Narrating England: Tolkien, the Twentieth Century, and English Cultural Self-Representation.

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PhD   **2015**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Department of English, Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English
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2015

Abstract

This thesis addresses the representation of England and Englishness in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949), *The Hobbit* (1937)*,* and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). Primarily questioning Tom Shippey's interpretation of the same themes in *The Road to Middle-Earth* (1982, 2005) and *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000), and offering a sustained analysis and evaluation of Shippey's position and critical methodology as well as their endorsement by subsequent criticism, this thesis argues that Tolkien's work does not position its representations of England as the unchanging pastoral idylls Shippey suggests. Rather, it proposes that through their prolonged examination of the importance of the relationship of location to narratives of English history, identity, and cultural self-representation, these texts self-consciously engage with the ways in which ideas of Englishness are serially made and remade.

While focused on Tolkien's treatment of England and Englishness throughout, the thesis takes the following trajectory. It begins by examining Shippey's contention that the representation of these themes by Tolkien's fiction was recuperative, idealising, and enshrining, investigating how and why this perspective has been critically endorsed and recycled. Establishing the enduring influence of Shippey's work and critical methodology within Tolkien criticism, I argue that Shippey's conclusions can be challenged by introducing the representations of England and Englishness presented by Tolkien's work to alternative critical perspectives on the narration of the nation, notably those proposed by the work of Benedict Anderson and Ian Baucom. Outlining the ways in which Tolkien's works operate similar strategies of representation to those of history and historiography in their fictive

engagements with the historical and cultural narratives of English identity, I then move on to individual readings of each text. Arguing that the narratives do not ultimately consolidate prelapsarian visions of England and Englishness, these readings instead examine how the texts endorse the relationships between location, cultural identity, and history as mutual, coextensive, and subject to perennial change and reinvention.

<u>Dedication</u>

To everyone who helped, my heartfelt thanks. Those who doubted, dissembled,

gave me up for dead, and actively hindered ... ? Karma is waiting around a corner

for you idly swinging a sockful of wet sand in one meaty fist ...

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Introduction

This thesis addresses a specific critical trend that exists within the broader parameters of what may be called Tolkien Studies which views the treatment of England and home in J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction in reclamatory terms.[1] This school of thought views Tolkien's representation of these themes as a nostalgic, intrinsically conservative and backward-looking endeavour designed to mitigate the social and cultural transformations of the late-imperial period, or positions Tolkien's work as a personal attempt to recuperate their real or imagined essence on an imaginative level. This critical perspective is encapsulated in Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (1982a, 2005). Shippey asserts that in the central home spaces of *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949), *The Hobbit* (1937), and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), Tolkien sought to create "a timeless and idealised England (or rather Britain) in which the place and the people remained the same regardless of politics. The story [...] is therefore largely the triumph of the native over the foreign."[2]

My argument is that Tolkien's works do not in fact attempt to recover or reclaim a lost English utopia. Via a sustained engagement with Shippey's critical perspectives, which chapter one's literature review will show have become

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[1] Michael D.C. Drout discusses the difficulties in defining what he describes as "Tolkien scholarship", noting its tendency to be simultaneously a series of distinct and overlapping fields: "The boundaries between each of these interpretative communities [...] are porous, poorly marked and difficult to negotiate, with many individual scholars and works of criticism not fitting neatly into any one category" (See Michael D.C. Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum 2005), pp. 15–29 (p. 15). 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' responds to and extends Drout's discussion of the same themes in the earlier overview of extant Tolkien scholarship offered with Hilary Wynne (see Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982', *Envoi*, vol. 9. no. 2 (Fall, 2000), 101–167).

[2] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (revised and expanded edn) (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 112. Shippey is here specifically addressing *Farmer Giles of Ham* but as I show in chapter one he describes all three texts in similar terms (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 81–83, and pp. 115–116 respectively). All citations are taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

something of a critical orthodoxy, this thesis argues instead that the texts Shippey nominates do not depict the homes and homelands of Ham, the Hill, and the Shire as originary unchanging entities; nor do they celebrate the primacy of a pastoral pre-modern past over the contemporary moment or reject the exterior foreign 'other' in outright favour of the native or local. Rather, this thesis proposes that Tolkien's work engages with the ways ideas of Englishness have been constructed. My argument mobilizes Ian Baucom's reading of the same themes in *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999) in this context. Baucom's argument, explored in detail in chapter two, suggests that in the imperial and late-imperial period English identity became metonymically attached to England's locations as a reaction to the identarian disorientation prompted by British imperialism. Overwhelmed by the breadth of the space of the British Empire beyond England's borders, Baucom suggests, and seeing its culturally significant locations, cultural-historical narratives, and races as a threat to their English counterparts, English narratives of cultural self-representation were prompted to serially sacralise places within England's borders. Privileging the English soil of the home country, they positioned representative locales as both authentically English and identity-bestowing. England and Englishness became symbolic arrangements of space and identity rather than denoting a literal relationship between geographical space and national identity, with the most powerful assertions of English identity often occurring in colonial spaces rather than within England itself. Defined by their presence in the past and absence in the present in cultural discourse, and representing the safe ordered past, England and Englishness were simultaneously celebrated for what they were felt to represent and mourned because they had failed to survive (because they never truly existed). It is this late-imperial complex, and these readings of England and

Englishness, that I suggest this that Tolkien's work explicitly engages with and articulates – something discussed in more detail in chapter two. Yet I will show that while their reclamation and recycling of the representative tropes of location and identity, endorsed by English cultural memory as 'authentic', emotionally amplifies their representations of English homes and homelands, these strategies also draw attention to the made nature of these entities, and the texts foreground the constancy of their changing nature far more than they present them as originary or inviolate.

Crucial to my analysis is a discussion that acknowledges the literary strategies of the texts. In their assumption of the narrative mechanisms of history, a critically acknowledged feature of Tolkien's work, Tolkien's fictional texts claim to be histories. Their appropriation of the characteristics of historical narratives can be positioned as a means of engaging with the narratives of nation and national belonging that define England and Englishness – something I do in chapter two. Tolkien's aesthetic methodology has been the focus of much critical work, notably Shippey's but also Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light: Logos and Language* (1983, 2002) and *A Question of Time: Tolkien's Road to Faerie* (1997, 2005). Shippey and Flieger's work are complementary. Where Shippey engages with the development and structure of Tolkien's work, Flieger suggests what the author hoped to accomplish through it. However, chapter one shows that discussions on the subject of Tolkien's representations of England and Englishness have largely supported the interpretation that the texts offer paeans to a pre-modern, pre-industrial, rural and idealized England, and that they rely heavily on the assumption and construal of a mutual relationship between Tolkien's intent as author and the meaning of the texts. While I do not wish to deny the importance and insight of readings of this type, I contend that it is precisely the conscious

nature of the engagement with English history and historiography in Tolkien's work that signals a more complex and nuanced representation of England and Englishness than has hitherto been presented. Looking at Tolkien's own statements on the subject it is clear that the author was deeply emotionally attached to the idea of a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon version of England, and that he believed that the Norman Conquest had negatively impacted on England's literary, linguistic, and cultural inheritance.[3] For example, Tolkien's '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' (1929) argues that a pre-Norman line of linguistic continuity, and a culture sustaining it, carried on long past 1066. As such it is predicated on the assumption that a representative national or indigenous culture existed in the pre-Norman period. Yet there is equally clear evidence that Tolkien had a profound understanding of the historical processes that occurred between the Anglo-Saxon period and his contemporary location and their impact on shaping and reshaping the idea of England – suggesting that selectively relying on the author's interpretation of what his work offers is inherently problematic. As this thesis will argue, Tolkien's texts analogously narrate these historical processes albeit in a fantastical manner. In their adoption of the metafictional framing devices of prologues and appendices, their detailed presentation as *faux*-histories, and their explicit links to English culture and history, it can be argued that the texts explore the ways in which narratives of representative identity are made and remade. Thus this thesis accepts that there may have been a sentimental resonance to Tolkien in the idea of a lost England, and that the texts Shippey nominates do promote a nostalgic vision of it. But it also suggests that these texts start from an implicit acceptance of the fact that England and Englishness did not ever really exist, and

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[3] Tolkien's belief that England's representative culture had suffered as a result of the Norman Conquest is discussed in more detail in chapter one and chapter two.

offer an intellectual exploration of the processes that form and sustain the identarian narratives that imply that they did. What this thesis proposes, therefore, is not a question of either/or. It is not a question of whether Tolkien's representations of England are nostalgic and idealised, nor whether they draw attention to the perennial making and remaking of the idea of England. My argument is that both readings are present, and that it is the sustained negotiation of the tension between both that is the most significant comment on England and Englishness Tolkien's work offers.

What is lacking in previous discussions of Tolkien's treatment of these themes is a more explicit consideration of the links between the historical emergence of nations, the cultural narration of these processes, and notions of cultural heritage. This will be addressed in two ways. First, I will position Tolkien's personal and professional statements on the relationship between England, Englishness, and his work as historically specific examples of commonly-held cultural beliefs regarding the idea of England's cultural heritage and the nature of Englishness. That Tolkien's philological interests granted the author a long historical perspective, and that this was personally and professionally focused on the cultural legacy of pre-Norman society, is emphasised by Shippey's work. But Shippey concentrates on the linguistic and literary artefacts of this legacy, the method of their transmission and dissemination through past generations, and their maintenance and implications for national character in the present to Tolkien. Shippey's work, and indeed Tolkien's own literary-critical texts, do not specifically detail the ways in which this inheritance is mobilized to form and support the idea of a nation and a national identity or how such processes inform the engagements with the themes of England or Englishness offered by Tolkien's work. Therefore, having established these contexts, I will go on to examine the contiguities and

divergences of Tolkien's understanding of these ideas from more theoretically

explicit discussions of the rise of representative narrative/nation complexes –

notably those contained in the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson's *Imagined*

Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983, 2006)

offers an account of the ways in which common descent, language, geographical

territory, political and state infrastructures, customs and traditions are used to

create narratives of shared history and national belonging. Explored in detail in

chapter two, I will show that these elements are all central to the engagements

with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work, and their construction of 'home'

nations and the 'home' space.

Secondly, articulating the nation's relationship to the idea of 'home', and

introducing Simon Malpas's reading of *The Lord of the Rings* in 'Home' (2005) and

Christopher Garbowski's discussion of homelands in Middle-earth in *Recovery and*

Transcendence for the Contemporary Mythmaker (2000), I will argue that Tolkien's

work does not help to preserve a romantic ideology that identified Englishness with

certain symbolic and literal spaces of belonging. The work of Malpas and

Garbowski specifically acknowledges the importance of historical actions in

forming home and homeland conceptualities theoretically and in Tolkien's texts.

Building on this work, I will argue that while Tolkien's texts frequently begin by

directing attention to the past and focusing on the relationship between homes and

homelands they do not, ultimately, ignore the changes to their constitution

prompted by historical processes. Indeed I will show the ways that the texts

actually narrate these changes. Informed by a deep awareness of the inevitability

of change and the inherent malleability of representative narratives of shared

culture and history, the metafictional and thus self-aware nature of the texts,

means that Tolkien's work ultimately does not offer a choice between the

authenticity of 'then' and the falsity of 'now', as Shippey's readings suggest.
Through sustained analyses of each text, I will show that the representative
England of Ham, the Hill, and the Shire are not presented as displaced or lost
across a temporal chasm, recollectable but ungraspable. Rather, each is
positioned as a complex that exists as a space of multiple belongings, each
defined an ability to accommodate simultaneously the 'here' and 'now' and the
'then', the local and the distant, and the traditional and the new. Tolkien's texts, in
this reading, reveal and position England, home, and homelands as coextensive,
but also as products of an ongoing series of comparative juxtapositions that deny
the notion of an intrinsic essence of home or nation or relationship between a
particular 'race' and the land. Instead, these texts recognize the impact of public
and private understandings of home on narratives of national identity to present
both nation and home as a series of culturally mediated stances, discourses and
engagements that acknowledge, endorse, and change under the influence and
impact of historical processes.

Thus, for example, chapter one's literature review, will begin by examining
Shippey's contention that the representation of England and Englishness in
Tolkien's fiction was recuperative, idealising, and concretising. It will note
instances where this perspective has been critically endorsed and recycled in
order to show the enduring influence of Shippey's work within Tolkien criticism.
Examining Shippey's critical rehabilitation of the author, and his source-study
methodology, I will indicate how this complex has facilitated the critical
perpetuation of Shippey's statements on Tolkien, England, and Englishness. The
review will conclude by examining what has become known as Tolkien's
'mythology for England' correspondence – a much-mobilized tranche of work in

discussions of Tolkien and England. In examining the ways that this body of work has been read, I will suggest how it may be interpreted: as outlining a preoccupation with the idea of England's cultural inheritance that ultimately came to focus on the cultural importance of land and locations to the representation of England and Englishness as the author's aesthetic methodology developed.

Chapter two argues that Tolkien's fictional representation of nations and homes specifically correlating to England mobilise the same elements described by theoretical readings of the nation as essential for their formation. This chapter does so in order to show that the interpretations of Tolkien's representations of England and Englishness, and home and nation, identified and discussed in the first chapter can be re-evaluated by examining them through alternative critical perspectives. It will begin by introducing the constituent elements of the nation identified by Hans Kohn's *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944), and Benedict Anderson's account of the ways that these elements inform the post-Treaty of Westphalia shift from military-fiscal dynastic units to modern nation and nation-state assemblages. This chapter will go on to demonstrate that the importance of the ideas of shared common descent, language, geography, customs and traditions, and political and cultural institutions in imagining the nation noted by Anderson are essential to the formulation of Tolkien's aesthetic methodology, his conception of England and Englishness, and his imaginative representation of these themes. In this context, chapter two shows how Tolkien's understanding of the shared relationship between language, literature, and culture and belief that there had been a representative pre-Norman English culture was explored in his academic essay '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' (1929). Extending Shippey's interpretation of this work, I suggest that it presents an intellectual expression of Tolkien's personal belief in the idea of a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon England and

that the article is predicated on, and preoccupied with, romantic notions of cultural authenticity rather than a *realpolitick* understanding of the processes of nation-formation. Having established Tolkien's interpretation of the meanings of England and Englishness in this context, chapter two will go on to illustrate how the aesthetic complex of Tolkien's work represents England as a distant lost homeland while ultimately acknowledging the historical processes that confirmed that it had never truly existed in this originary sense. It will note the importance to philology of the relationship of language, literature, and culture to ideas of nation and belonging and examine how this informs the use of the fantasy mode in Tolkien's work that incorporates mythological and metafictional techniques. Chapter two then discusses how the interest in quasi-historical narratives apparent in Tolkien's work manifests itself as an interest in the ways that historical events are mobilised by historiography to form narratives of national and cultural belonging. Placing the development of this aesthetic methodology in its cultural-historical context, chapter two establishes how these literary strategies align the representations of England and Englishness within the texts to the cultural preoccupation with their constitution in the late-imperial period. As Ian Baucom argues, in this period Englishness was "*generally* understood to reside within some type of imaginary, abstract, or specific locale [Baucom's emphasis]" and there was a cultural belief that its essence could be found there.[4] Far from endorsing this, however, as Shippey suggests, I will argue instead that *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit,* and *The Lord of the Rings* offer sustained, progressive engagements with and challenges to this cultural belief. The contexts laid out by chapter two, then, introduce the areas of discussion that inform my readings of these texts: how

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[4] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 4.

nation and identity are narrated, the relationships between historiography and fiction in this process, and the degree to which location and identity inform each other. Ultimately, the chapter argues that if "the whole point of ideology is to negotiate invisibly between the contradictory elements in the status quo [sic]", as Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick notes in her discussion of *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1485), then Tolkien's work does not consolidate prelapsarian visions of England and Englishness any more than it supports the idea that identity and location are mutual, coextensive, and unchanging.[5]

Chapter three will begin by examining the degree to which this proposition is supported by the representation of England as nation and home in *Farmer Giles of Ham*. Arguing that *Farmer Giles of Ham* is characterised by the literary strategies that define Tolkien's more celebrated texts, notably the metafictional framing device of its foreword, but also in its interventions in English history and historiography, this chapter will illustrate that it is through this mechanism that the text explicitly challenges the propensity of national narratives to propose the inviolate unity of land and identity.[6] As such the text offers valuable perspectives on Tolkien's thematic preoccupations and cultural concerns. Exploring the ramifications of the metonymic relationship between Giles and the village of Ham, my analysis shows that neither character nor location are presented as timeless, idealised, or unchanging, as Shippey suggests. Instead, I will show that *Farmer Giles of Ham* actively questions nationalistic invocations of originary homelands in favour of presenting location and the identity of individuals as mutable palimpsests that embrace competing and complementary narratives of cultural self-definition.

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[5] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 613.
[6] History is taken here to mean past events, historiography their writing and study.

Where chapter three shows *Farmer Giles of Ham* engaging with the problems associated with the historiographic representation of England and English history, chapter four argues that *The Hobbit* reflects specific contemporary concerns with the changing nature of England and Englishness in the interwar interregnum, particularly in the text's representation of the importance of individual perspectives in defining what is and is not home. In this context, Bag End and the Hill, emblems of England as home and homeland respectively, mirror the post-1918 tendency of British culture to romanticize its pre-1914 incarnation, presenting it as a secure, pastoral idyll. This reading draws on critical readings of this phenomenon, notably Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975, 2000) to propose that the text's secondary-world fantasy morphology negotiates the tension between pre- and post-war understandings of England and Englishness. Yet it will show that far from idealising Edwardian England, Bilbo Baggins's character, and the narrative's trajectory, emphasizes the gap between idealised pre-war representations of home and nation, their actuality, and their post-war realities. Introducing the text's thematic contiguity to the emerging war memoir canon of the same period, the chapter argues that the narrative explores English identity as symbolically caught between imagined pre-war certainties and real post-war anxieties. The identity that Bilbo embodies at the beginning of the narrative gives way to the new perspectives that his adventures give him, yet his increased appreciation of the value of 'home' comes at the cost of an increased understanding of its fragile, transient, and changeable nature.

Positioning *The Lord of the Rings* as the culmination of Tolkien's engagement with England and Englishness, chapter five will discuss the ways in which the text responds to and develops the themes uncovered in the analyses of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit*: the interrelation of central characters to

central locations, the question of the degree to which place and individual identity define one another, and the impact of historical change on the cultural perception of the immutability of these entities. Just as the analyses of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit* place their engagements with England and Englishness in the cultural contexts of their moments of production, this chapter will discuss *The Lord of the Rings* in the context of the impact on those concepts of post-Second World War realities. However, where previous critical discussions have focused on such aspects as whether or not sections of the text such as 'The Scouring of the Shire' can be viewed as the author's allegorical comment on the state of post-war Britain, this chapter will align the engagement with England and Englishness with the wider context of the dissolution of the territorial British Empire. Within this context, I discuss the prologue's presentation of the unified race/land paradigm of hobbits and the Shire as made entities, something constructed as a response to the historical epiphenomena of migration and settlement via conscious serial acts of cultural self-narration. This can be seen in the prologue's representation of hobbits as migrants and its depiction of the processes of settlement that ultimately create their identity and that of the Shire. These include the creation of shared histories and language, customs and traditions, and geographical boundaries. The implications of this for the critical and cultural understanding that the Shire represents the natural essence of England are profound, revealing, as it does, that the text suggests that the sacralisation culturally accorded to national origins must give way to an understanding that they are a secular, produced, and constantly changing narrative. This understanding, I suggest, is central to Tolkien's engagements with the idea of England and Englishness. Investigating this proposal further, chapter five will go on to discuss Bilbo and Frodo's relationship as adopted uncle and nephew, and Frodo's inheritance of Bag End. It will argue

that these further challenge generative models which utilise the biological imagery of birth, parturition and genealogy to naturalize the narrative of the nation and the homeland as one of uninterrupted descent from parents and children down the patriarchal line. The text's fracturing of the patronymic line of descent will be aligned to the cultural difficulties involved in attempting to define England and Englishness historically, and in the context of post-Second World War mid to late-twentieth century identarian realities. The final section of this chapter will argue in this context that while the text draws on, shapes, and occasionally retreats to the local, it more frequently exposes the limitations of parochial nationalism and embraces the liberating perspectives that can be attained by acts of reciprocal communication and cultural comparison.

Finally, my conclusion will bring together these discussions to show that Tolkien's work does not attempt to recover a vanished English utopia as Shippey, and the many critics who have taken up his argument, suggest. It will emphasize that Tolkien's treatment of these themes have provoked so much controversy within Tolkien criticism, notably in the context of the 'mythology for England' debate, and prompted the conclusions they have, because Tolkien's work has not yet been fully recognized as attempting to reconcile two possibly incompatible projects. On one hand, Tolkien's aesthetic methodology, narrative strategies, and representative approaches offer fundamentally interrogative modes of critique whose object is to subject the existing bodies of identarian knowledge production to critical scrutiny. On the other, these processes also create fictions that are reconstructive and recuperative. It is the contrast offered by these alternative perspectives that unsettle received methods of conceptualising the nation and its history, telling the story of England differently. Rather than viewing Tolkien's work as offering idealising and soothing paeans to lost homelands, then, the conclusion

will propose that it is more productive to view them as a progressive intervention in and exploration of the established discourses of England as nation that also offers new viewpoints on the constitution of Englishness at the time of their production.

Chapter One:

Literature Review

Tom Shippey's argument that in creating Ham, the Hill, and the Shire Tolkien "recreate[d] a timeless and idealised England (or rather Britain) in which the place and the people remained the same regardless of politics – the triumph of the native over the foreign" is positioned by this literature review as the founding example of the dominant critical perception of these themes in Tolkien's work.[1] This chapter begins by outlining the critical persistence of Shippey's argument that Tolkien's creative engagements with England were recuperative, before discussing the enduring influence of Shippey's work within Tolkien criticism. In examining Shippey's critical rehabilitation of the author, and his source-study methodology, I will indicate the ways in which Shippey's influence, and the appropriation of his critical method, has facilitated the perpetuation of his statements on Tolkien, England, and Englishness. I will conclude by examining Tolkien's 'mythology for England' correspondence, discussing its extant critical readings and suggesting how it may be interpreted in the context of the importance of land and location to English cultural self-representation.

Overview

While Jane Chance-Nitzsche's *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England* (1979) established links between Tolkien's work and its possible and probable analogues in pre-modern literature, and introduced the idea that Tolkien's work represented a 'mythology for England', it is Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R.*

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[1] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (revised and expanded edn) (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 112.

Tolkien Created a New Mythology (1982a, 2005) that is held to mark the inception of serious critical work on Tolkien.[2] A founding text in Tolkien criticism, it, alongside its companion piece *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000), also firmly established the source-study methodology that continues to inform critical approaches to Tolkien. Shippey's mapping of the significant overlaps between Tolkien's professional philological interests and his literary endeavours, the homological anterior literary and linguistic sources that inspired and informed his fiction, the canon's compositional history, and the author's personal aesthetic inclinations, remains the landmark and influential critical expositions in the field.

As such, Shippey's conclusions on Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness are problematic; not least because they have become something of a critical orthodoxy. For example, Peter Hunt argues that although it is

> set in an 'alternative' other world and in an indeterminate era [*The Hobbit*] seems to be very clearly of the 1930's [...] [an] adventure rooted in a bucolic, peaceful, little England [where] Hobbiton and the Shire are at the same time a non-industrialised idyll, the Arcadia that is always just a generation or two ago, and an adult's nostalgic view of childhood.[3]

Positioned within an introductory reader on children's literature, Hunt's reading offers little more than a cursory reading of the text, yet it indicates the degree to which Shippey's interpretation of Tolkien, England, and Englishness has filtered through. It is also a view reflected in more academically considered and critically rigorous engagements with the author and his work. In *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), for example, Brian Rosebury argues that Tolkien's childhood at "Sarehole Mill, with its nearby farms, its mill by the riverside, its willow-trees, its

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[2] See Jane Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art: 'A Mythology for England'* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1979). All citations are taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated.
[3] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 173–175.

pool with swans, its dell with blackberries" is both a "serene quasi-rural enclave" and an obvious model for "Hobbiton and The Shire", which are representative of "a half-remembered, half-idealised England."[4] In *Splintered Light: Logos and Language* (1983, 2002), Flieger discusses both the Waldman and Thompson correspondence at the heart of the 'mythology for England' debate that informs readings of England and Englishness in Tolkien's work in noting the "pastoral" nature of the Shire.[5] Patrick Curry expresses similar sentiments in the context of his 'green' readings of Tolkien, while in 'Frodo's Body: Liminality and the Experience of War' (2013) Anna Smols discusses the "pastoral" essence of the Shire, describing it as a "natural world", even though, as this thesis will show, the Shire is naturalized within the text by the narration of a fictional history that indicates the processes by which its location and its inhabitants become coextensive interchangeable synonyms for one another. In terms of what it is felt to represent, there is a remarkable consistency of critical opinion on the nature of the Shire and its relationship to culturally representative notions of England and Englishness in the early-twentieth century.[6]

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[4] Brian Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 118, 134. With the addition of two new chapters on Peter Jackson's film adaptations and Tolkien's cultural legacy, Rosebury's *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* is a revised and expanded edition of the earlier *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1992). All citations are taken from the later work unless otherwise indicated.

For further discussions of Sarehole Mill, one of Tolkien's childhood homes, see also Patricia Reynolds, *Tolkien's Birmingham.* (Milton Keynes: Forsaken Inn Press, 1992).

[5] Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (William B. Erdmans Publishing Co, 1983) (second edition Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002) (all citations taken from the later edition unless otherwise indicated), pp. xiv, 26. See also Douglas A. Burger's 'The Shire: A Tolkien Version of Pastoral', in *Aspects of Fantasy: Selected Essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*, ed. by William Coyle (1986), pp. 149–154.

[6] See Patrick Curry, '"Less Noise and More Green": Tolkien's Ideology for England', in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference: Keble College, 1992,* ed. by Patricia Reynolds and Glen H. GoodKnight (Milton Keynes: The Tolkien Society, 1995), pp. 126–138 (originally collected in a combined edition of *Mallorn 80* and *Mythlore* 30, 1992, all citations are taken from the edited collection unless otherwise indicated), Patrick Curry, *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth, and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Floris Books; New York: St. Martin's Pr., 1997) (London: HarperCollins, 1998), and Anna Smols, 'Frodo's Body: Liminality and the Experience of War', in *The Body in*

Similarly, in 'Barbarians and Imperialism in Tacitus and Tolkien's Trilogy' (2006), James Obertino argues:

> Tolkien is clearly a Little Englander, who describes the Shire as we find it at the start of the trilogy as a near perfect home county, with its leisure-loving, tea-drinking hobbits, with no factories, mines or telegraph wires to mar the landscape.[7]

Obertino's article as whole raises concerns regarding the interpretation of Tolkien's work that the adoption of Shippey's source-study methodology has introduced that I will return to shortly. But Obertino's perspective is valuable, as it neatly condenses the recurrent tropes of critical language and thinking on Tolkien, his work, their status as an inseparable entity, and their relationship to England and Englishness. The article indicates the degree to which a critical consensus has concretised on these themes over time. Published in the *Tolkien Studies Journal*, and therefore approved editorially, Obertino's suggestion that Tolkien is 'clearly a Little Englander' whose work depicts the 'near perfect home' of a pre-modern, pre-industrial, rural and idealized England endorses where it does not actively promote the idea of a coextensive relationship between Tolkien and his work. Obertino's description of the author suggests two things. First, the term 'Little Englander' has its origins in political debates from the time of the Boer War (1899 – 1902). Denoting opponents of the conflict, the phrase was used to imply someone unconcerned with the British Empire and wider world beyond the borders of the United Kingdom.[8] 'Little Englander' then became a colloquial epithet used to

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Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on Middle-earth Corporeality, ed. by Christopher Vaccaro (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc. 2013), pp. 39–63 (p. 42).
[7] James Obertino, 'Barbarians and Imperialism in Tacitus and Tolkien's Trilogy', *Tolkien Studies Journal*, Vol. 3 (2006), 1–15 (p. 5).
[8] For example, Arthur Ponsonby wrote of the Liberal Party leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman following his opposition to the Boer War: "The impression one got of him from the Press in those

describe English people who are at worst racist and xenophobic and at best narrowly nationalistic in their outlook. Using the phrase to describe Tolkien, therefore, reflects an attempt to align the author's personal views and his literary engagements with England and Englishness with a very circumscribed and ideologically loaded position.[9] It is an attempt, moreover, that consolidates the idea that Tolkien's version of England was something inherently tied to a notion of Englishness as an identity that belongs to those born within the geographical borders of the country and not something that can be assumed or picked up by outsiders. In other words it is something that has a 'true' and reducible essence. Secondly, reinforcing this, Obertino's description of the Shire mirrors Shippey's in language and sentiment: in Tolkien's work spaces like Ham, the Hill, and the Shire represent England, it suggests, and they do so in a manner that idealises it, that denies their contemporary location of production, and in doing so look to preserve or reclaim a past or lost identity.

Taken individually, such views represent distinct critical perspectives. Taken in a holistic sense, they represent something of an agreed consensus on how Tolkien's work relates to England and Englishness that can be traced back to Shippey's statements on the subject in *The Road to Middle-earth*. Shippey recognizes that Ham, the Hill, and the Shire, are compositionally distinct if dialogically interrelated entities. However, there is a critical tendency to conflate the Hill of *The Hobbit* (1937) and the Shire of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955)*.*

days was […] that he was an unpatriotic Little Englander" (See F. W. Hirst, *In The Golden Days* (London: Frederick Muller, 1947), p. 253).
[9] The ramifications of using Tolkien's correspondence in critical analyses of his work are discussed fully later in this chapter. However, while Tolkien notes a strong individual attachment to his "beloved land of England", and its importance to his work, his statements on England and the English are reasonably innocuous in this context (see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 89. All citations are taken from the HarperCollins reprint unless otherwise indicated). For the general tenor of Tolkien's personal statements on England and the English, see, for example, Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 55, 65, 89, 90, 106.

For example, in discussing the respective journeys of the protagonists in each text, Simon Malpas argues that Bilbo's trajectory ultimately leads him "back again to the Shire."[10] Similarly, Christopher Garbowski suggests that "in *The Hobbit*, along with its residents, Tolkien discovered the Shire."[11] There are a number of reasons for this. In one sense, the relationship between the Hill and the Shire was made explicit by the revisions Tolkien undertook to connect the two texts. Having done so, Tolkien assumed their mutuality. For example, in the Waldman correspondence, Tolkien noted:

> [The Hobbits] chief settlement, where all the inhabitants are hobbits, and where an ordered, civilised, if simple and rural life is maintained is *the Shire*, originally the farmlands and forests of the royal demesne of Arnor [...] It is in the year 1341 of the Shire (or 2941) of the Third Age: that is in its last century) that Bilbo – The Hobbit and hero of that tale – starts on his 'adventure' [Tolkien's emphasis].[12]

Tolkien also commented that he transplanted the Little Kingdom of *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949) to create the Shire of *The Lord of the Rings* in the sense of both being rooted in his conception of the West Country as 'home'.[13] Such comments suggest the interchangeable nature of these entities. However, until Tolkien's publisher, Stanley Unwin, requested a sequel, *The Hobbit* had been conceived as a stand-alone work, while *Farmer Giles of Ham* is not connected to either text beyond the

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[10] Simon Malpas, 'Home', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 85–98 (p. 86).

[11] Christopher Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence for the Contemporary Mythmaker* (Marie-Curie Sklodowska University Press, 2000), p. 180.

[12] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 158.

[13] For example, see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 130, 235, 250, 230, 235, 288, and 360. In contemporary usage 'The West Country' appears to define part of the South-West of Engand, comprising of Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset – with some definitions extending this area to Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Ceremonial boundaries have been redrawn since Tolkien's time, but in personal correspondence and place-name analogues the term appears to be used for the West-Midlands but also as a catch-all covering the regions now encompassed by Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire.

similarities of their narrative strategies and provenance.[14] I discuss this dialogic

reflexivity in chapter two, examining its importance to the development of Tolkien's

aesthetic methodology and the progressive nature of his engagement with the

subjects of England and Englishness. My analysis of the texts in chapters three,

four, and five, acknowledges the interrelation of Ham and the Little Kingdom, the

Hill, and the Shire in these contexts. But it will also discuss them as distinct

entities, whose conception, composition, and representations present differing

engagements with the themes of England and Englishness.

Shippey's analysis of place-names in *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit,*

and *The Lord of the Rings* explores his understanding of this relationship.[15] I

examine this element of Tolkien's work in chapter two. In the immediate context,

however, Shippey's overarching conclusions on Ham and the Little Kingdom, the

Hill, and the Shire propose that in each text these locations depicted an

unchanging, eternal England. As noted, Shippey describes 'The Little Kingdom' of

Farmer Giles of Ham as a "timeless and idealised England (or rather Britain) in

which the place and the people remained the same regardless of politics."[16] He

correspondingly notes that the Shire of *The Lord of the Rings* "with its mayors,

musters, moots and Shirrifs, is an old-fashioned and idealised England."[17]

Likewise, Shippey argues that the Hill of *The Hobbit* (in its later iteration as Bag

End) deliberately plays on the French word *cul-de-sac*, reclaiming its meaning in

order to evoke a distinctly English/British mode of existence.[18] Bag End, Shippey

notes:

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[14] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 23.

[15] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 109–124.

[16] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth,* (2005), p. 112.

[17] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 116.

[18] There is only one reference to 'Bag End' in the revised edition of *The Hobbit*, appearing at the end of the text (see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937) (rev. edn

is also a literal translation of the phrase one sees often yet stuck up at the end of little English roads: *cul-de-sac. Cul-de-sacs* are at once funny and infuriating. They belong to no language, since the French call such a thing an *impasse* and the English a 'dead-end.' The word has its origins in snobbery, the faint residual feeling that English words, ever since the Norman Conquest have been 'low' and that French ones, or even *Frenchified* would be better. *Cul-de-sac* is accordingly a peculiarly ridiculous piece of English class-feeling – and Bag End a defiantly English reaction to it [Shippey's emphasis].[19]

Shippey suggests that Tolkien's holophrastic word choices root Bilbo's home in *The Hobbit* in England through linguistic reclamation and repetition. That this should be considered a fixed, unchanging quality, argues Shippey, is signalled by the meanings that the tripartite repetition/reclamation sequence of linguistic confluences generates: in Bag End Mr. Baggins eats his 'Baggings' (colloquial English slang for a substantial afternoon meal between dinner and lunch).[20] Literally "the bottom of the bag", *cul-de-sac* thus means both the quiet closed off lane that Bilbo lives on, and "an inescapable position."[21] Bag End is thus doubly a 'dead end': it is a road to nowhere where nothing ever changes and nothing ever happens but the daily ritual of afternoon tea, a reality reinforced by Bilbo's reaction to Gandalf's suggestion that he go on an adventure: "We are plain quiet folk and I have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late

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1983), p. 253. (All citations taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated). Otherwise Bilbo Baggins is depicted as living in 'The Hill' (For example, see Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11).
[19] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 81–82.
[20] Although Shippey suggests a rural usage by drawing attention to afternoon tea being called 'Baggins' in the country, 'Dinner' can also be read in this context in its original meaning: the largest meal of the day. Certainly this would fit with the way it is used in *The Hobbit*: "They [...] laugh deep, fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it." Rather than a promoting a distinction between a large midday dinner in the labouring North and a lighter midday lunch in the polite South, the text's point is that hobbits enjoy their creature comforts, especially when they come in the form of substantial hearty meals (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp.81-82, and Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 12).
[21] See *Collins English Dictionary* (William Collins and Son, 1979, 1986) (rev. edn Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2011), p. 412. All citations taken from the 2011 edition unless otherwise indicated.

for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them."[22] Read through Shippey's interpretation of Bag End's meaning, Bilbo's rejection of the adventure is both a rejection of changes to this *status quo* and a rejection of the idea of change itself.[23] Insulated from the world, Bilbo and Bag End are not inviolate or immune to its influences, but it is clear that they do not invite them in or relish their company.

In *The Road to Middle-earth* Shippey suggests that these spaces evoke safe, ordered and discrete versions of England: rooted in the idea of an England past, they present its essential nature in idealised, unchanging terms. Nor does Shippey's position markedly change in the later *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*.[24] This is perhaps to be expected. The texts have divergent aims. *The Road to Middle-earth* offers an account of the development of Tolkien's work. *Author of the Century* seeks to place Tolkien within the context of the twentieth century. Yet each is characterized by much the same material and approach transparently structured to fit those objectives: detailed readings of the texts

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[22] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 13–14.

[23] The meanings of "Bag End," "Baggins", "Baggings", and the reading of *cul-de-sac* are Shippey's. Their interpretation in relation to change here is mine. See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 81–82.

[24] Robert Eaglestone suggests that while these books "overlap a little in content" they should be considered as distinct (See Robert Eaglestone, 'Further Reading', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 204–206 (p. 204). Contrastingly, Rosebury argues that *Author of the Century* "contains much of the same material" as *The Road to Middle-earth* (See Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 221). Rosebury essentially endorses the position of Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne who suggest that "in *Author of the Century* Shippey recapitulates many of the points he first made in *The Road to Middle-earth*" (see Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982', *Envoi*, vol. 9. no. 2 (Fall, 2000), 101–167 (p. 102). That *Author of the Century* condenses the analyses of *The Road to Middle-earth* is evident if both texts are compared, particularly on the themes pertinent to this thesis. For example, *Author of the Century*'s description of *Farmer Giles of Ham* as an "unusually light-hearted novella" whose events are set in an "imaginary past" that is nevertheless clearly rural "Oxfordshire and the neighbouring counties" abbreviates *The Road to Middle-earth*'s reading of the same text (see Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: HarperCollins, 2000, 2001), p. xxxiii, and pp. 58–59 respectively, and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005) pp. 111–113. Similarly, *Author of the Century* compresses *The Road to Middle-earth*'s lengthy discussion of the impact of English history, English place names, and English geography on the construction of the Shire to one brief paragraph (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 109-118, and Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2001), pp. 59-60 respectively).

informed by a wide knowledge of the medieval and Anglo-Saxon background material, Tolkien's intellectual leanings, and creative ambitions. In some areas of Tolkien criticism, it is evident that Shippey's readings of Ham and the Little Kingdom of *Farmer Giles of Ham*, the Hill of *The Hobbit* and the Shire of *The Lord of the Rings* have been endorsed and repeated. The critical examples cited above, for example, agree that these texts describe timeless and romanticised English home spaces: they are pre-industrial, pre-modern, pastoral, rural and leisured. They also agree that they depict England in this way because they represent the author's personal response to the social and cultural transitions in these entities that accompanied their production. Positioned as a deliberate, intellectually motivated aesthetic statement on what Tolkien's contemporary T.H. White called "the matter of Britain" they mark Tolkien as distancing himself from his contemporary location and understandings of the constitution of these themes by escaping into the past.[25]

      J.R.R. Tolkien's intent is not the main point of contention of this thesis, but it does represent a problematic area to be negotiated. The following discussion will

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[25] T.H. White suggests that his work dealt with "the matter of Britain," noting "that is what it has been called since the days of Malory and it is a serious subject […] I hope that the moral is not too heavy, but the story was always a deep one. After all, it is the major British Epic [White's capitalisation]" (see T.H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* (1937) (repr. London: William Collins Sons & Co, 1976), p. i). I discuss White's work in this context in 'Writing Arthur, Writing England: Myth, temporality and intertextuality in T.H. White's *The Sword and the Stone*' (2009) (see Aaron Jackson, 'Writing Arthur, Writing England: Myth, temporality and intertextuality in T.H. White's *The Sword and the Stone*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Vol. 33, Number 1 (Jan) (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2009), 44–59). Shippey would perhaps suggest that Tolkien might have taken issue with the idea that a nationally representative epic started with Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century romance *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1485), as Tolkien described it as British rather than English, a distinction I address in chapter one and two (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 144. See also Shippey's discussion of Tolkien's understanding of English Literature (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 40–44)). Nevertheless, Flieger argues that Tolkien's discovery of the Winchester College manuscript source of Malory's *Mort D'Arthur* may be the model for the 'translated history' conceit of *The Lord of the Rings* (Verlyn Flieger, 'Tolkien and the Idea of the Book', in *The Lord of the Rings 1953-2004: Scholarship in Honor of Richard E. Blackwelder*, ed. by Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006) pp. 283–300). It may be, however, generally suggestive of a cultural trend that both *The Sword and the Stone* and *The Hobbit* were written by authors whose stated interest was the constitution of the nation, that both mix fantasy and history, and that both were published in 1937.

introduce the reasons why the opinion of the author on his own work have come to carry a weight in Tolkien criticism perhaps unmatched in any other contemporary literary-critical field, noting Shippey's importance to Tolkien criticism and the presence and interpretation of Tolkien's archival materials within this canon in this context. The final sections in this chapter thereafter will respectively establish the historical trajectory of Shippey's criticism and its source-study methodology, note his enduring importance, discuss the issues that accompany this critical approach, and illustrate how this thesis will engage with this complex.

Shippey's critical engagements with Tolkien primarily combed exterior literary and linguistic resources to divine their analogues and homologues in Tolkien's fiction, pronouncing on their impact on the author's imagination. In reaching his conclusions on Tolkien and England, Shippey's sources, then, were not only the archaic literatures and languages of Tolkien's professional field and the body of his published corpus. They also included Tolkien's academic work on other texts and related matters, cited opinions on his own work, the personal perspectives expressed in his correspondence, and his drafts and posthumously published material.

