on his writing. From childhood, he saw factories polluting the air, beloved trees being cut down, and later, increasing numbers of automobiles and paved roads. He loved the minutely local, down to individual trees and the West Mercian ancestral dialect of his hometown. He felt intensely protective of the environment, especially evident in his feelings about trees. This concern continued throughout his life. In a 1962 letter to his aunt, Jane Neave, he wrote about his concern for one particular tree: "I love it, and was anxious about it. . . . Every tree has its enemy, few have an advocate" (*Letters* 321). While in this instance Tolkien was taking issue with one specific person, his reaction illustrates how he felt about larger issues regarding modernity. He saw the destruction of individual trees as a symbol of the increasing erosion of the English countryside. Tolkien likened modernity to his own fictive evil forces: "the spirit of 'Isengard', if not of Mordor, is of course always cropping up. The present design of destroying Oxford in order to accommodate motor-cars is a case" (*Letters* 235). At the same time, he perceived an erosion of culture that mirrored the physical wearing away of the land.

Being averse to modernity, Tolkien typically denied that his writing was influenced by the period in which he lived. In a 1955 letter to Auden, Tolkien writes, "[t]he last two books were written between 1944 and 48. That of course does not mean that the main idea of the story was a war-product" (*Letters* 216). In another letter, he states, "But there is no post-war reference [in *The Lord of the Rings*]" (*Letters* 235). While he assiduously fought the tendency of critics to link his work to the wars of his own day, insisting that Middle-earth's "historical period is imaginary," he also acknowledged that "Middle-earth is not an imaginary world" (*Letters* 239).

Tolkien may not have consciously created his fictive nations to mirror real nations, but his world certainly bears the scars of his experiences of war. The World Wars heightened his fear of losing everything that he loved about his local culture through literal obliteration or assimilation into another culture in the event of England's losing.

In "A Postmodern Medievalist?" Flieger suggests that:

> We have appropriated Tolkien, pronounced his work to be 'medieval,' and continued for too long to read both book and author by that light. . . . We can look at it from a distance that, far from lending enchantment, removes it and allows us to more easily see Tolkien in his time—as an essentially modern author using all the authorial tools and techniques available from whatever period. (72)

Tolkien tried to distance himself from what he felt modernity represented, including industrialization and its damaging effects on the environment, as well as the global wars that caused so much destruction. Despite these efforts, his fiction (whether consciously or not) grapples with the mid-twentieth century ideological conflicts surrounding the nation. In 1945, Tolkien suggested to Christopher that "the first War of the Machines seems to be drawing to its final inconclusive chapter—leaving, alas, everyone the poorer, many bereaved or maimed and millions dead, and only one thing triumphant: the Machines" (*Letters* 111). This sense of loss and powerlessness underlies much of Tolkien's fiction and leads him to a concept of the nation as an imperfect protector of culture, tempered by its need to rely on other nations.

Tolkien was not a modernist writer in any traditional sense. He did not write with experimental forms; in fact, many aspects of his writing, from his drawing of heroic characters to his use of the three-volume novel, reflect medieval or Victorian literary trends. He also did not hold many of the beliefs popular among his contemporaries. But he shared a number of

formative experiences with modern writers, perhaps most importantly the World Wars. Tolkien's critics have alternately accused him of being "an incorrigible nationalist" and "tak[ing] delight in the 'goriness of wars'" (Curry 40; Vanhecke 54). Yet his writing reflects real-world issues of his day through his fantasy world. Machines, power, and national identity, issues that repeatedly occur in Tolkien's fiction, are modern concerns.

Tolkien's fiction has clear thematic connections to the works of some of his contemporaries. As discussed in chapter five, the issues of surveillance and national service that repeatedly appear in "Leaf by Niggle" bear striking resemblances to Orwell's *1984*. Orwell explicates his own views of nationalism in an essay titled "Notes on Nationalism," advocating for a distinction between the definitions of nationalism and patriotism. He suggests that one could be patriotic in the sense of having pride in one's national identity, without needing to force that identity on others, while nationalism represents the negative side of national pride, leading to dominance over other nations and also to national interests subsuming citizens' entire lives (362). This conception of national pride as having positive and negative sides resembles Tolkien's ideas. Additional research could further investigate commonalities between Tolkien's and Orwell's ideas about national identity. Such a study would tie into discussions of how others of Tolkien's contemporaries responded to the issues of national identity in the wake of the World Wars. Was there a uniquely English response, or were Tolkien's concerns more universal because of the scale of the wars? Answers to these questions also would build on discussions of whether Tolkien really created an *English* mythology, as he aimed to do.