In this regard, Tolkien generated a substantial corpus. While his practice of revising his work during the typing, editing, printing, and galley-proofing stages, and in response to editorial and publication demands are well-documented, so too was his habit of reworking material on his own whim. An example of this can be seen in Tolkien's admission to Stanley Unwin in 1938 that the proposed sequel to *The Hobbit* had got "out of hand" and "taken an unpremeditated turn."[26] Much

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[26] *The Lord of the Rings*' composition and preparation for publication offers examples of these tendencies (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 34, and Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 164–173 respectively). Its drafting from inception to completion is mapped in *The History of The Lord of the Rings* (See *The Return of the Shadow (The History of the Lord of the Rings: Part One)*, ed. by

redeveloped and rewritten *The Lord of the Rings* was eventually published sixteen years later. As C.S. Lewis commented, Tolkien's "standard of self-criticism was high," and his idea of revision was generally to begin "the whole work over again from the beginning" while "the mere suggestion of publication usually set him upon a revision, in the course of which so many new ideas occurred to him that where his friends had hoped for the final text of an old work they actually got the first draft of a new one" – a first draft existing at the ongoing head of a line of other drafts predating it.[27] This occurred not simply because Tolkien was "a natural niggler", as the author claimed, but as a direct consequence of his intellectual interests and working method.[28] Tolkien's primary interest was language, as he noted in a letter to W.H. Auden:

> I learned Anglo-Saxon at school […] an accident quite unconnected with the curriculum though decisive – I discovered in it not only modern historical philology, which appealed to the historical and scientific side, but also for the first time the study of a language out of mere love: I mean for the acute aesthetic pleasure derived from a language for its own sake, not only free from being useful but free even from being the 'vehicle of a literature'. […] Though languages and names are for me inextricable from the stories, they are and were so to speak an attempt to give a background or a world in which my expressions of linguistic taste could have a function. The stories were comparatively late in coming.[29]

Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), *The Treason of Isengard (The History of The Lord of the Rings: Part Two)* ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), *The War of the Ring (The History of The Lord of the Rings: Part Three)* ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), and *Sauron Defeated: The End of the Third Age (The History of The Lord of the Rings: Part Four)* ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1992). Where it does not use these resources as source texts for discussion this thesis will refer to the broad critical map of Tolkien's revisions across the corpus offered in Wayne G. Hammond, with Douglas A. Anderson, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (St. Paul's Bibliographies: Winchester, 1993; Oak Knoll Books: New Castle, DW, 1993).
[27] See Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 186, and pp. 194–195. All citations taken from the 2002 edition unless otherwise indicated.
[28] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 313.
[29] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 213.

Creatively, for Tolkien, linguistic invention came first, then a culture to speak it and a story to support it.[30] Biographically, creating imaginary languages began as soon as Tolkien could write, and "never stopped." As he suggested in the Waldman correspondence, in which Tolkien outlined the aims of his fiction, this process continued during his work "as a professional philologist." Tolkien noted: "I have changed in taste, improved in theory, and probably in craft. [But] behind my stories is now a nexus of languages […] structurally sketched."[31] As in any real world language, for Tolkien invented languages required detailing of the laws of their sound shifts (phonology), their deployment of word-building elements (morphology) and their developments in meaning (semantics). From the viewpoint of a philologist, as John Garth argues in *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (2003, 2013), this linguistic complex represented the "unalterable facts of observed history" and hard evidence of its culture.[32] However, as Garth notes, because each law applied across the language and any change, no matter how small, required the alteration of a number of words and their individual histories, each change in taste, theoretical advance and improvement in craft meant the reworking of the whole.[33] This approach contributed to Tolkien's habit of drafting and redrafting his work, creating much of the body of work that has been published since Tolkien's death that feeds source-study methodological approaches, as well as polarising critical engagements with the author.

An example of the latter can be found in responses to the publication of *The History of Middle-earth* (1983-1996), a posthumously released twelve-volume set

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[30] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 214, 219, 231, 264–265, 375, 380.
[31] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 143.
[32] John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (London: HarperCollins, 2003, 2013), p. 61. All citations taken from the earlier edition unless otherwise indicated.
[33] Garth's description of how Tolkien developed complex etymologies from simple single root words of his early language *Quenya* illustrates how this process amplified Tolkien's workload (See Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), pp. 61–63).

edited by Christopher Tolkien, collected previously unreleased fragments, notes, drafts and revisions of texts from Tolkien's archives. Alongside the publication of complete (if posthumously calqued) narratives of *The Children of Húrin* (2007) and *The Lay of Beren and Luthien* (2009) these releases have produced a body of work whose scale and variants dwarf the authorised published texts of Tolkien's lifetime. Rosebury has suggested that the continuous publication of not only "incomplete fragments but also justifiably discarded or revised drafts" containing "rudimentary, immature and mishandled material" has not been wise.[34] Rosebury's argument is that while this process has succeeded in keeping Tolkien's name before the public, it has not enhanced Tolkien's literary reputation but rather tempted many detractors to "lob a rhetorical grenade or two in (Tolkien's) direction" instead.[35] While acknowledging their potential academic value, Rosebury's point is made to support his contention that *The Lord of the Rings* should be assessed as a "discrete invention" and his argument that the text should be seen as Tolkien's most important work simply because he actually finished it.[36] It can be argued that Rosebury's claim that he was "confident" that the plan to write the overarching mythological cycle Tolkien elaborated to Waldman "would not have worked" perhaps misses the point: Tolkien wrote much of his envisioned cycle, but it was either turned down by publishers or left unfinished.[37] The more fully elaborated narratives of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were placed into and informed by the cultural and historical contexts provided by the multiple

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[34] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 3.
[35] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 3–4.
[36] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 90.
[37] As Rosebury notes, Tolkien's literary success was "no bolt from the blue." From his early rejection by Jackson and Sidgewick to his repeated attempts to persuade George Allen and Stanley Unwin to publish *Farmer Giles of Ham* (successful) and *The Silmarillion* (1977) (failed) it is clear that Tolkien always intended that his work should be published (See Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 140, Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 25–26, 113, 135, 136, 215, 213, 237, 303, 346, 374, and Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 113, 119, 129, 132, and 133 respectively).

fictions of the wider mythological cycles, and these materials were themselves

eventually collated into the narrative of *The Silmarillion* (1977).[38] Beyond their

literary value, however, it must be noted that such materials would be of critical

interest to any scholar approaching any author. Their significance for this thesis

lies not in Tolkien's opinion, but in their excavation of Tolkien's working method,

how these strategies manifest in the published texts, and also their indication that

the central concerns of Tolkien's work were both enduring and consistent in their

essentials, though evolving in reach and subtlety as the corpus grew.[39] Tolkien's

work, then, in this thesis is being considered as a whole whose interrelation and

scale increased over time, discussing its preoccupation with England and

Englishness as a similarly progressive and developing complex. While my main

focus will be the published texts of *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The*

Lord of the Rings, this thesis is also an exploration of Shippey's conclusions of

these themes in these texts. Given the importance of these archive resources to

his interpretations, it will be impossible not to refer to them where they are

pertinent to the discussion in hand.

Having indicated that archive material will be mobilised and discussed,

then, its use by this thesis must be clarified. This will be addressed by examining

Shippey's role and influence within Tolkien criticism. As the opening of this chapter

has illustrated, Shippey's impact and influence on Tolkien criticism is evident in the

way that his conclusions on Tolkien, England, and Englishness have been

endorsed and recycled. But his authority has also resulted in the adoption and

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[38] Published posthumously, *The Silmarillion* was drawn from materials relating to *The Book of Lost Tales* begun in 1916 and edited into a coherent narrative by Christopher Tolkien, Tolkien's son, before its publication as part of the *History of Middle-earth* series noted above.
[39] As an example of this, in *Authoring the Century: Tolkien, the Great War, and Modernism* (2010), I draw a comparison between the consistency of Tolkien's linguistic choices in his early poetry and his later prose (see 'Authoring the Century: J.R.R. Tolkien, the Great War and Modernism', *English Literature* (The Journal of the English Association) (2010), 44–69.

promulgation of his source-study method as a dominant approach in Tolkien criticism.[40] In this regard, source study not only still plays a part but remains a touchstone within Tolkien Studies. These tendencies have been acknowledged within the field. As Drout and Wynne note, because of Tolkien's relative critical marginalisation, Shippey's dominance of this field has led to issues of critical and methodological repetition:

> Tolkien criticism has been afflicted with two seemingly incompatible faults: while critics have endlessly covered and recovered the same ground, they appear not to have read very much of each other's work, And while it seems that the failure to read and acknowledge other critical works would at least prevent arguments from falling into familiar ruts, Tolkien scholarship has had no such luck.[41]

But Shippey's presentation of the anterior literary and linguistic catalysing (re) sources and roots of Tolkien's creativity also tend to present the author and the work as an indivisible whole. The significance granted to Shippey's work has seen this intentionalist approach perpetuated. The centrality afforded by Shippey's analyses to Tolkien's own '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' (British Academy Lecture, 1936) and 'On Fairy Stories' (Andrew Lang Lecture 1939) and his implicit suggestion that they represent the origin of modern Anglo-Saxon criticism and fantasy literature respectively, alongside a hagiographic elevation of the author to an infallible 'Professor Tolkien' figure by fandom (and some critics)

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[40] In his discussion on Tolkien and literary theory, Robert Eaglestone's implicit suggestion that Shippey's engagements with Tolkien perhaps mark the limits of the effectiveness of this approach appears to endorse Drout and Wynne's earlier comment that "no method is perfect, and we might be inclined to argue that Shippey presses the philological argument as far as it can go and may even take the personal allegorical argument [...] too far" (See Robert Eaglestone 'Introduction', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 1–13 (pp. 1–3) and Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 127).
[41] Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 101.

has had the effect, Drout argues, of turning "Tolkien into his own leading critic."[42]

In 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005) Drout suggests that while in terms of

his own scholarship, "Tolkien was far more often right than he was wrong", it is

with the important and accurate qualification that Tolkien was not *always* correct,

and "his opinion, even of his own books, should not be given the status of holy

writ":[43]

> *All* authors can be tendentious in their self-criticism, and all have various
> blind spots and biases [Drout's emphasis]. Surely Tolkien is no exception.
> He may be (in my view, he is) a very good critic of his own work, but, as
> Barthes argues, '... a text is not a line of words releasing a single
> 'theological' meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-
> dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original,
> blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the
> innumerable centres of culture.' The over-reliance of critics upon the *Letters*
> guides Tolkien scholarship down the narrow channel of finding a single,
> 'theological' meaning for Tolkien's works, more often than not a meaning
> found in the *Letters*.[44]

Assessing the 'Professor Tolkien' complex through a reading of Michel Foucault's

'What is an Author?' (1984) and Roland Barthes' 'The Death of the Author' (1977),

Drout's point is that "meaning in a text exists not only because an author has

consciously put it there, but also due to factors outside the author's control."[45]

Foucault argues "there are a certain number of discourses that are endowed with

the 'author-function' while others are deprived of it."[46] From Foucault's perspective,

the persona of the author can imprint a persona on "the connections that we make,

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[42] Michael D.C. Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum 2005), pp. 15–29 (p. 18). The enduring idea of 'Professor Tolkien' is somewhat ironic given that Tolkien recognized the honorific nature of the title and that its applicability ended with his retirement (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006) p. 300). For Shippey's analysis of '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' and 'On Fairy Stories' in this context, see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 52–62.
[43] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 19.
[44] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 21.
[45] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 21.
[46] Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 101–120 (p. 107).

the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize or the exclusions that we practice" in interpreting the text.[47] The text, in this reading, ultimately creates the author. Foucault's point was not necessarily that culture should evolve to the point where "fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author", but that attempts should be made to discern the difference between the layers of meaning that inform the text – in this context, the person, the persona, the author, and the author-function of J.R.R. Tolkien. Recognizing this, and citing Foucault's notion that the figure of the author introduces "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning", Drout suggests that an unmediated idea of 'Professor Tolkien' has allowed some critics to "pull together" an otherwise "dizzying complexity of different materials and their relations both to individual writers and to the social, cultural, and economic processes of book production."[48] Or to put it another way, unstated but implicit in Drout's argument is that Tolkien's opinions on his own work have had the effect of saving some critics the trouble of forming their own. Yet, as Barthes argues, any interpretative practice that starts from the position of trying to discover what the author really meant is epistemologically and ontologically flawed. "Writing," he argues, "is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin, Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."[49] Barthes's suggestion to look at the text and its effects on the reader challenges the ideas of ownership and authorship that Foucault's differentiation of the person, the persona, the author and the author-function describes. Although Foucault also argues for a form of culture "in which

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[47] Foucault, 'What is an Author?'(1984), p. 110.
[48] Foucault, 'What is an Author?' (1984), p. 118. Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 18.
[49] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill, 1977), pp. 142–148.

fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author" he also recognizes the importance of the different layers of cultural discourse that create the meaning of a given text.[50]

This chimes with my earlier point regarding what might be dubbed Tolkien's extracurricular writings: that they must be acknowledged is undoubted, but their use must be negotiated and mediated if they are to have a valid critical function. Although Tolkien was not responding to Barthes, the author recognized the enclosed self-defeating logic in suggesting that the author's intent can be seen solely looking at their work, arguing in a discussion of *Beowulf* that: "The *Beowulf* critic, *as such*, must go first to the evidence for the period outside his poem. The process must not for him be a vicious circle in which the poem is used to depict a period, and that picture is then used to depict a poem [Tolkien's emphasis]."[51] Tolkien also personally disavowed biographical inference, doubting "its relevance to criticism."[52] It is clear in discussing Tolkien that within Tolkien Studies the relationship between the extant texts, the long-dead author, his held opinions, and the multiple extant critical and cultural discussions of their coextensive nature have become an influential complex. But the intentionalist critical strain spearheaded by Shippey that attempted to rehabilitate Tolkien, and that also revealed the deliberate and considered nature of his literary, linguistic and aesthetic concerns,

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[50] Foucault, 'What is an Author' (1984), p. 119.

[51] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Beowulf and the Critics*, ed. by Michael Drout (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), p. 39.

[52] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 257. Tolkien makes the same point in the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* (see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954) (reprinted London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), p. 11. Eaglestone notes Drout's suggestion that because of the number of editions of the principal texts Tolkien Studies would, for example, present a "citation from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, book two, chapter four, page 318 as '*FR*, II, iv, 318'" (see Eaglestone, 'Introduction' (2005), pp. 10–11). However, as Anderson suggests in his 'Introduction to the Text', the 1988 edition is taken as the standard unabridged text, marking as it does the point where HarperCollins began to release the book (See Douglas A. Anderson, 'Note on the Text', in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, (London: HarperCollins, 1988, 1994, 2001)). All citations will, therefore, be taken from this text unless otherwise indicated and presented in standard fashion.

and reconnected him to his cultural-historical context, have all fed the concept of 'Professor Tolkien' as the mediator and final arbiter of discussions on the texts.

Yet, as Drout argues, sustaining the belief that Tolkien's authorship was unmediated or that 'Professor Tolkien's' interpretation of his own work represents a final, definitive and infallible judgement is impossible. Moreover, as Drout suggests, citing Gergely Ngagy's discussion of the recursive and interrelated mythopoesis of Tolkien's work in 'The Great Chain of Reading: (Inter-)textual Relations and the Technique of Mythopoesis in the Turin Story' (2003), it is impossible to consider the published texts as 'clean'.[53] As Drout notes, too many Tolkien scholars have failed to acknowledge that the sources do not represent "a transparent, unambiguous guide to the 'real' meaning of Tolkien's literature or, for that matter, his scholarship."[54] By utilising Tolkien's opinions, archive materials, and literary-criticism it is certainly possible to argue that Tolkien aimed to create an

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[53] Ngagy argues that Tolkien's texts display recursive characteristics that create the effect of myth by constantly reinforcing their invented traditions (See Gergely Ngagy, 'The Great Chain of Reading: (Inter-)textual Relations and the Technique of Mythopoesis in the Turin Story', in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, ed. by Jane Chance (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 239–258). Ngagy extends this argument in 'The Adapted Text: The Lost Poetry of Beleriand' (2004), examining *The Silmarillion* as an editorially compiled text drawn together from a stylistically diverse number of sources (see Gergely Ngagy, 'The Adapted Text: The Lost Poetry of Beleriand', *Tolkien Studies Journal*, Vol. 1 (West Virginia University Press, 2004), 21–41). Douglas A. Anderson has foregrounded the difficulties in creating a 'clean' text in his note on the text that accompanies HarperCollins editions of *The Lord of the Rings*. As Anderson comments despite Tolkien's revisions *The Lord of the Rings* has mistakes. For example, Anderson suggests that "bed-loft" was "bird-loft" in the fair copy manuscript and Tolkien, who proofed both the typescript and later editions of the text, missed the change. Similarly, Anderson argues, the passage covering the description of the Great Hall at Minas Tirith has been altered by a line-jumping mistake in the final typescript (See Anderson, 'Note on the Text' (1988, 1994, 2001)). The presence of revision is sometimes more subtle, as when the steady advance in breadth of conception and maturity of style shown in *The Return of the Shadow* is thrown into sharp relief by the occasional presence of a few jarring immature phrases or ideas such as the bath scene in Crickhollow, for example, which is present from the first draft to the last (See Tolkien, *The Treason of Isengard* (1989), p. 243 and Tolkien, *The War of the Ring* (1990), p. 288. For more on the impossibility of a 'clean' text see David Bratman, '*The Literary Value of* The History of Middle-earth', in *Tolkien's Legendarium*, ed. by Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter (Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 69–91, and David Bratman, 'Top Ten Rejected Plot Twists from *The Lord of the Rings*: A Textual Excursion into the 'History of The Lord of the Rings''', *Mythlore* 86, 22 (2000), 13–38 respectively.
[54] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 20. Drout suggests here, for example, that word for word there are more citations from Tolkien's correspondence than Tolkien's fiction in Jonathan Pearce's *Tolkien: Man and Myth: A Literary Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998). Drout makes the same point in Drout and Wynne 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), 109–110.

idealized and unchanging England in Ham, the Hill, and the Shire, that he had a strong emotional and intellectual investment in preserving a specific pre-modern idea of Englishness, and that his attempt to achieve this was a response to the perceived changes in both that occurred during his own lifetime, if not before. But it is equally possible to argue that the positions on the relationship of his work to England and Englishness that Tolkien puts forward can be interpreted as part of a complex, mediated discussion of their relationship – the interpretation that I favour. Nevertheless, as I have also indicated, it is Shippey's position and its repeated critical endorsements that have come to be the dominant perception of his work in this context.

As Shippey's conclusions on the themes and texts stated above are therefore crucial, then, it is clear that both the criticism and the approach that leads to these conclusions presents challenges for this thesis, then. At the beginning of this chapter, I cited the conclusions regarding the representation of England and Englishness in Tolkien's works offered by many critics, drawing attention to the way that each position endorsed and echoed the language and sentiment of Shippey's original thoughts on Tolkien and England. This can also be interpreted as evidence of Shippey's importance to Tolkien criticism and his continuing critical and methodological influence in Tolkien Studies. Put simply, Shippey began the ongoing critical and cultural rehabilitation of Tolkien, establishing him as a major twentieth century author, and refined the critical approach that still informs scholarly approaches to the author. The next section, then, will examine the initial and enduring impact of *The Road to Middle-earth* and *Author of the Century* on Tolkien scholarship and illustrate Shippey's methodological approach. It will go on to give examples of how Shippey's source-study methodology has been used by

some critics to reduplicate and thus reinforce his conclusions that Tolkien's

representation of England and Englishness was recuperative and reactionary. I will

then go on to illustrating how this thesis intends to negotiate this complex.

Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* and *The Author of the Century*

In the first edition of *The Road to Middle-earth* (1982) Shippey identified a trend of

mainstream critical opposition toward J.R.R. Tolkien that stretched back to the

author's first mid-twentieth-century reviews by Alfred Duggan, Edward Wilson and

Philip Toynbee. Shippey argued that left unchecked this tendency had developed

into a prevailing chorus of outright critical hostility at the time of writing that

reduced Tolkien to "an unworldly figure, eternally aged like Gandalf, brooding over

his creation and possessed of no additional interests."[55] In countering these

perceptions, Shippey suggested that their emergence said more about the

ideological positioning of the average critic and the failure of the established

literary-critical values they represented to engage with Tolkien than it did about the

author's work:

> The toolkit of the professional critic […] does not work at all on whole
> *genres* of fiction (especially fantasy and science fiction, but including also
> the bulk of 'entertainment' fiction, i.e. what people most commonly read).
> Furthermore it has a strong tendency to falsify much of what it does attempt
> to explain by assimilating it, often unconsciously, to familiar models. Tolkien
> may be a peripheral writer for the theory of fiction. However, it seems time
> to pay more attention to the peripheries, and less to the well-trodden
> centre.[56]

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[55] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 136. See also Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 1–6 and Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. xx–xxiv respectively.
[56] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982a), p. 215.

Although disparities in age, temperament, intellectual, aesthetic and creative concerns, religious and moral values, as well as historical, social and cultural positioning inevitably create distinctions between any author and their commentators, the crux of Shippey's argument was that the continuous restatement of an oppositional relationship between Tolkien and the recognized practices of literature and literary-criticism over decades had resulted in its reality being accepted without any real evidence for its existence being tendered. Shippey argued that because critics lacked the correct "toolkit" and were unable or unwilling to coherently harmonize the commercial success, cultural appeal and aesthetic concerns of Tolkien's work with any particular literary school, movement, or prevalent trend, succeeding critics had instead resorted to making statements "not about literary merit, where their opinions could rest undisprovable, but about popular appeal", with the latter widely understood to compromise and disable the former, or resorting to personal attacks.[57]

Shippey's response to this was robust. Noting that the critical opprobrium increased in direct proportion to the burgeoning success of his work, Shippey mobilized Tolkien's 'Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics' lecture to point out that while "correct and sober taste may refuse to admit that there can be an interest for us – the proud we that includes all intelligent living people – in ogres and dragons"[58] it is not its job to say that those who like such things are "wrong to do so."[59] More precisely, Shippey argued that using popularity as discriminatory or disqualifying criteria for engaging with an author does not establish the merit of the

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[57] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 2.
[58] See J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics', in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 22 (1936), pp. 245–295 (p. 257). Reprinted in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and other Essays*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 2006), pp. 5–48 (p. 16). All citations taken from the 2006 edition unless otherwise indicated.
[59] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 3. Shippey reprised this argument in *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. xx–xxiv.

work, merely the prejudices of the critic at work. Positioning the cultural practice of categorically excommunicating Tolkien from any progressive literary-critical history as being ultimately as unwise as the corresponding habit of dismissing his work as the whimsical irrelevant prank of an elderly don unconcerned with 'English Literature', *The Road to Middle-earth* mapped the early-twentieth century ideological distinctions between "Lit" and "Lang" in order to reveal the author's distinctive role in reforming 'English Literature' as an academic discipline in his capacity as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.[60]

More pertinently, this work also established Tolkien's own position between the two disciplines as a practicing philologist, allowing Shippey to advance the main thrust of his argument. This was to propose that Tolkien's fiction derived from a coherent, discernible, and valid set of concerns and interests. Using a philological methodology rooted in Tolkien's own academic praxis and creative approach that homologically connected the shared linguistic and cultural relationship between details in Tolkien's work and exterior sources, Shippey

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[60] What Rosebury describes as the "Don's Whimsy" school of Tolkien criticism has a long historical trajectory (Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 7–8). Edmund Wilson called Tolkien's work "an overgrown fairy story, a philological curiosity" while Lin Carter's attempt to defend Tolkien's work described it as "the outgrowth of a don's scholarly hobbies' (See Edmund Wilson, 'Oo, those Awful Orcs!' *Nation*, 14 April, 1956), 312–313 (p. 313) and Lin Carter, *Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine, 1969), pp. 93–94 respectively). Similarly, J.I.M. Stewart's *A Memorial Service* (1977) describes "J.B. Timbermill [a thinly-disguised reference to Tolkien] as "a notable scholar" who "ran off the rails" and abandoned scholarship to write fiction, Bryan Appleyard described *The Lord of the Rings* as a work of "tweedy academic whimsy", and Harold Bloom dismissed it as "only an intricate period piece" (see J.I.M. Stewart's *A Memorial Service* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 176, Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 433, Bryan Appleyard, *The Pleasures of Peace*, (London: Faber, 1989), p. 13, and Harold Bloom, *J.R.R. Tolkien* (London: Chelsea House, 2000), p. 2 respectively). Tolkien was well aware that some critics felt that an "elderly professor of philology" writing and publishing "fairytales and romances" as a "hobby" was nothing more than a literary "aberration" (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 219, 230).

For more on the struggle between language, literature, philologists and critics that attended the creation of the Oxford English School see D.J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) pp. 66–117. Palmer's work is cited by Shippey in his analysis of Tolkien's relation to the development of English Literature as an academic discipline, and the relation of philology to Tolkien's creative outlook (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 6–15, 26–28). See also Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), pp. 90, 99, 110, 161–162, 184–185).

revealed these to be a culturally diverse, intellectually considered and creatively

catalysing set of anterior literary, linguistic and academic philological resources.[61]

In charting their direct influence on the genesis and evolution of Tolkien's creative

work and discussing their embedded presence in the finished texts, Shippey's

overall analysis articulately stated that Tolkien's relationship to the twentieth

century and twentieth-century literature, and continuing relevance to the twenty-

first century and twenty-first century literary studies, should not be considered as

the "act of deliberate defiance of modern history" suggested by the school of

'correct and sober taste.'[62] Instead, Shippey proposed that it was more accurate to

consider it an intellectually motivated premeditated and purposeful act of aesthetic

positioning that was as valid a response to the twentieth century as any made by

his literary contemporaries.[63]

    Subsequent revisions of *The Road to Middle-earth* (1992, 2005) and the

production of *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000), augmented by further

material published over the preceding eighteen years in journals, conference

proceedings and essay collections, saw Shippey develop this position further,

moving beyond his earlier philologically informed conclusions.[64] These had

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[61] As Drout and Wynne argue "the real brilliance of *Road* was in method: Shippey would relentlessly gather small philological facts and combine them into unassailable logical propositions: part of the pleasure in reading *Road* lies in watching these pieces fall into place and Shippey's larger arguments materialize out of the welter of interesting detail" (See Drout and Wynne 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 102).

[62] Hugh Brogan, 'Tolkien's Great War', in *Children And Their Books: A Celebration Of The Works Of Iona And Peter Opie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 351–367 (p. 356).

[63] Despite protestations to the contrary, Tolkien was not unaware of contemporary trends of English Literature. His dismissal of it in the foreword of the revised edition of *The Lord of the Rings* was more a rebarbative response to hostile critics than a considered opinion. Nevertheless, it is a perspective broadly endorsed within his personal correspondence (See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 10 and Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 172, 213, 414). Shippey provides an extensive rebuttal to critical suggestions that Tolkien was uninterested in English Literature from Shakespeare on (See Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. 161–225).

[64] Shippey's revision of *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005) also uses material first published in 'Orcs, Wraiths, Wights: Tolkien's Images of Evil', in *J.R.R. Tolkien and his Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, ed. by Dan Timmons and George Clark (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 183–198, 'From Page to Screen: J.R.R. Tolkien and Peter Jackson', *World Literature Today*, 77, no

considered Tolkien as a linguist "descended essentially from Jacob Grimm, of 'Grimm's Law' and 'Grimms' Fairy Tales'", advancing the concerns of philology in his personal creative work even as it lost professional ground to new academic interests.[65] *Author of the Century*, by contrast, built on Shippey's discussion of 'Tolkien as a Post-War Writer' (1992) advanced in Shippey's University of Turku, Finland, lecture to consider the author in the context of his time, the early to mid-twentieth century.[66] Shippey's synchronic view argued that in pursuing a demonstrably coherent vision, Tolkien could be characteristically considered a twentieth-century author, not only in an idiosyncrasy of approach echoed by other writers in and out of the literary mainstream (notably T.S. Eliot, George Orwell and James Joyce, but also C.S. Lewis, William Golding, Kurt Vonnegut, George Orwell, and Ursula le Guin) but in similarly addressing the key thematic issues of the twentieth century – the nature of warfare, of humanity, of community, belonging and displacement – to produce literature's most resonant and culturally enduring response to the twentieth century's traumatic manifestation and passage.[67]

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2 (2003), 69–72, and 'Another Road to Middle-earth: Jackson's Movie Trilogy', in *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*, eds. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose Zimbardo (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), pp. 233–256.

[65] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 6–22.

[66] See Tom Shippey, 'Tolkien as a Post-War Writer', in *Scholarship and Fantasy: The Tolkien Phenomenon*, *Turku, Finland*, ed. by K.J. Battarbee (Anglicana Turkuensia 12, Turku: University of Turku, 1993), pp. 217–236.

[67] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. xix. As Rosebury comments "amid the stylistic diversity of the twentieth-century novel, from *Ulysses* to *Brighton* Rock to *Pale Fire* to *Trainspotting* – or simply within *Ulysses* – the stylistic scope of *The Lord of the Rings* is neither unusual nor intimidating" (See Rosebury, *A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 23). The evolution of Shippey's arguments to reach this conclusion is marked. For example, in the first edition of *The Road to Middle-earth* Shippey suggested that Tolkien possessed no analogous "literary context" or relationship to the twentieth century, and that he foresaw no further academic work being necessary on the author (*The Road to Middle-earth* (1982), p. xix). Also, in *Author* Shippey advances the view that Tolkien's critical disenfranchisement was a result of his Roman Catholic sensibility. Shippey's argument is that this put Tolkien at odds with modernism's ironic atheistic orthodoxy. In apparently rejecting the literary-critical establishment's aesthetic position, Shippey suggests that Tolkien offered a challenge to their cultural superiority in an ideological-political rather than personal-political sense. Shippey stops short of saying that bad reviews followed as a result, however (See Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000). pp. 305–309).

That Tolkien is now considered a major twentieth century author is, then, largely down to Shippey's rehabilitative efforts and a strain of scholarship that has been quick to endorse his arguments or repeat them, either entirely or in part. For example, in contextualising Tolkien's relationship to the twentieth-century as "a welcome variant, rather than a lamentable failure of adjustment to the dominant cultural trend", Rosebury used the same authors in making the same point as Shippey – that Tolkien should be analysed as a twentieth-century writer: "Tolkien belongs to the same century as Proust, Joyce and Eliot, and is read with pleasure by many of the same readers. Criticism needs to confront this fact and make sense of it."[68] Similarly, in his introduction to the edited essay collection *Reading The Lord of the Rings: New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* (2005) Robert Eaglestone revisits the Joyce / Eliot / Orwell / Tolkien comparisons advanced by Shippey, Rosebury, and Drout and Wynne, to make the same point: "[*The Lord of the Rings*] is clearly an important book with no little literary value, a significant film trilogy [and] a social and cultural phenomenon" that offers "a meditation on what the very nature of community and evil might be in the twentieth century, traumatized by two World Wars, mass death and totalitarian disaster."[69]

Shippey's work was not alone in establishing Tolkien's fiction as worthy of serious critical attention. Biographies such as Humphrey Carpenter's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (1977) and *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles*

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[68] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 7. Drout and Wynne also reiterate Shippey's view that Tolkien should be considered the equal of "Joyce, Pound [and] Eliot" (See Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000) p. 114. See also Shippey's comparison of Tolkien and Eliot's use of language, (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*, pp. 384–387, Tolkien's use of myth as compared to Joyce (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* pp. 237–238), and the contiguities between Orwellian and Tolkienian fantasy (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*, pp. 371–375). Shippey revisits and extends these comparisons in *Author of the Century* (See Shippey's comparison of Tolkien's work to Eliot's modernist method (Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. 312–313), Tolkien's relationship to James Joyce (Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. 310–312), and Orwell's descriptions of England (See Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. 219–220).
[69] Eaglestone, 'Introduction' (2005), pp. 1–3.

Williams, and Their Friends (1978), as well as Joseph Pearce's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Man and Myth* (1998) and John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003) went further in placing Tolkien in relation to the twentieth century, his intellectual contemporaries, his religious faith, and the First World War respectively.[70] Garth's work is discussed in more detail in chapter four. However, it should be noted that their work in this respect augmented and was assisted by the critical rehabilitation of the author over the last three decades that *The Road to Middle-earth* initiated. Both approaches worked to reconnect a figure and body of work previously defined as 'otherworldly' when assessed within the context of its era and suggest its significance and relevance. After the false start of his initial conclusions on Tolkien, where Shippey had suggested that there was "no immediate literary context" in twentieth-century literature in which to place Tolkien, the revised and expanded *Road to Middle-earth* proposed instead that Tolkien's works addressed the "most immediate relevant issues of the whole twentieth century – questions of industrialised warfare, the origin of evil, [and] the nature of humanity."[71]

The importance accorded to Shippey's work within Tolkien criticism, then, is founded on two things: an acknowledgement of its landmark significance as a work of criticism, and the recognition that Shippey's successful integration of a thorough knowledge and sympathetic understanding of Tolkien's intellectual concerns and learning with an effective source-focused philologically informed methodology continues to represent one of the seminal approaches of the field. It

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[70] This thesis returns to Carpenter's and Garth's work throughout. Pearce's work is not the focus of my analysis, but it can be characterised as an attempt to interpret how Tolkien's Catholicism informed his work, stressing the links between the rubric of orthodox Catholic theology, Tolkien's personal understandings of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the representations of ritual and the divine in Tolkien's texts (See Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth: A Literary Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), and Joseph Pearce (ed), *Tolkien: A Celebration. Collected Writings on a Literary Legacy* (London: Fount, 1999)).

[71] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. xix. Shippey had earlier suggested that there was "no immediate literary context" in twentieth-century literature in which to place Tolkien (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. xix).

also recognizes that both works offer an enduring defence of Tolkien, both in their explicit refutation of hostile criticism and the profound statement that making Tolkien the subject of such a monumental body of critical analysis in the first place implicitly makes. Following the publication of *Author of the Century*, in an effort to finally detach Tolkien from what was described as mainstream literary criticism's continuing hostility, or rather more often indifference, towards the author, Drout and Wynne analogised the impact and influence on Shippey's work on its subject to that of Tolkien's own '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics' lecture.[72] This defended the integrity of the Anglo-Saxon poets' art against modern readers for whom the art was of secondary importance to the poem's value as a cultural, historical and linguistic document. Similarly, Drout and Wynne suggested that if Shippey's work was henceforth cited as the definitive defence of Tolkien's literary-critical worth to those who continued to dispute it, Tolkien Studies would be freed more profitably to discuss Tolkien's works rather than remaining trapped in a cycle of continuously revisiting the same ground and replaying the same arguments in defending him:

> We would even suggest that if critics begin to act as if Shippey's work has provided the definitive "defense" [sic] of Tolkien (that is, simply writing "Tom Shippey has already analysed the early, misguided critical antipathies to Tolkien…" and moving on), *Author* will have accomplished one of its major tasks. And if in fact Tolkien criticism does reach a point where critics no longer feel the need to defend this particular choice of subject than it seems reasonable to guess that by the year 2025 or 2050 Tolkien scholars will use *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* as today's scholars use Tolkien's

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[72] Shippey had published on Tolkien prior to *The Road to Middle-earth*, notably 'Creation from Philology in *The Lord of the Rings*', in *J.R.R. Tolkien, Scholar and Story-Teller: Essays in Memoriam*, ed. by Mary Salu and Robert T. Farrell (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979) pp. 286–316. This thesis takes *The Road to Middle-earth* and *Author of the Century* as Shippey's consolidated major contributions to Tolkien criticism, however, and its main focus of discussion.

'*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics" – as a convenient benchmark back beyond which they need not read.[73]

Drout's and Wynne's argument is that because of Shippey Tolkien's status as a subject worthy of academic engagement, object of serious literary-critical study, and focus of literary, critical and cultural worth have been so effectively established and defended that their perpetual regurgitation as points of contention by some merely proves the pointlessness of engaging in the debate. Post-Shippey, they suggested, those hostile critics who persisted in scoring what Drout later described as "a quick hit on the text" without taking the time to acquire "a good close reading, much less the laborious acquisition of background knowledge, both in Tolkien's works themselves and in his many sources" (and accompanying critical canon) could either be referred to *The Road to Middle-earth* and *Author of the Century* or, essentially, ignored.[74] By feeding a compulsion to "point out the same fallacies by the same foolish critics and make the same points [as Shippey] in refuting them", they argued, Tolkien criticism was duplicating extant material and becoming entrenched in unproductive positions.[75]

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[73] Drout and Wynne 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 116. Drout and Wynne's collation and analysis of Tolkien criticism to that point builds on a similar exercise undertaken by Jane Chance-Nitzsche and David D. Day (See Jane Chance-Nitzsche and David D. Day, 'Medievalism in Tolkien: Two Decades of Criticism in Review', *Studies in Medievalism* 3 (1991), 375–387).

[74] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism', (2005), p. 24. Drout has consistently advocated moving on from this facet of Tolkien criticism. He suggests that while there is "great and justified enjoyment" for the Tolkien scholar in exposing and ridiculing the "ill-informed and even logically contradictory claims about Tolkien's work" and in demonstrating "the errors, logical fallacies, bad predictions and simple stupidity in the works of those critics who have most vocally and intemperately attacked Tolkien" it does not advance the author's cause (see Michael D.C. Drout, 'Tolkien's Prose Style and its Literary and Rhetorical Effects', *Tolkien Studies Journal*, Vol.1 (2004), 137–163 (p.137) and Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 16 respectively). As Drout noted with Wynne, "yes, it is fun to point out how illogical Wilson and Muir were in their attacks on Tolkien, but it is probably not worth the effort" (see Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 116). A variation of this argument was advanced by Daniel Timmons (See Daniel Patrick Timmons, 'Tolkien Dissertations and Theses in English', in *The Tolkien Collector*, Issue 16, ed. by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond (1996), pp. 236–237).

[75] Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 116.

To a degree, this tendency explains why Shippey's perspectives on Tolkien and England have been recycled by other critics in the way that illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. As Drout and Wynne have argued, there is a historical propensity for certain areas of Tolkien criticism to reduplicate and thus reinforce extant critical ideas. This is not to suggest that Shippey's ideas and approach represent the only scholarly approach to Tolkien, or that they have been taken up without thought. However, given that Shippey's work and critical methodology undoubtedly represent an influential strand of the field, and given his methodology relies on engaging with the author and his work as a representative entity, and given the importance accorded to Tolkien's own views on his work, it is possible to see how such duplications might recur within these contexts. Therefore the following section will examine Shippey's critical methodology in more detail, and outline how its duplication can lead to critical distortions.

Source-Study Methodology and its Impact

Shippey's source-focused philological methodology relies on the identification of the possible and probable anterior foundations of Tolkien's work. The roots of these primarily archaic extractions were deduced through a painstaking linguistic comparison of homological contiguities and incidences of similarities of nomenclature. Filtered through the probability of Tolkien's professional and personal access to and knowledge of these sources, and admissions of their importance in Tolkien's academic work and personal correspondence, they were presented on balance as the conclusions of an informed academic opinion.[76] But

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[76] Drout defines this source-study method, characterized by a close linking of the author, his work, and anterior sources, as "Tolkien Studies", suggesting that it is distinct from "Middle-earth Studies" (analysis of Tolkien's invented worlds, histories, languages, and literatures) (see Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), pp. 15–16).

Shippey's approaches (and perhaps the challenge of his assertion that both academically and creatively Tolkien possessed a mind of "unmatchable subtlety") have proved beguiling for other critics.[77] Those who adopt Shippey's approach show a marked propensity to adopt his tendency of intimating exactly what it was that Tolkien was trying to do. This is the danger in Shippey's methodology: once past the indisputable fact that the Dwarves of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* share names as individuals and characteristics as a race with the Dwarves of the Eddic poem *Voluspá*, (circa 1220 – 1270), for instance, there comes a tendency to pronounce on Tolkien's creative and imaginative processes that can lead back to a discussion of Tolkien's intent.[78] It is an intrinsic part of Shippey's approach, and both *The Road to Middle-earth* and *Author of the Century* frequently offer suggestions regarding what Tolkien was personally trying to accomplish: "This [makes] it easier to say what Tolkien was doing in *The Hobbit*. Like Walter Scott or William Morris before him, he felt the perilous charm of the North, recovered from bits and scraps [and] he wanted to tell a story about it."[79]

Shippey's work, informed by a "strong sense of obligation and professional piety", however, is rooted in the same philological traditions as Tolkien's.[80] It also represents a bridge to an older tradition of literary-criticism where the opinions of

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[77] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 6. Rosebury suggests that this is a "hyperbolic" claim, but one that Shippey's work "comes surprisingly close to vindicating" (See Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 7).

[78] See Shippey's discussion of the literary antecedents of Tolkien's dwarves (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 69–74).

[79] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 80.

[80] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. xvii–xxi. Shippey's professional biography reiterates the correspondences between Tolkien's personal and professional trajectory and his own:

> There were both personal and professional reasons for this concentration on Tolkien. Purely by accident, I followed in Tolkien's footsteps in several respects: as a schoolboy (we both went to King Edward's School, Birmingham), as rugby player (we both played for Old Edwardians), as a teacher at Oxford (I taught Old English for seven years at St. John's College, just overlapping with Tolkien's last years of retirement).

(See http://www.slu.edu/x23819.xml [accessed 19/05/2014]).

authors could perhaps colour critical readings of texts. The continuing impulse to attempt to divine Tolkien's imaginative workings and then pronounce on his personal intent is thus understandable in one sense.[81] Yet in the enduring influence of Shippey and his method within Tolkien Studies a tendency towards critical recycling and reduplication and the reluctance by some to undertake the rigour of its most successful practitioner are demonstrable. For example, in 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy' (2004) Dale J. Nelson's acknowledges that "Tolkien's letters and other sources for his life do not say much about his recreational reading." However, that does not stop Nelson "suspecting that Tolkien was indebted to Blackwood and Dunsany."[82] He cites Tolkien's own passing suggestion that Mount Doom had an echo in Blackwood and the claim in Jared Lobdell's *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (1981) that 'The Willows' (1907) and 'The Glamour of the Snow' (1912) had an impact on *The Lord of the Rings*.[83] If Lobdell's claim that these stories, published in collections in 1907 and 1912 respectively, had an impact on Tolkien's composition of *The Lord of the Rings* over thirty years later, Nelson proposes, then Blackwood's 'The Wendigo' (1910) must have also. These fragile connections are central to Nelson's contention that in Blackwood's story the origin of Tolkien's Nazgûl can be found. In 'The Wendigo', Nelson argues, "a great outer horror" appears unheralded out of the skies of the Canadian wilderness to strike fear and terror into the hearts of its victims in a manner "much akin to Tolkien's soaring,

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[81] Shippey's comments regarding philologists unfortunate enough to follow Jacob Grimm can perhaps be applied to those who have followed him into the source-study of Tolkien. There is "little field left to harvest" (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 27). See also Eaglestone's and Drout and Wynne's notes about the limitations of the philological method when analysing Tolkien (See Eaglestone 'Introduction' (2005), pp. 1– 3 and Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 127 respectively).
[82] Dale J. Nelson, 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy', *Tolkien Studies*, Vol. 1 (2004), 177–181 (p. 180).
[83] See Jared Lobdell, *England and Always: Tolkien's World of the Rings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 86–88.

mounted Nazgûl."[84] The article suggests that the causal connection is evident:

both creatures materialize out of the skies, creating horror and panic in their

victims, both smell, both are associated with sniffing, both hunt their prey across

vast geographical distances (the Wendigo across Canada, the Nazgûl across

Middle-earth), both are described as ancient, primeval creatures, and both have a

strange effect on their victims. Nelson concludes that "whether Tolkien was

consciously influenced by Blackwood's story or not, it seems reasonable to

surmise that he had read it and that it affected his conception of the Ringwraiths

and their aerial mounts."[85]

However, closer reading suggests that Nelson's analysis and conclusions

are problematic. While it is true that Tolkien acknowledged the suggestion that

Mount Doom might have an analogue in Blackwood, he could not remember

exactly what these analogues may be or which story contained them.[86] Secondly,

even if this were not the case, a relationship between the Wendigo and the Nazgûl

is not evidently present. As Drout and Wynne argue, similarity does not equal

descent and echoes are not sources.[87] In piling up superficial likenesses across

little more than three brief pages of analysis, most of which is taken up with

quotations from the source texts, Nelson's comparative readings of the two texts

fail to clinch the point that the two creations possess a homological connection –

the founding principle of Shippey's analytical approach.[88] For example, Nelson

conflates and renders interchangeable Ringwraiths and their mounts – two very

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[84] Nelson, 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy' (2004), p. 177.
[85] Nelson, 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy' (2004), p. 179.
[86] See Douglas A. Anderson, *The Annotated Hobbit: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), p. 106.
[87] Drout and Wynne, '*Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 107.
[88] The fourth page of Nelson's article is given over to a brief reading of Tolkien's debt to Dunsany (See Nelson, 'Possible Echoes of Blackwood and Dunsany in Tolkien's Fantasy' (2004), p.181).

distinct entities in Tolkien's canon.[89] For example, in the early part of the text the

Nine pursue the hobbits from the Shire to Rivendell mounted on horses "born and

bred to the service of the Dark Lord" rather than aerially: "The Riders seemed to sit

on their great steeds like threatening statues on a hill, dark and solid, while all the

woods and land about them receded as if into a mist."[90] It is only after the horses

are drowned in the 'Flight to the Ford' chapter that the Ringwraiths are remounted

on Fellbeasts, which can fly. Sighted by Frodo, Sam, and Gollum as they cross the

Dead Marshes, it is one of these creatures that the Witch-King of Angmar rides

during the Battle of the Pelennor Fields:

> A black shadow loosed from Mordor; a vast shape winged and ominous. It
> scudded across the moon, and with a deadly cry went away westward.[91]

> The great shadow descended like a falling cloud. And behold! it was a
> winged creature: if a bird, then greater than all other birds, and it was
> naked, and neither quill nor feather did it bear, and its pinions were as webs
> of hide between horned fingers, and it stank. A creature of an older world
> maybe it was [...] It gave a croaking cry.
> Upon it sat a shape, black-mantled, huge and threatening. A crown of steel
> he bore, but between rim and robe there was naught to see, save only a
> deadly gleam of eyes: the Lord of the Nazgûl.[92]

Moreover, in conflating both entities Nelson's comparative examples are also not

particularly skilfully handled, making simple errors that undermine the argument.

The petrifying cry that is heard by Frodo, Sam, and Gollum is that of the Fellbeast

rather than the Nazgûl that is riding it. It is the Fellbeast's cry, heard on the walls of

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[89] For the possible cultural and linguistic origins of Nazgûl, particularly the
'wreath/wrath/wroth/wraith' crux see Shippey *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 166–169, for
their role in cross-connecting the narrative as it fragments see Shippey *The Road to Middle-earth*
(2005), pp.184–185, and for their place in the Boethian underpinnings of Tolkien's work see
Shippey *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 242–244, 302n.
[90] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 238, 229.
[91] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 654–655.
[92] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 873.

Minas Tirith by Pippin and Beregond, that Nelson compares to the cry of Défago, the snatched guide, rather than the Wendigo itself, which appears soundless in the passage cited, for example.[93] Likewise, the 'sniffing' comparison ignores the fact that while the Ringwraiths attempt to sniff out their prey, in 'The Wendigo' it is Défago, one of the prey, who is attempting to sniff out the monster.[94]

As indicated, however, Nelson's analysis fails to take into account the important epistemological difference between analogy – unconnected similarities arising independently in two separate places – and homology – similarities that spring from a shared linguistic, literary, or cultural lineage.[95] It is a distinction that is the difference between the qualified authority of Shippey's central argument – that the contentious passages in archaic northern literatures about which philologists could not agree catalysed Tolkien's imagination – and superficial similarities being mobilised to pronounce definitively on the representations of Tolkien's texts and the intent of their author.

Obertino's suggestions that Tolkien was a "Little Englander" and that the Shire represented a "perfect home county" can be assessed in the same way. 'Barbarians and Imperialism in Tacitus and Tolkien's Trilogy' (2006) is a more sustained analysis than Nelson's, but similarly relies on an assemblage of analogical correspondences and inferences of authorial intent to advance its argument. For example, alongside the points already noted, Obertino also suggests that Tolkien must have been influenced by classical Roman literature because of "the Victorian and Edwardian fascination with the Roman Empire" and

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[93] See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 840 and Algeron Blackwood, *Best Ghost Stories of Algeron Blackwood* (New York: Dover, 1973), p. 186.
[94] See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 88 and Blackwood, *Best Ghost Stories of Algeron Blackwood* (1973), p. 171.
[95] For more on homology and nomenclature see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 74–78. See also Tolkien on the relationship between nomenclature and invention (Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006) pp. 297, 374–375, 379–387).

because "he lived at a time in which many British writers viewed their empire in terms of the Roman Empire".[96] Ultimately, the inference is drawn to enable Obertino's proposal that Tacitus's representation of imperialism, the Germanic tribes, and Germanicus's expedition into the Upper Rhine in search of Varus's lost legions in *Annals of Imperial Rome* (circa 116 AD) represents source material for *The Lord of the Rings* in general, and Sauron's "aggressive expansion" and the journey of Frodo's company through Middle-earth in particular.[97] Obertino's reduction of the late-Victorian early-Edwardian imperial complex as a footnote to Rome aside, Tolkien was neither an admirer of British imperialism nor an unthinking assimilator of its values. In correspondence with his son, Christopher, during the Second World War, he noted:

> 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.[98]

Of its Classical iteration in the Roman Empire, Tolkien wrote: "I should have hated the Roman Empire in its day (as I do)". Tolkien's admission that he would have remained "a patriotic Roman citizen" while preferring "a free Gaul" seem to present a more balanced perspective on his view of imperialism, especially when read alongside his statements on England and Englishness in general: it is a statement that acknowledges its reality while romantically yearning for what it replaced.[99] Similarly, Tolkien's "love" of England did not extend to its empire: "I love England",

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[96] James Obertino, 'Barbarians and Imperialism' (2006), p. 1.
[97] Obertino, 'Barbarians and Imperialism' (2006), p. 1.
[98] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 115.
[99] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 89.

he noted, "not Great Britain and certainly not the British Commonwealth."[100] This does not mean that Tolkien was a 'Little Englander' in the sense that he is unconcerned about the world beyond his doorstep, as Obertino proposes, however. The author recognizes the homogenising impact contemporary imperial action has had, and decries its effect on the diversity of representative cultures, commenting:

> The bigger things get the smaller and duller or flatter the globe gets. It is all getting to be one blasted little provincial suburb [...] Col. Knox says 1/8 of the world's population speaks 'English', and that it is the biggest language group. If true, damn shame I say.[101]

While Obertino notes that Tolkien studied Latin at King Edward's school, his analysis minimises that Tolkien was also introduced to Anglo-Saxon, German and Gothic at the same time.[102] It is, in the work of Shippey and the other critics cited in this thesis, critically accepted that the study of ancient northern languages inspired Tolkien and his work far more than Latin. On discovering them, Tolkien noted, something "stirred in me, half wakened from sleep. There was something very remote and strange and beautiful behind those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond ancient English."[103] It is true that Tolkien won a Classics scholarship to Oxford, as Obertino suggests.[104] Yet it is also a matter of record that the

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[100] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 65.

[101] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 65.

[102] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006) p. 376. Carpenter maps Tolkien's trajectory from Classics scholar to philologist (see Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 72–73, 78–80, and 90). So too does Garth (see Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), pp. 29–30, 33–35, and 42–44).

[103] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Notion Club Papers', in *Sauron Defeated: The End of the Third Age (The History of The Lord of the Rings: Part Four)*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 236.

[104] Obertino's stress on the importance of Latin to Tolkien's literary development to make a critical point is similar to Dimitra Fimi's claims for the influence of Wales and the Welsh language on the author. In *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History* (2008) Fimi argues that Tolkien adapted Welsh grammar and phonology to create the languages of some of his fictional peoples and drew on Welsh toponymy for his place names (see Dimitra Fimi, *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History*

scholarship ultimately became simply a route into the University and that Tolkien

transferred to an English course that allowed him to avoid Latin and Greek and

focus on the subjects and period that most interested him: languages and

literatures formed between the end of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the

fifteenth century, including Anglo-Saxon, Gothic, Old Norse, Old English, Medieval

Welsh and Celtic.[105]

Thus while Tolkien's location in the late-imperial period is not in doubt, his

alignment to British imperial culture is far more nuanced than Obertino's

description of him as a "Little Englander" who viewed the British empire "in terms

of the Roman Empire" suggests. Far from being an unthinking assimilator

Edwardian classicism, as Obertino intimates, if Tolkien's linguistic and cultural

engagements, and his cultural debts, are anything they are deliberate and aware.

Nor did Tolkien parrot Victorian or Edwardian verities, as Obertino infers:

> Tolkien lived long past the high Victorian days of his childhood and
> Edwardian afternoon that preceded the Great War; the British Empire
> continued to expand geographically in the First decades of Tolkien's life,
> but even before the Great War many knew that imperialism, even British
> Imperialism, had serious flaws. Both Tacitus and Tolkien would see an
> empire grown in size even as it seemed to have lost its soul.[106]

(London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). While Carpenter acknowledges the
formative influence of Welsh on Tolkien's childhood imagination and Shippey notes that there are
Welsh elements to Tolkien's invented languages and cartographies, these are generally held to be
part of the representative complex of Tolkien's work rather than its dominant element. Moreover, as
chapter two discusses in more detail, place names are to be recognized symbolically rather than
analogously as Fimi does in suggesting that Buckland Hall and the Brandywine Bridge may be the
Buckland Hall and Llangynidr Bridge of the Usk Valley (See Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), pp. 33–
34 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 114–118).

[105] Carpenter continually returns to the formative and enduring later personal and professional
influence of these languages (For example, see Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), pp. 43–44, 54–55,
57, 58, 73, 82–83, 89–93, 81–82, 86, 99–100, 160, 177, 178–184, and 285). Garth explores their
burgeoning influence during Tolkien's time as an undergraduate at Oxford (See Garth, *Tolkien and
the Great War* (2003), pp. 25–36. Contrary to Obertino's suggestion Garth notes that "against the
Classicist ethos drummed into King Edward's schoolboys he [Tolkien] played the outsider with
verve" (see Garth, *Tolkien's and the Great War* (2003), p. 16).

[106] Obertino, 'Barbarians and Imperialism' (2006), p. 5.

As Garth notes, while in "embracing the culture of the ancient European North,

Tolkien turned his back enthusiastically on the Classics that had nurtured his

generation at school," Garth's addendum that "they had become romantically

entangled with Victorian triumphalism" is taken from another commentator.[107]

There is no extant evidence that Tolkien believed that British imperialism had

"serious flaws" or that it had "lost its soul" as Obertino suggests.[108] Attributing

unsubstantiated cultural beliefs to the author, then, Obertino suggests a near-

literal paralleling of the Shire with England. As the critical discussions above

indicate, this is not unprecedented. But proposing that the Shire's lack of factories,

mines, and telegraphs represents a comment on contemporary England is

problematic given that the linguistic imperatives underpinning Tolkien's creative

methodology represent a much-covered critical area. I discuss this in more detail

in chapter two, but to briefly introduce its ideas here, that the Shire is not criss-

crossed with telegraph poles or railway lines, or pitted with factories and mines is

for the same reasons that the Latin derivative 'goblin', used in *The Hobbit*, was

dropped from *The Lord of the Rings*, that Gandalf's request for "cold chicken and

tomatoes" was revised to become a request for "cold chicken and pickles", and

why Gaffer Gamgee and Samwise reduce the word 'potato' in *The Lord of the*

Rings to a more native sounding 'taters': the overt presence of the primary world

from which the secondary world narratives are deliberately removed would draw

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[107] Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) p. 24 (See Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), p. 42).
[108] Tolkien appears to rarely have advanced overt political views. When he did so, they did not expressly engage with the issue of British imperialism, except perhaps by inference. For example, his comments on the state and the role of Government focused on their "inefficiency" as being a consequence of their man-made nature rather than their ideological underpinnings. Similarly, his note on the nature of democracy drew a comparison between the actual politics of ancient Greece and the way the word was being deployed by contemporary politicians (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 63–64, 107).

attention to the distance between them.[109] Founded on their sense of linguistic detail, an attempt to integrate the modern elements Obertino suggests are conspicuous by their absence would completely deny the suspending capacity of the work. Their absence, then, is not a commentary, but an aesthetic choice. To suggest otherwise, while shaping known authorial prejudices into definitive statements on Tolkien's perception of other aspects of British culture, is problematic.

The reasoning behind this extended discussion of Obertino's article in this way is to indicate, to paraphrase Tolkien, that in following Shippey's lead the desire to divine Tolkien's intentions has seen some critics pronouncing on the contents of the soup rather than focusing on the soup itself.[110] Nelson and Obertino are not isolated examples of this tendency. For example, as Drout and Wynne note, in 'Persian Influences on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*' (1985), Elizabeth M. Allen argues that because both Persian mythology and Tolkien's Middle-earth equate good and evil with light and dark signifiers, Tolkien's inspiration was Persian in origin.[111] Similarly, K.C. Fraser's 'Whose Ring is it

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[109] Shippey argues that Tolkien's rejection of some words was on the grounds of their overt modernity (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 65, 77–80). Shippey's analysis acknowledges Jessica Kemball-Cook's discussion of the same theme (see Jessica Kemball-Cook, *Amon Hen: the Bulletin of the Tolkien Society*, 23 (December, 1976), p. 11. The changes are mapped by Hammond and Anderson (see Hammond and Anderson, *Bibliography*, pp. 29–33).
[110] In his Andrew Lang Lecture 'On Fairy Stories' (1938) Tolkien suggested that there were critics who were interested in the soup and critics who were interested in the ingredients, noting:

> In Dasent's words I would say, 'We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled.' […] By 'the soup' I mean the story as it is served up by its author or teller, and by the 'bones' its sources or material – even when (by rare luck) these can be with certainty discovered. But I do not, of course, forbid criticism of the soup as soup.

(J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964) (second edition 1988), pp. 9–74 (p. 22–23). All citations taken from the later edition unless otherwise indicated.
[111] See Elizabeth M. Allen 'Persian Influences in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*', in *The Transcendent Adventure: Studies of Religion in Science Fiction/Fantasy*, ed. by Robert Reilly (Westport: Connecticut: Greenwood, 1985), pp. 189–206 and Drout and Wynne, 'Drout and Wynne, '*Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 107.

Anyway?' (1991) proposed that Tolkien's source for *The Lord of the Rings* was

Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* because both are "long epic[s], dealing with

heroes, dwarves, a dragon and a broken sword."[112] Patrick Curry's *Defending*

Middle-earth (1999) argued that Tolkien's representation of the environment in *The*

Lord of the Rings promoted a post-modern 'green' ideological consciousness.

Similarly, James Obertino's 'Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*' (2005) suggests that

"the place of Gandalf's death – Moria" is drawn from "Moriah in Genesis 22:2, the

land where Jaweh commands Abraham to take Isaac to sacrifice him."[113] Robert

Giddings and Elizabeth Holland argue that the old Forest is descended from the

Wild Wood in *The Wind in the Willows* on the grounds that the characters get lost

in both of them, that Lorna Doone should be connected to the *Akallabeth,* the

chronicle of Númenor because Lorna suggests 'lorn', which means lost and

Númenor is a lost land, Dun means west in Elvish, and suggest Doone and both

Saruman and Counsellor Doone have similarly remarkable hairstyles.[114]

Such readings indicate that the texts have proved fertile for many critics. In

one sense, that these interpretations stretch or veer from the sources Tolkien

might recognize in provocative ways offers a challenge to the author-work complex

that underpins the source-study method even as they deploy it. Tolkien would not

accept such interpretations, and as the footnote about other interpretations of the

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[112] See K.C. Fraser, 'Whose Ring is it Anyway?', *Mallorn*, 25 (1998), 12-14 (p.12) and Drout and Wynne, '*Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 106. In this debate, Tolkien criticism has generally fallen back on the rebuttal of the Wagner comparison offered by Tolkien in his lifetime to Dr. Ake Ohlmark: "Both rings were round, and there the resemblance ceases" (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 304–307).
[113] James Obertino, 'Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*', *Explicator*, 54, 4 (2005), 34–45 (p. 44) Obertino promotes a similar argument in 'Moria and Hades: Underworld Journeys in Tolkien and Virgil', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 30 (1993), 153-169). As Drout and Wynne point out Gandalf's death is not self-sacrificial in the transcendent Christian sense Obertino implies but merely a "terribly unlucky accident." The wizard only falls "because the last swing of the Balrog's whip catches his knees" (See Drout and Wynne, '*Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 128). Tolkien also rejected the Moria/Moriah similarity (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 383.
[114] See R. Giddings and E. Holland, *The Shores of Middle-earth* (London: Junction Books, 1981), pp. 102–104, 106.

Ring indicates did not in his lifetime. But just as the examples of Nelson and Obertino illustrate the dangers inherent in selectively or uncritically choosing supporting evidence solely from Tolkien's correspondence or archive materials, in offering alternative critical perspectives to his views the above readings also indicate that Tolkien's own opinion should only be one of many regarding his work. Equally, what these examples also indicate is that at a high enough level of arbitrariness comparative similarities can be generated between most things. Crucially, I am not suggesting that this is the case in Shippey's work, or in every critical work that follows his approach. Nevertheless, this discussion and these examples do highlight that there is a critically acknowledged tendency within Tolkien criticism to seek the meaning of Tolkien's work outside the texts themselves, either in the author's intent, or in things that may or may not have inspired or informed his work. Taken as a whole these factors have clearly contributed to the recycling of critical perspectives on the relationship between Tolkien's work, England, and Englishness that echo Shippey's. Given that this thesis draws on and acknowledges many of the same sources and engages with the critical perspectives that they have produced in discussing these themes, but does not come to the same conclusions, the question of how this thesis will interpret the noted author-work complex that Tolkien and Tolkien Studies represents will be discussed in the next section in more detail.

Discussing 'Professor Tolkien'

One of the problems with adopting a source-based, philologically informed methodology can be shown by summarising Eaglestone's assessment of Flieger's contributions to Tolkien criticism. Revised and republished following the increased

academic focus on the author that followed the success of Peter Jackson's film adaptations (2001 – 2003), *Splintered Light: Logos and Language* and *A Question of Time: Tolkien's Road to Faerie* (1997, 2005) have been described by Drout and Wynne as the second and third best books of extant Tolkien criticism after Shippey's.[115] Flieger's analyses directly complement Shippey's. Where Shippey explicates the way Tolkien worked, Flieger proposes a theory of what Tolkien was working to accomplish. Flieger linked Tolkien's fascination with language to his fellow-inkling Owen Barfield's belief that language was constantly fragmenting as the evolution of humanity towards a greater understanding of their environment created a cultural need for greater specialisation and precision.[116] She then argues that Tolkien had taken this cultural splintering to be analogous to the fragmentation of the word that is God described in the Book of John.[117] In Flieger's analysis, the

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[115] See Drout and Wynne 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 119.

[116] Any idea of a 'school' of Oxford Christian writers should be treated warily. First, as Carpenter's *The Inklings* shows, while of the group Tolkien was temperamentally and intellectually something of a loner within it, and he possessed a marked ambivalence towards some of its members (notably Lewis). Secondly, Tolkien pursued the ethical, religious and moral underpinnings of his work in much more idiosyncratic and single-minded way than Lewis. As a general measure, in the eighteen years it took Tolkien to complete *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis published twenty-five books (See Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends* (London: Harper Collins, 1978) (reprinted Houghton Mifflin, 1979, 1981), A.N. Wilson, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (rev. edn) (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 294, Robert Boenig, 'Critical and Fictional Pairing in C. S. Lewis,' in *The Taste of the Pineapple: Essays on C. S. Lewis as Reader, Critic, and Imaginative Writer,* ed. by Bruce L. Edwards (Bowling Green, OH: Popular, 1988), pp. 138–148, and Anna Vaninskaya, 'Modernity: Tolkien and His Contemporaries', in *A Companion to J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Stuart Lee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwells, 2014), pp. 350–366 respectively).

[117] The impact of Tolkien's religious beliefs on his work is not the main focus of this thesis. However, alongside the work already cited on this subject, Tolkien's Roman Catholicism is discussed in this context in Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 64, 150, 159, 230, 250, and 313, Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 52, 83–84, 95–96, 109, 127, 191, 337–339, 354, and 393–395, Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light* (2002), and Nils Ivar Agøy, 'Quid Hinieldus cum Christo? New Perspectives on Tolkien's Theological Dilemma and His Sub-Creation Theory,' in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, Incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxenmoot 1992 *Mythlore/Mallorn*, 21; 33:2 (80), ed. by Patricia Reynolds and Glen H. GoodKnight (Milton Keynes: The Tolkien Society, 1995), pp. 31–38. There are further discussions of this subject in C. M. Adderley, 'Meeting Morgan le Fay: J. R. R. Tolkien's Theory of Subcreation and the Secondary World of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Mythlore* 22 (2000), pp. 48–58, Colin Duriez, 'Sub-creation and Tolkien's Theology of Story', in *Scholarship and Fantasy: Proceedings of the Tolkien Phenomenon, May 1992, Turku, Finland.* ed. by K.J. Battarbee (Anglicana Turkuensia 12, Turku: University of Turku, 1993), pp. 133–150, and Gunnar Urang, 'Tolkien's Fantasy: The

devoutly Roman Catholic Tolkien believed that words and light were agents of phenomenological perception, and that his invention of new words and languages were part of the work of sub-creation God wants humans to accomplish:

> In acting as a prism and thus refracting light and word, 'Man, Sub-creator' is fulfilling God's purpose by making a fantasy world which will of necessity reflect the phenomena of our world. Sub-creation is not idle or random imitation of God: it is part of His intent.[118]

While Eaglestone acknowledges that Flieger's work offers "a particular and unified view of what Tolkien aimed to achieve" he argues that it falls prey to the urge to link Tolkien's work to a wider purpose outside of the texts: "If, as these sort of books argue, all the stories we tell betray mythic, or unconscious, or divine structures, then these will be manifest in all stories or indeed other texts" – not just a representative complex of Tolkien's works and his personal beliefs.[119]

This thesis endorses the idea that Tolkien's invention and construction of languages should not be decoded in psycho-biographical terms, or his work interpreted as a series of linguistic hymns to the divine. Without denying the importance or consequence of Flieger's work, Eaglestone's assessment of its approach offers further insight into how the perspectives on Tolkien, England, and Englishness may have arisen and been perpetuated. Much of the critically rehabilitative work carried out on Tolkien was a reaction to established criticism's treatment of the author. But, as Drout notes, because of their historically mutual antagonistic relationship, the strain of Tolkien criticism that Shippey represents

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Phenomenology of Hope', in *Shadows of Imagination: The Fantasies of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams*, ed. by Mark R. Hillegas and Harry T. Moore (Crosscurrents Modern Critiques, Carbondale; London: Southern Illinois University Press, Feffer and Simons; 1969), pp. 97-110.
[118] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, (2002) p. 47.
[119] Eaglestone, 'Further Reading' (2005), p. 206.

has "been signally uninterested in mainstream literary theory and criticism."[120] On both sides this antipathy has resulted in the projection on Tolkien's work "of meanings which it does not contain: sometimes reductive, tendentious, or historically impossible meanings".[121] If the critical reception of Tolkien's work was hostile in some quarters its integration into the wider contexts of literary studies has also been hamstrung because of its supporters' tendency to read it as a mythopoetic journey, a representation of archetypal processes, or a product of Tolkien's mythical, religious or psychological outlook – readings that offer an interpretation of the author's intent, rather than an analysis or interpretation of the text itself. In doing so, the tendency to use Tolkien's own opinions to endorse or consolidate these perspectives has become deeply embedded. As Drout and Wynne's discussions on this subject have indicated, this has been compounded by the assumption within some areas of Tolkien criticism that "that once a source is identified, the meaning of Tolkien's text has been discovered."[122] As they add, "finding a source merely defers the problem of interpretation: it cannot eliminate

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[120] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 16. Tolkien's relationship to literary theory is a contended one. In *Defending Middle-earth*, Patrick Curry argued that "he had too much respect for Tolkien's work […] to sacrifice it on the altar of literary theory", while Shippey dismissed "literary theorists with their différances and ratures", suggesting that they were no different to war criminals with "their body bags" who destroy and decimate (see Curry, *Defending Middle-earth* (1998), p. 18 and Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), p. 126). However, citing both examples in arguing that Tolkien should be opened up to the mainstream sweep of literary theories that have emerged since the author's rehabilitation, Eaglestone notes that such statements ignore that they themselves have their own "'theories' of how literature in general and Tolkien in particular work":

> By attacking other theories as 'theory' in general, these and many other writers cover up their own unavoidable presuppositions in reading. And indeed, this is one of the things that 'theory' a poor word, binding together a huge range of different ideas and discourses – can be seen: simply, the often-unacknowledged presuppositions that one takes into reading.

In noting that Curry's *Defending Middle-earth* relies on post-modernism and green theory to posit its contention that Tolkien be considered a proto-postmodern environmentalist while Shippey's philological methodology utilises linguistics to advance its analysis, Eaglestone's point is that all literary analysis proposes or possesses a theory of how literature works (see Eaglestone, 'Introduction' (2005), pp. 1–2).
[121] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 6.
[122] Drout and Wynne 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 107.

it."[123] This highlights a contemporary culture-gap between Tolkien Studies (as defined by Drout) and current critical discussions every bit as significant as the one that Shippey established existed between Tolkien and his earlier critics.

The former happened because at the time of Shippey's early statements, the origins of Tolkien's aesthetic had not been fully traced. As a result, his work's chronology of publication was persistently being confused with its actual framework of composition. Acknowledged by Shippey as a problem in the revised edition of *The Road to Middle-earth*, this confusion has been cleared following the publication of *The History of Middle-earth*.[124] *The History of Middle-earth*'s inclusion of the multiple iterations of *The Silmarillion* (1977), unpublished and incomplete works, and linguistic materials provide the material from which Tolkien drew in composing texts like *The Lord of the Rings*, allowing the genesis and evolution of his ideas to be traced in context. Augmenting this, Tolkien's bibliography and the overlapping composition of his texts have also since been clearly mapped by Wayne G. Hammond's and Douglas A. Anderson's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1993).[125] Ironically, however, the sense of being forever out of step has also been used to burnish the Tolkien author-work complex. In his biography of the author, Carpenter uses Tolkien's suburban ordinariness to provide an irreconcilable contrast with his fantastical vision as a writer:

> [Tolkien's] eyes fix upon some distant object […] in all externals he resembles the archetypal Oxford don, at times even the stage *caricature* of a don. But that is exactly what he is not. It is rather as if some strange spirit has taken the guise of an elderly professor. The body may be pacing this

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[123] Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 107.
[124] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. xix–xx.
[125] See Hammond, Anderson, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1993).

shabby little suburban room, but the mind is far away, roaming the plains and mountains of Middle-earth.[126]

On both sides of the critical divide, this kind of mythologizing precluded dispassionate analysis of Tolkien's literary concerns, output and position. Assertions such as Carpenter's that "though Tolkien lived in the twentieth century he could scarcely be called a modern writer"[127] effectively severed Tolkien from the twentieth century as neatly as his critics, enabling him to be categorised as a 'one-off', an author who in Shippey's first but later much revised assessment possessed "no literary context."[128] The only difference between the two camps was that Tolkien's supporters presented his apparent disengagement from the twentieth century as a badge of honour; his detractors as a mark of lack and shame.

The detachment of Tolkien from his early, intellectually formative years created critical distortions that were, and continue to be, compounded by his cultural positioning and critical treatment. Because of the relative lateness of his commercial success, in Tolkien's own lifetime most readers encountering his work came to associate the pre-modern world of Middle-earth with the photographs of the elderly Oxbridge professor on the flyleaf. Rosebury describes this opposition between the popular perception of Tolkien and the reality by analogising it to the relationship between the boy-narrator and his favourite novelist Bergotte in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927). Because of the cadences and content of Bergotte's work, Proust's boy-narrator imagines him to be a frail, melancholy, snowy-haired old man and is taken aback when Bergotte turns out to

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[126] Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 17.
[127] Carpenter, *The Inklings* (1981), p. 157.
[128] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (1982), p. xix.

be a "youngish black-haired garrulous man with a nose like a snail."[129] Forever associated with the elderly Oxbridge academic he was when he first came to public acclaim, Tolkien was not seen as the young man growing to personal and artistic maturity in the first half of the twentieth century until the major recuperative efforts of the critics already cited.

Using Tolkien's 'mythology for England' correspondence as examples, the next section will further discuss the critical use of Tolkien's extra-literary corpus. Beginning by indicating how this thesis will utilise these resources and going on to examine the historical critical interpretations of the 'mythology for England' complex in this context, it will propose how these statements can be productively aligned with my discussions of the treatment of England and Englishness in Tolkien's texts.

A 'Mythology for England'?

As discussed above, in engaging with the subject of Tolkien and England, its critical contexts and attendant readings this thesis must by necessity also engage with many of the same sources and materials used by the critics noted. However, to avoid the issues highlighted above, this thesis will place Tolkien's critical statements, such as on the nature of England, for example, in relation to other theoretical positions on the subject. Rather than mobilising them uncritically, this thesis, then, will counter the critical tendency to use Tolkien's statements as definitive endorsements of a critical position or as last words upon the texts by instead testing and examining them against literary-critical contexts pertinent to its argument. Any critical weight afforded to Tolkien's statements will be via their

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[129] Marcel Proust, *Within A Budding Grove, Remembrance Of Things Past*, trans. T. Kilmartin and C.K. Scott Moncrieff (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 589–591. See also Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 135.

contextualisation and discussion in relation to other critical perspectives. For example, in this section, I will examine Tolkien's 'mythology for England' correspondence, evaluating how it has been interpreted, and how it may be contextualised against more theoretically considered discussions of the nature of England and Englishness in the late-imperial period. Similarly, chapter two, I will examine Tolkien's comments on the Norman Conquest, and on the nature of fantasy literature via alternative critical readings of the same subjects, testing Tolkien's conclusions, and offering alternative interpretations. In doing so, I will also acknowledge the context of the material. This means that in the case of *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection* (1981, 2006), valuable source though they are, it must be recognized that they were written to friends, family, professional colleagues, critics and casual admirers alike. Thus their opinions must be viewed as being mediated by courtesy and reticence, the desire for personal privacy, professional pedantry, exasperation, academic insight and circumspect qualification expressed in a multitude of different voices rather than as definitive statements. As Shippey belatedly and ruefully noted, his failure to recognize this led to critical distortions in his work:

> What I should have realised – perhaps did half-realise, for I speak the dialect myself – was that this letter was written in the specialised politeness-language of Old Western Man, in which doubt and correction are in direct proportion to the obliquity of expression. The Professor's letter had invisible italics in it, which I now supply: "I am in agreement with *nearly* all that you say, and I only regret that I have not the time to talk more about your paper; especially about design as it appears *or may be found* in a large *finished* work, and the *actual* events and experiences as seen or felt by the waking mind *in the course of actual composition*." [Shippey's emphasis][130]

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[130] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. xxi.

If the italics are included, then what Shippey had been assumed to Tolkien's endorsement of his work becomes something far more qualified and hesitant. It is perhaps the failure to acknowledge this that has led to Tolkien becoming, in some cases, his own last word, as Drout suggests.[131] Viewed in this light, the correspondence that has informed the 'mythology for England' debate can be seen as less of a definitive statement of intent and more a qualified attempt to distil a lifetime's work and its relationship to England and Englishness to a brief paragraph for an audience unaware of Tolkien's personal preoccupations with these themes. It is this complex that I will now examine, showing how it has been interpreted in order to illustrate how this thesis will use it to inform its discussions of England and Englishness in Tolkien's work.

The persistent depictions of Tolkien's fictive portrayals of home and homelands as representing both idealised unchanging England's and Tolkien's personal desire to recapture or preserve a sacral, originary notion of identity can be traced to the interpretation of the Waldman correspondence. In 1951, responding to publisher Milton Waldman's request that he outline the aims of his fiction, Tolkien commented:

> Once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story – the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backdrops – 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' (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East) and, while possessing (if I could achieve it) the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic (though it is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things), it should be 'high', purged of the gloom, and fit for the more adult mind of a land long now long steeped in poetry. I would draw some of the great tales

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[131] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), pp. 19–21.

in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama.[132]

As an example of separating the meaning of Tolkien's statements from the critical readings that have grown up around them, and establishing their relationship to Tolkien's aesthetic method and cultural motivations, the first thing to note is that Tolkien never actually stated that he wanted to create 'a mythology for England.' The invention of the phrase appears to be titular, coming from Chance-Nitzsche's *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England*. Introducing her argument, Chance-Nitzsche noted:

> It seems appropriate that the seeds for his [Tolkien's] 'mythology for England' sprang from those medieval literary, religious, and cultural ideas in which his life was steeped [...] If he [Tolkien] wished to develop a 'mythology for England' akin to the Northern mythologies of the Eddas, what better way to use those Old and Middle English works native to the country in fashioning his own works.[133]

Pre-empting Shippey's central areas of discussion, Chance's argument, in summary, was that Tolkien's aim was to produce a body of work that engaged with and represented England because he felt that the acquisition of Roman and Norman literary, linguistic and cultural discourses, and their amalgamation into a representative British culture had supplanted England's indigenous culture. To redress this, Chance argues, Tolkien used the literary and linguistic resources of his philological background as inspiration, as well as source and reference

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[132] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 144–145.
[133] Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), p. 2.

material, to create fiction deeply embedded within (and indebted to) English literary, linguistic, and cultural traditions.[134]

Chance's position aligns with the academic position Tolkien developed in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhað*' (1929), which will be discussed at length in chapter two, and Tolkien's personal belief that representative Anglo-Saxon (English) culture was overwritten by the Norman Conquest – a view essential to and mobilized by Shippey's conclusions on the nature of Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness in his work. Shippey argues:

> England must be the most demythologised country in Europe, partly as a result of 1066 (which led to near-total suppression of native English belief [...] partly as a result of the early Industrial Revolution, which led to the extinction of what remained.[135]

Tolkien's work, and his engagements with England and Englishness, Shippey suggests, were attempts to recoup this. The critical work that endorses Shippey's views on Tolkien, England, and Englishness follow his suggestion that the primary impulse behind Tolkien's work was to imaginatively recreate this, or to offer an alternative that replaced it. In 'A Mythology? For England?' (1992), over a decade after the phrase had entered the lexicon of Tolkien criticism, Anders Stenström noted that Carpenter had spliced two quotations about 'mythology' and 'England' together when compiling the text of *The Letters*.[136] Yet what the extant evidence

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[134] Preceding Shippey's suggestion of the same point, Chance proposed that "source and influence" were inextricably linked" in Tolkien's work (see Chance, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), p. 3).
[135] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 345–346. Flieger too follows Shippey's lead to suggest that as a result of the Norman Conquest England was "one of the few national entities without a mythological heritage" (Flieger, *Splintered Light* (2002), p. 42). Tolkien's and Shippey's interpretation of the impact of the Norman Conquest on England is discussed in more detail in chapter two.
[136] See Anders Stenström, 'A Mythology? For England?' in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, Incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxenmoot 1992 *Mythlore/Mallorn*, 21; 33:2 (80), ed. by Glen H. GoodKnight and Patricia Reynolds (Milton Keynes:

does indicate is that Tolkien explicitly positioned his work as being an engagement

with England and Englishness. This is apparent both in the Waldman

correspondence and a later letter following the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*

in which Tolkien commented:

> Having set myself a task, the arrogance of which I fully recognized and trembled at: being precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own; it is a wonderful thing to be told that I have succeeded, at least with those who have still the undarkened heart and mind.[137]

As this chapter has noted, Tolkien's correspondence, along with his academic

work, is one of the many sources that have been mobilized in support of critical

discussions of the author. Into this category, for example, can also be placed

Shippey's pioneering readings of the invitational lectures of '*Beowulf*: The

Monsters and the Critics' and 'On Fairy Stories', and his analysis of academic

papers like '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' and the literary divertissement 'Leaf

by Niggle' (1945).[138] Yet this chapter has also outlined some of the critical issues

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The Tolkien Society, 1995), pp. 310–314. Neither Stenström nor Carl F. Hostetter and Arden R. Smith's article 'A mythology for England?' cite Chance's work (see Carl. F. Hostetter and Arden R. Smith, 'A mythology for England?' in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, Incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxenmoot 1992 *Mythlore/Mallorn*, 21; 33:2 (80), ed. by Glen H. GoodKnight and Patricia Reynolds (Milton Keynes: The Tolkien Society, 1995), pp.126-138). Citing this as an example of Tolkien's Studies propensity for unacknowledged duplication, Drout and Wynne note that although originally part of conference proceedings, in collection the Hostetter and Smith essay has 51 references, making Chance's omission somewhat surprising (See Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 126). Shippey footnotes Anders Stenström's point in the revised edition of *The Road to Middle-earth* (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 447).

[137] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 230.

[138] Carpenter, Shippey and Rosebury describe 'Leaf By Niggle' as being written in 1943 (See Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 261, Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 49, and Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 128 respectively). However, Hammond and Anderson trace its production back to 1939 (See Hammond and Anderson, *Bibliography* (1993), p. 348). *The Road to Middle-earth* developed the notion these extracurricular texts could offer insights into the development and interpretation of Tolkien's work, an idea I have shown to be central to the methodological approach of Tolkien Studies. For example, Shippey's suggestion that in 'Leaf by

that have, on occasion, arisen from the use of these sources, and suggested the ways in which interpretations will be mediated by this thesis. Some, such as Tolkien's letter to Shippey, cited above, should be considered as qualified responses to direct questions. Others, such as Tolkien's comments on the subject of English Literature in the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, his opinions regarding France or the French, or his position on British agricultural policy should not be taken wholly seriously.[139] Although not unreflective of Tolkien's own opinions, they are also, largely, unqualified in context.

In the immediate context, the Waldman and Thompson letters fall into both categories. They are qualified and considered responses to direct enquiries. But as private correspondence they are not and should not be taken as a statement of a definitive position. This is not to suggest their intrinsic lack of significance, however, as they are some of the most contentious passages in Tolkien criticism and remain a continued point of orientation and debate in contemporary discussions of the author on the themes in which this thesis intervenes. But the following factors might be taken into consideration. In the Waldman correspondence, although *The Lord of the Rings* was complete, publishing issues meant it would be a further six years before its release.[140] At this point, all Tolkien had to show for four decades of work on his fiction were two published children's stories (*The Hobbit* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*). As with the circumspect quality of

Niggle' Tolkien was simultaneously criticising and justifying his own working method has been taken up by critics such as Rosebury (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 49–55 and Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp, 8, 128–130).

[139] I discuss the comments on 'English Literature' contained in the foreword to the revised edition of *The Lord of the Rings* on pp. 39–40 Carpenter suggests that Tolkien did not like "France and the French", arguing that the author suffered from "Gallophobia" as a result of bad tourist experiences there. Yet as Carpenter also admits that Tolkien enjoyed his visits to Paris and chance to study the language, it is possible that the antipathy has been exaggerated to support Tolkien's views on the Norman Conquest (see Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 96).

[140] *The Lord of the Rings* was finished in August 1947. However, due to conflicts with publishers, revisions, and editing it remained unpublished until 1954-1955 (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 122, 134–160, 163–166 and Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 273.

'On Fairy Stories', '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', and '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*', the letter takes a retrospective view of the author's youthful ambitions to use linguistic invention to create narratives of cultural import in light of his achievements to date. As such, its tone is resigned rather than triumphal. The Thompson letter (1956) cited above is equally insightful, for while *The Lord of the Rings* had finally been published Tolkien was deeply concerned with how to finish its counterpart, *The Silmarillion*, and fearing that he would not achieve it.[141] These contexts should inform the interpretation of the correspondence. Ambiguities surrounding the critical interpretation of his ambition to create "a body of more or less connected legend" which he "could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country" aside, what is clear, however, is that Tolkien intended his work to engage with England and Englishness in some way. Tolkien's articulation of his attempt to "restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own" is also a concluding summary of his own prolonged meditation on the nature and constitution of England and Englishness.

Regardless of the extant interpretations of these passages, what the correspondence indicates is that Tolkien explicitly aligns his work with these debates. The question Tolkien criticism has historically addressed is what form this engagement with England takes. In this regard, as Drout and Wynne note, it is not simply what form a 'mythology for England' might take, but also that "not only must critics analyze Tolkien's texts, but they have to define what 'England' they are talking about (for which period, in what time period, for what level of generality, and so on)" but what constitutes a mythology: "For those who follow Tolkien's explicitly stated views it is one thing, but for say, orthodox Marxists, it is entirely

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[141] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 230–231. Carpenter presents an accurate précis of Tolkien's difficulties in completing *The Silmarillion* (see Carpenter, *Bibliography* (2002), pp. 333–336.

another. Critics thus end up arguing past each other, since one's mythologizing is positive and the other's negative."[142]

The desire to restore something lost is implicit in both statements, but what is significant in the context of this thesis is that Tolkien traces the advent of his ambition to create an English epic in the Thompson letter to "when I was an undergraduate and began to explore my own linguistic aesthetics in language-composition." That Tolkien's fiction had a pre-war beginning is widely acknowledged in Tolkien criticism.[143] Given that this fiction's development spanned the first half of the twentieth century, it appears logical to suggest that Tolkien's engagement with England and Englishness can be viewed as being progressive and ongoing as well as rooted in this cultural-historical context. As Tolkien noted: "it was just as the 1914 war burst in on me that I made the discovery that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition."[144] This view, and Tolkien's interest in its links to a nationally representative culture, Garth suggests, was at least in part prompted by his discovery at this time of W.F. Kirby's Everyman translation of the *Kalevala* (1907). Carpenter notes that Tolkien first encountered Elias Lonnrot's (1802-1884) epic collation of folk songs from the Karelian region of Finland while at King Edward's Grammar School.[145] There is substantial evidence that its influence remained constant over the course of his life

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[142] Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 112.
[143] See, for example, Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 102 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 39 respectively.
[144] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 230.
[145] See Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 57. Garth supplies the note that the *Kalevala* so caught Tolkien's schoolboy imagination that the King Edward's librarian had to send Tolkien a letter when he had gone up to Oxford, politely requesting that he return it (See Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War,* (2003) p. 25). Shippey suggests the importance of the *Kalevala* to philology in highlighting how "national myth" can grow from "forgotten history" (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 33).

and throughout his own creative endeavours. For example, he noted in 1914 to his

fiancée Edith Bratt:

> Had an interesting talk with that quaint man Earp I have told you of and
> introduced him (to his great delight) to the 'Kalevala' [sic], the Finnish
> ballads. Amongst other work I am trying to turn one of the stories – which is
> really a very great story and most tragic – into a short story somewhat on
> the lines of Morris' romances with chunks of poetry in between.[146]

Fifty years after this, Tolkien noted that it had been his inspiration in a letter to

Christopher Bretherton, writing: "the germ of my attempt to write legends of my

own to fit my private languages was the tragic tale of the hapless Kullervo in the

Finnish *Kalevala*. It remains a major matter in the legends."[147] Taken alongside the

references to the *Kalevala* in the Waldman and Thompson correspondence, the

impact of the *Kalevala* on Tolkien's ambitions and its enduring influence on his

work is obvious.