Tolkien was not only interested in maintaining, but also in building a national identity for England. As Shippey notes in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Tolkien's attempts to create an English mythology resembled the efforts of nineteenth-century folklorists Wilhelm and

Jacob Grimm, Nikolai Grundtvig, and Elias Lönnrot to compile anthologies of national literature that would help to shape their respective nations' identities (xv). Tolkien fervently associated his work with England, becoming frustrated with translations that changed place-names, as he felt that such changes inherently altered the identities even of fictional places (*Letters* 250, 299). He argued that the name-changes did not truly mean that the places assumed the identities of the new languages. For Tolkien, if fictional Dutch place-names were translated into English, those places would neither be English nor Dutch; they would be "just homeless" (250, 299). In his battles with foreign publishing houses, Tolkien got a taste of the lack of control an author has over his/her own works after their publication.

As the Grimms' folklore was appropriated frequently during the nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, Tolkien's mythology also has been appropriated in ways he could not have foreseen. In some senses, Tolkien's writing is remarkably universal, having proven appealing to audiences around the world across more than five decades. Yet the reception of his work in many cases has been politically charged. The scholarly compilation *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* includes several entries on the reception of Tolkien's work in various countries. Perhaps not surprisingly, translations of Tolkien's work typically had greater immediate success in countries more politically and ideologically aligned with England, including America, Denmark, and Finland (14-15, 121-122, 208-209). Conversely, in countries that opposed England either during World War II or the Cold War period, Tolkien's fiction generally faced greater obstacles to publication and popularity. In Italy, for example, Tolkien "has been considered a politicized writer," and more accusingly, "a right-wing writer" (299).

In Russia, Tolkien's work gained interest, but several translations had to be attempted, beginning in the 1960s, before a Russian *Lord of the Rings* finally was published several decades later (581). Earlier, never-published versions were abridged, included new chapter introductions that offered "scientific" explanations for fantastical elements of the novel, and added references to Russian folklore in efforts to get the novel past Russian censors. Still, the novel was not published until 1992, in great part for political reasons:

> The danger of *The Lord of the Rings* detected by some commentators was the hidden allegory 'of the conflict between the individualist West and the totalitarian, Communist East.' Nowadays Russian Communists think differently about this: they view the anti-industrial ideas of Tolkien's work as a return to primordial Communism and discuss the possibility of creating a type of Communist fantasy, whose father could be considered Tolkien. (581)

This shift in thinking about the relationship of Tolkien's work to Russia is intrinsically tied to changes in Russia's political climate.

In Germany, a company contacted Tolkien in 1938 to inquire about publishing *The Hobbit*, but only if he certified in writing that he just had Aryan lineage (*Letters* 37-38). Tolkien famously refused to do so, and a German translation of *The Hobbit* was not published until 1957, only a couple of years after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* in England, but long after the end of the Nazi regime (*J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* 240). Tolkien's writing gained widespread popularity in Germany shortly after *The Hobbit* was published. Since that time, many of his other works have been published in German, new translations have been issued, and games and radio versions have appeared, all of which have "anchored the work of Tolkien deep in the public mindset" (239). An article with the provocative title, "The Hobbits Versus Hitler,"

appeared in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in July 2005, discussing the current interest of German academics in Tolkien. Author Tom Wainwright cites two scholars who respectively attribute this phenomenon to the films and posit that the significance of this development is that Tolkien's fiction "offer[s] a powerful alternative view of Germanic culture to that presented by the Nazis" (1). The article ends by quoting the letter in which Tolkien famously railed against Hitler for "ruining, perverting, misapplying and making forever accursed that noble northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe, which I have ever loved, and tried to present in its true light" (1). Ironically, the author whose work once was refused publication in Germany when he would not officially state that he was not Jewish now is being acclaimed for his reclamation of the beautiful qualities he perceived in Germanic culture.

The reception of Tolkien's work has varied in good part because of other nations' identities. While reception has been discussed by a number of Tolkien scholars, a more comprehensive study could compare reception in different countries, particularly as it relates to national identity. Though Tolkien intended to create a mythology specifically for England, the international popularity of his work has only increased over time, particularly since the release of the films. The issues of national identity that made Tolkien's writings relevant after their original publications are still significant today. Recent developments such as globalization, the establishment of the European Union, and the ease of transcending national borders through technological advances like the internet ostensibly have made borders more fluid (Berezin 2-3). At the same time, these occurrences have not eliminated the nation but in many ways have further complicated the ideological tensions between nationalism and internationalism (18-19). Tolkien once wrote to his son, Christopher, that he felt like a "fish out of water" and that the two of them had been "born in a dark age out of due time (for us)" (*Letters* 64). Despite his feeling

that he did not belong in his time, and despite many of his critics' dismissal of his work as escapist, Tolkien addressed in his fiction issues of national identity that were profoundly important both at the time he was writing and today.

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