Moreover, its inspiration occurred early in Tolkien's intellectual and creative

development. It was during the same period that he wrote to his fiancée that

Tolkien first implied a desire to do something similar for English culture. Garth

notes that when addressing Corpus Christi College's Sundial Society on 22

November 1914, Tolkien declared:

> Mythological ballads are full of that very primitive undergrowth that the
> literature of Europe has on the whole been steadily cutting and reducing for
> many centuries with different and earlier completeness among different
> people. I would that we had more of it left – something of the same sort that
> belonged to the English.[148]

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[146] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 7.
[147] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 345.
[148] J.R.R. Tolkien on 'The Finnish National Epic', Sundial Society Minutes, Essay Club Meeting
(see Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 86).

As Tolkien later recalled in a letter to W.H. Auden, linguistically and culturally his discovery of the Kalevala "was like discovering a complete wine-cellar filled with bottles of an amazing wine of a kind and flavour never tasted before," and in retrospectively envisioning the trajectory of his writing to Waldman its influence on those two elements remained a constant.[149] The "tone and quality" should 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)." Moreover, it should be "high" and fit for the more adult mind of a land long now long steeped in poetry."[150]

Critical discussions of Tolkien's 'mythology for England' correspondence have repeatedly returned to these statements to reinforce the idea that Tolkien was looking to find or recreate something lost – which is precisely how the representations of England and Englishness in Tolkien's fiction have been interpreted. In 'Identifying England's Lonnrot' (2004) Anne C. Petty's argument follows Shippey's lead in searching for sources for Tolkien's work outside of the texts, drawing repeated personal parallels between Lonnrot and Tolkien despite there being over a century and a continent separating them:

> Temperament and creativity had an effect on both Lonnrot's and Tolkien's output [...] both men were endless revisers, each expressing real fears that his work might prove overwhelming and never see the light of day. Both authors found themselves plagued by self-doubt regarding the worth of their efforts due in large part to consistency issues and the compulsion towards perfection.[151]

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[149] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 214.
[150] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 144.
[151] Anne C. Petty, 'Identifying England's Lonnrot', *Tolkien Studies Journal*, Vol. 1 (2004), 69–84 (p. 73). Anna de Luigi similarly discusses the influence of Finnish literature on Tolkien's work (See Anna de Luigi, 'The Magic of Words: J.R.R. Tolkien and Finland', *Scholarship and Fantasy:*

Petty follows Shippey's lead in positioning Tolkien as a "philologist-creator" who followed the template of his professional forebears in engaging in "great projects of literary and linguistic national identity reconstruction."[152] She suggests that while the appeal of the *Kalevala* may also lie "in the grandeur and universality of its themes, the coherence of its plots and the splendour of its poetry",[153] a crucial part of its attraction was that it intervened in official narratives of national history offered by Russia following its annexation of Finland to propose its own version.[154] As a philologist, the constitution of the nation was central to Tolkien's discipline. Petty extends Shippey's discussion of the academic and cultural history of philology in this context, and his assessment of its impact on Tolkien and his creative work, to likewise argue that like Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Nikolai Frederick and Lonnrot, Tolkien was determined to attempt a similar process of national excavation. She notes:

> For each, a nation's language was recorded through folklore and sanctioned through literature to the point where it became "the means of defining the identity of the nation" and "if the traditions they found appeared fragmentary and deteriorated, it was the task of collectors and editors to 'restore' them.[155]

Proceedings of the Tolkien Phenomenon, May 1992, Turku, Finland, ed. by K.J. Battarbee (Anglicana Turkuensia 12, Turku: University of Turku, 1993), pp. 7-20).

[152] Petty, 'Identifying England's Lonnrot' (2004), p. 73 (see also Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2003), pp. 9–10).

[153] Petty cites page four of Michael Branch's *A History of Finland's Literature* in asserting this. However, this work does not appear in Petty's 'Works Cited' section, and the website she gives as an alternate source (www.virtualfinland.com) does not contain Branch's work (see Petty, 'Identifying England's Lonnrot' (2004) pp. 69, 82). The actual reference can be found in Michael Branch, 'Finnish Oral Poetry: Kalevala and Kanteletar', in *A History of Finland's Literature* ed. by George C. Schofield (London and Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, in cooperation with the American-Scandinavian Society, 1998), pp. 3–33 (p.4).

[154] Garth discusses the way Finnish nationalists appropriated the *Kalevala* on its publication, positioning it as the culturally representative "ancestral voice" of Finland that opposed Russia's rule (Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2005), pp. 50–51).

[155] See Petty, 'Identifying England's Lonnrot', p. 70. Petty takes this perspective from 'Nordic Folklore Studies Today', in *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies* ed. by Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 3–22 (p. 4).

Petty's argument explores a position that Shippey had earlier established. The creation of a 'mythology for England', Shippey argues, was Tolkien's response to what the author perceived to be the overwriting of indigenous English culture by the Norman Conquest and what ultimately became British culture.[156] This, and its representative literature, Tolkien felt, "was imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not with English," and did not replace what "he felt to be missing."[157] It is in this context that Tolkien's fascination with the *Kalevala* must be positioned. Finland had been ruled by Sweden since the twelfth century but had maintained an entirely separate linguistic, cultural and ethnic history before becoming a personal grand duchy of Tsar Alexander of Russia in 1809. Fragmentary and referring to a pre-Christian cast of heroic and divine figures and events, Lonnrot had been trying to create a Finnish equivalent of the mythological literature of Greece and Iceland. But on its publication in Finland in 1835, Finnish nationalists had subsequently embraced Elias's poem as an ancient literature expressing the ancestral voice of the Finnish people in a myth of origin and renewal. As Tolkien criticism has suggested, the parallels to the Norman Conquest and the possibilities of creating something similar appeared stark to Tolkien.

Eaglestone suggests, however, that rather than a 'mythology for England' Tolkien's work should be seen as enunciating "something about British collective memory":

> *The Lord of the Rings* does not offer or create a mythology for England – as if England (Arthur, Robin Hood, Alfred, Joseph of Arimatheia, even Brutus of Troy for whom 'Britain' is supposedly named) lacked such a thing:

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[156] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 346.
[157] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 144.

instead, like any modern novel, it is intimately interwoven with, but as art not simply reducible to, its time and historical context. As the celebrated letter 131 reads, Tolkien wanted to *dedicate* his mythology to England, because it came from the cultural context.[158]

The mythologies that Eaglestone suggests (Arthur, Layamon, Robin Hood, Joseph of Arimatheia) may be imbricated in British cultural history, but they were also, Tolkien felt, Norman-French in origin. As '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*', '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', and his correspondence make clear, Tolkien viewed them as entities that had replaced Anglo-Saxon literary and historical narratives and Old English linguistic culture following the Norman Conquest.[159] Nevertheless, Eaglestone's broader point about the difficulty of separating or even defining what might constitute a representative English and British cultures is an important one. It has ramifications for the development of Tolkien's aesthetic methodology, and also for the engagement of his work with the issues surrounding the representation of England and Englishness in the late-imperial period.

In the first instance, this is an issue that Tolkien's early creative work attempted to address. In doing so, it indicates the complexity of the task that Tolkien had set himself, and the-then inadequacy of his aesthetic method to realise it. For example, while Shippey acknowledges Stenström's point that Tolkien never uttered the phrase most attached to his work, his analysis argues that Tolkien's "general intent" was to make "a mythology *of* England [Shippey's emphasis]."[160] In this regard, Shippey points out the evidence of Tolkien's early attempts to accommodate England in his work. In the early drafts of *The Book of Lost Tales*, for example, begun in 1916, Shippey notes the contiguities: "Tol

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[158] Eaglestone, 'Introduction' (2005), p. 9.
[159] See, for example, Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 144.
[160] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 345.

Eressëa, the Lonely Isle, is England; Kortirion, the town of exiles from Kôr, is Warwick; Tavrobel on Tol Eressëa 'would afterwards be the Staffordshire village of Great Heywood'".[161] Shippey's analysis focuses on Tolkien's efforts to directly equate his work to England. It is complemented by Verlyn Flieger's argument, in 'J.R.R. Tolkien and the Matter of Britain' (2003), that while Tolkien's stated ambition may have been to provide an English counterpart to what Lonnrot had accomplished in the *Kalevala*, his early attempts to do so could not escape the historical overlaps between England and Britain or the interrelation of their literary and linguistic traditions. Indeed, Flieger suggests, they did not try to, but instead attempted to accommodate both. Although Tolkien denounced Arthurian myths and legends as "imperfectly naturalized, associated with a soil of Britain but not with English", Flieger's article notes the congruence between Tolkien's *Silmarillion* narratives and this literary tradition. As the published mythology of *The Silmarillion* originated in *The Book of Lost Tales* drafts, Flieger cites them as evidence that Tolkien knew that he could not escape the mythologies of Britain by a process of direct equation because they were ultimately also the mythologies of England.

For example, Shippey's analysis argues that *The Book of Lost Tales* focused on Ottor the Wanderer as a dual ancestral figure shared by both cultures – Ottor being the Father of Hengest and Horsa, the early invaders of Britain, and the founders of Anglo-Saxon England.[162] Flieger extends Shippey's position in 'The Footsteps of Ælfwine' (2000). In this, she proposes that the figure of Ælfwine in Tolkien's earliest works served as an intermediary translator figure between the actual Anglo-Saxon history of England and Tolkien's works. Shippey suggests that

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[161] See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales: Part One*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983)*, p. 25, and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 345–351 respectively.
[162] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 346–347.

the intermediary served to highlight "two chains of transmission": an English legend that became part of the story of Britain's origin, but also part of the lost tradition that Tolkien wished to recover by creative invention. In supporting this, he notes that Ottor was the father of Heorrenda, a Norse and English harper whose name remains his only trace in history. The sort of linguistic trace that was part of Tolkien's philological profession, in the narrative Heorrenda becomes a symbol of a lost artistic tradition – a neat if oblique reference to Tolkien's own belief in England's lost history. Shippey's interpretation is countered by Flieger, but only in as much as to suggest that Heorrenda also fulfils a second function: because of Tolkien's belief that language and literature require a culture to use them, the story-teller figure must be there to foreground the links between the narrator, the events of the story, and reader.[163]

In the second instance, *The Book of Lost Tales* and the 'mythology for England' correspondence offer firm evidence that from an early stage Tolkien had two central creative preoccupations: cultural representation and the mode of transmission this might take. First, and leaving aside momentarily the debate as to whether Tolkien's work represents a mythology dedicated *to* or *for* England, the correspondence and evidence indicates the area in which Tolkien was specifically interested: England and Englishness. Tolkien believed that England had lost a cultural inheritance. Yet, addressing Eaglestone's point, *The Book of Lost Tales* suggests that Tolkien was not unaware of the difficulties involved in separating England and Britain, or in attempting to define a representative English against a representative British culture. Chapter two will discuss further how this concern

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[163] Verlyn Flieger, 'J.R.R. Tolkien and the Matter of Britain', *Mythlore*, 87 (Summer-Fall, 2000), 47 – 49 and Verlyn Flieger, 'The Footsteps of Ælfwine', in *Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-earth* ed. by Verlyn Flieger and Carl Hostetter (Westport, CT, 2000), pp. 183–197 (p. 185).

preoccupied Britain's late-imperial culture and how Tolkien's work achieved this feat of representation. From an intentionalist perspective, it could be said to be unlikely that Tolkien was unaware of what Eaglestone defines as the myths of British culture, especially given his personal interests and professional expertise. Yet the above analysis of the text presents clear evidence of the attempt to explore and reconcile their overlaps. Secondly, *The Book of Lost Tales'* efforts to represent England come early in Tolkien's work. The narrative is tentative in its approach, offering broad analogues and metaphorical symbols that are reliant on their direct equation with location for their meaning and impact, rendering their effect allegorical rather than commentative. The text indicates the difficulties faced in defining England's 'lost' culture and finding a suitable mode of representation for its recovery, leaving the intellectual and aesthetic quandary of how both problems might be resolved. I do not think that the answer lies in a debate as to whether Tolkien's mythology was to or for England. It is clear from the evidence that Tolkien never said he was creating a mythology for England. Nor should his work be considered a "mythology of England", as Shippey suggests – at least in the sense of presenting an alternative historical mythology of the island where the Norman Conquest had not occurred. Shippey's analysis of this complex arrives at this conclusion, noting "if Tolkien was to create an English mythology, he would first (given his scholarly instincts) have to create a context in which it might have been preserved." The creation of this context leads to the dual chains of transmission both Shippey and Flieger discuss: "one authentic, one invented, but both determinedly native and English." Yet in going back "before for the Fall, so to speak, the Fall being in some way the start of English history" Tolkien was presented with the "logical difficulties" identified above: how best to define and

separate English and British cultural-historical discourses and how best to represent them.[164]

I would suggest that the overlapping nature of the cultural-historical discourses of England and Britain focused an aesthetic pursuit of those questions on how England is represented in that complex that emerges in Tolkien's work. Tolkien's work is unequivocally "dedicated to England." This, I would propose, identifies a specific area of engagement. As the supplementary evidence suggests that Tolkien was fastidious in his word choices as one-time assistant editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and a professional philologist, an intentionalist would perhaps suggest that it is possible that Tolkien chose to use the word "dedicated" in his correspondence with Waldman and Thompson deliberately.[165] It signifies an act of devotion to the "sacred person, purpose, or place" of England, his own lifelong commitment to the "special task or purpose" engaging with England in his work, and compounds that his work and his endeavours are offered "in honour or recognition" of his country.[166] Yet in its nomination of a specific place as a site of engagement, the correspondence aligns to the early attempts of the texts to successfully define, separate, and represent English and British cultural-historical discourses in *The Book of Lost Tales* that give way to more specific engagements with England as a location and Englishness being defined by its relationship to

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[164] Shippey uses the idea of 'the Fall' in a prelapsarian sense, using it to describe England as an "unstained land." As it is part of a discussion of the impact of the Norman Conquest on England the inference is clear (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 345–347.

[165] Following his demobilisation from the army, Tolkien was an assistant at the Oxford English Dictionary under editor Henry Bradley between 1919 and 1920 as the text was prepared for its first edition (See Peter M. Gilliver, 'At the Wordface: J.R.R. Tolkien's Work on the *Oxford English Dictionary,* in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, Incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxenmoot 1992 *Mythlore/Mallorn*, 21; 33:2 (80), ed. by Glen H. GoodKnight and Patricia Reynolds (1995-1996), pp. 173-186).

[166] *Oxford English Dictionary,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 217. All citations taken from the 1986 edition unless otherwise indicated.

location in the later texts of *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. There are critical precedents for interpreting the word choices of Tolkien's "dedicated to England" statement in this way, then. For example, in discussing the importance of language to Tolkien's creative inventions, Shippey notes:

> Invention' of course comes from the Latin *invenire*, 'to find': its older sense, as Tolkien knew perfectly well, was 'discovery.' If one were to say of nineteenth century philology that 'the discovery of languages was *its* foundation', one would be stating literal truth; as often, probably, Tolkien was playing with words, juxtaposing the languages he made up out of his own head with those that others had found or 'reconstructed' all over the world, so aligning himself yet again with his professional inheritance [Shippey's italics].[167]

Shippey's point is that Tolkien's invention of second-world fantasy narratives were founded on a logical linguistic analysis that recognized the interrelation of language, literature, and the cultures that produced them. It rests on the multiple meanings the word 'invention' carries when one examines the word beyond its customary usage: "to create by thought, or make or design (something that did not exist before)" gives way to finding or discovering something via the consistent application of considered investigation.[168]

But these critical precedents are, in this instance, supported by the textual evidence. In terms of this thesis, the above interpretation aligns the engagements of Tolkien's work with England and Englishness with the cultural preoccupation regarding their constitution during the late-imperial period: England as a land, a place, and a location, but also an absent centre around which elements are mobilized to denote or bestow Englishness. These are the elements that chapter two examines. It will move through three distinct areas. First, it aligns the

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[167] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 28.
[168] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 430.

representation of such spaces in Tolkien's work with Benedict Anderson's writings on the nation as a narrative construction. Tolkien's work has not been extensively discussed in relation to Anderson's description of imaginary homelands. Outlining the similarities between Anderson's suggestion that historiography uses shared language, territory, customs, traditions, and history to construct national narratives and the use of the same elements to construct the representative spaces in Tolkien's work, the following chapter will highlight the ways in which such constructions acknowledge their essentially fluid, impermanent and narrated nature. In doing so, they challenge readings that see them as offering originary verities. Secondly, introducing the work of Ian Baucom, I will position the focus in Tolkien's work on England and Englishness as one informed by then-contemporary cultural concerns regarding their constitution and essence as much as Tolkien's personal and professional interests. Framing Tolkien's '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' as a pertinent example of the author's personal obsession with the idea of a distantly lost English history and cultural inheritance, I will then revisit Shippey's work to establish how philology's belief in the interrelation of literature, language, and culture, and the resuscitating capacity of its asterisk-reality methodology, directly inform Tolkien's conception of fantasy. Finally, chapter two will argue that the approach to the fantasy mode undertaken in Tolkien's work explicitly engages with the way that historiography continuously creates and recreates culturally representative narratives. Examining the importance of mythological and historical strategies of narration to Tolkien's fiction in this context, I will discuss how the development of literary strategies more commonly associated with metafictional historiography facilitate the engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work. I will position these as offering a

sustained examination of the propensity of English history and English

historiography to lay claim to the land and position it as the repository of English

identity. This contention will form the central areas of discussion for my readings of

Farmer Giles of Ham, The Hobbit, and *The Lord of the Rings*. In their

representation and depiction of the ideas surrounding culturally authentic

locations, I will argue that rather than solely being attempts at recuperation, the

engagements with England's cultural-historical discourses in Tolkien's work

ultimately became examinations and acknowledgements of the way in which

individual and local identities had been made and remade throughout English

history.

Chapter Two

Framework of Analysis

This chapter argues that the representations of England and Englishness constructed in Tolkien's fiction mobilise the same verities that theoretical readings describe as essential for the formation of nations and home in cultural-historical contexts. It will therefore begin by outlining theoretical perspectives that suggest the ways in which narratives create nations, particularly those offered by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), before tracing the contiguities between these perspectives and the aesthetic preoccupations and literary strategies of representation that are evident in Tolkien's work. It will conclude by outlining how these strategies enable the engagements with England and Englishness offered by Tolkien's work.

The Idea of the Nation

In *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944) Hans Kohn argues:

> Nationalities come into existence only when certain objective bonds delimit a social group. A nationality generally has several of these attributes; very few have all of them. The most usual of them are common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs and traditions, and religion.[1]

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson suggests that these elements, in shifting patterns of relation, are used to create nations by large scale communities that share enough of them. As chapters three, four, and five illustrate, all of these things – language, lineal

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[1] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp. 13–14.

descent, geographically defined and cartographically inscribed territory, political

entity, customs and traditions, and religion – are present in Ham, the Hill, and the

Shire. As such, they are elements that inform the engagements with the subjects

of England and Englishness in Tolkien's work. *The Idea of Nationalism* offers a

general introduction to the nature of nationalism, tracing its development from

Antiquity to late-eighteenth century understandings of the modern nation-state.

Kohn's work proposes that civic nationalism developed in the West in close accord

with Enlightenment liberalism and cosmopolitanism within a social order based on

reason and justice, contrasting this trajectory with the development of the ethnic

nationalisms of the East.[2] Yet just as Kohn's taxonomy was organised to make the

point that none of these elements "was essential to the existence or definition of

nationality", I suggest that while Tolkien's work uses these constituents, it does so

in a manner that examines and questions the ways in which they are used to make

nations, exposing the strategies that present nations as unbroken narratives of

continuity and permanence, rather than solely concretizing or simply romanticising

them as Tom Shippey suggests.[3] As the readings of the texts will show in chapters

three, four, and five, Tolkien's work examines the nation, and England, as both

home and homeland, presenting these entities as being essentially fluid. Each, I

will show, imaginatively represents Kohn's and Anderson's theoretical constitutive

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[2] Craig Calhoun situates Kohn's work on nationalism within the context of Carlton J.H. Hayes, Friedrich Meinecke, and Elie Kedourie in its discussion of the importance of notions of shared descent, language, faith, literature, culture, consolidation of political power, defensible borders, and sovereignty to the formation of national discourses. Calhoun notes that approaches that privilege state-centred narratives can downplay the importance of shifting cultural patterns that forerun and inform the structures of nationalisms, commenting that these cultural contexts are "prominent themes in the older historiography of Kohn, Hayes, Meinecke, and Kedourie" (See Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 59. See also Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966: orig. 1926), Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the Nation State* trans. R.B. Kilmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), and Ellie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (New York: New American Library, 1974) respectively).
[3] Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944), pp. 13–14.

elements as shifting and changing as one set of cultural-historical determinants and factors is replaced by another. In doing so, they demonstrably reject one of the key principles of nationalist discourse by failing to deny that national projects are unstable and impermanent. In doing so, these representations challenge Shippey's suggestion that Ham, the Hill, and the Shire offer idealized and unchanging versions of an English homeland.

As Jonathan Rée argues in 'Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality' (1998), where they do not actively propose it, most national narratives perpetuate the idea that the represented nation is "as old as the hills, and that one's own, in particular, stems from time immemorial, or even that it goes back to the first creation." Promoting a narrative of shared history, geography, biology, culture, and language, Rée suggests that "a nation's claim to antiquity will also, nearly always, involve the affirmation of a continuous chain of racial inheritance going back to a biologically pure past, whose contamination will be thought of as an ever-present danger." Rée notes that while this is the case, it is largely a product of narration as it is also evident that "most national traditions are inventions of the past two hundred years", and that "despite its trappings of misty antiquity" the idea of the shared nation "is a defining feature of modernity."[4] It is from this perspective that the engagements with England offered by Ham, the Hill, and the Shire, can be interpreted. Nostalgic and recuperative although each undeniably is, especially when read through Tolkien's personal perspectives, their narration foregrounds their own precariousness and volatility. More pertinently, in consciously acknowledging their cultural nostalgia for the past alongside the self-awareness of their production in the present, and in exceeding the boundaries of

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[4] Jonathan Rée, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation,* ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1998), pp. 77–90 (p. 81).

any singular definitions of nation by negotiating the inherent contradictions and tensions of their constitution, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949), *The Hobbit* (1937), and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) confound critical attempts to define them as presenting their representations of home and the homeland as unchanging idylls. It is in this way, and in their treatment of the shared verities of language, lineal descent, geographically defined and cartographically inscribed territory, political entity, community and customs, that I suggest that the representations of these texts can profitably be aligned with Benedict Anderson's discussions of the same themes.

This is not to marginalise the significance of other theoretical readings of nation and nationalism – of which there are many. Yet Anderson's work proposes an influential way of imagining the nation, and a cogent reading of the importance of narrative in creating its imagining. As such, as Craig Calhoun notes in *Nations Matter: Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (2007) although Anderson's book is "not the most systematic contribution to the large recent literature on nationalism" it is "perhaps the most original."[5] Pertinently from the perspective of this thesis, there are significant overlaps between Anderson's theoretical reading of the role narrative plays in creating, framing, and sustaining the idea of the nation, and the way that Tolkien's texts negotiate the intersections of history, language, and culture to form their representations of home and homeland: the strategies that Anderson argues construct the nation are evident in the strategies by which Tolkien's texts create their own secondary world and nation-type narratives.

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[5] Calhoun, *Nations Matter* (2007), pp. 71–72.

In *Imagined Communities*, then, Anderson argued that nations are produced centrally by cultural practices which encourage individual members of a community to situate their own identities and self-understandings within a nation. Standardised language, reported news, political features like borders and state administration, and cultural events and activities combine to weave the life of the individual into a shared collective narrative. The evocative phrase 'imagined community' suggests that rather than a liberal or fascistic ideology, nationalism represents a distinctive communal understanding of the phenomenon of belonging together comparable to kinship. A nation, imagined this way, becomes:

> An imagined political community [...] It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion [...] The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations [...] It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm [...] Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.[6]

Despite their shared elements, a connection between Anderson's imagined communities and the homes and homelands of imaginary worlds of Tolkien's fiction has not yet been fully made or comprehensively explored in Tolkien criticism. There are references to Anderson's work. For example, in 'Translated by Goblin: Global challenge and local response in Post-Soviet translations of Hollywood films' (2011) Vlad Strukov uses the phrase 'imagined communities' in passing to refer to the radical film translator 'Goblin's' treatment of Tolkien's film

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[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso Books, 1983, 1991, 2006), pp. 6–7.

adaptations.[7] Similarly, Amanda J. Johnston's doctoral thesis 'J.R.R. Tolkien, War, and Nationalism' (2010) cites Anderson to define what the nation is not:

> In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson admits "nation, 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 [sic][8]

However, in reemphasizing the view that the national imaginings present in Tolkien's work are integrated and unchanging constants, emerging from the author's personal obsessions, Johnston does not explicitly link Anderson's explanation of the way that nations are narrated to the methods of world-creation used by the texts. Nor does she challenge the consensual perspective on how the texts represent the spaces that have been critically linked with England and Englishness. Johnson's work instead is focused on the impact of war on Tolkien's fiction, returning to the perspectives advanced by Garth and Shippey to advance the idea that Tolkien's work offered an escape from modernity and a retreat into the past.

There are, however, a number of challenges that must be addressed in bringing Anderson's theoretical perspectives to bear on Tolkien's works and *vice versa*. The most notable of these is that Anderson's work explores the relationship between the realist novel and narratives of national history. By contrast, Tolkien's

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[7] Vlad Strukov, 'Translated by Goblin: Global challenge and local response in Post-Soviet translations of Hollywood films', in *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. by James Baer (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), pp. 235–249.

[8] Amanda J. Johnston, 'J. R. R. Tolkien, War, and Nationalism', Dissertation (Georgia State University, 2010), p. 2 [http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/54 accessed 27/05/2014].

work, of course, operates in the fantasy mode. Anderson's engagement with these elements is informed by his examination of their pertinence to and importance in facilitating the nation's post-Treaty of Westphalia transition from dynastic, monarchical, and military fiscal units to modern nation-state apparatuses.[9] It is in this context that Anderson argues that the nation represents a socially constructed organism that moves "calendrically through homogenous empty time", existing as a "solid community moving steadily down or up history."[10] It is clock-derived, man-made "homogenous empty time" that allows communities to configure themselves as geographically-bounded, intrahistorical entities; the simultaneity of "empty time" opens the way for the individual and cultural imagination of large, cross-generational delimited communities, made up of people largely without contact with one another, to view themselves as arriving in the present out of a clearly narrated past. Anderson argues that the production of the novel as popular commodity accompanied this development, as this forwarded synchronically-bounded, intra-historical society-with-a-future narratives that supported the simultaneously produced diachronic narratives of national history. In Anderson's reading, it is the development of the post-Treaty of Westphalia nation-state complex and the burgeoning apprehension of a wider world system caused by their imperial projects that initiates the cultural "longing for form" that forms the

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[9] Calhoun suggests that writers on nationalism and the development of the nation-state have historically tended to invoke the Treaty of Westphalia to exaggerate "the extent to which nation-states were already effective and discrete power-containers in 1648, and the basic units of international politics for the next three and a half centuries." Yet it can be used, as Anderson does and Calhoun concedes, as "a convenient marker" around which to orientate discussions of the nation-state (see Calhoun, *Nations Matter* (2007), p. 14).

[10] Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983, 1991, 2006), p. 26.

imaginary homelands.[11] This longing harnessed the organising powers of narrative to simultaneously write the novel and the nation.[12]

In this model, the novel accompanies the rise of the nation by providing narratives that support the simultaneously produced diachronic narratives of national history. The nation is imagined as a secure collective space and positioned as interior to an alien exterior in an attempt, as Stephen Connor describes it, to "achieve perspectival distance on the question of national belonging and to confirm the integrity of the various boundaries that mark the nation off from its opposites."[13] Tied to the nation, Connor suggests, the novel becomes "one of the principal agencies by which the nation constructs itself in [...] (a) fabular, always-narrated first place."[14]

Rather than viewing *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* solely as attempts to recover lost homelands, as Shippey suggests, then, their engagements with home and homeland can be interpreted as sustained examinations of the way that nations are narrated and the cultural anxieties regarding the identity of England and Englishness at the time they were written. Such a position is in line with Anderson's argument in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (1998) that the novel begins to run into problems of representation at the midpoint of the twentieth century. Anderson's argument rests on the presupposition that the novel as a form is historically preoccupied with two areas: the constitution and future of the nation, and the arc of the individual. Anderson suggests that in the first instance "the historical appearance of the novel-as-popular commodity and the rise of nation-

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[11] Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44–70 (p. 49).
[12] Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 9.
[13] Stephen Connor, *The English Novel in History 1955 – 1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 83.
[14] Connor, *The English Novel in History* (1996), p. 86.

ness were intimately related," questioning whether "the deep original affinity between nation-ness and the novel meant that they would always be adequate for one another: that the nation would continue to serve as the natural if unspoken frame of the novel" if the constitution of either changed.[15] In *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), Nancy Armstrong extends this to suggest that "novels think like individuals about the difficulties of fulfilling oneself [...] under specific cultural historical conditions."[16] Both positions recognize the possibility of cultural-historical changes on potential modes of national and individual representation. As Anderson suggests: "the novel of course was not made to think beyond the individual, but neither, on the other hand, was it made to reproduce the *status quo*."[17]

It is in their explicit engagements with the nature of home and the homeland, their overt interventions in and examinations of English history and historiography and mobilization of the representative tropes of Englishness, and the progressive and sustained nature of their compositional trajectory that *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* can be seen as addressing this crisis of representation. In *The English Novel in History* (1996) Stephen Connor argues that the rise of the novel and the development of the nation-state are inextricably linked in English culture by "an inherited ambition to represent England and Englishness."[18] As the literature review noted, this was the ambition which Tolkien retrospectively claimed inspired his work and informed the development of his aesthetic methodology. While Tolkien's 'mythology for

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[15] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London, New York: Verso, 1998) (reprinted 2002), p. 334. All citations taken from the later edition unless otherwise indicated.
[16] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 10.
[17] Armstrong, *How Novels Think* (2005), p. 25.
[18] Connor, *The English Novel in History (*1996), p. 47.

England' statements do not present a critically unproblematic complex, my readings of the texts will indicate the ways in which their narratives weld a wide range of different origins and histories into a shared sense of chronological and sequential continuity, something which Homi K. Bhabha has argued is key to the nation's narration of itself. It is via these strategies that Tolkien as a novelist, and the work under discussion in particular, can be aligned to Connor's proposition that novelists attempt to harness the "organising power" of narrative precisely to deal with "the problem of imagining the whole of a nation."[19] Thus despite Anderson's discussion of the imagined homeland focusing specifically on the rise of the novel and the novel's evolution into its nineteenth-century socio-realist form, Connor's point that these novelists were attempting to depict, imagine and "diagnose the 'condition of England'" is also applicable to Tolkien and Tolkien's work.[20] This chapter's discussions of the development of aesthetic methodology of Tolkien's work, their literary strategies, and the ways in which a personal preoccupation with the notion of England's cultural inheritance became series of textual engagements with England's history and historiography, as well as my readings of the texts in later chapters, will show the ways in which both exploit the amalgamating potentialities of narrative. Moreover, these discussions will indicate the ways Tolkien's work deliberately engages with the problems inherent in simultaneously imagining the whole of a nation at the same time as contriving to represent specific communities – one of the most important social functions of fiction. As Brian Doyle argues in *England and Englishness* (1989), narrative has the ability to transform "confusion into order, contingency into typicality, conflict into resolution,

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[19] Connor, *The English Novel in History* (1996), pp. 7, 44.
[20] Connor, *The English Novel in History* (1996), pp. 44–45.

strangeness into familiarity [and] diffuseness into collectivity."[21] Like the socio-

realist novel, then, the development of the fantasy mode in Tolkien's work and

their explicit engagements with English history and historiography can therefore be

productively repositioned as an investigation into "the ways in which history is

made, and remade" in a manner contingent and concerned with the tensions

inherent in Britain's national consciousness in the first half of the twentieth century.

As Connor argues:

> If the novelistic narration of the nation is really only a shadowing of a
> process of nation-formation that is already an act of narrative, then the
> novel may come to be regarded as one of the principal agencies by which
> the nation constructs itself in this, anyway fabular, always-narrated first
> place.[22]

The same narrative dynamic Timothy Brennan refers to as "the national longing for

form" (that is, a cultural desire for a structuring narrative of coherent and collective

consistency) that Anderson explores, and its contradictions, can be shown to be

present in Tolkien's work.[23] Yet I would suggest that it is not simply recuperative,

as Shippey suggests. Although inherently nostalgic, the texts avoid a retreat into

the past by directly confronting the processes involved in creating national

narratives of identity. In their organization, narrative strategies, and content,

Tolkien's texts signal their awareness of history's interruption. In this regard, they

do not return the past to enshrine it or render it inviolate, but to challenge the idea

that nations existed unbroken in the past and come down unchanged through

history. This belief is presented by myth as part of its explicit functionality but it is

disrupted by history, whose narration of the community's history exposes the sham

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[21] Doyle, *English and Englishness* (1989), p. 9.
[22] Connor, *The English Novel* (1996), pp. 1, 86.
[23] Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form' (1990), p. 49.

of the nation's eternality. As I will show in this chapter's discussion of the use of

the mythic and historical modes of representation in Tolkien's work, it is in this

context that the fiction explores the tension between the finitude of literature's

contrast with myth's self-professed infinitude. Where myth promotes homeostasis,

and the eternality of the nation in this context, the narration of its history suggests

that this is an impossibility. Be it global, national, and familial or otherwise, this

thesis proposes that Tolkien's texts practise an imagining of the nation that is

dedicated to the idea of the nation, yet rejects its nationalist myths of essence,

homogeneity and perfect integrity. The next section will examine the English

perception of home and the homeland in the late-imperial period in order to

provide cultural and theoretical context in which to place Tolkien's engagements

with the subject.

Out of Place: England, Home, and Location

In *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999), Ian

Baucom suggests that in the imperial and late-imperial period English identity

became metonymically attached to location, specifically home sites within England

deemed to be authentically representative – whether imaginary, abstract, or

geographically specific. It is this reading of England and Englishness that this

thesis is examining in Tolkien's work. Baucom's thesis is that confronted by 'the

other' of the British imperial dominions and the prospect of English identity being

diluted or contaminated by competing identarian discourses, a distinction was

drawn between Britain's imperial space and British imperial subjects and

England's home space and English home subjects that privileged the latter over

the former. In doing so, Baucom suggests, history and cultural memory combine to

sacralise location as the place of authentic English identity. Baucom's interpretation of this complex rests on Pierre Nora's reading of the same in 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*' (1989). Nora suggests that individual and collective cultural memories become historical narratives in the act of recall, but that this does not occur in relation to a location. Instead, location inserts itself into both as a 'trace' whose actuality endorses its authenticity. My discussion of Tolkien's literary strategies will show how in assuming the narrative mechanisms of history Tolkien's work claims the objective authority of the historical mode for its fictions. But it is its reclamation and recycling of locations whose imagery has been endorsed by English and British cultural memory as 'authentic' that emotionally amplifies their representations of home and homelands. It is in this context that this thesis will discuss Tolkien's work as nostalgic; not as a sentimentalising of a lost England, but as an examination of the roles of nostalgia and the pastoral in early to mid-twentieth century English cultural self-representation.

The engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work can, in this context, be aligned with the contemporary preoccupations with the constitution of home and the homeland during their period of composition. In *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1999), Rosemary Marangoly George proposed that "imagining a home is as political an act as imagining a nation. Establishing either is a display of hegemonic power."[24] George's position contends that interior apprehensions of home and nation are created by an understanding of their distinction from exterior spaces. She argues:

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[24] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 4.

> Homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered 'not home', with the foreign, with distance [...] Thus, for instance, it is in the heyday of British imperialism that England gets defined as home in opposition to 'the Empire' which belongs to the English but which is not England.[25]

George argues that homes and nations are interrelated (and defined) as interior spaces in opposition to what are perceived as exterior spaces. In the late-imperial period, this reading suggests, the ability to recognise England occurs because of a simultaneous recognition and disavowal of the British Empire, a complex George suggests is defined by a matrix of "capitulation and resistance" where the acknowledgement of the existence of both England and the British Empire simultaneously undermines each. In this context, the terms 'nation', 'home', and 'home-nation' can be used discretely or interchangeably to articulate a range of radical, reactionary and revolutionary political and cultural stances regarding the constitution of the interior/exterior relationship. For example, England is both home and the home-nation in a way that the British Empire, which belongs to Britain, is not. Homes in George's reading, therefore, cannot be "neutral places" either as privately defined or publically acknowledged spaces because "discussions of nation" are also discussions of what also constitutes "viable homes" and "viable selves."[26] As my readings of *Farmer Giles of Ham, The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* will show, these relationships are present in the text's representations of England and Englishness. Locations become defined as culturally important and identity-bestowing through acts of narration that unify locations and inhabitants, acts that also define them as home in relation to what lies outside their borders and is considered not home.

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[25] George, *The Politics of Home* (1999), p. 4.
[26] George, *The Politics of Home* (1999), pp. 5–6.

Because of their location of production, their literary modality, and their literary strategies, then, the representation of these themes in Tolkien's texts cannot be seen as culturally neutral evocations of their conceptualities. As Anne McClintock notes, the mutual interrelationships of imperialism, colonialism and the post-colonial depend on their organization of and division of the world into what is and what is not "domestic space."[27] McClintock argues that the formation of cultural identity, even on a national level, originates from an understanding of home; both where and what home might be. According to McClintock, the concept of home assumes the status of a representative metaphor maintained, like the nation, by metaphorical and metonymical strategies that place it in a relationship of imaginative displacement to its cultural-historical reality. An example of this, she suggests, is seen in the way that imperialism's narration of colonization rewrites the violence of territorial acquisition as the settlement and establishment of home. By making home stand for the colony and vice versa the violence of expansion and conquest is presented as natural.[28] Written in the late-imperial period in a literary modality that reflects the tensions on the modern national consciousness, and by an author preoccupied with the ways in which history is made and remade in order to define or promote a national identity, Tolkien's texts have cultural investments in the concept of home. But their investments in this concept are not the nostalgic idealizations of an unchanging pastoral homeland that has been suggested by Shippey and those who echo or endorse his work.

The engagements with home and homelands, and England and Englishness, in Tolkien's work are better aligned to Baucom's understanding of the concepts. As Baucom notes, "whatever 'ways-of-being' Englishness has been

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[27] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 117.
[28] McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (1995), p. 117.

understood to entail, Englishness has been *generally* understood to reside within some type of imaginary, abstract, or specific locale, and to mark itself upon that locale's particulars." Baucom suggests that during Britain's period of imperial expansion and consolidation the idea that the discourses defining Englishness could be contained or represented within or by a spatial context allowed England to globalise itself, resulting in it creating a series of geographical, architectural and discursive spaces over the entire reach of its empire that allowed it to see the English nation "when it regarded a global beyond that was also an imperial within."[29] Baucom proposes that the sheer enormity of Britain's empire beyond its borders triggered this process. If, as Homi K. Bhaba's argues, nations orientate and define themselves by looking within to the "*heimlich* pleasures of the hearth" and outward to the "*unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other", Baucom suggests that the overwhelming impacting breadth of the 'other' disorientated and destabilized Britain's self-perception to such an extent that the question of whether "the empire was the domain of England's mastery of the globe or the territory of the loss of Englishness?" could only be answered in the former through serial acts of cultural legerdemain.[30] In a space crowded with other spaces, other culturally significant locations and historical narratives and other races "that must begin, sooner or later, to enter the canon, to expand the catalogue of Englishness", Englishness could only survive, Baucom argues, by "simultaneously avow[ing] and disavow[ing] its Empire." He suggests that in this process, imperial space and imperial subjects became defined as "*British* space and *British* subjects", something "subordinate to but quite different from English space [Baucom's

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[29] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 4–5.
[30] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.1–7 (p. 2). Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 6.

emphasis]."[31] This distinction allowed English imperialists to maintain an identity separate to that of the British empire; one that could be disseminated through the exterior 'other' of British imperial space in architectural and discursive structures designed to represent the interior's essence while maintaining its inviolate exclusivity.

Baucom's argument rests upon and acknowledges Arjun Appadurai's thesis in 'Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography' (1996). Appadurai proposes that nation-states extend themselves beyond their geographical borders via the distribution of population, extension of law and civil authority, activity in economic, labour and resource markets. It also does so by distributing its cultural images across the globe. But in doing so, it creates a division between the ideologies of the soil "as the ground of loyalty and national affect" and discourses of territory "as the site of sovereignty and state control of civil society."[32] Baucom and Appadurai both note, then, that as the colonial facet of an imperial system expands so too does its sovereign territory – the domain over which the home nation claims a degree of economic, cultural and regulatory control. However, as Appadurai comments, during this process "other discourses of loyalty emerge" that are not based on national soil as a consequence of this, raising a challenge to the jurisdiction of 'affect' claimed by the nation. To preserve its authority, Appadurai suggests, the nation must engineer unity between its ideologies of soil and discourses of territory. It achieves this by sacralising the interior space within its borders by defining itself against what is outside them

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[31] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 5.

[32] Arjun Appadurai, 'Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography', in *The Geography of Identity*, ed. by Patricia Yaeger (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 40–58 (p. 47). Simon Gikandi predates Baucom and Appadurai in also arguing that Englishness has been repeatedly defined through "acts of [imperial] inclusion and exclusion" (see Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 6).

while also replicating and dispersing them throughout its exterior territories in representative structures. It is Appadurai's interpretation of this process that Baucom refers to when he suggests that in this period:

> Englishness has been identified with Britishness, which in its turn has been identified as coterminous with and proceeding from the sovereign territory of the empire, and that Englishness has also defined itself against the British Empire, first by retaining a spatial theory of collective identity but by privileging the *English* soil of the 'sceptered isle' or, more regularly, certain quintessentially English locales, as its authentic identity-determining locations.[33]

This attempt to engineer inclusion is also one that emphasizes exclusion, something symbolized by the puncturing of the landscape of the simultaneous British imperial and 'other' with spatial structures regnant with the ideologies of English nationalism, the cult of English memory, and the discourses of Englishness and Britishness. Emblems of Englishness, they are by fact of their location, reminders that they are not England itself. It is this dialectic, I suggest, that informs Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness.

These themes can be related not just to their representation in Tolkien's work, but also Tolkien's personal preoccupation with the constitution of England and the essence of Englishness. Both can be situated within the context of the author's cultural location and the period of production of the texts. As a result of Britain's imperial expansion, as Baucom notes, "over the past 150 years the struggles to define, defend, or return Englishness have, consequently, been understood as struggles to control, possess, order and dis-order the nation's and the empire's spaces."[34] He notes:

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[33] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 12.
[34] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 4.

> Simultaneously literal and metaphorical spaces have been understood as synecdoches of the nation's space (even when they are physically   present in imperial territory) and because nationalist discourse, as Benedict Anderson suggests, expresses a will to synchronic and diachronic coincidences of identity, a will to homogenize the present by submitting it to the sovereignty of the past, these spatial struggles, I further argue, have also been apprehended as temporal contests, primarily as struggles to determine the meaning and authority of the English past and to define the function of collective memory in a discourse of collective identity. The locale [...] serves a disciplinary and nostalgic discourse on English national identity by making the past visible, by rendering it present, by acting as what Pierre Nora calls a *lieu de memoire* that purports to testify to the nation's essential continuity across time. [But] because it not only occupies space but is occupied by living subjects who, as they visit, inhabit, or pass through it, leaving their estranging marks upon it, the locale also serves as the site in which the present recreates the past, as a 'contact zone' in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of collective remembrance, and in doing so reveal England as continuously discontinuous with itself.[35]

Baucom's return to Nora's work is significant as it highlights a point of balance and interchange between history and mythology in English cultural-self representation that is apparent in Tolkien's work. In 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*', Nora separated 'history' and 'places of memory', arguing that the two concepts were antonymic. By history, Nora meant the systematic, deauraticized knowledge of the past that had superseded 'traditional' methods of recuperating the past – oral storytelling, mythologies, and folk superstitions. In Nora's reading, as Baucom identifies, history is historiography, a complex fiction susceptible to reinterpretation. Disenchanting and disenfranchising, it removes the past from us, and in doing so, removes the past from meaning – it becomes representative only of the static narratives of itself and has meaning only when we engage with it. By contrast, Nora suggests, memory defines who we are by delineating the

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[35] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), pp. 4–5.

environments through which we live, move and exist. Nora argues that the links between memory, environment and ourselves are not static, but are constantly altering and shifting. However, in the moment of actively considering memory the past ceases to be an environment and becomes an object. Memory, in Nora's view, becomes history in its recall and recuperation. But Nora also argues that memory can escape the process of historification in specific locations. The logic of Nora's argument, and its relevance to Baucom's thesis can be summarized as follows: where nostalgia is defined as a longing for the past defined by place, nostalgia for the vanishing environments of our memories allows memory to survive the traditionalist moment that enshrines it as history and pervades this historicist moment with a 'trace' of itself. In certain places, or the individually shared and culturally charged memories of certain places, the past survives as a *lieux de memoire* – a cultural phenomena that, in Baucom's words, "stop time, or, better yet, launch a voyage of return to the past."[36] The use of historical and fictional modes of representation to depict location in Tolkien's work, positioned as a deliberate aesthetic complex, can thus be aligned to this idea. Intrinsically nostalgic in their return to the past and their representation of the culturally charged locations of Ham, the Hill, and the Shire, the texts simultaneously acknowledge their own act of recuperation. The following section will discuss the location that Tolkien felt culturally represented England and Englishness, and establish the complex of language, literature, and culture that he attached to its narration. I will then go on to outline how this understanding informs Tolkien's use of the fantasy mode, its relationship to history, and the use of the strategies of history within Tolkien's fiction.

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[36] See Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*' trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), pp. 7–25, and Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), pp. 18–19.

Tolkien, England and the Norman Yoke

In '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhađ*' (1929) Tolkien proposed that a pocket of Anglo-Saxon civilization that he felt was representatively English endured for centuries after 1066, surviving what he felt had been a rewriting of the country's cultural, linguistic and literary landscape by the Norman Conquest.[37] Tolkien's academic engagement with this proposal has a twofold resonance: first, it intellectualizes his personal belief that England had been demythologized and that it somehow had lost a representative indigenous English culture. As my introduction and literature review noted, these perspectives inform Shippey's readings of Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness, and the critical strain that believes Tolkien's work was somehow attempting to recover these lost homelands. Second, it offers an insight into the linguistic, literary, and cultural complex that informs Tolkien's work and the literary strategies with which they intervene in and engage with these themes that this thesis discusses.

'*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhađ*' explores the pre- and post-Conquest difference in verb forms contained in the Early Middle English texts *Ancrene Wisse* (circa 1225 - 1240) – a guide for anchoresses – and *Hali Meiðhad* (circa 1190 - 1220) – a tract on female virginity. Given the critical importance attached to Tolkien's perception of the impact of the Norman Conquest on English culture, Shippey advances an extended discussion of the article. Shippey's analysis in *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (2005) notes

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[37] See J.R.R. Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhađ*', in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 14 (1929), pp. 104–126. Philologists used the distinction Old English rather than Anglo-Saxon to mark what they saw as an essential linguistic continuity. This thesis will follow the convention that Old English denotes language, while Anglo-Saxon denotes period (See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 16).

that Tolkien's point "rested in classic philological style on an observation of the
utmost tininess":

> In Old English a distinction was regularly made between verbs like *hé*
> *híereð, híe híeraðˈ*, 'he hears, they hear', and *hé lócað, hie lóciað*
> 'he looks, they look. An -*að* ending could be singular or plural depending on
> what sort of verb it was attached to. This clear but to outsiders utterly
> unmentionable distinction was, after Hastings, rapidly dropped.[38]

Shippey's précis is brief and incisive: the verb form persists therefore the
community that used it persisted. But having established this central linguistic
point, he notes that Tolkien's own concluding argument is circumlocutory:

> There is an English older than Dan Michel's and richer, as regular in
> spelling as Orm's but less queer; one that has preserved something of its
> former cultivation. It is not a language long relegated to the uplands
> struggling once more for expression in apologetic emulation of its betters or
> out of compassion for the lewd, but rather one that has never fallen back
> into 'lewdness', and has contrived in troublous times to maintain the air of a
> gentleman, if a country gentleman. It has traditions and some acquaintance
> with books and the pen, but it is also in close touch with a good living
> speech – a soil somewhere in England.[39]

Obscured in such language, Tolkien's exegesis, as Shippey admits, requires
unpicking. Dan Michels was the author of *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (1340), a translation in
the Kentish dialect of Laurentius Gallus's *Le Somme Des Vices et Des Values*
(1279), while the *Ormulum* is work of biblical exegesis written in the East Midlands
dialect by the monk Orm in the twelfth century (circa 1150-1180).[40] But the

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[38] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (revised
and expanded edn) (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 45.
[39] J.R.R Tolkien, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhaðˈ* (1929), p. 106.
[40] Also written as *Aȝenbite* (*Agenbite*) *of Inwit* (the again-biting of inner wit) (See Clara L. Thomson,
'Later Transition English: Legendaries and Chroniclers', *The Cambridge History of English
Literature: From the Beginnings to the Cycles of Romance*, ed. by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller
(Cambridge University Press: 1908). See also M.B. Parkes, 'On the Presumed Date and Possible
Origin of the Manuscript of the Ormulum', in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A
Festschrift for Eric Dobson* ed. by E.G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer,

sentiment is clear, as is Shippey's interpretation of it: the 'former cultivation' Tolkien refers to is the pre-Norman *status quo*, the 'troublous times' the Norman Conquest, and the relegation of language 'to apologetic emulation of its betters' a consequence of the impact of 1066 on representative English culture. The text, the people who wrote it, and the area that they lived in form Tolkien's idea of a lost England and its language, literature, and inhabitants.

In broad terms, Tolkien's beliefs on the subject of the Norman Conquest offer an accepted interpretation of it. To summarise: the Norman presence in England was based on conquest and the occupational period immediately following the invasion struck an uneasy balance between the coercive and the negotiated.[41] Within a year of the Battle of Hastings keeps had been erected at strategic points throughout the country to symbolize the Norman domination and control of the landscape. Although Anglo-Saxon units of land and property were preserved both in record, outline and detail, over time the Anglo-Saxon ruling elites began to be extirpated and replaced with the Norman military aristocracy, many of whom "William the Conqueror owed" for their "assistance in his great venture." Norman-French and Latin became culturally representative languages, used in the King's Court and by canonical and secular law respectively and exclusively.[42]

1983), pp. 115–127, Robert W. Burchfield, 'Ormulum', in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joseph R. Strayer, Vol. 9 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), p. 280, Robert W. Burchfield, 'Line-End Hyphens in the *Ormulum* Manuscript (MS Junius 1)', in *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E.G. Stanley*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray, and Terry Hoad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 182–187, and J.A.W. Bennett, 'Middle English Literature', in *Oxford History of English Literature*, ed. by Douglas Gray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 259–263 respectively.

[41] See John La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 28–29.
[42] Sir Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943) (reissued edn. 2001), p. 618, David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact upon England* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964) (renewed 1992), p. 270. All citations taken from the later editions unless otherwise indicated. Both Stenton and Douglas stress the mantle of legality that was thrown over the territorial colonisation of England. However, La Patourel

The latter point supports Shippey's assertion that post-1066 "anyone who was anyone spoke French" while Old English dialects were relegated to being a marginal language.[43] But while the Norman Conquest indubitably had an impact on England, its extent is a subject of debate. As John La Patourel argues in *The Norman Empire* (1976):

> Although a clearly defined historical phenomenon [...] like all such phenomena it cannot be treated as entirely self-contained. Dividing lines are never sharp and exclusive; and all argument on continuity or discontinuity between one historical phase or subject and another must be treated as a matter of more or less.[44]

The historical and cultural impact of the Norman Conquest on England is not the central focus of this thesis. But it is crucial to understanding the interpretations that have been placed on Tolkien's work and its engagements with England, and also to drawing a connection between the cultural inheritances Tolkien believed had been lost and the engagements with English historiography his work undertakes in its efforts to recover them. In this regard, extensive debate has been devoted to assessing the impact and influence of the Norman Conquest and the importance to British and English culture of the concept of "the Norman Yoke".[45] As David C. Douglas argues in *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact upon England* (1964, 1992) "few periods of our history remain more the subject of controversy",

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comments that in the matter of land redistribution just "because a legal theory was found to cover the vast change in land ownership that took place" the Normans "had the power [and] it does not follow that it was done justly" (see La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. 47).

[43] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 47.

[44] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. v.

[45] This phrase originated with the Levellers before passing into the wider cultural debate that Douglas describes (see J.G.A. Pococke, *Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century – A Reissue with a Retrospect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) (reissued 1987), pp. viii, 361. All citations taken from the 1987 edition unless otherwise indicated. See also R.B. Seaberg, 'The Norman Conquest and the Common Law: The Levellers and the Argument from Continuity', *Historical Journal*, vol. xxiv (1981), 791–806).

with the Norman Conquest and its architect, William the Conqueror, being simultaneously "hailed as one of the founders of English greatness and as one of the most lamentable of English defeats."[46] Culturally, Douglas notes, in the late-Victorian period, the Conquest was routinely positioned as the making or breaking of Britain.[47] It is clear on which side of the debate Tolkien positioned himself.

I do not intend to replay all of Douglas's or La Patourel's arguments, or explore their corollary links to other scholars therein. Nevertheless, their work is significant in this context. Arriving a generation on from Tolkien's academic heyday, yet drawing on the same sources, they are far enough removed from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cultural beliefs in Anglo-Saxon verities and the Norman Yoke to question the interpretations of the Conquest such perspectives advance. As such, they offer a tempered view to the central point advanced by Tolkien and Shippey: that the Norman Conquest destroyed the things that made England English: its language, its literature and its culture. Their work

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[46] Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (1992), pp. 4–5.

[47] Douglas offers Thomas Carlyle and Edward Freeman as examples of this cultural division. Douglas notes that where Carlyle asked "without the Normans what had it ever been? A gluttonous race of Jutes and Angles capable of no great combinations", Freeman argued that "all England" was "'round the banners of Godwin" and "the good old cause was that for which Harold died on the field" (See Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (1992), p. 6). To these examples can be added Joseph Chamberlain's late-Victorian proposal of the "greatness and importance of the distinction reserved for the Anglo-Saxon race, that proud, persistent self-asserting and resolute stock which no change of climate or condition can alter". In the same period, Alfred Milner wrote:

> If I am an imperialist, it is because the destiny of the English race, owing to its insular position and its long supremacy at sea, has been to strike fresh roots in distant parts of the world. My patriotism knows no geographical but only racial limits. I am an imperialist and not a Little Englander because I am a British race Patriot. It is not the soil of England […] which is essential to arouse my patriotism, but the speech, the traditions, the spiritual heritage, the principles, the aspirations of the British race.

Such rhetoric bypasses the historical and cultural impact of the Norman Conquest to root the idea of 'real' England in a shared racial and cultural Anglo-Saxon heritage, language, history, and set of traditions. It also does not acknowledge, as Peter S. Baker comments, that "the people who were conquered in 1066 had themselves arrived as conquerors more than six centuries earlier" (See Joseph Chamberlain, *Speech to Canadian Federation,* Toronto, August 1887, Alfred Milner and Jan Smuts, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 415–432, and Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (Malden and Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 1).

indicates that the assertion that a complete extirpation of culture had occurred is problematic.

First, as La Patourel comments, the Norman conquest of England "was a long and complicated process, far from complete when Domesday Book recorded the stage it had reached in 1086, and continuing far into the twelfth century."[48] With regard to the destruction of native language, literature, and representative culture that Tolkien and Shippey suggest happened, La Patourel proposes that "the English vernacular style was not extinguished" in its entirety – something central by implication to Tolkien's argument in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*'. Although he concedes that "it was driven underground by the requirements of the new Norman aristocracy and normanized church" the influx of the French language that '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' suggests was a defining and immediate feature of the Conquest "appears to have happened later." Rather than a complete eradication of pre-existing culture and customs, La Patourel suggests that immediately following 1066, and during the colonization that followed it, a merging of "native English" with "continental fashions" in art and literature occurred slowly and over time. It is significant that La Patourel also takes the opposite view to Tolkien regarding the impact of this process. Rather than interpret the Norman Conquest as a catastrophe that interrupted an extant history, or destroyed a pre-existing indigenous culture, La Patourel's description of the Conquest as "a clearly defined historical phenomenon" interprets it as an historical process, one of the many incursions that shaped English and British history. Similar to the Anglo-Saxon or Roman colonisations of Britain, La Patourel suggests that it should be

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[48] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), pp. 46–47.

considered as part of the island's ongoing narrative, rather than an interruption of its true history and or destroyer of its true character.

La Patourel's view, supported by the work of other historians of the field, acknowledges that what was spoken and written after 1066 was not what Tolkien might recognize as Old English. But La Patourel contends that the intermingling of languages and forms ultimately produced "a not undistinguished body of literature."[49] That it may have been written in what Mildred K. Pope describes as "Anglo-Norman – a traditional French spoken and written in Britain from the Norman Conquest to the last quarter of the fourteenth century" is to be expected.[50] As Bernard Cohn argues with regard to the British colonisation of India in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (1996) gaining control of the language is the first stage of colonisation.[51] Yet while Anglo-Saxon may no longer have been the language of the court, the church or the law, the language was in flux and, as la Patourel suggests, its elements remained recognizably English. As La Patourel comments although things were introduced from the continent, "native styles remained strong in England ... [and] the general result by the beginning of the

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[49] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. 257. La Patourel draws on the analysis of Richard Wilson and Austin Poole in drawing this conclusion (see Richard.M. Wilson, 'English and French in England, 1100-1300' *History* 28, (1943), 37–50 and Austin Lane Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta 1087-1216* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 252–254 respectively). La Patourel's point and his wider argument regarding the impact of the Norman Conquest have been more recently endorsed by Hugh M. Thomas. While acknowledging the changes that did take place, Thomas also notes the many essential continuities that endured in England pre- and post-1066 (see Hugh M. Thomas, *The Norman Conquest: England After William the Conqueror* (Plymouth and Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).
[50] Mildred K. Pope, *The Anglo-Norman Element in our Vocabulary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1944), p. 1. La Patourel also cites Johan Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 27–33, Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta* (1955), pp, 242-259, and Raymond Wilson Chambers and Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, *On The Continuity of English Prose From Alfred to More and His School* (Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1957), pp. lxxxi–c respectively to support this contention.
[51] See Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command', in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 16–57.

twelfth century, whatever happened later, was a remarkable degree of uniformity between the two countries [of France and England]."[52]

The top-down imposition of the French language on England, moreover, was not long-lasting. In his analysis of the development of Britain's legal language in *The Language of the Law* (1963), David Mellinkoff traces the trajectory of both languages in this context from the Conquest onwards. He notes: "The Norman Conquest did not slam the door on English [...] From the coronation of the Conqueror on, French and English (and Latin for the learned) were heard side by side in England." There is evidence, he argues, of the "steady progress of Frenchmen learning English and Englishmen learning French" with the result that by the twelfth century "bilingualism was not uncommon." By the thirteenth century, he notes, "English was becoming general in all classes in society" although French and Latin were "still important to the educated man". Yet by the fourteenth century, Mellinkoff argues that "English was the cradle tongue of Englishmen generally" and the "language of common use" while French was rapidly being relegated to "an accomplishment."[53]

The work of Douglas, La Patourel, Mellinkoff, and the authors mentioned in parenthesis, acknowledge that there were significant changes in England. As La Patourel comments "at the highest level there was an outright substitution of a Norman-French aristocracy for the English aristocracy of pre-conquest times, which was exterminated or degraded by the Norman king and his followers."[54]

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[52] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. 252.
[53] Mellinkoff acknowledges the lasting impact of the Norman Conquest on secular and legal language, estimating that of the estimated "10000 French words" that entered the English language in the Middle English period approximately "7500" remain in common usage today. However, he argues that it should be seen as a fluctuating exchange that did not result in French dominating English or vice versa except perhaps in the area of the law (see David Mellinkoff, *The Language of the Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1963) (reissued) (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), pp. 94–98. All citations taken from the 2004 edition unless otherwise indicated.
[54] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. 253.

Marriage was banned between English men and women and Norman aristocrats

of the first rank, although this dissolved over the following century, prompting

Robert fitzNeal to comment that there had been so much intermingling in England

that it was now impossible to distinguish between Englishmen and Normans.[55] Yet

when it comes to the idea that the pre-existing language and literature suffered

extermination, something central to both Tolkien's ideas on Anglo-Saxon history

and Old English as a language and his belief in a lost England, La Patourel

suggests that there were "no occasion for extensive changes":

> For while Norman barons might often rearrange the units of which the
> Anglo-Saxon estate they took over were composed when constructing their
> castleries and honours, or entrust their exploitation to farmers, they would
> not wilfully disrupt the agricultural or pastoral routine; for the value of their
> manors to them was as going and profitable concerns. *There was no great
> revolution in English rural life* [my emphasis].[56]

La Patourel's suggestion is that apart from the brutal suddenness of the regime

change at the top where the aristocracy of Anglo-Saxon England was replaced by

the military and proto-feudal aristocracy of the Normans, the wider impact of the

conquest was gradual, taking centuries. The Normans may have organized the

peasantry into a universal class of *villani* to produce a resemblance to their

counterparts in Normandy, then, but it was a superficial change. At the

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[55] Richard fitzNeal, *Dialogus de Scarracio*, ed. by Charles Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, (1950), p. 53. Stenton suggests that this was not a racial policy, but a result of a Norman instinct for alliances informed by the aristocratic urge to build estates and familial legacies. As such, he argues that as a tendency it predated William's conquest of England. To summarise Stenton's argument, he proposes that when Normans married outside of their close baronies, it tended to be into families settled on land augmenting their own, or adjacent to the borders of Normandy in order to extend their influence. It follows, therefore, that having conquered Britain anyway they felt no impulse to marry their English counterparts (See Sir Frank M. Stenton, 'Presidential Address: English Families and the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* fourth series, 26 (1944), 1-12 (p. 5–6).
[56] La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (1976), p. 256. As La Patourel acknowledges, Reginald Lennard makes the same point (see Reginald Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135: A Study of Social and Agrarian Conditions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 105).

intermediate level, there was intermingling between the English and the French. Crucially for Shippey's interpretation of Tolkien's argument in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' La Patourel and Mellinkoff both suggest that, while they were interchangeable depending on social context, the languages remained distinct.

These historical analyses indicate that the central point of Tolkien's argument that a verb distinction persisted into post-Conquest times is not remarkable but both likely and possible. The persistence of the linguistic distinction noted by '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' should not be considered as demonstrating the survival of an indigenous culture in the face of an exterminating, colonising other, therefore. Its endurance can be positioned as a natural consequence of the pace of assimilation and change following 1066. Rather than being a surviving emblem of representative pre-Norman English culture enduring by chance under the conquerors, then, or a connecting line to a pre-Norman heartland, the evidence suggests that it endured because the initial impact of the Norman Conquest was more nuanced, and its overall influence on English life was mediated and dispersed over the course of several centuries.

In proposing otherwise, and in Tolkien's life-long belief that an "uncorrupted country-speech" survived post-Conquest in "parts of England", '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' argues that as surviving dated fragments of these and other associated texts written in Middle English maintained a pre-Norman Old English verb rule well into the twelfth century, a line of linguistic, literary and cultural continuity existed that stretched back beyond the Conquest to a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon (and somehow representative) England.[57] As Shippey summarises:

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[57] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 106.

> They were the product of a 'school'; so were the works themselves, composed in the same dialect by another man or men; and this school was one that operated in English, and in an English descended without interruption from Old English, owing words certainly to the Norse and the French but not affected by the confusions their invasions had caused.[58]

Tolkien's own circuitous argument does not make this clear. As Shippey notes, the allusions to Dan Michels, Orm, former cultivations and present troubled times must be laboriously unpicked to be understood. Nevertheless, the reason for drawing together the historical analyses above is because they challenge the implications of Tolkien's position here: it does not deny that Tolkien may have seen his work as an attempt to retrieve it, but it does challenge the author's belief that the Norman Conquest destroyed a somehow representative Anglo-Saxon English culture and Old English as a language.

Nevertheless, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' remains insightful in three ways: first, it emphasizes Tolkien's personal conviction that England had somehow been 'lost' – a conviction that can be situated in the context of the emotionally charged and highly polarised division Douglas suggests the Norman Conquest inspired in British cultural self-representation. Secondly, it reveals Tolkien's deep intellectual and emotional attachment to the idea that England's representative culture came from its West Country area. Thirdly, it outlines the essential importance of philology, and its ability to generate causal links between language, literature, and culture, to Tolkien's creative work. In the first and second instance, Tolkien's attempts to temporally and spatially locate his 'invented' histories in England led to similar engagements with linguistic distinction. For example, in composing *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien noted that he had "constructed an imaginary *time*, but kept my feet on my own mother-earth for *place*." Middle-earth

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[58] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 46.

was positioned as a "modernization or alteration […] of *an old word* for the inhabited world of Men [my emphasis]". As with *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit* and Tolkien's mythology generally, the inspiration for this choice of location and the components of his linguistic engineering can be found in archaic texts as similarly fragmented to the ones discussed in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*'. Middle-earth, Tolkien contended, could be traced back to the "O[ld] English *middan-geard*", and "mediæval E[nglish] *midden-erd, middle-erd* [sic]", representing the lands of "the *oikoumene* [or] middle […] set amidst the encircling seas and between ice of the North and fire of the South".[59] The *oikoumene*, Tolkien explained, was "the abiding place of Men, the objectively real world, in use specifically opposed to imaginary worlds (as Fairyland) or unseen worlds (as Heaven or Hell)".[60] More explicitly Tolkien remarked that Middle-earth:

> Is not a name of a never-never land without relation to the world we live in. It is just a use of Middle English *middle-erde* (or *erthe*), altered from Old English *Middangeard*: the name for the inhabited lands of Men 'between the seas.' And though I have not attempted to relate the shape of the mountains and land-masses to what geologists may say or surmise about the nearer past, imaginatively this 'history' is supposed to take place in a period of the actual Old World of this planet.[61]

Yet each distinction is made to reinforce Tolkien's explicit idea of where 'home' was: the West Country and its environs. As he stated in a letter to his publishers (ironically on the subject of the work's translation) *The Lord of the Rings* "is an English Book and its Englishry should not be eradicated."[62] It was written "precisely to restore to the English an epic tradition and present them with a

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[59] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 283.
[60] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 239.
[61] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 220.
[62] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 299.

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mythology of their own."[63] As this chapter will discuss, the relationship of the individual components of Tolkien's fictions to English history are designed to be recognized analogously via a process of symbolic applicability rather than by direct and total allegorical equation. As such, Middle-earth is "in short a 'medial' or 'liminal' place", a symbolically charged narrative construction rather than a definitive concrete historical location.[64] Yet, as chapter five's reading of *The Lord of the Rings* will discuss, and as Shippey notes, taken from Anglo-Saxon history, the names of the hobbits who found the Shire, Marcho and Blanco, signify **marh* (horse) *blanca* (white).[65] The Shire, then, is explicitly twinned with the Vale of the White Horse, the West Country, in the English Midlands, described by Thomas Hughes as the heart of all England and "sacred ground for Englishmen."[66] This is the territory identified as representatively English by Tolkien in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*'. It is also the place Tolkien described as "home to me, as no other part of the world is."[67] As he notes in another letter, "I am in English terms a west-midlander at home only in the counties upon the western marches: and it is, I believe as much due to descent as opportunity that Anglo-Saxon and Western Middle English and alliterative verse have been both a childhood attraction and my professional sphere."[68]

The link**s** between Tolkien's intellectualising of what is representatively English, his emotional attraction to the concept of the West Country as its essence, and the representations of the texts are important. As Baker comments,

[63] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 231.
[64] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 347.
[65] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 116.
[66] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (London: Penguin, 1994 (original 1857), p. 25.
[67] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 54, 213.
[68] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 218. For more on Tolkien's comments regarding the North-West of Europe notably the importance of its "soil", its "temper", and the geographical correspondence of Hobbiton and Rivendell to Oxford and to his work see Tolkien, *The Letters*, p. 144, 212–213, and 376 respectively. For more on the importance of the West Country to his conception of 'home', see Tolkien, *The Letters* , p. 54, 108, 213, and 218.

"most Old English Literature is not in the Mercian dialect […] but in West Saxon [which] was the dominant language during the period in which most of our surviving literature [of the period] was recorded."[69] This belief informs Tolkien's position in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*'. Both Carpenter and Shippey comment on the personal significance of the West Country for Tolkien; as with *Farmer Giles of Ham* most of Tolkien's shire-names in *The Lord of the Rings* are drawn from the region.[70] But the wider implications of this evidence are clear: home and England were the same for Tolkien and both were explicitly tied to a specific location.

Part of Tolkien's personal preoccupation with England and Englishness, then, and their representations in the texts clearly focus on the question of them as a cultural inheritance. This leads into the final point to be drawn from this discussion of '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*': philology's ability to formulate links between language, literature, and culture were crucial to Tolkien's exploration of these themes. One of the main strands of Shippey's analysis of Tolkien is the centrality of philology to Tolkien's self-perception and thence to his work. As Tolkien commented to his son:

> I am a *pure* philologist. I like history, and am moved by it, but its finest moments for me are those in which it throws lights on words and names [...] Without those syllables the whole great drama both of history and legend loses savour for me [Tolkien's emphasis].[71]

But, as Shippey identifies, philology's concern with "something much greater than a misfit combination of language plus literature" directly informs the aesthetic

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[69] Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (2003), p. 10.
[70] For example, see Shippey's analysis of the place names in Tolkien's work (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 114–118.
[71] Tolkien, *Letters* (2006), p. 264.

methodology that underpin the texts.[72] Shippey argues that while linguistically-based, for Tolkien the subject of philology was about people as much as it was words and texts. It is also, he also suggests, by necessity an imaginative pursuit. Philology sees culture as encoded in the linguistic footprints a people leave behind, however compromised, fragmentary or corrupted, and hence always potentially retrievable. Frequently, in Tolkien's time, Shippey explains, from no more than a few fragments scholars would draw "conclusions from the very *letters* of a language […] They were prepared to pronounce categorically on the existence or otherwise of nations and empires on the basis of poetic tradition or linguistic spread".[73] In this context, the characteristic activity of the philologist is reconstruction and this reconstruction, even if carried out in accordance with established linguistic theorems and critical intuition, is imaginative. Defined by Shippey as "asterisk-reality", this philological reconstruction, based on the logic of linguistic and cultural support structures, directly correlates to Tolkien's professional and creative praxis.

The analytical logic of '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' draws attention to how the philological method provides not just points of linguistic, literary and cultural-historical orientation for the judgements of the article but the methods of construction and reconstruction that later informed Tolkien's fiction. Put simply, Tolkien's creative approach was essentially the same as his philological praxis. Tolkien's approach to the texts in the article mirrors and is echoed by their discussion by other philologists. For example, Robert W. Burchfield endorses J.A.W Bennett's proposal that the multiple corrections of the manuscript over a period of decades to its conclusion circa 1180 demonstrate the sluggishness of the

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[72] Leonard Bloomfield, 'Why a Linguistic Society?', *Language Vol. One*, (1925), p. 1 (see also Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 6–12).
[73] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 21.

Norman influence in the formerly Danish areas of England. This echoes M.B.

Parkes's reading of the assimilation of Anglo-Saxon features into early Middle-

English, traced in his analysis of the *Ormulum* (circa 1150).[74] This style of phonetic

and orthographic work, which establishes and traces the linguistic fluxes following

the Norman Conquest, is characteristic of the philological approach Tolkien uses

in his article and informs his conclusions: that the verb form has not changed

indicates linguistic and therefore cultural continuity. But past this evidence-based

assertion, Tolkien's analysis is also imaginative. By noting that the manuscripts

were written in different hands '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhaď* can then

suggest that the continued presence of the verb distinction not only meant that the

texts represented a preserved dialect, a school of English descended without

interruption from Old English, but also the continued presence of a community that

spoke and recorded it. This is the same sort of imaginative leap that allowed Henry

Bradley and James Wilson to argue that Orm wrote in Elsham Priory in North

Lincolnshire.[75] Thus not only did Tolkien use the coordinating indices accepted by

philology as a discipline to place his surviving community in rural but literate

Herefordshire, locating a surviving culture in a defined geographical space at a

precise point in history all on the basis of one verb distinction – but it allowed him

to *imagine* that community.

That this was the case for Tolkien and Tolkien's work can be addressed

from the perspective of Benedict Anderson's proposition that language is an

essential cultural constituent to the imagining of nation. Key to Anderson's reading

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[74] See Parkes, 'On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the Ormulum' (1983), pp. 115–127, Burchfield, 'Ormulum' (1987), p. 280, Burchfield, 'Line-End Hyphens in the *Ormulum* Manuscript (1994) pp. 182–187, and J.A.W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature* (1986), pp. 259–263.
[75] Henry Bradley and James Wilson, 'Where was the *Ormulum* written?', *Athenaeum* (I) 609, (II) 43-44, 73-74, 104 (19 May 1906).

of this is the suggestion that nationalisms do not simply develop out of traditions of linguistic commonality but the privileging given to language from the elite level of Latin to the spoken vernaculars.[76] The linguistic traditions discussed by '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' are not only important from an academic philological point of view, then, but from an imaginative perspective. In Anderson's model those who read the same newspapers simultaneously shared the same news; in Tolkien's analysis, the community who preserved this language did the same, joining in imagining others who adhered to the same forms, imaginatively situating themselves in relation to a perceived community and allowing them to think of themselves as living lives in parallel to those others – or at least proceeding along a similar trajectory – as well as distinct from, for example, the Norman or Anglo-Norman community.

As the citations of Shippey above indicate, the importance of philology's imaginative capacity to Tolkien's creative approach and the relationship of the West Country to the English spaces of his fiction have been established by Tolkien criticism. But they have generally been mobilised to support the idea that Tolkien sought to recover a pre-Norman version of England.[77] Yet if philology was central to Tolkien's creative approach then the evidence also suggests that Tolkien's deeply held personal conviction that there had been a Norman yoke and that in

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[76] Anderson notes this via a discussion of the importance of the development of print media in creating the idea of the nation. Anderson suggests that the essentially monoglot nature of mankind sees the use of vernacular language for administrative purposes occurring in a "gradual, unselfconscious, [and] pragmatic" manner. However, these sequences of "state" rather than "national" usages, taken alongside the development of print capitalism, give a "fixity to language which in the long run helped to build the subjective idea of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (See Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983, 1991, 2006), pp. 52–58).

[77] Alongside the examples echoing or endorsing Shippey's description of Tolkien's representations of England that I have already cited, Jolanta N. Kornormicka's 'The Ugly Elf: Orcs, Bodies, Perversion, and Redemption in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*' (2013) touches on the importance of *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad* in this context (see Jolanta N. Kornormicka, 'The Ugly Elf: Orcs, Bodies, Perversion, and Redemption in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*' , in *The Body in Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on Middle-earth Corporeality*, ed. by Christopher Vaccaro (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc. 2013), pp. 83–97).

throwing it off an English culture could be found must be balanced against his ability as a philologist to accept historical evidence. While it is clear that Tolkien believed the former, his work also displays an equally compelling familiarity with the processes of history and historiography and their role in the formation of national cultures that suggests that any sentimentality Tolkien held towards this idea was tempered in the texts by a realistic appreciation of the way that the world worked. This chapter's analysis of the development of Tolkien's aesthetic methodology and my later discussions of the representations of these themes in the texts will indicate that this was certainly the case. In one sense, Tolkien's personal romanticising of a lost England is perhaps understandable. In the post-colonial era Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that the search for origins was intrinsic to national culture, but counselled that "nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities."[78] Spivak proposes that the image of the pre-imperial/pre-colonial society as a distant culture "exploited but with such rich intact heritages waiting to be discovered" was a potent symbol, but that it was unwise to attempt to recover or invent a national culture or identity in a post-independent nation simply by erasing or ignoring the legacy of colonization.[79] Spivak is writing specifically about the search for identity that newly-independent nations undertook as the territorial blocs of Western empires broke down over the course of the twentieth century. However, when read alongside the culturally potent but divisive idea of an Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Yoke,

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[78] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* ed. by C. Nelson and L.Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271–313 (p. 291).
[79] Other postcolonial critics beside Spivak have criticised the tendency to eulogise the pre-colonial past or romanticise an idea of 'native' culture. For example, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Out of Africa, Topologies of Nativism', in *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, ed. by D. LaCapra (Ithica, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 134–163.

Spivak's ideas are equally applicable to the idea of a pre-Norman English heartland. It is statements such as Shippey's that see Tolkien's work positioned as a nostalgic attempt to recover this.

Nevertheless, if the idea that a colonial presence always reworks the pre-colonial reality is applicable to British culture as well as those of former British colonies then it is perhaps more productive (and more accurate) to view Tolkien's work (and the complex of linguistic, literary, cultural and philological concerns that inform it) as a far more nuanced recognition that the past and our identity are rarely, if ever, available to us in a form that can be kept separate from the tumultuous historical processes of human and cultural interaction. Tolkien's texts discuss the cultural upheavals that historical phenomena and epiphenomena produce, and display an awareness of the roles that history and fiction played in healing these disruptions. As a discipline, philology maintains and promotes its imaginative ability to recuperate lost languages, lost literatures, and lost cultures. But it does so from a firm grasp and acknowledgement of the processes of history, processes that Tolkien's fictions not only acknowledge but utilise. Both strands, I would suggest, not only inform the engagements with England and Englishness of Tolkien's texts, but also the literary modalities and strategies chosen to do so:

> In this entire process the thing which was perhaps eroded most of all was the philologists' sense of a line between imagination and reality. The whole of their science conditioned them to the acceptance of what one might call '*-' or 'asterisk-reality', that which no longer existed but could with 100 per cent certainty be inferred. [80]

Indeed, that philology's power to reconstruct long-vanished societies from vestigial literary and linguistic fragments is an intrinsic part of Tolkien's imaginative process

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[80] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 22–26.

is the crux of Shippey's work and one of the reasons for his centrality in this thesis. Methodologically, philology provided Tolkien with a strategy for connecting language, literature and culture to form locations that only existed imaginatively, yet carried the gloss of cultural and historical specificity. As the next section will discuss, this formula informed the development of the fantasy genre in Tolkien's work.

From Philology to Fantasy

In 'On Fairy Stories' (1939) Tolkien suggests that the literary mode of fantasy has a crucial relationship with the real world and its moment of production. The article's central argument is that the "arresting strangeness" of fantasy must be coterminous with its "hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun"; in other words, there is always a close deterministic link between the primary world from which the narrative originates and the secondary world created by it.[81] As Shippey notes, because Tolkien knew that fantasy was a marginal literary genre he suspected that suggesting that the fantasy narratives of his fairy stories were not only artistically important but real would provoke an unsympathetic critical reaction in the prevailing academic and cultural climate. Therefore, as with '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*', Tolkien's points are hedged with equivocation, as Shippey acknowledges. He comments "Tolkien was not prepared to say this in so many words to other people, to sceptics, maybe not to himself", but:

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[81]J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 9–74 (p. 51).

By 'fantasy' Tolkien declared (with a long haggle over the inadequacies of the *OED* and S. T. Coleridge) he meant first the 'Sub-creative Art in itself', but second 'a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image'. The last phrase is the critical one, for it implies that the 'Image' was there before anyone derived any expression from it at all.[82]

Shippey implies that Tolkien was not pursuing something 'real' in an empirical sense that his audience might recognize but that 'felt' real to him from the one perspective that interested him: language. Reading '*Beowulf*: The Monster and the Critics' (1936) and 'On Fairy Stories' as interrelated on this theme, Shippey argues that "Tolkien didn't want dragons to be symbolic, he wanted them to have a claw still planted on *fact* [Shippey's emphasis]" because it described the fusion of linguistic invention, literary artifice and mythic suggestion that he wished to achieve in his own creative work.[83] But in both articles, Tolkien, aware that his artistic ambitions and professional position was out of kilter with the cultural tone of the time, hovered around these central points because they were ones "on which he dared not or could not land."[84]

Tolkien's elusiveness was not without cause. In his own lifetime, Tolkien's employment of the fantasy mode was defined as 'escapist.' For example, seizing on Tolkien's admission that "a real taste for fairy-stories was wakened by philology on the threshold of manhood and quickened to full life by the war" Hugh Brogan

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[82] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 56. Augmenting Shippey's perspective, Tanya Caroline Wood argues that 'On Fairy Stories' follows Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defense of Poesy)* in its structure and rhetorical strategies. Wood suggests that this should be seen as Tolkien's acknowledgement of the literary precedents of defending a difficult position (see Tanya Caroline Wood, 'Is Tolkien a Renaissance Man? Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* and J. R. R. Tolkien's 'On Fairy Stories', in *J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle-earth*, ed. by George Clark and Daniel Timmons (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2000) , pp. 95–108).
[83] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 55.
[84] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 55–58. In noting George MacDonald's declaration that he would "as soon think of describing the abstract human face, or stating what must go to constitute a human being" as define fairy stories, John Garth suggests that in attempting to explain how fantasy works Tolkien attempted the impossible (see George Macdonald, 'The Fantastic Imagination', in *The Complete Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin Classics, 1999), p. 5 and Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), p. 77 respectively).

argued that Tolkien's writing was "therapy for a mind wounded by war."[85] Brogan's

implication is that Tolkien's fiction was triggered by the war, constitutes an escape

from it, and that the author, his work, and its readers, are guilty of failing to engage

with real life. Yet conversely, as Tolkien had pre-emptively suggested in 'On Fairy

Stories,' critics like Brogan could be accused of wilfully confusing "the escape of

the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter":

> Just so a Party-Spokesman might have labelled departure from the misery of the Fuhrer's or any other Reich and even criticism of it as treachery. In the same way, these critics […] so to bring into contempt their opponents, stick their label of scorn not only on to desertion, but on to real escape, and what are often its companions, Disgust, Anger, Condemnation and Revolt.[86]

As far as Tolkien is concerned, escape may be "very practical, and may even be

heroic" and was certainly a viable and vital representative narrative form.[87]

    This is not to suggest that Tolkien's apprehension of what constitutes a

fantasy narrative conforms with other critical appraisals of the genre. For example,

in *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the*

Fantastic (1983) Christina Brooke-Rose argues that *The Lord of the Rings* failed to

conform to her reading of fantasy. Brooke-Rose's points have been rebutted by

Shippey and Rosebury but I will outline her position and their counter-arguments in

order to further contextualise Tolkien's ideas on fantasy.[88] Brooke-Rose's reading

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[85] See Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories' (1988), p. 41 and Brogan, 'Tolkien's Great War' (1989), p. 358. Brogan was not broadly hostile to Tolkien, entering into correspondence with him. But his position within the same literary-critical tradition Shippey identified as antipathetic to Tolkien coloured his critical engagements with the author (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 129, 131–132, 185–186, 224, 225–226, 230, 442, and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 1–6). See also Lionel Basney, 'Tolkien and the Ethical Function of 'Escape' Literature', *Mosaic* 13:2 (1980), pp. 23-36.

[86] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories' (1988), pp. 55–56.

[87] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories' (1988), pp. 55–56.

[88] Rosebury relegates his discussion of Brooke-Rose's analysis to a footnote, perhaps acknowledging that Shippey specifically uses Brooke-Rose's *The Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in*

of Todorov appears to emphasize the importance of the plot's integrity to the

success of a fantasy narrative.[89] She argues that from a structurally definitive

perspective Merry's oath of fealty to Théoden and Pippin's to Denethor are not

"functional" because Merry assists Théoden's niece Éowyn instead and Pippin

disobeys Denethor and breaks his oath to save Faramir's life:

> "Little service, no doubt, will so great a lord of Men think to find in a hobbit, a halfing from the northern Shire; yet such as it is, I will offer it, in payment of my debt." Twitching aside his grey cloak, Pippin drew forth his small sword and laid it at Denethor's feet.[90]

> "What are you doing here?" said Gandalf. "Is it not a law in the City that those who wear the black and silver must stay in the Citadel, unless their lord gives them leave?"
> "He has," said Pippin. "He sent me away. But I am frightened. Something terrible may happen up there. The Lord is out of his mind, I think. I am afraid he will kill himself, and kill Faramir too. Can't you do something?"[91]

Although Brooke-Rose acknowledges the highly developed descriptive realism of

The Lord of the Rings' narrative she dismisses it as "pointless" information

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Narrative Structure, Especially of the Fantastic (1983) to argue that critics who resent Tolkien before reading him tend to fall back on the criticism of the "automatic snigger." Shippey exposes Brooke-Rose's theoretical, conceptual and factual errors over three closely argued pages, notably dismissing her idea that *The Lord of the Rings* fails to fulfil Todorov's scheme as a form of cultural and critical apartheid that fundamentally denies the propensity of English Literature to cross-pollinate forms and genres (See Rosebury *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 226–227, and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 364–367 respectively).

[89] Brooke-Rose is not the only critic to discuss the structural implications of Tolkien's use of the fantasy form. For example, in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) Brian Attebery draws on theoretical readings of the genre to position fantasy in postmodern terms. While acknowledging the importance of nostalgia to the form, Attebery's reading of Tolkien covers much the same ground as Shippey's critical analysis in arguing that the initial reception of *The Lord of the Rings* said more about the critical climate of the time than it did about the work (See Brian Attebery, 'Is Fantasy Literature? Tolkien and the Theorists', in *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992). Similarly, Vappu Viemerö discusses the structural role that violent action plays in creating the tension and resolution required by the genre (See Vappu Viemerö, 'Violence and Fantasy', in *Scholarship and Fantasy: Proceedings of the Tolkien Phenomenon, May 1992, Turku, Finland*, ed. by K.J. Battarbee (Anglicana Turkuensia 12, Turku: University of Turku, 1993), pp. 193–202).

[90] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954) (reprinted London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), p. 786.

[91] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 884–885.

"irrelevant to the quest."[92] But Rosebury argues that Brooke-Rose fails to realise

(or acknowledge) that the scope and scale of Middle-earth is itself an essential

part of the plot. Rosebury argues:

> The emotional power of *The Lord of the Rings* is at least as much a matter of the fascination and beauty of Middle-earth (including its peoples and their cultures) as of the excitement of the plot. But the crux of the plot is, precisely, the threatened destruction of Middle-earth: its conversion by Sauron, if he obtains the Ring, to the likeness of Mordor, a sterile, undifferentiated waste-land in which, we may presume, all cultures will have been obliterated and all peoples slaughtered or enslaved. ('He'll eat us all if He gets it, eat all the world' as Gollum warns Frodo (TT, 245). In this way the two aesthetic structures – the dynamic structure of the plot, and the comprehensive structure of the invented world – are integrally related.[93]

In this context, Rosebury suggests, Merry's and Pippin's actions are the "kinds of

departure from a facile and predictable structuring of ethical action which

exemplify the work's moral subtlety and openness to contingency." Brooke-Rose's

reading of the text, he suggests, "confirm one's impressions that the

distinctiveness of the work counts for less in this analysis than the deployment of

the Todorovian scheme."[94]

Tolkien's intellectual preference was for historical applicability over direct

allegory. In this regard, his conception of fantasy shows correspondence with

other theoretical conceptions of fantasy's relation to the 'real'. For example,

Rosemary Jackson contends in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981) that:

"like any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by its

social context. Though it might struggle against the limits of this context, often

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[92] Christina Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 233-255 (pp. 245, 244, 238) (See also Christine Brooke-Rose, 'The Evil Ring: Realism and the Marvelous', *Poetics Today* 1:4 (1980), pp. 67–90, in which Brooke-Rose gestures towards her later position on Tolkien).
[93] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 34.
[94] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 226–227.

being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it."[95] Correspondingly, Tolkien describes in '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' and 'On Fairy Stories' narrative's propensity to reflect its historical-cultural moment of production as well as the ability and context of a reader to interpret such reflections. While, as Tolkien is quick to assert, one ought not to assume that author's life and cultural-historical context always become foregrounded in their work as a matter of course, his position certainly allows for some kind of relation between reality and invention to be established.[96] What is striking about Jackson's position is its consonance with Tolkien's own comments on allegory. Much cited, Tolkien is putting forward a rejection of allegory that is more tactical than actual. In the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings* he commented:

> I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations and always have done since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its closed applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory' but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.[97]

A response to critical charges that *The Lord of the Rings* was an allegory of twentieth-century history, specifically the Second World War and its aftermath, the foreword proposed a relationship between history and imaginative fiction that challenged simplistically allegorical readings of his work. This has been linked to the theory of subtextual 'large symbolism' advanced in '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and The Critics' (1936). This lecture's proposition that considering the poem and

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[95] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 3.
[96] For example, "biographical terms [are] so obsessively interesting to modern critics that they often value a piece of 'literature' solely in so far as it reveals the author, and especially if that is in a discreditable light" (Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 321).
[97] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 11. Discussion of Tolkien's relationship to allegory tend to focus on his comments in the foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* and 'Leaf by Niggle' (1945) as an allegorical text (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*, pp. 49–51, 190–197, Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 128–129).

the poet as art and artist rather than historical document is integral to its historical

and linguistic value has been interpreted as a defence of Tolkien's own work.[98] As

Shippey noted, "Tolkien felt more than continuity with the *Beowulf*-poet, he felt a

virtual identity of motive and of technique."[99] In its argument for the representative

function of art, '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and The Critics' suggests the "reality of

language" becomes intertwined with the "reality of history […] *at a given point* of

contact between old and new, a product of thought and deep emotion [Tolkien's

emphasis]."[100] Tolkien's argument was that knowing when a text was written helps

identify and define its literary modality. But while on a subtextual level a text's

historical cultural context crucially informs its narrative and the "large symbolism is

near the surface", noted Tolkien, and it informs the work, it "does not break

through, nor become allegory."[101]

The belief that a text should not automatically either be equated with, or

immediately separated from, the events accompanying or surrounding their

production, or depicted by them, is not, then, an outright rejection of allegory. It

argues that if the essence of allegory is to draw equations, they must be supported

by the text.[102] This makes it difficult to accommodate critical views that *The Lord of*

the Rings represents an allegory of the Second World War. In a much-mobilised

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[98] See Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982', *Envoi*, vol. 9. no. 2 (Fall, 2000), 101–167 (p. 103), Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 3–4, and Vladmir Brljak, 'The Book of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist' *Tolkien Studies Journal*, Vol. 7 (2010), 1–34 (pp. 1–2). Tolkien's perspectives in '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' extend beyond Tolkien criticism. In the introduction to his own translation, Seamus Heaney suggests that Tolkien's lecture was "epoch-making." In arguing that the "*Beowulf* poet was an imaginative writer than some kind of back-formation derived from nineteenth-century folklore and philology" to take for granted "the poem's integrity and distinction as a work of art" Tolkien indicated "what this integrity inhered […] a combination of creative intuition and conscious structuring [to] arrive at a unity of effect and balanced order" (Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Translation* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), p. xi).
[99] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 54.
[100] Tolkien, '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' (2006), p. 20.
[101] Tolkien, '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics' (2006), p. 17.
[102] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 49–62.

quotation, Tolkien argued that if *The Lord of the Rings* had been a direct allegory of World War Two:

> The Ring would have been seized and used against Sauron; he would not have been annihilated but enslaved […] Barad-Dûr would not have been destroyed but occupied. Saruman, failing to get possession of the Ring, would […] have found in Mordor, the missing link in his own researches into Ring-lore, and […] made a Great Ring of his own […] Both sides would have held hobbits in hatred and contempt: they would not long have survived as slaves.[103]

In broad terms, there can be little doubt that the text was informed by the Second World War but it is more productive to consider it, and Tolkien's work as a body, as responding to the events of the first half of the twentieth century as a whole.

Within the context of this thesis, and taking into account the specific cultural focus on England and Englishness that Tolkien attributed to his work, the acts of linguistic invention, metafictional constructions and use of the literary mode of fantasy in Tolkien's work can be seen not as escapist, but as a deliberate attempt to confront, reveal and celebrate the mixed histories and cultural hybridities that lie at the heart of individual and national identities. The over-reliance on Tolkien's explanations of his own work has already been noted, but taken alongside philology's approach to reconstructing the past, Tolkien's preference for historical applicability over direct, equatable allegory can be seen as a mechanism that exposes and examines the accepted representative narratives of history and culture. Less quoted than his cordial dislike of allegory, but more apt in this context is Tolkien's description of the confluence of allegory, story and historical truth:

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[103] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 11.

> Allegory and story converge, meeting somewhere in truth. So that the only perfectly consistent allegory is real life; and the only fully intelligible story is an allegory, and one finds, even in imperfect human 'literature' that the better and more consistent an allegory is, the more easily it can be read as 'just a story', and the better and more closely woven a story is the more easily can those that are so minded find allegory in it. But the two start out from opposite ends. You can make the ring into an allegory of our time, if you like; an allegory of the inevitable fate that waits for all attempts to defeat evil power by power. But that is only because all power magical or mechanical does always so work.[104]

To critics who saw 'The Scouring of the Shire' as an allegory of Britain's post-war reality, Tolkien's rebuttal that it was devoid of any "contemporary [post-war] political reference whatsoever" and that it was "an essential part of the plot, foreseen from the outset" gather resonance from this theoretical perspective.[105] If, as Simon Malpas suggests, one of the conflicts at the heart of *The Lord of the Rings* is between "technologically-driven expansion and the threatened home of an organic community" , then it might follow that the destruction and rebuilding of the Shire is vital to communicate how what seems certain and stable is perpetually subject to perpetual disintegration and renewal.[106] When Frodo returns from his adventures, he acknowledges that the Shire has been saved, but that the Shire is not what he thought it was when he set out to save it: "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me."[107] This can be linked to Tolkien's belief that 'The Scouring of the Shire' chapter reached "much further back" than the Second World War to an England that had been "shabbily destroyed" since his early

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[104] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 121.
[105] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 10–12. For example, Robert Plank positions 'The Scouring of the Shire' in this context (see Robert Plank, "'The Scouring of the Shire': Tolkien's View of Fascism', in *A Tolkien Compass*, ed. by Jared Lobdell (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1975; New York: Ballantine, 1980), pp. 107–115).
[106] Simon Malpas, 'Home', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 85–98 (p. 87).
[107] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1067

childhood "in the name of progress."[108] Tolkien may have set out to create some form of 'mythology for England' believing that something had been lost because of the intervention of the Norman Conquest. But that the attempt to fulfil that ambition brought the text into confrontation with the accepted touchstones of origin, language, history, culture, nation, ethnic groups and family is evident in the texts. Frodo's comments, then, can be seen as a clear-eyed retrospective recognition of the inevitability of change. In Frodo's case, this is because of the historical events of the War of the Ring depicted in the narrative. In Tolkien's own comments, the observation of changes to the nature of Englishness over the half century over which he wrote must have confirmed the changes in its character philology suggested had been occurring over the millennia following the Anglo-Saxon period. Both perspectives can be viewed as acknowledging not just the inevitability of such changes, but also the wider cultural-historical ramifications of imperial transition, positioning the texts as embracing the history of empires and the universality of the problems that are the residue of their decay and demise. But the result are works that do not solely seek to recover or preserve a lost England but instead expose and confront the unstable and imaginary realities of such a concept.

Like Brogan, Jackson positioned Tolkien's fantasy in escapist terms, suggesting that it was looking "back to a lost moral or social hierarchy which [he] attempts to recapture and revivify" and arguing that Tolkien's secondary-world fantasy "relates to the real only through metaphorical reflection and never, or rarely, intruding into it or interrogating it."[109] But it can be argued that as with Brogan and Brooks-Rose this more reflects the cultural position and theoretical

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[108] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 12.
[109] Jackson, *Fantasy* (1981), pp. 3, 2, and 42.

scheme of the critic rather than the realities of Tolkien's work. As the literature review noted, in the absence of an appropriate 'toolkit' literary-criticism had fallen back on noting approximate resemblances and broad general comments on authorial intent when confronted with *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time. Jackson's analysis is Freudian-Marxist in outlook, a critical perspective Drout and Wynne have suggested Tolkien's work has historically suffered in its contact with. Drout and Wynne suggest that as the text focuses on "traditional morality [...] a love of heroism, individuality, entrepreneurship and loyalty" it is unsurprising that it has been consciously rejected by "collectivists."[110] The point here is not that critics disagree, sometimes vehemently. It is that Jackson's work precedes Shippey's and the process of Tolkien's critical rehabilitation that *The Road to Middle-earth* set in train. As such, Jackson's views on Tolkien's work are representative of the prevailing critical climate. Moreover, Jackson's own thesis examines the ways in which literary works are created by, and embody, the fantasies of the human unconscious, focusing specifically on primal sexual drives and desires. It is not surprising, then, that Tolkien's work does not fit Jackson's model of what fantasy texts present and engage with it. As has been noted by supporters and detractors of Tolkien's work alike, whatever it is about, it isn't about sex.[111]

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[110] Drout and Wynne describe this mutual hostility by noting Hal Colebatch's riposte to Mick Otty's question "one has to wonder why the inhabitants of Mordor get up in the morning?" – because they are slaves who would be "tortured and killed" if they did not (see Drout and Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*' (2000), p. 115, Mick Otty, 'A Structuralist Guide to Middle-earth', in *J.R.R. Tolkien: This Far Land*, ed. by Robert Giddings (London: Vision, 1983), pp. 154–178 (p. 162), and Hal Colebatch, *Return of the Heroes: The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars and Contemporary Culture* (Perth: Australia Institute, 1990), p. 27 respectively).

[111] Shippey discusses this view (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 367–370). Shippey draws on Tolkien's suggestion that there is more to love than sex (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 48–54). Leonard Jackson's *Literature, Psychoanalysis, and the New Sciences of the Mind* (2000) read *The Lord of the Rings* as a classic Freudian castration-anxiety fantasy. Gollum biting Frodo's ring-bearing finger off in the climactic scene, Jackson suggests, "as clearly Freudian as one could ever hope to get. If this scene is not a reference to the castration complex, then there is no reference to castration anywhere in literature." In response, Shippey noted "apart from some entirely literal cases" (see Leonard Jackson, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp.172–176 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 368 respectively).

However, what is pertinent to this discussion of Tolkien's use of the fantasy mode is Jackson's comment that:

> The forms taken by any particular fantastic text are determined by a number of forces which intersect and interact in different ways in each individual work. Recognition of these forces involves placing authors in relation to historical, social, economic, political and sexual determinants, as well as to a literary tradition of fantasy, and makes it impossible to accept a reading of this kind of literature which places it somehow mysteriously 'outside' time altogether.

Placing authors and texts firmly within their cultural-historical locations, and acknowledging fantasy as both a literary tradition and culturally representative form, Jackson argues that fantasy narratives work simultaneously as symptomatic corollaries, imaginative renditions, and cultural-historical documents of their moment of production. The escape Brogan suggested fantasy offered can instead be repositioned in Tolkien's work as a confrontational engagement with, and renegotiation of, reality. As noted by Mikhail Bakhtin, "the fantastic serves […] not in the positive embodiment of the truth, but in the search after the truth, its provocation, and, most importantly, its testing".[112] In other words, the nature of fantasy is to expose accepted norms and recast the limits of reality's ontological and epistemological frame. Accordingly, it is possible to view Tolkien's work, however apparently fantastical and otherworldly their secondary-world construction appears, as a commentary on the historical moments of its composition. Thus while it would be misguided to read it as an allegory of the twentieth century, it would be equally misguided to read it as entirely devoid of historical referentiality because while the use of fantasy allows literature to sidestep realism's fixity of cultural-historical context and the necessity of

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[112] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* trans. R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), p. 94.

coordinating referents, it does not deny the resonance of the cultural-historical moment of its composition.

Brogan's position, outlined above, can be closely aligned with Jackson's. Both depict critical perspectives that position Tolkien's work as an attempt to retreat into a world of fantasy and the past to avoid the real and the contemporary. But while the First World War 'quickened to life' the concepts that eventually manifested themselves in Tolkien's fiction, it is apparent that the fiction itself sprang from Tolkien's preoccupation with the constitution of England and Englishness while the form these engagements took were inspired by the philological discipline that dominated his professional life. It can be proposed, then, that Tolkien's engagements with these themes encompassed two perspectives: first, England and Englishness viewed from the long historical perspective granted by philology. Secondly, the contemporary cultural resonances, concerns, and anxieties regarding its nature captured by the use of the fantasy mode. While demonstrably deeply invested in the past, Tolkien and his work were also part of the twentieth century and can be seen as responding to the same cultural traumas as both the war poets and the modernists of his era. Tolkien's work was not alone in returning to archaic and medieval sources to negotiate the first half of the twentieth century and his work was not unique in stressing the contemporaneity of the past by appropriating it.[113] In focusing on the historical processes that shaped the idea of England, and in attempting to represent them, Tolkien's narrative strategies ultimately mirrored those of historiography in a

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[113] Robert Graves, for example, implicated Anglo-Saxon poetry in his trench imagery, imagining "Beowulf lying wrapped in a blanket among a platoon of drunken thanes in the Gothland billet; Judith going for a promenade to Holofernes's staff tent; and Brunaburgh with its bayonet and cosh fight" while Ezra Pound rewrote *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, engaging with the modernist idea of history as at once a palimpsest and a complex matrix of perennial synchronicity (see Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995 (original 1929)), p. 362.)

manner that conspicuously came to resemble T.S. Eliot's idea of the "mythical method" as a way of "controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense paranoia of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[114] The following section will explore this further. Beginning by outlining the contiguities between Tolkien's and modernism's use of mythology, it will go on to show how the relationship between philological method and the fantasy mode, discussed here as primarily originating from an interest in cultural inheritance and as a mirror to the fantasy mode, ultimately saw Tolkien's work engaging with and questioning the national history and historiographies of England.

Tolkien, Modernism and Metafiction

To the modernist aesthetic, myth presented a formula with which to impose order upon a reality whose certainties of science, time, religion and culture had collapsed. Myth – "by definition both impersonal and ahistorical" – offered a way of affording validity beyond cultural or historical specificity.[115] Specifically, faced with the realist impossibility of accurately rendering the chaos of modern existence, myth offered a way of reasserting artistic authority over the ambivalencies of subjectivity and time. Of course, a crucial difference between Tolkien, on the one hand, and Graves and Pound, on the other, is that Tolkien's work did not mix and match cultural sources as the modernists did. Rejecting modernist classicism and drawing primarily from Northern discourses; instead, Tolkien's work was to "possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our "air" (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither

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[114] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. by F. Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 177.
[115] Rainer Emig, 'Macro-myths and Micro-myths: Modernist Poetry and the Problem of Artistic Creation', in *Myth and the Making of Modernity: The Problem of Grounding in Early Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. by Michael Bell and Peter Poellner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 181–196 (pp. 181).

parts of Europe; not Italy or Aegean, still less the East)".[116] Yet consciously engaged in the project of restoring "to the English an epic tradition and present [ing] them with a mythology of their own",[117] Tolkien's aesthetic methodology and approach to mythology conspicuously came to resemble T.S. Eliot's idea of the "mythical method" as a way of "controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense paranoia of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history".[118]

As Michael Bell notes, myth "represents precisely the lost unity, real or imaginary, which preceded the modern division of realms."[119] Appropriating the authority of ancient myths by allusion or direct quotation afforded access to myth's unifying locus. As well as its implications for the structural relationships between his works, Tolkien's description of his mythological vision in the Waldman and Thompson correspondence outlines a creative rationale that fulfils many of the theoretical criteria characteristic of modernist myth-making, pursuing the notion of independent stories that interrelate to form an overarching structure which explains why the world is as it is and things happen as they do.[120]

> the larger [work] founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backdrops […] I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama.[121]

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[116] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 144.
[117] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 231.
[118] Eliot, *Selected Prose* (1975), p. 177.
[119] Michael Bell, 'Introduction', in *Myth and the Making of Modernity: The Problem of Grounding in Early Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. by Michael Bell and Peter Poellner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 1–8 (p. 5).
[120] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 144–145.
[121] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 144–145.

Redolent of modernism's 'mythical method', Tolkien's corpus is composed of a multiplicity of stories that interrelate: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are ultimately fragments of the wider cycle of Tolkien's mythology of the Silmarils and the Valar. Ultimately a collection of disparate stories their effect and coherence emanate from their intrinsic intertextuality. As Tolkien remarks in '*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics', "myth is alive at once and in all its parts, and dies before it can be dissected."[122] Considered in the context of the Waldman correspondence, this statement indicates how the distinct, fragmented and unfinished elements of Tolkien's mythology are perfectly consistent with his own aesthetic vision. The lesser tales, such as *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *Leaf by Niggle*, stand in contrast to the longer narratives of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, which are in turn set against the vast cosmogonic backdrop of *The Silmarillion* (1977).

In this instance, Tolkien's thoughts on mythology and their congruence to its theoretical understandings are reflected in the texts themselves. In *Work on Myth* (1979, 1985) Hans Blumenberg argues that humanity cannot accept the indifference of time; both myth and history are attempts to overcome this indifference by imposing a structure on time's apparent arbitrariness.[123] Dividing the past into epochs structured around designated key events (e.g. wars, revolutions, natural disasters) endows it with meaning by establishing a sense of essential contiguity between the present – that is, our own position in the world – and the past. Tolkien's work is marked by the same strategies. For example, a historical account of Tolkien's lifetime would be structured around major twentieth-century events (e.g. the First World War, the rise of communism and fascism, the

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[122] Tolkien, '*Beowulf:* The Monsters and the Critics', (2006), p. 15.
[123] Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London. MIT Press, 1985).

Second World War, the decline of the British Empire, the Cold War). Similarly, in *The Silmarillion* great wars end the First, Second and Third historical ages of the narrative. The War of Wrath, the Last Alliance, and the War of the Ring are thus historical structuring devices.

But Tolkien's work is simultaneously the mythology and the history of Middle-earth. According to *The Silmarillion*, the Valar created Middle-earth, yet as gods they are not exclusively the imaginary beings of theology or mythology; they exist for the Elves meet them.[124] The events of *The Silmarillion* are temporally located within the First Age of Middle Earth and therefore fixed in 'history', yet by the time of *The Lord of the Rings,* set in the Third Age of Middle-earth, that time is past and designated as remote enough to function as a mythological background, even though the presence of Galadriel and Elrond as well as Aragorn's direct descent from Beren and Lúthien provide a living connection to its historical reality.

In one sense, the interrelations of the texts can be interpreted as what Shippey described as Tolkien's aesthetic "thrift."[125] Yet the reworking of the poems 'The Cat and the Fiddle' (1923) and 'The Root of the Boot' (circa 1920 -1925) to provide "the hobbit poems" of *The Lord of the Rings*, and the recycling of *The Tale of Tinúviel* can also be assessed as a deliberate attempt to overlap the modes of

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[124] Tolkien discussed the temporal structure of his work in this context in depth. Suggesting that *The Silmarillion* depicts the First Age of Middle-earth, Tolkien proposed that the difference between history and mythology was one of perspective. He suggested that *The Silmarillion*'s narrative overlapped the wider "cosmological narrative" of the Valar and the history of the Elves to show the "half-mythical mode" of history. When perceived from the perspective of the Third Age, a period primarily "concerned mainly with the Ring", Tolkien suggests that by the period depicted by *The Lord of the Rings* the Elves' history is "storial" - temporally distant, its historical events have been told and retold through the span of the Second Age to the point where they have become a mythology of Middle-earth's beginnings. By contrast, the Second Age retains its status as "history" because its events are temporally closer to the Third Age depicted by *The Lord of the Rings* and directly inform this narrative's attempt to resolve their consequences (Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 146–160.
[125] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 41–42, 266.

history and mythology.[126] Firstly, the recycling is consistent with the principles of causal connection and narrative amalgamation described above. In that sense, the reduplication of material in the first two instances is consistent with Tolkien's aesthetic method. They are also integral to the progression of the narrative. The singing of 'The Cat and the Fiddle' for the audience at the inn ultimately results in Frodo using the Ring, allowing both Bill Ferny and Strider to identify him as the 'Mr. Baggins' sought by the Black Riders.[127] 'The Root of the Boot' becomes Sam's 'Rhyme of the Troll' and is inserted into a narrative episode that implicitly links Frodo's quest to destroy the ring to Bilbo's discovery of it. Journeying across country from Bree to Rivendell, Frodo's party come across the three trolls encountered by Bilbo in *The Hobbit* and turned to stone by Gandalf's intervention.[128] In the latter case, *The Tale of Tinúviel* is a narrative Tolkien repeatedly reworked, rewriting it as the poem 'Light as Lead on Lindentree' (circa 1925) and as 'The Lay of Lethian' in *Lays of Beleriand* (circa 1930).

However, the latter's inclusion in *The Lord of the Rings* as "the tale of Tinúviel" which Aragorn tells the hobbits on Weathertop is significant in the context of time schemes.[129] Temporally located within the First Age of Middle Earth, the events recounted in the *Tale of Tinúviel* are fixed in history. But by the time of *The Lord of the Rings,* set in the Third Age of Middle-earth, they are remote enough to function as a mythological background. However, the presence of Aragorn, Beren

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[126] Dating from Tolkien's time at Leeds, 'The Root of the Boot' was first published in *Songs for the Philologists* (University College: London, 1936). 'The Cat and the Fiddle' was first published in *Yorkshire Poetry*, II, 19 (Leeds: The Swan, 1923). For their use in *The Lord of the Rings,* see Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 174–175 and pp. 223–224.
[127] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 176–177.
[128] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 222–224. See J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937) (rev. edn 1983), pp. 32–45.
[129] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 208–209. For the genesis of this see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The History of The Lord of the Rings* (See *The Return of the Shadow (The History of the Lord of the Rings: Part One)*, edited by Christopher Tolkien (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 179–182 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 292–296.

and Lúthien's direct descendent, provides a historical link between this mythological background and the contemporary context. Tolkien's lifelong habit of "'writing back' to confirm the links between [*The Silmarillion*] and *The L. of the Rings*" and recycling his resources is thus also a deliberate process of temporal juxtaposition integral to the creation "a body of more or less connected legend".[130] In doing so, they mark the narrative's conflation of linear historical time and cyclical mythological schemes.

There are other examples of the way that mythological and historical time-schemes operate in Tolkien's texts but one of the most subtle, and yet most powerfully direct, occurs in *The Lord of the Rings* as Frodo and Sam prepare for the last leg of their journey into Mordor:

> Light was fading fast when they came to the forest-end. There they sat under an old gnarled oak that sent its roots twisting like snakes down a steep crumbling bank. A deep dim valley lay before them. On its further side the woods gathered again, blue and grey under the sullen evening, and marched on southwards. To the right, the Mountains of Gondor glowed, remote in the West, under a fire-flecked sky. To the left lay darkness: the towering walls of Mordor; and out of that darkness the long valley came, falling steeply in an ever-widening trough towards the Anduin. At its bottom ran a hurrying stream: Frodo could hear its stony voice coming up through the silence; and beside it on the hither side a road went winding down like a pale ribbon, down into chill grey mists that no gleam of sunset touched. There seemed to Frodo that he descried far off, floating as it were on a shadowy sea, the high dim tops and broken pinnacles of old towers forlorn and dark.[131]

The distant towers are Osgiliath, the populous city Frodo caught a glimpse of in the mirror of Galadriel during his earlier stay in Lothlórien. Frodo's vision was of the city's former peace and prosperity *before* the expansion of Mordor forced

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[130] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 360, 144, 145.
[131] *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 724.

Gondor to retreat from it.[132] Tolkien's use of the word 'forlorn' in this context is precise. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (circa 1137), it is used variously to mean that which has been abandoned, that which has been doomed to destruction, and that which has been morally, as well as physically, lost.[133] The distant towers represent all three things. As Rosebury notes in his reading of the scene:

> Osgiliath is condemned: it stands in no man's land between two opposed powers: East and West, and the haunted impression it makes under the gathering dark reminds us that it is Mordor, rather than Gondor, the spirit of decay rather than the spirit of growth, that dominates this disputed territory.[134]

But there is a wider pertinence than the sensuous alertness to the language of description Rosebury positions as a crucial important characteristic of this passage. In the Shire, unconcerned with the world outside its borders, Osgiliath's siege, defence and fall had been unknown to Frodo until Faramir explains it. Osgiliath is also where Faramir will almost die in an equally forlorn attempt to turn back the host of Mordor before it reaches Gondor. It is also forlorn because Faramir recognized the indefensibility of the city and ordered the retreat from it yet will return to try and retake and defend it because Denethor, Steward of Gondor and his father, suggests that Faramir ordered the retreat because of moral cowardice rather than pragmatism. Although it is (essentially) depicted in the text

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[132] See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p.383.

[133] See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* trans. G.N. Garmonsway (London: Everyman Press, 1953, 1972).

[134] Roger Sale argues that the Gothic nature of passages like this is an indication of how Tolkien "can make the world live just by taking all the dead metaphors he knows and writing them as if they were not dead" (see Roger Sale, *Modern Heroism: Essays on D.H. Lawrence, William Empson, and J.R.R. Tolkien* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p. 213. Where Sale feels that it is only the provincial naiveté of the hobbit characters that allow "dead metaphors" like brooding landscapes and far off towers to come to life, Rosebury argues that in using such tropes "Tolkien restores power to a jaded image by constructing around it a new historical and geographical context, which displays afresh its original aptness: the very simplicity that made it a cliché becomes again its virtue" (Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 86).

as a suicide mission, Denethor's goading of Faramir on this point provokes him

into fruitless action against his better (and correct) judgement:

> "Yet," said Denethor, "we should not lightly abandon the outer defences [...]
> It is at Osgiliath that he will put his weight, as before when Boromir denied
> him the passage."
> "That was but a trial," said Faramir. "Today we may make the Enemy pay
> ten times our loss at the passage and yet rue the exchange. For he can
> afford to lose a host better than we to lose a company."
> [...]
> "Much must be risked in war," said Denethor [...] "But I will not yield the
> River and the Pelennor unfought – not if there is a captain here who has still
> the courage to do his lord's will."
> [...]
> "I do not oppose your will, sire. Since you are robbed of Boromir, I will go
> and do what I can in his stead – if you command it."
> "I do so," said Denethor.[135]

In the middle of what is being narrated as the history of the War of the Ring, then,

Frodo is confronted by a physical reminder of Middle-earth's immediate future and

deep past – the historical antagonism of Mordor and Gondor. The connection of

the eras preceding the War of the Ring to current events, and their temporal

modes, is made explicit by the use of the word 'descry'. Rather than the more

passive 'saw' or 'perceived', 'descry' stresses the physical effort involved and the

conscious link that is being made between the actions of the present and the

events of the past. Tolkien noted how the juxtaposition of different temporal

schemes informed *The Lord of the Rings* using precisely the same imagery,

commenting:

> Part of the attraction of The L.R. is, I think, due to the glimpses of a large
> history in the background: an attraction like that of viewing far off an

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[135] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 847–848.

unvisited island, or seeing the towers of a distant city gleaming in a sunlit mist.[136]

The physical distance between Frodo and Osgiliath here emphasizes the immensity of the temporal and cultural gulf between Frodo, the historical antagonism between Gondor and Mordor, and the events that forced their abandonment, and yet their respective eras, contingent historical causalities, and subjects are brought into contact by the narrative.

It is through such strategies, positioning historical and mythological narratives within the same text, that Tolkien's work explores the human desire for continuity. In terms of mythical models, this has been described by Blumenberg as the need for "mythical models […] that enable the individual subject, with his finite time, to determine how he can set himself in a relationship to the large-scale structures that reach far beyond him."[137] Complimenting this approach, the inspiration offered by the vestigial fragments of the Anglo-Saxon and Norse mythologies was a direct result of the possibilities offered by their fragmented history. As Shippey notes, it was the gaps between fragments as much as the fragments themselves, "hovering, forever on the fringe of sight that made them more tantalising and the references to them more thrilling."[138] Their very vagueness appealed to Tolkien's philological imagination. In the same way that Eliot enhanced his own vision by interweaving literary-historical voices in *The Waste Land* (1922), Tolkien conflated ancient material with his own imaginings. In contradistinction to the direct address favoured by the trench poets, although from the same generation, the highly allusive reflexive nature of Tolkien's narratives denies the emergence of a single subject position. Moreover, this, and their

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[136] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 333.
[137] Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (1985), p. 100.
[138] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 22.

interlacing of historical and mythological modes shift their literary representations from what Bakhtin describes as "the absolute dogma" it might have "been within the narrow framework of a sealed off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality".[139] In the multiplicity of their sources and internal voices, Tolkien's fantasies can be seen as parodic in their "process of revising, replaying, inventing and transcontextualising previous works of art" but also as dialogically reflexive in the way they draw attention to their own artifice.[140]

Combined with the philological method and concept of imagined asterisk-reality that underpins Tolkien's fantasy narratives, this allusiveness can also be seen as forming a bold complex in which, to use Linda Hutcheon's words, "the creating consciousness stands, as it were, on the boundary between language and styles."[141] Just as 'The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star' was inspired by Cynewulf's *Christ*, a multitude of further examples of the imaginative catalysis provided by ancient sources have been identified in Tolkien's work by the source study approach.[142] As Shippey notes, the names of Thorin and Gandalf are transplanted into *The Hobbit* directly from the 'Dvergatal' of the Old Norse *Prose Edda* and the 'Voluspa': "Dvalin […] Bifur, Bafur, Bombor, Nori […] Oin […] and Gandalf […] Thorin […] Fili, Kili […] Gloin, Dori, Ori"; the landscape of *The Hobbit*

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[139] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 61.

[140] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), p. 61.

[141] Linda Hutcheon, 'Modern Parody and Bakhtin', in *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, ed. by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), pp. 87–104 (p. 93).

[142] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Notion Club Papers', in *Sauron Defeated: The End of the Third Age (The History of The Lord of the Rings: Part Four)*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 236. Carpenter and Garth attribute the Anglo-Saxon poem *Christ* to Cynewulf – as Tolkien and his contemporaries did. The latter group also spell the poem's title as *Crist*. However, these views are no longer held. The three *Christ* poems are no longer read as a single sequence and evidence for a Cynewulfian authorship exists only for *Christ* II. *Christ* I, which contains the reference to Éarendel is now generally thought to be anonymous (see Carl Phelpstead, '*Christ*: Advent Lyrics', in *The J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, ed. by Michael D.C. Drout et al (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 98–99).

is derived from Eddic poetry; both 'The Misty Mountains' and 'Mirkwood' find their origin there.[143] In the Norse sagas Mirkwood is the forest that separates Hunaland from other countries, whereas in *The Hobbit* it is the dark forest that lies between the Company and their destination. In *The Road to Middle-earth*, Shippey traces the Elves of Mirkwood back to the Hunting King of *Sir Orfeo*, a text translated by Tolkien, and Bilbo's conversation with Smaug to the Eddic poem *Fáfnismál*, in which Sigurthr and Fáfnir talk while the Dragon dies of the wound the hero has dealt him. Similarly, Shippey compares Bilbo's riddle contest with Gollum to the riddle-contests of *The Saga of King Heidreck*, another text Tolkien had translated, and the method by which Gandalf despatches the trolls can be traced back to the Old Norse poem 'Alvissmal.'[144]

This is not to suggest that Tolkien was a modernist. His work contradicts some of the methodologies of modernism. For example, Tolkien aimed to fabricate a coherent new mythology, one endowed with the authority of antiquity and a sense of completeness suggesting it had been given rather than forged. The final vision was to appear intact rather than self-consciously fragmented. Yet although Margaret Hiley argues in 'Stolen Language, Cosmic Models' (2004) that Tolkien's artistic method is "markedly different from that of modernists such as Eliot and Pound", the above evidence suggests that his texts, at times, show contiguities with the modernist aesthetic, notably in their overt intertextuality.[145] Tolkien's work exposes its allusive correspondence in full view. For example, for instance, alongside their 'borrowed' resuscitated peoples, dragons, landscapes and scenery*,* whenever men gather to do battle in Old English poetry, some

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[143] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 80–81.
[144] See Shippey, *The Road Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 63–74.
[145] Margaret Hiley, 'Stolen Language: Cosmic Models: Myth and Mythology' in Tolkien', *MFS Journal of Modern Fiction Studies,* 50, 4 (London: Winter, 2004), pp. 838–860.

combination of carrion beasts – ravens, eagles and wolves – gathers as well, and so they do too – in the form of *wargs* – at the climactic Battle of the Five Armies in *The Hobbit.* Yet whereas in the Anglo-Saxon originals such tropes tend to remain peripheral, their presence intended to comment on the action by euphemism, the text conspicuously appropriates them as central components.[146] Thus, ravens appear not as mere carrion birds, but as "the great Ravens of the [Lonely] Mountain", an ancient and noble race used to convey vital messages on behalf of The Company at the end of the narrative.[147] Similarly, the eagles rescue The Company from the goblins and *wargs* of Mirkwood and return at the Battle of the Five Armies to help tip the balance to the allies. The point is not to replay all of the anterior sources that appear in Tolkien's work. This has already been done by Shippey, as these examples indicate. But they serve to indicate that this intertextuality goes beyond source inspirations and allusions to become the organizing principle of Tolkien's work. They also define the literary strategies of the narratives in a manner that I will shortly illustrate can best be described as metafictional historiography.

My discussion of the role of metafiction in Tolkien's work will take two parts. Firstly, I will examine the way that it has been interpreted in the criticism of Tolkien Studies. I will do this in order to suggest that these discussions tend to acknowledge the presence of metafiction in Tolkien's work, but that they tend to do so as part of the trend of critical rebuttal that chapter one noted as a tendency of this critical field. Rather than fully scrutinizing their role or impact within the text, this criticism tends to highlight the metafictional strategies used by Tolkien's work

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[146] For example, Baker notes that in *Beowulf* the cost of battle is alluded to by having the raven describe to the eagle how he and the wolf 'plundered' (ate) the corpses strewn about the battlefield (see Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (2003), p. 141).
[147] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 218.

either as an authorial pose, as a non-ironic usage, or as part of a reaction to the suggestion that Tolkien the author was not modern or contemporary in his literary outlook. Responding to these positions, the second part of this section will illustrate that these strategies work specifically to augment the engagements with history and historiography and the examination of national narratives of cultural representation offered by the texts. Discussing the self-aware nature of the texts with reference to Luis Borges and Linda Hutcheon's comments regarding metafiction, and noting Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur's positions regarding the relationship of history and fiction, I will argue that the metafiction of the texts should be regarded as drawing focus towards its key areas of thematic and representative concern: history and historiography's representation of England and Englishness.

It is worth beginning by establishing a critical perspective on the concept of metafiction in order to link Tolkien's texts as metafictional structures to their engagement with English history and historiography. In 'When Fiction Lives in Fiction' (2000) Jorge Luis Borges noted that there are two kinds of stories within stories: those where the "two planes" do "intermingle", and those where they do not.[148] As both are examples of narratives where fiction lives within another fiction Borges designates both 'metafiction.' Borges is primarily interested in this strategy when it manifests as a self-referential "intermingling" narrative where the metafictional elements serve to disrupt the primary mimetic illusion. But he also notes that while metafiction can be interruptive and anti-mimetic, it is not axiomatic that it should be so. As well as the self-referential elements outlined above, Tolkien's metafictional strategies can be placed into Borges second category:

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[148] Jorge Luis Borges, 'When Fiction Lives in Fiction', in *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. by Eliot Weinberger. Trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine and Eliot Weinberger (New York: Viking 2000) pp.160–162 (p. 160).

narratives where a fiction precedes its fiction via approaches such as pseudo-editorial statements, fictional forewords and prologues, claims to translation and so on. *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* all use these devices and in Borges' argument such strategies work in concert to increase the mimetic potential of the work.

Viewed from this perspective, Tolkien's work encompasses both of Borges' definitions of metafiction. Its drive towards faux-authenticity shies away from the overt disruptive tendencies of Borges' 'intermingled' category, at least in the case of *The Lord of the Rings* whose framing devices can be seen as part of an elaborate attempt to propose the accuracy and legitimacy of the text on its own terms. As my analysis of both texts will indicate this level of metafictional construction was only reached after earlier experiments with the form in *Farmer Giles of Ham* whose metafictional devices do puncture the narrative. But nor does Tolkien's work fully attempt the hyperrealism of the 'found manuscript' tradition – although these are an integral part of the framing strategies of the fiction before the fiction. *The Hobbit*, presented as a translation in its own foreword, is identified as a story "from the Red Book of Westmarch", composed by Bilbo himself, and The Red Book of Westmarch itself is revealed to be an archival resource for Tolkien's account of the War of the Ring in *The Lord of the Rings*:

> This account […] is drawn mainly from the Red Book of Westmarch. That most important source for the history of the War of the Ring […] It was in origin Bilbo's private diary […] Frodo brought it back to the Shire […] and during S.R. 1420 – 1, he nearly filled its his pages with his account of the War.[149]

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[149] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 9–15.

Such strategies follow the principles of causal connection and narrative amalgamation Tolkien foregrounded in the Waldman correspondence. The passage imaginatively outlines how philology might resuscitate long-dead archaic cultures from the literary fragments they left behind in purporting to trace lines of linguistic and literary continuity through time. In detailing the archival resources and authors from which the account has been 'drawn' – "The Red Book of Westmarch […] *Herblore of the Shire* […] *Reckoning of Years* […] *Old Words and Names in the Shire* […] *The Tale of Years*"[150] – the text proposes that it stands at the head of and is drawn from a corpus of archival resources. Tolkien Studies has suggested that this approach is a consequence of the philological process of linguistic and cultural reconstruction the author critically employed in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*':

> The original Red Book has not been preserved, but many copies were made […] The most important copy […] kept at Great Smials […] was written in Gondor, probably at the request of the great-grandson of Peregrin […] completed in S.R. 1592 […] It is an exact copy in all details of the Thain's Book in Minas Tirith. That book was a copy, made at the request of King Elessar, of the Red Book of the Periannath, and was brought to him by the Thain Peregrin when he retired to Gondor in IV 64 […] In Minas Tirith it received much annotation, and many corrections, especially of names, words, and quotations in the Elvish languages: and there was added to it an abbreviated version of those parts of *The Tale of Aragorn and Arwen* which lie outside the account of the War. The full tale is stated to have been written by Barahir, grandson of the Steward Faramir.[151]

As Shippey comments, Tolkien's pretence at being a 'translator' was a pose he assumed "with predictable rigour, feigning not only a text to translate but behind it a whole manuscript tradition, from Bilbo's diary to the Red Book of Westmarch to

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[150] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 17–18.
[151] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 26–27.

the Thain's Book of Minas Tirith to the copy of the scribe Findegil".[152] Rendering the narrative thus as the result of many layers of historical translation and embellishment, the Prologue also casts it as myth, filtered through time and shaped by successive refashioning, with Tolkien taking the role of the historian reconstructing a past "that is abolished yet preserved in traces."[153] This is the first way that Tolkien Studies has previously discussed the metafictional nature of Tolkien's work, then: as part of an authorial pose. Yet Shippey's reading of these strategies can be taken further and more profitably aligned with the concerns of this thesis. In reciting the different treatment of the Red Book by the various cultures that possessed the manuscript, the text can be said to essentially also be exploring how narratives of continuity become endowed with identity-bearing significance as they are received, handled and interpreted by successive generations.

That the use of metafiction by the author was non-ironic is another way in which Tolkien Studies has interpreted its presence in the texts. For all of the invented sources and borrowed fragments that fill the narratives, as Mary R. Bowman argues in 'The Story Was Already Written: Narrative Theory in *The Lord of the Rings*' (2006), "Tolkien's characters would never be shown reading a chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* during the chapter itself." Nevertheless, as Bowman also notes "they are frequently shown writing it. He [Tolkien] manages to operate at a meta-fictional level while preserving the illusion of historicity and integrity of a very traditional kind of narrative":[154]

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[152] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 133.
[153] Paul Ricoeur*, Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blarney and David Pellauer, 3. vols (3) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 100.
[154] Mary R. Bowman, 'The Story Was Already Written: Narrative Theory in *The Lord of the Rings*', *Narrative*, 14 (2006), 272–293 (p. 272).

> There was a big book with plain red leather covers; its tall pages were now almost filled. At the beginning there were many leaves covered with Bilbo's thin wandering hand; but most of it was written in Frodo's firm flowing script [...] The title page had many titles on it, crossed out one after another, so:
> *My Diary. My Unexpected Journey. There and Back Again. And What Happened After.*
> *Adventures of Five Hobbits. The Tale of the Great Ring, compiled by Bilbo Baggins from his own observations and the accounts of his friends. What we did in the War of the Ring.*
>
> Here Bilbo's hand ended and Frodo had written:
>
> THE DOWNFALL
> OF THE
> LORD OF THE RINGS
> AND THE
> RETURN OF THE KING [...]
>
> "Why, you have nearly finished it, Mr. Frodo!" Sam exclaimed. "Well, you have kept at it, I must say."
> "I have quite finished, Sam," said Frodo. "The last pages are for you."[155]

The effect of this is twofold: In showing and alluding to the characters writing it, the text is lent the authenticity of independent authorship. In translating these texts, Tolkien-as-editor and translator gives it the veneer of judicious academic scrutiny in its preparation.

It is via manoeuvres such as this that Tolkien Studies has discussed Tolkien-as-author as post-modern. Indeed, Verlyn Flieger argues that genuinely post-modern fiction like John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) appears crude in its deployment of comparative strategies. Flieger cites Frodo and Sam's conversation about their 'story' on the stairs of Cirith Ungol as an example of how close Tolkien comes to 'disruptive' metafiction without tipping over into it:

> "Still, I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We're in one, of course; but I mean: put into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years

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[155] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1065.

afterwards. And people will say: 'Let's hear about Frodo and the Ring!' And they'll say: 'Yes, that's one of my favourite stories. Frodo was very brave, wasn't he, dad?' 'Yes, my boy, the famousest of the hobbits, and that's saying a lot.'"

"It's saying a lot too much," said Frodo, and he laughed, a long clear laugh from his heart [...] "Why, Sam," he said, "to hear you somehow makes me as merry as if the story was already written. But you've left out one of the chief characters: Samwise the stouthearted. 'I want to hear more about Sam, dad. Why didn't they put in more of his talk, dad?' That's what I like, it makes me laugh. And Frodo wouldn't have got far without Sam, would he, Dad?'" [...]

"You and I, Sam, are still stuck in the worst places of the story, and it is all too likely that some will say at this point: 'Shut the book now, dad; we don't want to read anymore.'"[156]

Flieger suggests that this represents the "most critically interesting theory-orientated passage in the book", a passage that is "the measure of Tolkien's skill and modernity as a writer", arguing that even though "it is one of the quietest and calls no attention to itself," it accomplishes "much the same thing as does Fowles."[157] Flieger's point is not the metafiction of the passage – although its fiction about the fiction is apparent. It is that in this passage where she suggests that the text is being "post-modern with a vengeance" Tolkien is actually rewriting the passage in *Beowulf* where the poet celebrating the deeds of *Beowulf* introduces into his poem a poet celebrating the deeds of *Beowulf*. As she comments: "Well then, is the *Beowulf* poet anachronistically postmodern? Or is the technique surprisingly medieval? What exactly do these terms [metafiction/post-modern] refer to?"[158] Flieger does not offer a response to her question, or propose the representative function of Tolkien's post-modernity. It is enough that the author is capable of postmodernity while remaining distinctively Tolkienian. The answer, I

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[156] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 740.
[157] Verlyn Flieger, 'A Postmodern Medievalist?', in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, ed. by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Sievers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) (reprinted 2009), pp. 17–28 (pp. 24–25).
[158] Verlyn Flieger, 'A Postmodern Medievalist?', in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, ed. by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Sievers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) (reprinted 2009), pp. 17–28 (pp. 24–25).

would suggest, is that Tolkien's work deploys both the 'disruptive' and 'buried' strategies outlined above in presenting what Linda Hutcheon described as 'historiographic metafiction' to facilitate its examination of history, the techniques of historiography, and national narratives of cultural representation.

There are qualifying distinctions to make in suggesting that the metafiction of the texts be explained in this way. Touched on, but not fully pursued in Vladimir Brljak's discussion of Tolkien and metafiction in 'The Book of Lost Tales: Tolkien as Metafictionist' (2010), these distinctions require exploration. Hutcheon's discussion of historiographic metafiction is based on work that could be said to be more critically 'mainstream' in a way that Tolkien's work has never been fully recognized as being. In such work, Hutcheon suggests that the distinction is that the historian is presumed to deal in 'facts' and the novelist is presumed to work in 'fiction.' The distinction then would appear to be that the texts Hutcheon discusses co-opt and subvert what could be dubbed real-world histories in their fictions. Tolkien's texts perhaps cannot be evaluated strictly by this measure. As my readings of the texts will make clear, while the actual landscape of England is described in the text, and English history both lightly and heavily fictionalised throughout *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, the histories that each text purports to present are fictional, arising in invented secondary fantasy worlds rather than the primary world and its accompany histories that Hutcheon discusses. Yet I would also suggest that the focus of the texts on the themes of cultural inheritance, how the interrelation between language, literature and culture creates culturally representative narratives, and how location and identity are placed in coextensive relation and written into these narratives suggests that their histories also examine, as Hutcheon proposes, "all

the provisionality and indeterminacy" which primary world historiographic

metafiction raises against world historiography. As with works more usually

designated as metafictional, then, I suggest that the texts under discussion by this

thesis display an equally apparent "intense self-consciousness" about how history

and fiction are written.[159]

On their own terms, therefore, they can be aligned within the parameters of

metafiction as it is discussed by Borges and Hutcheon. In the context of this

thesis, it is the self-aware nature of their engagements with the functions and

strategies of history and historiography, particularly English history and

historiography that is the defining facet of their metafiction. In *The Content of the*

Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (1987), Hayden White

suggests that any mode of discourse constitutes "the ground whereon to decide

what shall count as a fact in the matters under consideration and to determine

what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus

constituted."[160] The texts under discussion foreground their appropriation of the

techniques and strategies of history and historiography in presenting their fictions.

In doing so, they also highlight that their primary focus is as an extended

examination of how England and Englishness have been represented in these

contexts. This conclusion can be examined with further reference to Paul

Ricoeur's arguments in *Time and Narrative* (1988). Ricoeur's argument that fiction

is any type of narrative that is not history is helpful in advancing the proposal that

this is what *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* achieve.

Ricoeur suggests that history and fiction are aligned rather than diametrically

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[159] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 111–113.
[160] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 3.

opposed modes of representation, something achieved by their use of the same strategies of narrative representation. For example, he suggests that "history makes use of fiction to refigure time and, on the other hand, fiction makes use of history for the same ends".[161] To take this further, Ricoeur argues that the indebtedness of historical narratives to fiction is twofold: first of all, history imitates "in its own writing the types of emplotment handed down by our narrative tradition".[162] More importantly, at the level of configuration, history invokes "the representative function of the historical imagination", allowing the historical narrative to be "read as a novel", as the narrative voice courts the complicity of the reader in accepting the presented events of the narrative.[163] Metahistorians such as White and Ricoeur argue that in the same way as history ought not merely to provide a background to the study of texts, but must be seen as informing textual meaning, so fiction is thus fundamental to the creation of historical narratives. Historical narrative is subject to the same methods, strategies and slippages of rhetorical construction as fiction, blurring the lines between 'fact' and 'fiction' and rendering history's claim to perfect objective accuracy suspect. According to Ricoeur, the fundamental difference between historical and fictional narratives – besides the fact that in a historical narrative, the events are not 'invented' – lies at the level of their emplotment and configuration: while the sequence of events in history are imposed by a pre-existing chronology, necessitating their emplotment, authors of fiction are free to manipulate time and event as they see fit. In one sense, then, in order to effect the reader's suspension of disbelief needed to enter and embrace the world of the fiction – which is what Ricoeur calls the 'emigration' of the mind to the world of the text – Tolkien's fiction deploys the devices of

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[161] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1988), p. 181.
[162] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1988), p. 185.
[163] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1988), pp. 185–186..

historiographic metafiction noted above: forewords, prologues, appendices, invented archive and literary traditions and author-as-editor/translator conceits. But in another, these structural devices focus on the text's examination of its key themes: history and historiography's representation of England and Englishness. The use of metafiction in Tolkien's texts, then, should not simply be acknowledged as a rebuttal to the critical claim that Tolkien the author was out of touch or anachronistically divorced from contemporary cultural mores. It should be seen as an integral part of the text's areas of thematic and representative concern.

Revisited, Brljak's argument is insightful in this context. As he argues, these strategies can all be considered as part of "an elaborate metafiction about its [Tolkien's fiction's] own emergence from a basically historical narrative about the way in which parts of a heterogeneous "chronicle" came to be transformed into a literary narratives."[164] Brljak goes on to suggest that the purportedly hobbit-written elements of Tolkien's 'sources' correlate to Hutcheon's belief that historiographic metafiction uses characters who are the "eccentrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history and who project "no sense of cultural universality" to offer fresh perspectives on accepted historical narratives. Brljak's point appears to be that hobbits are peripheral because the Shire is geographically distant from the lands whose events ultimately threaten it, just as they are marginal or eccentric figures because of their demonstrable social insularity and provincial outlook as a people. In both instances, Brljak's assessments are supported by the representations of the text. However, I would suggest that just as evident is the centrality of hobbits to the unfolding narrative of the War of the Ring and as some of its main chroniclers within the context of the *faux* history the text

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[164] Brljack, 'The Book of Lost Tales' (2010), p. 21.

purports to offer – something discussed in more detail in chapter five. Within the context of this chapter, it can also be noted that the hobbits are also central to Tolkien's main focus: his extended engagement with the historical narratives of England and Englishness. As my readings of these elements indicates in chapters three, four, and five, hobbits are symbolically representative, occupying a symbolically representative space, and both are produced at a time when what each represents – England and English identity – was under question.

This makes it difficult to accept without qualification Brljak's suggestion that hobbits simply represent the marginal and peripheral figures of the history and its historiographic representation. Their roles as cultural symbols and as literary mechanisms appear more complex than that. Nevertheless, Brljak's points that in Tolkien's fiction the qualities that Hutcheon argues are the key defining attributes of historiographic metafiction are present is borne out by the representations of the text. Through such devices, and through their confrontation and negotiation of the tensions between history and fiction, the narratives establish, differentiate and then disperse "stable narrative voices (and bodies) that use memory to try and make sense of the past." Both installing notions of authenticity and dispersing them, his fiction both "asserts and is capable of shattering" its own mimetic illusion, regardless that these manoeuvres relate to a secondary rather than primary world.[165] In the prologue to *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, Tolkien exploits the connection between history and fiction in his narrative strategy to invite the reader's acceptance of his fictional historiography, as chapter five will note. Similarly, as chapter four argues, the narrator of *The Hobbit* draws attention to his position in the present in order to scrutinise contemporary obsessions with the

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[165] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (2002), p. 118.

idea of England past. And as chapter three will argue, *Farmer Giles of Ham* foregrounds that fiction is complicit in the creation of historical narratives in order to highlight that historical narratives are subject to the same methods, strategies and slippages of rhetorical construction as fiction, blurring the lines between 'fact' and 'fiction'.

Coda

This chapter has drawn attention to the contiguities between the strategies used in Tolkien's work to engage with the idea of England as a land, a place, and a location that bestows Englishness and more theoretically contextualised understandings of the role played by narrative and the processes of narration in the cultural-historical formation of the nation. Notably assessing Tolkien's aesthetic and cultural preoccupations against Benedict Anderson's reading of imaginary homelands, it also drew attention to the cultural concerns surrounding the constitution of the nation in general and in England specifically at the time Tolkien's work was produced: specifically the disruption and challenge to the understanding of the nation offered by British imperialism, theoretically contextualised in this chapter's discussion of Ian Baucom's work. The reading of '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' pursued two objectives in this context. It positioned Tolkien's personal belief in a lost pre-Norman England as one perspective arising from an established set of cultural readings of the impact of the Norman Conquest on representative English culture. Yet in essentially separating Tolkien's individual opinion from the representations of his work, my analysis did not, however, deny the importance of that perspective in influencing its development, or its role in his progressive evolution of an aesthetic methodology

focused specifically on representing those themes. Revisiting Shippey's analysis of the personal importance of the philological approach to Tolkien's creative praxis and his understanding of his own creative processes in this context, I traced the connections between the asterisk-reality of philology and the manifestations of the fantasy mode in Tolkien's work. As this section acknowledged, in many ways this is critically well-covered ground. But in placing both within the cultural-historical contexts offered by modernism's use of mythology and drawing attention to the self-conscious nature of Tolkien's texts, I then positioned Tolkien's work as a series of metafictional engagements with English history and historiography. This was achieved in order to highlight that the central focus of the texts is a representation of location that acknowledges its role in forming identity but also its inherent mutability. I did so to support this thesis's contention that they do not solely idealize or seek to recuperate a lost England. In their metafictional engagement with historiography's creation of narratives of national history, they accept the phenomena and epiphenomena of history as processes, and they acknowledge the inevitability of change. It is these processes and strategies that I will now discuss in relation to *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit,* and *The Lord of the Rings.*

The current critical positioning of the texts and their relationship to their cultural context of production are discussed in more detail when each is introduced. However, while noting their relationship to one another as part of an interconnected corpus and the implications that may have for any collective conclusions on the treatment of the themes of England and Englishness in Tolkien's work, the examination of each text's interpretation and representation of these elements also acknowledges their autonomy. In this regard, alongside their

reception by criticism, and their location within the late-imperial period, I will also note the ways in which their stand-alone literary modality informs their engagements with these subjects. In this context each can be said to be distinct. *Farmer Giles of Ham*, for example, is a slight comic fable. This contrasts notably with the linear, episodic structure of *The Hobbit*, which is more clearly and specifically a work of children's literature, especially when compared to *The Lord of the Rings*. While this was intended as a sequel to *The Hobbit*, and a process of 'writing back' subsequently linked the two texts, *The Hobbit* was produced independently of Tolkien's mythology of the Valar and history of the Silmarils. By contrast again, although it is occasionally still introduced by criticism as a work of children's literature *The Lord of the Rings* is more complex in its structure, tone, and content than its predecessors, although it uses many of the same literary strategies. These distinctions inform how England and Englishness can be read in each text. For example, I argue that it is the use of the comic mode in *Farmer Giles of Ham* that allows the text to successfully deconstruct the unitary model of national culture presented by English history and historiography to present location as a shared space, serially adapted and overwritten by successive cultural incursions to suit their own ends. It is, I suggest, *The Hobbit'*s symbolic rather than literal interpretation of the cartographic landscape of *Farmer Giles of Ham* that aligns it with concerns about the nature and constitution of Englishness in the interwar period. While elements of both approaches are still discernible in *The Lord of the Rings*, it is, I argue, the complexity of the text's engagements with English history and historiography, foregrounded in its prologue and unfolded progressively throughout that are its significant contribution to these debates. I will begin examining these ideas with my discussion of *Farmer Giles of Ham.*

Chapter Three

Farmer Giles of Ham

As my introduction noted, and chapter one discussed, a critical perception exists that Tolkien's work presents idealized depictions of England. Suggesting that it celebrates homelands as home, these interpretations propose that Tolkien's work does so in a manner that celebrates the past and place as culturally representative, authentic, identity-giving entities, rejecting contemporary understandings of their constitution. Chapter two argued that the engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work could instead be positioned as a progressive exploration of the ways in which historical events and their historiography have made and remade English narratives of identity. Reading *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s (1949) treatment of these themes, this chapter will begin this thesis's examination of that contention.

Farmer Giles of Ham has rarely been considered as an important text in Tolkien's canon. A work of children's literature, discussions of it within Tolkien criticism tend to note its relationship to Tolkien's more celebrated work and position it as a minor text. For example, in *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England* (1979), Jane Chance-Nitzsche suggests the text is "a medieval parody" that "imitates a medieval form or genre and also burlesques medieval literary conventions, ideas, and characters."[1] In *The Road to Middle-earth; How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (2005) Tom Shippey's analysis of the text places it in relation to Tolkien's personal understandings of his profession as a philologist and the impact of the Norman Conquest on the English language,

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[1] Jane Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art: 'A Mythology for England'* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 85. Chance-Nitzsche uses the word 'parody' in this context to mean a humorous imitation of the original object.

noting the text's distinctness from *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). Noting its linguistic and stylistic slightness in comparison to *The Lord of the Rings*, Shippey's scrutiny emphasizes the text's lightly-fictionalized real-world cartography, discussing its language and scope as a developmental tangent between the limited world of *The Hobbit* and the expansive world-creation of *The Lord of the Rings*.[2] Similarly, in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000) Shippey comments on the "light-hearted" nature of the text, suggesting that it is set "neither in real history nor in the world of Tolkien's mythology."[3] Yet Shippey's conclusions on the text are emphatic. In its composition, he argues, Tolkien sought to create "a timeless and idealised England (or rather Britain) in which the place and the people remained the same regardless of politics – the triumph of the native over the foreign."[4] If *Farmer Giles of Ham* can be said to sacralise place, in Shippey's reading it does so because it enunciates Tolkien's personally held desire to return to the 'known' of location as a palliative to cultural change. Yet this chapter will show that the text instead epitomizes a conscious engagement with the partial, incomplete, permeable and always-narrated condition of the nation and its multiple histories. It will also be shown that the text represents an authorial attempt to find suitable modes of representation for this project. Shippey's analysis does not explore the ramifications of his conclusions or fully explore how the text may relate to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* in these contexts. If Tolkien's work is accepted as representing an evolving interconnected whole during its production, as I have suggested, then it is possible that *Farmer Giles of Ham* has

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[2] See Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (revised and expanded edn) (London: Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 111–114.
[3] Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: HarperCollins, 2000, 2001), p. 289.
[4] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 112.

more significance in the context of Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness than has hitherto been attached to the text.

Farmer Giles of Ham was written during the period when, as chapter two noted, critics such as Stephen Connor, Brian Doyle, Homi K. Bhabha, and Benedict Anderson suggest Britain became preoccupied with the constitution and representation of its nation. The text grew in length and complexity from a brief children's story first drafted in the mid-1920s through four galley proofs to its published form in 1949. Farmer Giles of Ham's references to Oxford suggest that it was begun after Tolkien returned there from Leeds in 1926 and the narrative was significantly expanded for its presentation to the Lovelace Society in late 1937.[5] It is also apparent that the text's elaboration overlapped with the final production of The Hobbit and that it was also further revised as Tolkien concluded The Lord of the Rings.[6] As noted earlier, Tolkien's habit of drafting and redrafting work and of 'writing back' to interlink his ideas is critically accepted as his working method. This method has been positioned as intrinsic to the evolving sophistication of his engagement with the thematic concerns he had identified before the First World War. As such, it appears likely that the development of Farmer Giles of Ham was part of Tolkien's practice of what Brian Rosebury described as "implicit self-analysis and self-exhortation."[7] It is certainly possible to position the text's growth as part of a movement from the early attempts to engage with the 'matter of Britain' in the early Book of Lost Tales drafts discussed in chapter one, to the more

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[5] See Wayne G. Hammond, with Douglas A. Anderson, J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography (St. Paul's Bibliographies: Winchester, 1993; Oak Knoll Books: New Castle, DW, 1993), pp. xvii–xix, and pp. 73–76, J.R.R. Tolkien, The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2006), pp. 39, 119, 133 respectively, and Christina Scull, 'The Publishing History of 'Farmer Giles of Ham'' [sic], in Happy Birthday 'Farmer Giles of Ham' (Amon Hen 98), ed. by Mike Percival (1989), pp. 9–10..
[6] See Tolkien, The Letters (2006), pp. 119, 129, 132, 133.
[7] Brian Rosebury, Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 8.

sophisticated strategies of connection displayed by the metafictional

historiography of *The Lord of the Rings* discussed in chapter two.[8] Depicting the

evolution of Farmer Giles from farmer to King and the progress of the village of

Ham to its independence as 'the Little Kingdom' as linked, the text directly

intervenes in the idea of the nation and national identity as a pre-given, pre-

existing entity. It is in its exploration of the falsity of what Bhabha described as the

naturalized "sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation*", then, that the text

challenges Shippey's conclusions.[9]

Cartography, Ham, and the Little Kingdom

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*

(1983), Anderson argues that as nations developed into nation-states in the post-

Treaty of Westphalia world, the imaginings of community that coalesced into a

shared understanding of the constitution of the homeland and the home were

given graphic and synoptic representation in the form of maps. He suggests that

maps before this point generally derived from two discourses: the religious or the

dynastic. In each, cartography served to orientate the reader, positioning them

either in relation to the universal or offering them physical landmarks by which they

could navigate their way from one to the next across the real landscape. From the

early-modern era onwards, however, Anderson argues that maps increasingly

began to divide the globe into a set of bounded territories, each distinct from the

other, and each defining different imperial projects or autonomous countries.

Visually and imaginatively, the new cartographies both represented and

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[8] Tolkien sent a rough copy of the foreword, along with a revised typescript, to Allen & Unwin in July 1947 (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 119).
[9] Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291–322 (p. 299).

conceptualized the new world of nation-state systems and their interior/exterior relationships.[10] In *The Road to Middle-earth*, Shippey notes the importance of cartography to the creation and organization of Tolkien's work. The central thrust of Shippey's analysis in this context focuses on the role of maps in *The Lord of the Rings*, taking as its starting point Tolkien's statement that in writing the latter he "wisely started with a map, and made the story fit."[11] Shippey's conclusions are that Tolkien's use of maps fulfilled three functions: narrative coordination, the creation of depth, and cultural representation. Shippey's analysis of *Farmer Giles of Ham* in this regard acknowledges the text's lightly-fictionalized English landscape, briefly suggesting that it represents a developmental bridge between the Hill of *The Hobbit* and the more fully realised Shire of *The Lord of the Rings*.[12] But I would suggest that the importance of the text does not solely lie in its relationship to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.[13] The text engages with England as a place, English history, and English historiography using the same strategies of representation evident in *The Lord of the Rings*. Both use a foreword/prologue to 'frame' the text, and both mobilize representative narratives of English history as part of their fiction. But where the geography and history of *The Lord of the Rings* is fantastical, *Farmer Giles of Ham* uses the English landscape as a setting in narrating a version of English history. As such it marks a

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[10] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983, 1991), pp. 170–178.

[11] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 177.

[12] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 114.

[13] As Shippey acknowledges in the foreword to the revised edition of *The Road to Middle-earth*, his "discussions of Tolkien were affected by reading his works (as almost everyone does) in order of publication, not in order of composition" (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. xx). Published in 1949, it appears that Shippey's assertion that *Farmer Giles of Ham's* use of English place names represents "a long step on from The Hill and The Water" of *The Hobbit*, published in 1937, rests on this (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 114). However, the text's compositional trajectory text accompanies that of *The Hobbit* and this feature was in place from an early point (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 39 and Hammond and Douglas, *A Descriptive* (1993), pp. xvii–xix, and pp. 73–76).

point of development midway between Tolkien's attempts to analogize England in *The Book of Lost Tales* and the symbolic England of the Shire.

Examining this requires summarising the use of cartography in the other texts under discussion. As chapter four will discuss in more detail, and as Shippey notes, the landscape features surrounding Bilbo's home in *The Hobbit* are not named beyond isomorphic designations: "The Hill,'" 'The Water'" and "The Country Round."[14] The text contains no reference to the Shire and its only reference to Hobbiton comes at the very end when Bilbo returns home after his adventures.[15] Its presence has been positioned by critics including Jessica Kemball-Cook and Douglas Anderson and Wayne Hammond as part of Tolkien's retrospective alignment of the text to the characters, locations, and narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*.[16] As Shippey notes, in *The Hobbit* Tolkien simply made names by capitalising objects and its landscapes display none of the complexity that defines those of *The Lord of the Rings*. Where they are not borrowed from other sources, Shippey comments, like Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains, or archaic names for things like Dale (valley) or Carrock (rock), locations and features are made by simply appending a definite article in front of them: The Hill, The Water, The Misty Mountains, The Long Lake, The Mountain.[17] It was not until the composition and publication of *The Lord of the Rings* that these names became associated with and fixed within the more fully realized and sophisticated geography of Middle-earth.

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[14] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–33. Shippey appears to use the "isomorphic" in this context to mean something that preserves or sets a relationship between designated elements (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005)*,* pp.109–121).

[15] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 253.

[16] For example, Jessica Kemball-Cook notes Gandalf's request for "cold chicken and tomatoes" becomes a request for "cold chicken and pickles" (see Jessica Kemball-Cook, *Amon Hen: the Bulletin of the Tolkien Society*, 23 (December, 1976), p. 11). See also Hammond and Anderson, *A Descriptive Bibliography* (1983), pp. 29-33.

[17] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005)*,* pp.109–121. See *The Hobbit*, pp. 11, 12, 25, 29, and 46.

The rudimentary "chart" and "the general map" that augment *The Hobbit* are succeeded by the four detailed maps that accompany *The Lord of the Rings*:[18] a foldout map of Middle-earth, specific maps of the Marches of Gondor and Mordor, and the map of the Shire that ends the narrative's Prologue section.[19] All are based on Tolkien's own maps, and they were specifically drawn, sometimes with the help of his son, Christopher, to aid the composition of a narrative that grew in its scale and complexity over its seventeen-year gestation.[20] Fulfilling Shippey's definition of their function they offer coordination, visual representation, and depth to the narrative.

In the first instance, as Shippey and Rosebury both observe, *The Lord of the Rings*' narrative trajectory from its beginning in the Shire to the destruction of Sauron's ring is non-linear and defined by separation, encounters and departures, and wanderings.[21] As Rosebury notes, the text represents:

> A design of exceptional amplitude, multiplicity and expansiveness [that] needs somehow to be reconciled with narrative energy and cohesion [...] the resources of twentieth-century English language have to be deployed, without being wrenched into obscurity or disfigurement, in the representation of an invented world remote from that of contemporary experience.[22]

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[18] Tolkien is referring to Thorin's Map of 'The Desolation of Smaug' and the map of Wilderland (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 14-15, and Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), frontispieces respectively).

[19] Some editions also include the complete elaborated map of Middle-earth issued as a poster by Pauline Baynes in 1970. See also Karen Wynn Fonstad, *The Atlas of Middle-earth.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), and Brian Sibley, *There and Back Again: The Map of* The Hobbit, illustrated by John Howe (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

[20] Tolkien's maps were an intrinsic part of the compositional process for the reasons Shippey identifies. As Tolkien wrote: "I very wisely started with a map, and made the story fit (generally with meticulous care for distances). The other way about lands one in confusion and impossibilities (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 177). For the growing scale and complexity of these maps, see Tolkien*, The Letters* (2006), pp. 43, 58, 79, 86, 112, 118, 177, 168, 170, 171, 177, 185, 208, 210, 224, 247, 358, and 360.

[21] See Shippey, *The Lord of the Rings* (2005) pp. 109–118 and Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), pp. 11–12 and 26–34 respectively.

[22] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 60.

Compositionally maps helped Tolkien to keep track of his characters and helped coordinate their multiple narratives in the context of the overarching plot – offering the same function to readers. That the maps also give representative weight to Middle-earth's extent in space and time, as Shippey argues, is reinforced by the characters "talking like maps."[23] As an example of this, Shippey cites Celeborn's and Aragorn's descriptions of all the lands visible as the Fellowship of the Ring sets out from Lothlorién:

> There the River flows in stony vale amid high moors, until at last after many leagues it comes to the tall island of the Tindrock, that we call Tol Brandir [...] to where it falls over the cataracts of Rauros down into the Nindalf, the Wetwang as it is called in your tongue. That is a wide region of sluggish fens [...] There the Entwash flows in [...] About that streams, on this side of the Great River, lies Rohan. On the further side are the bleak hills of the Emyn Muil. You are looking now south-west across the north plains of the Riddermark [...] Ere long we shall come to the mouth of the Limlight that runs down from Fangorn to join the Great River [...] [24]

The lands, locations, and features described relate directly to the supplied maps. In these are hundreds of other details that do not feature anywhere else in the text, giving, as Shippey notes, "implicit assurance of the existence of the things that they label, and of course their nature and history too."[25] As my literature review noted, Tolkien's early attempts to engage with the themes of England and Englishness in *The Book of Lost Tales* narratives are critically acknowledged as running into representational issues. Metafictional devices such as maps allowed Tolkien to fuse history and invention on a culturally resonant level via the process of 'calquing' that Shippey describes as:

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[23] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 114.
[24] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954-1955) (reprinted London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), pp. 393–401.
[25] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 115.

a linguistic term to mean the process in which the elements of a compound word are translated bit by bit to make a new word in another language [...] the point about calques is that the derivative does not sound anything like its original: nevertheless it betrays its influence at every point.[26]

As Shippey argues, the names of places in the Shire betray this process. Where they do not possess a direct equivalence in the English landscape, their provenance can be traced through an analysis of the language. Thus, for example, "Nobottle" in the Northfarthing of the Shire "comes from Old English *niowe* (new) and *botl* (house)", but there is also "a Nobottle in Northamptonshire."[27] Viewed from this perspective, as Tolkien noted, the text's place names and locations are "actually an imaginary country and period [...] coherently made", but if the "fiction" is dropped, "The Shire is based on rural England" and its nomenclature and toponymy "is a 'parody' of that."[28]

Shippey's analysis of the importance of cartography, locations, and names to the construction of the Shire, and its illusion of depth and authenticity is compelling. However, he does not address these themes in relation to Anderson's proposition that there are three designated modes of early cartographical representation – dynastic realms, monumented landscapes, and autonomous bounded territories. As it is the only one of Tolkien's texts actually rather than symbolically set in England, it is in this context that *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s use of the English landscape is significant. Descriptively the text utilises all three modes. As Tolkien noted, *Farmer Giles of Ham* "is a definitely located story (one of its

[26] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 116.
[27] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 117.
[28] Given the rendering of the Shire it is unlikely that Tolkien's use of place names was to mock or ridicule England and English landscapes, Tolkien appears here to be using the word 'parody' in its now little-used sense of singing alongside the original artefact. This interpretation would certainly support Shippey's analysis of the Shire names being part of Tolkien's process of calquing (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 250, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, ed. by J.A. Cuddon (London: Andrew Deutsch, 1977) (republished London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 640–642 (all citations taken from the 1999 edition unless otherwise indicated), and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 114–118 respectively).

virtues if it has any): Oxfordshire and Bucks with a brief excursion into Wales. The places in it are largely named, or fairly plainly indicated."[29] Where *The Lord of the Rings* used English place names, they were set in imagined landscapes. By contrast, it is possible to map the described geography of *Farmer Giles of Ham* to its English equivalent. While Shippey acknowledges this, it is the narrative's description of the evolution of these locations within this landscape from their Anglo-Saxon to their twentieth century designations that lift its engagements with England and Englishness beyond the "nursery rhyme" history he suggests.[30] The term "The Seven Kingdoms of the English" was used by historians of Tolkien's era to describe the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, Wessex, Essex, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria in the sixth to eight centuries. This is the period in which *Farmer Giles of Ham* is set. The historic Anglo-Saxon village of Ham thus grows into the modern Buckinghamshire town of Thame, twelve miles east of Oxford. Ham's position as the centre of the bounded territory of the Little Kingdom by the end of the narrative mirrors a more literal, actual historical example of a bounded nation in the same period. At sixty-eight miles from Thame, Tamworth, the dynastic capital of the Mercian kings, corresponds with the narrative's "twenty leagues distant" capital of the Middle Kingdom, making the latter the analogue of the state of Mercia in the sixth to eighth centuries.[31] Outside of the bounded territories these kingdoms represent, the wild hills where the giants live, and the mountain-country where the dragons dwell to the west and north, are the equivalent of the 'Here Be Monsters' spaces of early cartography Anderson discusses.

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[29] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 130.
[30] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 111.
[31] See Christopher Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (London and Glasgow: B.T. Batsford, 1965), p. 85.

When Garm, Farmer Giles' dog, describes where he saw the dragon

Chrysophylax as "north over the hills and far away, beyond the Standing Stones

and all", he is referring to the Rollright Stones.[32] This ring of seven standing stones

traditionally stood as boundary markers between Warwickshire and Oxford and

they possess a mythological resonance.[33] As Shippey notes, citing Arthur J.

Evans' 'The Rollright Stones and their Folk-lore' (1895), the folk belief was that the

stones represented a king of England and his men frozen by a witch's curse: "Rise

up, stick, and stand still, stone/For king of England thou shalt be none/Thou and

thy men hoar stones shall be/And I myself an eldern-tree."[34] However, what is of

equal historical significance is that the Rollright Stones, which are still featured on

Ordnance Survey maps, are also the sort of distinctive monumental landscape

feature that Anderson suggests that early maps would have recorded.[35] Enduring

in space and time, and present both in the English landscape and Tolkien's text,

these stones can perhaps be positioned as being of more significance in the

development of Tolkien's work than Shippey describes. Drawing on established

critical perspectives, I have noted the pre-First World War inception of Tolkien's

creative engagement with the subject of England in 1913 and indicated that work

on *The Book of Lost Tales*, begun in 1916, continued through the interwar period.

However, I have also cited the critical acceptance that there was no guarantee that

this work would be concluded or published.[36] As Shippey has commented,

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[32] J.R.R. Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949) (London: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 76, 20, 10. All citations taken from the 2000 edition unless otherwise indicated.

[33] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 109–110.

[34] Arthur J. Evans, 'The Rollright Stones and their Folk-lore', *Folklore*, vol. 6 (March 1895), pp. 6–53 [JSTOR 1253704].

[35] The Rollright Stone circle is located at: Latitude 51deg 58' 32.68" N, Longitude 1deg 34' 14.11" W. See National Grid Reference SP 2963 3089 (See the following Ordnance Survey maps: Landranger sheet - 151 Straford-upon-Avon (1:50,000), Explorer sheet - 191 Banbury, Bicester and Chipping Norton (1:25,000)).

[36] See, for example, footnote 37, p. 34.

prompted by the success of *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* saw Tolkien draw together his cultural interests and aesthetic methodology more successfully. Given that the narrative of *Farmer Giles of Ham* gestated over the same timeframe as the composition of both it is therefore tempting to reposition it as a significant experimental narrative. The existing proofs signal the consistency of the text's thematic concerns and increasingly sophisticated engagement with them. As well as an actual spatial boundary and a monumental cartographic feature, the presence of the Rollright Stones can perhaps be taken as marking where the points of fusion between history, mythology, location and narrative Tolkien outlined in his literary-critical work begin to coalesce. *Farmer Giles of Ham*, I would suggest, is where the linguistic and cultural territories Tolkien attempted to define in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' begin to give way in the texts to an understanding of how language and narrative create spatial and cultural overlaps, attaching culturally resonant identities to locations. It is also the text within the canon which begins to engage with England and Englishness through the cultural-historical representations of their locations and history. In doing so, and its narration of the evolution of Ham into the Little Kingdom, *Farmer Giles of Ham* fictively outlines Anderson's description of how the progress of cartography marks the evolution of nations from dynastic realms to nation-states, depicting change rather consolidating a prelapsarian vision. It is within the lightly-fictionalised English landscape punctured by the Rollright Stones that the disparate threads of Tolkien's concerns, outlined above, begin to resolve into the representative form more commonly associated with *The Lord of the Rings*. *Farmer Giles of Ham* is where the narrative possibilities offered by passing fiction off as the translated histories of past events emerge. But in the process, it is also the text which

establishes the impossibility of recuperating or recreating the past or denying the inevitability of change. The next section will discuss how the foreword frames this series of engagement with England and Englishness.

Sober Annals vs. Popular Lays: *Farmer Giles of Ham* and History

In *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2000), Shippey suggests that *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s reference to "sober annals" and "popular lays" represents Tolkien's comment on the fashion for "style at the expense of substance" where people have "no time" for "tradition", and "old tales" are forgotten.[37] Shippey's position echoes Chance-Nitzsche's argument that in presenting the text as a "translation", Tolkien was displaying "a self divided by two different interests, art and philology and literary criticism, which tug him first one way, then another."[38] The text itself, she suggests, "spoofs the epic through its mock-heroic style" and mocks the gloss of "academic scholarship of its fussy, editorial preface by the pseudo-historian and linguist who 'discovered' the original manuscript."[39] There is humour in the editor/translator of the piece saying that his information comes from the 'sober annals' of "historians of the reign of Arthur" when it is in fact drawn from the 'popular lay' of *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* (1375).[40] However, it is in this explicit distinction between 'sober annals' (history) and 'popular lays' (fiction), I suggest, that the text foregrounds a challenge to the idea of representative history as a single teleological narrative. Specifically addressing post-Norman English history and suggesting its relationship to fiction, the text declares its commitment to excavating alternative pre-Norman histories in order to emphasize the patterns

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[37] See Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7, and Shippey, *Author of the Century* (2000), pp. 289–291.
[38] Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), p. 18.
[39] Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), p. 85.
[40] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7.

of overwriting initiated by the dominant hegemony and confront the acts of erasure undertaken by this model.

As chapter two's discussion of Tolkien's narrative strategies indicated, the assemblage of forewords, prologues and appendices, maps, genealogies, invented manuscript and archive traditions and created languages found in Tolkien's work can be grouped together under the heading of metafictional devices: mechanisms that draw attention to the fiction as fiction even as they posit its status as translated history. The use of such mechanisms has been critically discussed. Shippey's argument that such devices add 'depth' to the stories, lending a sense of authenticity to the narratives and augmenting the realities they invented, Flieger's paralleling of Tolkien's devices with their "immediate antecedents in some of the popular fantasy fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries", and Mary R. Bowman's consideration of them as part of Tolkien's meditation on the "nature of story" appear the distinctive enduring interpretations of these frame narrative elements.[41] Presented "from the outset as found manuscripts put into shape by an outside editor" notes Flieger, these devices represent "attempt(s) at verisimilitude by artefact" and can be defined either as metafictional devices, or as Anderson suggested in the case of museum antiquities, objects that give the illusion of temporal depth from the perspective of

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[41] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 351–361, Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005), pp. 75, 83, and Mary R. Bowman, 'The Story Was Already Written: Narrative Theory in *The Lord of the Rings*', *Narrative*, 14 (2006), 272–293 respectively. Flieger has developed her interpretation of the framing devices in Tolkien's fiction from drawing attention to their possible models in medieval literature to consider their use against the metafictional strategies by nineteenth and twentieth century novelists and those of Tolkien's postmodern contemporaries (see Verlyn Flieger, 'Tolkien and the Idea of the Book' (2006), Verlyn Flieger, 'Frame Narratives', in *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, ed. by Michael D.C. Drout (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 216–218, and Verlyn Flieger, 'A Postmodern Medievalist?', in *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*, ed. by Jane Chance and Alfred K. Sievers (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) (reprinted 2009), pp. 17–28 respectively).

the contemporary viewer.[42] In *Farmer Giles of Ham*, not only does the foreword emphasize the fundamental metafictionality of the text but it brings together all of the themes and strategies that inform Tolkien's work. In some ways, it offers a template for *The Lord of the Rings*.

Acting as a contextual framing device for the following narrative, the mock-scholarly foreword detaches Tolkien from the text by introducing him as its editor and translator rather than its author, allowing both to claim a measure of objectivity in their subsequent analysis of its status as a history:

> Of the history of the Little Kingdom few fragments have survived; but by chance an account of its origin has been preserved: a legend, perhaps, rather than an account; for it is evidently a late compilation, full of marvels, derived not from sober annals, but from the popular lays to which its author frequently refers.[43]

The opening is a deliberate echo of Geoffrey of Monmouth's claim that he was not the author of *Historia Regum Britanniae* (circa 1136) but its translator. Monmouth's account of the origins of Britain and its history was arguably the "first definitive or coherent account" of the Arthur myth and was positioned by its author as a translation an attempt to illuminate the same "dark period of history" in which the events of *Farmer Giles of Ham* are said to occur.[44]

Chapter two proposed that textual allusions to ancient myths are ultimately used to appropriate the latter's authority by marshalling their culturally unifying locus. Tolkien-as-editor's comment that "since Brutus came to Britain many kings and realms have come and gone" and the partition of the island "under Locrin, Camber and Albanac, was only the first of many shifting divisions" thus suggests

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[42] Flieger, *Interrupted Music* (2005), pp. 75, 83.
[43] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7.
[44] Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of The English Imagination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002), p. 108, Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, (2000), p. 7.

that the division of realms proposed by Bell and its resulting cultural uncertainty is not a purely modern phenomenon.[45] Whereas chapter two suggests that modernity poses the division as problematic, in the period depicted by Tolkien's narrative, the world is "happily divided into many kingdoms."[46] The reference to Locrin, Camber and Albanac, to King Coel and King Lear, moreover, are also explicit allusions to the writers of the 'Brutus' histories of Britain such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. By invoking Monmouth, Tolkien questions the veracity of historical narratives. Monmouth's history was fictional. Written to legitimise the Norman conquest of England, which it achieved by laying its emphasis "not on the race of Arthur, but upon the land he administered and defended", it was also revisionist.[47] In this, Monmouth's texts obeyed the imperatives of imperial conquest. Ignoring the contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon histories of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Regum Britanniae* presents a totalising master-narrative of colonial conquest, not in the sense of particularising or exemplary cultural representivity but via the presentation of a relational universality that engages with and swallows any given, distinct site within its all encompassing whole.[48] In stating that he had "not been able to discover anything at all on the Kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ or indeed about Arthur", Monmouth establishes a need for a comprehensive history of Britain – despite William and Henry's being readily to

[45] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7.
[46] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 9.
[47] Ackroyd, *The English Imagination* (2002), p. 108.
[48] See William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889) and Henry of Huntingdon, *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon*, trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), pp. 400–409 respectively.

hand – to produce an explicitly Norman history of Britain, written to validate William the Conqueror's claim to the throne and Norman rule.[49]

But by foregrounding the distinction between 'sober annals' and 'popular lays' Tolkien-as-editor draws attention to the requirement of annals to contain verifiable facts, events and chronological sequencing in contradistinction to the products of fiction.[50] Monmouth treated Arthur as a real historical agent for the purposes of his narrative, fixing his death at 542 AD while the term 'The Seven Kingdoms of the English' was used by historians to describe the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, Wessex, Essex, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria circa 600 – 800 AD.[51] This allows Tolkien-as-editor to place the historical events inspiring the production of the fragment as some time after the Roman occupation but before the Anglo-Saxon colonization of Britain. By referring to the text's original author as a historian "of the reign of Arthur" and also alluding to the opening of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* at the beginning of *Farmer Giles* in reducing the verse beginning "where werres and wrake and wonder" to the prose "the years were filled with swift alternations of war and peace, mirth and woe", Tolkien foregrounds, as Shippey has noted, that whatever the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* might have assumed to be the case Tolkien believed that the fictional Arthurian tradition "was originally non-English", forming in fact, like Monmouth's history, part of the Norman-French overwriting of native culture after

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[49] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (London, New York: Longmans, 1929), p. 1.
[50] For example, Hayden White suggests that there are three fundamental types of historical representation: annals, chronicles, and narrated history. White draws a distinction between annals, which "consist only of a list of events ordered in chronological sequence", the chronicle, which contains the same but "aspires to narrativity", and narrated history, which offers a causal explanation of the chronology of the annal and the events of the chronicle (Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 5–6).
[51] Christopher Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 85.

the Battle of Hastings "dedicated to the overthrow of England."[52] The foreword's

implication, then, is that the actual text being translated is a later and consequently

more problematic Monmouthian fictional "compilation" of events, one of a number

of histories of Britain that were presented and accepted as true in post-Norman

times but were actually works of fiction.[53] As Chance-Nitzsche argues, Tolkien-as-

editor claims that his translation is drawn from a 'sober annal' written by "historians

of the reign of Arthur", but he is in fact paraphrasing one of the fictional 'popular

lays' that form the Arthurian tradition.[54]

The foreword's reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* significantly

exploits the author's knowledge of the elastic nature of mytho-poetic time in

medieval romance narratives to highlight the unsuitability of considering them

parts of nationally representative history. The poem's ticking off of days makes it

clear that the missing day does matter. As A.D. Putter notes, problems of dating

and chronology are common in translations of medieval texts, as "medievalists

discover the hard way ... [that] the medieval sense of time differs from our own."

As R. L. Poole comments, one historian who knew that Thomas à Beckett died on

29 December 1170 argued that the medievalists were wrong to date the event to

1171 simply because he did not know that in that period the New Year beginning

on 1st January did not occur until 1250. Before that it was celebrated on Christmas

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[52] See Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 44 respectively. This direct allusion is not the text's only reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* As Chance-Nitzsche notes the entry of the "rude and uncultured" giant mirrors the Green Knight's unheralded arrival at the King's Christmas feast. Both issue challenges to the protagonist (unwittingly in the case of Giles) that effect changes in their status (see Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), pp. 87–89). Flieger also notes Tolkien's allusions to this text, albeit within the wider context of his work and *The Lord of the Rings* specifically (see Verlyn Flieger, 'The Green Man, the Green Knight, and Treebeard: Scholarship and Invention in Tolkien's Fiction', in *Scholarship and Fantasy: Proceedings of the Tolkien Phenomenon, May 1992, Turku, Finland*, ed. by K.J. Battarbee (Anglicana Turkuensia 12, Turku: University of Turku, 1993), pp. 85–98).
[53] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, (1949, 2000), p. 7.
[54] Chance-Nitzsche, *Tolkien's Art* (1979), p. 19.

Day.[55] It is feasible that the text is here taking advantage of the sketchy nature of recorded time in outlining its temporal frame. In the foreword's emphasis on the text's 'translated' status, the sketchy nature of 'facts', and in its implicit questioning of how temporal and spatial coordinates are bestowed on cultures and becoming defining narratives, it seems probable that its loose location of *Farmer Giles of Ham* in time is also deliberate. Because it was common for a scribe to omit a date or record a notation that has no relation to current calendric orthodoxy, Tolkien-as-editor uses the reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to draw further attention to the difficulties in dating 'sober annals' as well as 'popular lays.' In doing so, the foreword again undermines history's claim to objective accuracy, highlighting, as it does, that alongside its 'facts' history's chronologies are not to be trusted either. If the chronology cannot be trusted, the narrative asks, then what chance the narrative causally linking it together?

It is through these strategies that the foreword's critical attitude towards narratives of legitimacy and authority acknowledge and uncover the epistemological disjuncture that colonial domination generates by treating its exploration of origins not simply as a means of breaking out of the framework of an imperial history, but as a device that challenges and restructures their myth of historical continuity. There are significant conceptual differences between origins and beginnings: whereas origins are generally perceived as unchanging constants or fixed points of reference, stories of beginnings serve to narrate a departure from origins. As Edward Said notes, beginnings are "are historical whereas origins are divine". Distinguishing between the historicity of *beginning* and the sacral

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[55] A.D. Putter, 'In Search of the Missing Days in *Sir Cleges* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Time in the Medieval World*, ed. by Chris Humphreys and W.M. Ormrod (York: York Medieval Press 2001), pp. 119–136 (p. 132), A. L. Poole, 'The Beginning of the Year in the Middle Ages', in *Studies in Chronology and History*, ed. by A.L. Poole, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934) , pp. 1–27 (p. 1).

mythologized notion of *origin* – where "the latter is divine, mythical and privileged" and "the former secular, humanly produced and ceaselessly re-examined" – Said argues that the act of narrating one's origins endows it with the linear forward thrust characteristic of beginnings.[56] Thus where origin implies homeostatic sameness, beginning represents an act of change, rendering the two terms at once mutually implicated and contradictory. As the myth of origin is always already inscribed in the historical impulse of every new beginning, origin continues to be implicitly subjected to change, that is, a constant making or producing of difference, destabilising once and for all its status as a touchstone of purity.

Although the text relies on its allusions to Monmouth and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to make its point, the narrative does not attempt to transparently represent this period of history or reduce the process of overwriting to an easily separable chain of historical causes and effects. But as a ground-clearing exercise the foreword's interrogation of narratives whose assertions do not correlate to a prevailing reality has the effect of overturning the overarching commensurability of Monmouth's colonizing Norman imperial narrative. The origins of Britain that it suggests are shown to be fictional, leaving a space in history. It is into the space created in the nominated historiography that an alternate account of English history can be placed – that of Farmer Giles. With official history having been rejected as demonstrably false, the text lays claim to the historical function of art as a means to assert the presence of a people into the world by the simple means of telling a story about them:

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[56] Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Basic Books, 1975) (republished Columbia University Press Morningside Edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. xviii–xix. All citations taken from the 1985 edition unless otherwise indicated.

> Ægidius De Hammo was a man who lived in the midmost parts of the Island of Britain. In full his name was Ægidius Ahenobarbus Julius Agricola de Hammo; for people were richly endowed with names in those days, now long ago, when this island was still happily divided into many kingdoms […] he was Farmer Giles of Ham, and he had a red beard. Ham was only a village, but villages were proud and independent still in those days.[57]

Inverting Monmouth's claim to be translating his text into Latin from Ancient British the narrative is presented as a conversion from Latin into 'the modern tongue of the United Kingdom'[58] – a reclamation of language that also takes back of history. The sequence cited sees Giles' full Latin name devolve from a nomenclature common to freeborn citizens of classical Rome via Ægidius's Latinate relation to the French *Gilles* to the generic British name for a farmer, *Giles*, which, coupled with his location – Ham, Old English for village – presents the reader with the protagonist's modern name, Farmer Giles of Ham. The process undertaken to arrive at this neatly (un)covers several periods of history where the language changed, even if the meaning ultimately didn't. In Baucom's reading of English history, translation tends to be seen as a dystopian process causing English to become foreign to itself.[59] But the constantly changing nature of Giles' names suggests the evolving nature of language. By locating each in specific historical periods, the text sidesteps the idea that the Anglo-Saxon language is lost. Rather than a narrative of loss, coercion, and inauthenticity, the text makes a wry point about the nature of language to change, showing the falsity of the official national narratives that pretend otherwise.

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[57] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 9. The text's allusion to the Roman and post-Roman periods of Britain via Giles' name can perhaps be linked to Tolkien's view that Julius Agricola's occupation of the island represented the point from which the idea of a Britain could be considered (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 107).
[58] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7.
[59] See Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 221.

It is this ability to negotiate history via the comic mode that allows the text to adumbrate the concept of a mixed national culture that differs significantly from the unitary model presented by Monmouth. In this context, the seventeenth-century blunderbuss, fourteenth-century armour, twentieth century non-aggression pact between Giles and the Chryslophax and simultaneously archaic and twentieth-century rendering of "That will learn him!" are, by comparison, no more anachronistic than "medieval treatments of Arthurian matters" that accepted Monmouth's history as true.[60]

Having conceptualised the interface between fiction and history as crucially ambivalent and endlessly malleable, the text goes on to elaborate the mutations these narratives undergo, and explain how, enshrined as national histories, they and the locations they defined as authentic come to be deemed immutable. This challenges Shippey's suggestion that the text sees Tolkien "brooding over problems of re-creation and of continuity – for names and places remain whatever people think about them."[61] The idea that there are no eternal historical and national originary verities, only a palimpsest where past, present and future are all visible at once, is evident in the narrative of the ever-changing Little Kingdom and Farmer Giles' names. Both of which demonstrate that 'identity' and 'location' are ultimately subjective variables:

> In the end Giles became a king […] the King of the Little Kingdom […] crowned in Ham in the name of Ægidius Draconarius […] he was more often known as Old Giles Worming […] the Draconarii built themselves a

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[60] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 78, 18. Tolkien suggests that the text exists in "no time", allowing the juxtaposition of anachronistic concepts (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 133). In modern usage, using' learn' in sense of 'teach' is considered incorrect. The usage here cross-references *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 'if thou learnest him his lesson.' and echoes Badger's remark after Toad has had his grammar corrected by Water-Rat: "But we don't *want* to teach 'em. We want to *learn* 'em – learn 'em, learn 'em' (Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (London: Butler and Tanner (101st edition), 1951), p. 290.
[61] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 114.

great house […] That place became known throughout the kingdom as Aula Draconaria, or in the vulgar Worminghall, after the king's name […] The face of the land has changed since that time, and kingdoms have come and gone; woods have fallen, and rivers have shifted […] But still that name endures.[62]

Farmer Giles enters the narrative named as a Roman, is transformed by translation into a British farmer who then, as a result of his adventures, becomes "The Lord of the Tame Worm", "the Darling of the Land" and the "Lord of the Free Villages" because of his adventures before advancing from Earl to Prince to the King beyond the River.[63] Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon village of Ham becomes the Little Kingdom, Worminghall, and eventually (T)hame of the twentieth century. The original names are traceable, to the philological mind, but the text emphasizes that even their first iteration is not their originary point. The Norman imperial reading of the past offered by Monmouth and its assumption of the sovereign authority of a single dominant historical narrative is renounced by *Farmer Giles of Ham*, which reclaims the pre-colonial past in a manner that offers alternate imaginative visions of post- and pre-colonial English culture. In locating its analytical frame of reference and historical engagement most acutely in the exploration of the conditions of its own production, the text foregrounds the fictional strategies that are at play in the creation of historical narratives of nation and national identity by highlighting that historical narratives are subject to the same methods, strategies and slippages of construction.

Like the Shire, a location that will be examined in chapter five, Ham and the Little Kingdom are imaginative expressions of Tolkien's belief that Anglo-Saxon English culture sustained past 1066 in the West Country. Aligning with Tolkien's

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[62] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 74–75
[63] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 104.

intellectual understanding of this, expressed in 'Ancrene Wisse and Hali Meiðhað'
(1929), the text constructs this depiction from the coordinating indices of language
and cartography. In this sense the narrative offers a creative interpretation of
philology's asterisk-reality: Ham's imagined community is something that did not
exist, but it is something that the orientating points of language indicate might have
done. Although definitely located in England, Ham is an intellectual conception,
something that places its depiction in the text outside of historical 'reality' and
firmly into the category of a secondary world construction. But for all the text's
cartographical elements, it is a symbolically charged narrative rather than a
definitive historical one. Ham is a "medial" or 'liminal' place[s]" and it is neither
idealized nor unchanging, as Shippey suggests.[64] The next section will show that
having aligned itself with the construction of narratives of England and
Englishness, the text offers a nuanced consideration of the processes involved
their creation and the identities that are attached to them.

Farmer Giles of Ham and England

Ian Baucom and Rosemary Marangoly George's readings of nation and cultural
self-representation suggest that Britain's mythologizing of an English 'home' and
'homeland' took shape alongside the development of the Empire. They argue that
it grew increasingly culturally talismanic as the Empire expanded but that its
concept also became increasingly divorced from its socio-cultural reality. By the
end of the Victorian era, Niall Ferguson suggests in *Empire: How Britain Made the
Modern World* (2003), "the expatriates' memories of home became increasingly at
odds with the reality. Theirs was a nostalgic, romantic vision of an unchanging

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[64] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 347.

rural England, of squires and parsons, thatched cottages and forelock tugging villagers."[65] The interior/exterior divisions Baucom proposes these create defined Britain and the British Empire as something that belonged to but was outwith of England and the English, privileging specific places as being coextensive with authentic 'English' identity. These cultural anxieties and this division, this section argues, are present in *Farmer Giles of Ham's* organization of space into Giles's fields, village and market, and the world outside of that.

From this perspective, Shippey's conclusions on *Farmer Giles of Ham* and Ham itself are recognitions of this cultural stress as much as they are an acceptance of Tolkien's own views on the lost nature of England and Englishness. The narrative does not appear to look outwards in a global sense. It operates on a parochial and localised level, a scale emphasized by the thinly disguised regional specificity of its landscape. When Garm describes the dragon Chrysophylax as "north over the hills and far away" he is referring to a location less than thirty miles distant. But this is still sufficiently distant for Farmer Giles to dismiss it. "They're queer folk in those parts, I've heard tell", he declares, "and aught might happen in their land. Let them get on with it!" To Giles's mind, his place is in his place: "property is property", he states, and he is only stirred to action by direct threats to his own.[66]

The text's description of Ham as a rural idyll, and the agrarian nature of its fields, village and market, as well as the peaceful relations it shares with the neighbouring Middle Kingdom at the beginning of the narrative bear comparison with the myth of England as a green and pleasant land. Culturally and socially canonized during Tolkien's lifetime, the myth of England's rural 'essence' actively

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[65] Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made The Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 206.
[66] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 10, 20, 22, 27, 76.

promoted the idea that the real England was "a cottage small" on "a country lane" next to "a field of grain", rarely acknowledging the synthesizing addendum that England could also be a busy street, the turning wheels of industry or a million marching feet of the nation's military achieved by Ross Parker's iconic lyric.[67] That Stanley Baldwin's claim that "England is the country, and the country is England" was echoed seventy years later by John Major stating that "fifty years from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer […] and old maids cycling to holy communion through the morning mist" demonstrates its potency, persistence and longevity.[68] These appeals to England's essence being locatable in a place were not historically isolated sentiments. They are recurrent themes in English narratives of cultural self-representation. From Shakespeare's eulogy of John of Gaunt's dying speech in which England is "This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle […]/ This other Eden […]/ This fortress built by nature for herself […]/ This precious stone set in a silver sea [and]/ This blessed plot, this earth, this realm" to Henry C. Warren's morale-boosting *England Is a Village* (1940) the idea that the intrinsic soul of the English homeland lies in the countryside is a recurrent thread in the narrative of English identity.[69]

The idea that England's 'soul' was pastoral reached its emotional peak between the First and Second World Wars. Four years before the outbreak of the Second World War, as Tolkien completed *The Hobbit*, the Londoner Sir Philip Gibbs chose to cast England as an agrestic paradise in his celebration of the Silver Jubilee of George V. "England," he commented, "is still beautiful when one

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[67] See Ross Parker and Hugh Charles, 'There'll Always Be an England', *Discoveries*, dir. Carroll Levis (1939).
[68] See Stanley Baldwin, speech to the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of St. George, 6 May 1924 and John Major, speech to the Conservative Group for Europe, 22 April 1993 respectively.
[69] William Shakespeare, *Richard II* (London: Penguin, 1971), Act Two, Scene One, Lines 42–54, and C. Henry Warren, *England is a Village* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1940), p. ix respectively.

slips away from the roar of traffic and the blight of industrialism […] All this modernization is, I find, very superficial […] it has not yet bitten into the soul of England or poisoned its brain."[70] But at this time, Britain had been a predominantly urban society for more than seventy years and was the most heavily industrialised nation on earth per capita, its landscape permanently removed from medieval rurality by two centuries of industrialisation, urban expansion and imperial economics. The immemorial sights and sounds that Stanley Baldwin had claimed in 1924 defined England "since England was a land" no longer existed, if ever they had.[71]

In the emphasis such statements place on the land as the essence of the nation there are echoes of Monmouth's attempt to stress continuity between the land then and the land now in his history, not least as they derive from authoritative 'official' narratives and are offered as palliatives to cultural upheaval. As the above examples indicate, it is in the interwar period, when *Farmer Giles of Ham* was being developed, Paul Fussell argues, that the invocation of this myth reaches its zenith as a cultural trope. Where nostalgia represents a longing for the past as defined by place, Fussell suggests that it is after the First World War but before the Second that a nostalgic myth of the green and pleasant land begins to be deployed to shore up the cultural perception of Britain in the face of its changing, predominantly urban character. In a chapter of *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) appropriately entitled 'Arcadian Resources' Fussell argues that this occurred as a direct reaction to the trauma of the First World War: "recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamity of

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[70] Philip Gibbs, *England Speaks* (London: Heinemann, 1935), pp. 3–4.
[71] Stanley Baldwin, 6 May 1924 (See Stanley Baldwin, *On England, and Other Addresses* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1938), pp. 6–7.

the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against it."[72] That the pastoral is simultaneously remembered and mourned in Fussell's reading of the myth of the green and pleasant land is explicit. What is remembered is a symbolic arrangement of space (that represented a safe and ordered past) that is also mourned because it has failed to survive (because it never existed). Nostalgia considered in this way embraces melancholy and loss in privileging the past at the expense of the present, a theme explored by Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (1973). Williams argues that the composition of English identity over the three hundred years of empire has been the project of English writing over the same period, one attempted through a sustained series of nostalgic excursions situated in the tension between an encroaching modernity and present (the city) and a vanishing rurality and past (the country).[73] In Williams' reading, England's essence has always been defined by its presence in the past and its absence in the present. He notes:

> A way of seeing has been connected with a lost phase of living, and the association of childhood and happiness has been developed into a whole convention, in which not only innocence and security but peace and plenty have been imprinted, indelibly, first on a particular landscape, and then, in a powerful extension, on a particular period of the rural past, which is now connected with a lost identity, lost relations and lost certainties.[74]

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[72] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 235.

[73] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). Gauri Viswanathan, Paul Gilroy and Edward Said all suggest that Williams fails to delineate the relationship between the invention and representation of English culture and British Imperialism (see Gauri Viswanathan, 'Raymond Williams and British Colonialism', *Yale Journal of Criticism* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1991), 47–66, Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 44–50, and Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), pp. 82–84 respectively). However, Brian Short argues that the invented nature of this complex is implicit in William's position and analysis (see *The English Rural Community: Image and Analysis*, ed. by Brian Short (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)).

[74] Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973), pp. 138–139.

That England has always been lost, wounded or vanishing has been repeatedly

reinforced by acts of writing that serve to emphasize an idea that England is

somehow essentially spatially (as well as temporally) displaced from itself. In

Williams' as in Baucom's thesis, the discourse of nostalgia allows a return to the

place that has been lost via an act of narrated memory and sentimental attitude,

but it cannot offer a return to the actual place, because the constantly replayed

struggles "of memory against forgetting" emphasize the distance the act of

remembrance and the remembered idyll, hiding the fact that the place

remembered never existed in the first place.[75] For Baucom, Nora, Williams, and

Fussell, then, nostalgia is positioned as offering solace and refuge, but also the

torment of constantly reminding that the past is past.

The subtext of the appearance of nostalgia in this cultural context, nostalgia

for the past, for place, and for the past as embodied by place, is that there is a

crisis within Englishness at this time, a cultural perception that some essential

form of Englishness is vanishing from the face of the earth. The emotional and

cultural investment in the idea of therapeutically authentic places suggests that

Englishness can be recovered but betrays a belief and an awareness that

somehow Englishness has also been lost. Patrick Curry notes that Williams

viewed Tolkien's representation of pastoralism in *The Lord of the Rings* as "half-

educated" and "suburban".[76] In replying that "Oxford Professors may be many

things but they are not half-educated", Curry's defence of Tolkien appears to miss

the point that Williams was making. In arguing that *The Lord of the Rings*

displayed a suburban attitude towards the rural, Williams was suggesting that

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[75] Williams sustains his reading of the appearances and disappearances of England (see Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973), pp. 1–13).
[76] See Patrick Curry, *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth, and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Floris Books; New York: St. Martin's Pr., 1997) (London: HarperCollins, 1998) (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), p. 35 (citation taken from 2004 edition).

Tolkien's pastoralism was suburban because it was romantic and idealised, and half-educated because it did not explicitly deal with the socio-cultural realities of English rural life. As I have shown, in many ways Tolkien's representation of this complex was exactly this, but as this thesis argues this representative complex emerged precisely because of the contemporary culture's perceived remove from such locations. Regardless of his personal view of Tolkien and his work, this perspective informs the reading Williams offers of the relationship between nostalgia and the pastoral in English cultural life. It is in this threnodic context that Shippey's reading of the village of Ham and its inhabitants embeds the text by presenting it as an idealized and unchanging rural space. It implicates *Farmer Giles of Ham* as belonging to a common tradition of the representation of England in the interwar period and suggests that its story of how Farmer Giles, with his sword Tailbiter, defeats the dragon Chrysophylax to avail himself of the dragon's treasure and establish the independence of the village of Ham from the Middle Kingdom, under the rule of King Augustus, represents a "triumph of the native over the foreign."[77]

A reading of *Farmer Giles of Ham* as a simplistic imaginative allegory mourning and celebrating a 'lost' English identity in the interwar period is persuasive, and it almost certainly forms part of the narrative's complex. Yet, as I have shown, although this is suggested by Shippey's analysis, the narrative also makes it explicit that there are no fixed quantities or eternal certainties in this context. The text's negotiation of the cultural stresses attending its production are far more sophisticated than readings that define it simply as an attempt to recover or depict a lost England would suggest. Shippey's positioning of *Farmer Giles of*

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[77] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 112.

Ham as a narrative intent on securing identity through preserving and authenticating suitably representative locations can be further questioned via the closer examination of the text's organization and representation of the concepts of home and homeland. Having conceptualised the interface between history and fiction as being ambivalent and endlessly malleable in its foreword, the following section will show that the main text of *Farmer Giles of Ham* reveals home and homelands to be similarly supple and changeable ideas, and that it deploys the cultural tropes outlined above to question the degree to which place and identity are related, inevitable and coterminous.

Farmer Giles of Ham

Farmer Giles of Ham's foreword suggests that history is subjective and inconsistent and that its narratives of national origin, unity, and descent must be treated cautiously as a consequence. The fiction beyond this framing endorses this by proposing that the notion that home and identity are imbricated and inviolate, and the idea that a sense of origination from the former somehow authenticates the latter, must be approached equally warily. More precisely, and offering a challenge to Shippey's position, the trajectory of metamorphosis the central character and that of his location jointly undergo demonstrates that identity is ultimately a mutable variable. It is true that the text explicitly joins the central character with his location. But it presents both as mutually implicated: "He was Farmer Giles of Ham."[78] Giles is the Norman-French word for Farmer, Ham the Anglo-Saxon for village. There is no distance between Giles and his home, which is simultaneously his farm and the village of Ham. As the village is "independent"

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[78] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 9.

from the Middle Kingdom, Ham is also his homeland. Taken separately and together, all three ideas root identity in what Benedict Anderson describes in *The Spectre of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998) as "local soil." Anderson draws on Acton's premise "exile is the nursery of nationalism" to draw a contrast between what he views as a coextensive relationship between identity and the identity-giving properties of place viewed from the perspective of a feudal, hierarchical, unchanging society and the same concept observed in a social order defined by its disenfranchisement from place and mobility through space.[79] In the former, most relevant to this discussion, citing Bossuet, Acton proposes "a general social condition in which human beings feel themselves powerfully connected together by whatever mother-terrain has nourished them, and in whose bosom […] they will attain their final rest."[80] Identity is limited in three ways in Anderson's reading. Temporally it is bounded by the moment of birth and death. Socially it is defined by an individual's pre-ordained place in an unchangeable society. Spatially it is located by an individual's profound attachment to immediate location whose connection to other such local communities create "the ramshackle imperia of legitimacy" where the "home-village" is understood in relation to the "home-region" and ultimately "the home-country", or *Patria*.[81]

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[79] John Dahlberg-Acton, *Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 154, 146.
[80] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London, New York: Verso, 1998) (reprinted 2002), p. 59.
[81] Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons* (2002), p. 60. Anderson ultimately argues that even in the seventeenth century Bossuet's formulation of the nation was anachronistic. To summarise, Anderson suggests that Bossuet's birth in 1627 was seven years after the Pilgrim Fathers had set in motion a process that would see millions of "free Europeans, and millions more enslaved Africans" cross the Atlantic with little prospect of a return to "local soil". These migrations gave rise to the term "colonial" to describe a new type of displaced person with a new relation to the nation – that of being in exile from it, and exterior to its geographical borders. Acton's premise that "exile is the nursery of nationality" thus arises from an individual's simultaneous identification with a far

The title *Farmer Giles of Ham* frames these concepts, tying Giles to Ham through a series of explicit linguistic connections that utilise tautology to make its point. In title and text, Giles is doubly a farmer, tied to the land and his place in name and profession respectively and mutually; his village is doubly a village, its name and purpose underscored. Metonymic in their relation to one another, Farmer Giles and Ham name themselves, their relationship to one another, and their representative function. Placed in history before the reach of Monmouth's usurping narrative (and even further from the twentieth-century's invocation of it as a pastoral paean) via the chronological unpicking of the foreword, the logic of metonymy and synecdoche proposes that these acts of repetitious reinforcement itemize sites of England and Englishness, locating them in 'local soil', and positioning them as tautologically reinforced symbols both of an essential intrinsic nature stretching across time and through space.[82]

Yet although its title explicitly roots *Farmer Giles of Ham* in local soil representatively and linguistically, and each is presented as a synecdoche of the other, the narrative that follows makes it patently clear that these are arbitrary conflations and designations. By its conclusion events have radically altered both protagonist and place, leading to their renaming. For example, following his brush with the giant, Giles moves from being Farmer Giles to 'The Hero of Ham.' After his adventures with Chrysophylax, he changes again, becoming "The Lord of the Tame Worm, or shortly Tame." His last metamorphosis, as the text notes, is to

distant *Patria* and realisation that they may not die there (see Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons* (2002), p. 60).

[82] The union of local soil and the individual put forward by the twinning of Giles, his land, and his home, can be seen as reclaiming the birth-of-the-nation metaphors usually deployed by official national narratives. The presence of this theme in Tolkien's work is explored more fully in chapter five's discussion of *The Lord of the Rings*.

King of the Little Kingdom: "In the end Giles became a king, of course, the King of the Little Kingdom."[83]

At each stage, the renaming of Giles and Ham reflects a change in their identity, function and purpose. Moving from farmer to Earl and then to Lord and finally to King of the Little Kingdom, Giles escapes the feudal social order implied by Anderson's formulation of the relationship between local soil, the individual and the prevailing social hierarchy. Giles moves inexorably from being literally and linguistically rooted in his place in the soil of Ham to being the king of an entire realm, both being renamed through his own actions. As the relationship between who Giles is and where he is, and what Giles does and what he is called, is foregrounded as indivisible by the title the implication is that his changing names reflect his changing identity.

The idea of what constitutes local soil is shown to change too, both in the immediate context of the events of the story and from a longer historical perspective. In the former, Ham becomes the centre of The Little Kingdom. In the latter, the Anglo-Saxon village of Ham mutates into the twentieth-century town of Thame. In both instances, the mutually changing identities of Giles and his location challenge the idea that there is an intrinsically inviolate unchanging aspect to place as a site of identity formation and authentication. Giles' status as "The Lord of the Tame Worm" becomes contracted to the "Lord of Tame" and Ham changes to the village of Tame as a result. That the changing identity of both is deliberately tied in this trajectory is made explicit by the text's uncovering of a narrative of their 'unofficial' names: the family of Old Giles Worming establish the

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[83] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 75–77.

place "known throughout the kingdom as Aula Draconaria, or in the vulgar Worminghall, after the King's name [and home]."[84]

The contiguity of the text's engagement with identity formation to the foreword's uncovering of the interrelation of the fictional strategies of history and fiction can be read from the perspective of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). In this, de Certeau argues that it was possible for subordinate groups to appropriate hegemonic legitimating cultures, effectively consuming and reordering them to make of "the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind [...] using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept", escaping hegemony "without leaving it."[85] Giles' and Ham's metamorphosis from farmer to King and the Little Kingdom respectively enact this paradigm. Giles recreates his identity, and that of Ham, not by constructing an opposing discourse. Instead he subverts the imposed discourses of the villagers, by the knights at court, and by the King, a totemic emblem of the hierarchical system Giles lives in, and puts them to his own use. This first occurs when Giles accidently rids Ham of a giant. As a result he is dubbed a hero by his villagers who sit around "drinking his health and loudly praising him." This does not "please" him and he makes "no effort to hide his yawns" as they do so. Nor is Giles above adopting the benefits of his new identity when it suits him: "he had become an important local figure [...] very pleasant he found it. Next market day he got enough free drink to float a boat: that is to say, he nearly had his fill, and came home singing old heroic songs." But he refuses to be bound by these externally

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[84] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 77.
[85] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. xiii.

imposed identities. When Chrysophylax threatens the village, the villagers turn

back to the "Hero of The Countryside [sic]"[86] to save them:

> "We look to you!" they said; and they remained standing round and looking,
> until the farmer's face was redder than his beard.
> "When are you going to start?" they asked.
> "Well, I can't start today, and that's a fact," said he. "I've a lot on hand with
> my cowman sick and all. I'll see about it."
> They went away; but in the evening it was rumoured that the dragon had
> moved even nearer, so they all came back.
> "We look to you, Master Ægidius," they said.
> "Well," said he, "it's very awkward for me just now. My mare has gone lame,
> and the lambing has started."[87]

The text's suggestion that the ability to embrace and reject imposed identities and

the capacity to solidify or collapse them at will rests with the individual is sustained

in Giles' dealings with his Lord, the King of the Middle Kingdom, Augustus

Bonifacius. Bonifacius refers throughout to Giles as "our loyal subject," maintaining

a conception of Giles' pre-given and self-contained identity. When it suits him,

Giles is happy to play along. "By asking to look at" the letter of royal approbation

Giles receives for disposing of the giant it is possible to "get a seat and a drink at

the farmer's fire", while the sword accompanying the letter is hung over the

fireplace. But when it does not suit him, Giles rejects the notion that he is a loyal

subject. Ordered by the King to Court following his successful taming of

Chrysophylax, Giles refuses, forcing the king to come to him.[88] Giles's actions

suggest that his identity is neither locally self-contained nor hegemonically

imposed but ultimately fully available to his own writing and reinvention. As

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[86] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 18–19. The name 'the hero of the countryside', as John la Patourel notes, was used to describe Alfred the Great, and Hereward the Wake, who held the Isle of Ely against William the Conqueror (see John La Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 134).
[87] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 31.
[88] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 68–77.

chapter four will show, this is a trait shared by Bilbo in *The Hobbit*. I will now examine how Giles' changing perception of his identity is linked to the change in his perception of home that his journeys outside of the homeland initiate – a key theme in the text's examination of the relationship between identity and place.

Giles' agency in choosing his identity is tied to his status as a reluctant hero. This is a recurring trope in Tolkien's fiction and I will return to discuss its portrayal in Giles' character in *Farmer Giles of Ham* in due course. What can be noted, however, is that in *Farmer Giles of Ham*, as in *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, it is clear that the central protagonist would prefer to be left alone. However, as with Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, when unfolding of historical events demand it, these characters ultimately display the agency to engage with and shape them. It is through this process that they acquire new understandings of their own identity and new perspectives on their home and homeland. What is significant in each instance is that it is the central protagonist's movement from a home within the homeland into the space outside the homeland's borders that results in their transformed understandings of both. Clearly evident in each text, this movement repeatedly underscores that identity for individuals and locations alike have no pre-given authenticity: both are always under subversion and reinvention. This theme is obvious in *Farmer Giles of Ham*. It is Giles's movement outside of Ham to face Chrysophylax that results in the greatest changes in his self-perception. This process is one that can be interpreted from the perspective of de Certeau's discussion of the relationship of place and space in the 'Spatial Stories' chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In this, de Certeau argues that place is a mere expanse, a distributed area, a fixed order. Contrastingly, space is defined by one's movement and motion across this area. Where place is static, de

Certeau suggests, space is performative, existing in its enunciation by action.[89] In *Farmer Giles of Ham* it is clear that Giles would rather be left to get on with being a farmer. His name explicitly links him to a place, Ham, as does his desire to stay in it. Nevertheless, his actions in "the Wild Hills" and beyond, spaces beyond the borders of Ham, have transformative effects on his identity, removing its predication on his location in Ham.[90]

The narrative's description of this progress mirrors the highlighting of an inherent tension between narratives of national origins and stories of beginnings that the foreword achieves. Noted earlier in this chapter, this reading of the foreword examined Said's proposal that where origins are "divine", beginnings are "historical." In Said's formulation, the unchanging constant nature of origins, and their status as fixed points of cultural reference, are destabilized by the act of their narration, which appropriates origins for a narrative of beginning that moves the narrating culture ever further away them. In the case of the foreword's deconstruction of Geoffrey of Monmouth's claim to be narrating the origins of Britain, *Farmer Giles of Ham* outlines this relationship, demonstrating that as the myth of origin is always already inscribed in the historical impulse of every new beginning, origin itself continues to be implicitly subjected to change and cannot be relied on as a totem by nationalisms that invoke it.

In its presentation of multiple possible points of beginning for the history of Farmer Giles and the village of Ham, the text uncovers the importance to official narratives of history of the myth of an original homeland. The multicultural linguistic tautologies the text uses to root Giles in place serve to emphasize the subsequent transformation of both. Equally, the foreword's separation of the

[89] See Michel de Certeau, 'Spatial Stories', in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 115–130.
[90] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 11.

languages it purports to be translating into distinct historical periods suggests that each correlates to a different historical period. Tolkien-as-translator/editor presents the text as a translation *out* of Latin into "the modern tongue of the United Kingdom," exploiting the relationship between the words 'insulae/insular' to indicate that the narrative is a translation of an historical fragment retrieved from a remote period of history in the island of Britain.[91] The Latin from which the curious tale is translated is "insular" in that it was used in the *insulae* (islands) of Britain and Ireland, a reference to the Roman colonization of Britain.[92] Yet Tolkien-as-editor also blurs the distinction between the post-Roman Latin used by the characters, on the one hand, and the 'insular' Latin used by the purported author of the fragment.[93] For example, Giles's Latin name is given as "Ægidius Ahenobarbus Julius Agricola de Hammo", a name belonging to the Roman era when, as Peter S. Baker notes, "people were richly endowed with names" according to the nomenclature of freeborn male citizens of classical Rome. Ahenobarbus denotes "red or bronze beard" while "de Hammo" denotes 'of Ham', tying identity to place again.[94] But Tolkien-as-editor's translation is taken from the later 'insular' Latin that the fragment is purported to be written in, rendering Giles' pre-Norman, post-Roman name as "he was Farmer Giles of Ham and he had a red beard", "Ægidius de Hammo" or "Farmer Giles of Ham."[95] Ægidius is the Latin from which is derived the Norman-French name Gilles from which is rendered in

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[91] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 7.
[92] Latin for island, insulae (plural) also refers to the idea of 'home' as it denotes the apartment buildings that housed the bulk of the lower and middle-class urban population of ancient Rome.
[93] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 7–8. Both Caesar and Tacitus refer to Britain as *insulae* off the coast of France (See Julius Caesar, *Seven Commentaries on the Gallic War with an Eighth Commentary by Aulus Hirtius*, trans. Carolyn Hammond (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998), p. 79, Tacitus, *The Agricola and The Germania*¸ trans. H. Mattingly (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 63).
[94] Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (2003), p. 263.
[95] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), p. 9.

modern English as 'Giles' – a traditional name for a farmer in all three periods and idioms.

The foreword, then, makes a distinction between the classical Latin used while Britain was occupied by the Romans, that used by Britain's Norman-French conquerors, the idioms used in-between and their transformation over time into Modern "vulgar" English. Each indicates how historical shifts over time have been mirrored by changes in the representative language. The linguistic distinctions are significant as they deny the idea of an originary land owned by an originary race. In his history of vernacular Sheldon Pollock argued that "vernacular literary cultures were initiated by the conscious decisions of writers to reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe by renouncing the larger world for the smaller place", arguing that "using a new language for communicating to a community of readers and listeners can consolidate if not create that very community."[96] Sheldon's point is that vernacular writing is identity-shaping, designed to emphasize the solidarity of what he calls "small place" communal belonging. In mapping a trajectory of overlapping competing and complementary representative languages the 'insular' narrative Tolkien-as-editor purports to be translating is positioned as a series of redactions between the classicism of Roman Latin and the standardization of Modern English. Essentially a fragmentary vernacular account of geographically localised area, *Farmer Giles of Ham* explicitly signals the interchangeability of the linguistic strands that have defined this area. Each belongs to particular periods and particular cultures. Each has defined the places and spaces depicted in the narrative for a representative culture. But while Tolkien-as-editor/translator uses the English variant of Giles to describe the central

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[96] Sheldon Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History', in *Cosmopolitanism*, ed. by Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 15–53 (p. 16).

protagonist in his prose; certain characters in the story continue to call Giles by both his post-Roman and 'insular' Latin names.[97] They are labels to which Giles responds without apparent distinction or disruption of identity, indicating that linguistically Ham operates a multiform *lingua franca* where notions of what is native and non-native are interchangeable. The linguistic exchange is governed by a diversity that emphasizes the causal connections in between otherwise distinct periods of history and distinct cultural backgrounds. Not only does this contest Pollock's distinction between "a language that travels far and one that travels little" but it denies his suggestion that vernacular writing is attached to small places rather than large worlds.[98] The foreword and text acknowledges that each language was a standardized form representative of distinct civilizations that maintained cultural hegemony at various points in their and its history. But it repositions each as simply ones of many among other cultural-historical and socio-regional variants.

Viewed from these perspectives, Shippey's assertion that *Farmer Giles of Ham* represents the triumph of the native over the foreign is open to question. Each language the text locates as belonging to and defining Ham at one time or another is, essentially, foreign, apart from the "common tongue" of Modern English. This is a hybrid of all of the others. If, as David Crystal argues, "language is a major means (some would say the chief means) of showing where we belong, and of distinguishing one social group from another" then *Farmer Giles of Ham's* depiction of Ham being home to a multicultural multi-linguistic population deflates Shippey's reading of the text by asserting that Ham exists in, and is open to the

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[97] See, for example, Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 18, 24, and 34.
[98] Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History' (2002), p. 16.

space of, a wider world.[99] Each language that the text notes could be used by its culture for a narrative of origins. But as each is explicitly tied to a different culture at different points in history whose corresponding narrative of origins would seek to sacralise the place they describe, the text's palimpsestic foregrounding of their co-existent multiplicity denies any of their attempts to undertake this mythologizing process. Instead, the text denies culturally representative language's claim to exclusively define spaces and places for identarian narratives in the same way that the foreword denied history's claim to objective accuracy. The text's description of the metamorphosis of Giles and Ham into King and Little Kingdom is therefore one that reveals that identity and culture have no place, in the sense of a static and fixed order of positioning. They exist only in their performances. Giles' activities within and without the borders of Ham alter the identity of both, moving the text further from the critical view that it represents an originary, preordained, and unchanging England.

Farmer Giles of Ham as a Late-Imperial Text

In my introduction and the literature review, I suggested that the engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's texts should be viewed as evolving and progressive. I have also indicated that as fantasy texts *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* reflect the cultural concerns regarding these entities that accompanied their production. As I will shortly assess *The Lord of the Rings*' relationship to late-imperial notions of these themes and *The Hobbit*'s contiguity to their interwar rendering, it is logical to also consider *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s reflection of the cultural context surrounding its production. Given that the

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[99] David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2003), p. 22.

text's composition overlapped with both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* it would be too far-fetched to read *Farmer Giles of Ham* as a high-imperial text, or to position Giles's securing of both Chrysophylax's treasure and vow of allegiance as a straight reading of British mercantile imperial expansion and the flow of capital from the margins to the metropolitan centre. Nevertheless, such a reading gestures towards the engagements with the contemporary nature of England and Englishness achieved by the construction of the central characters of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and the final section of this chapter will suggest that in the simplicity of *Farmer Giles of Ham* there are elements of the text that bear comparison to this idea. Broadly, if unconsciously, rewriting the Act of Union of 1707, and echoing the political and financial expedience that united the disparate elements of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales into a United Kingdom of common imperial purpose, *Farmer Giles of Ham* affirms its understanding of identity as being based on the tripartite union of blood, soil and the individual. These themes are vital to the relationship to home and the homeland of the central characters of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Yet while these texts offer more complex readings of the dynamic relationship of these entities, ultimately showing how historical action disengages the promise of unity offered by these elements, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, by contrast, unravels these ideas only to reunite them by the narrative's conclusion.

Giles's narrative differs significantly from the more celebrated fictional account of this process that is depicted in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In Defoe's text, the titular protagonist represents the national characteristics perceived to have helped found Britain's empire. Crusoe's seafaring background, his resourcefulness in the face of the wilderness, capture and adversity, and his

enlightened mastery of Friday, meant that Defoe's text served to codify and reinforce a British sense that it was their destiny to conquer and civilise the world at a time when cultural and historical determinants required that this was the case. As A.G. Hopkins and P.J. Cain argue in *British Imperialism 1688 – 2000* (2001), that this had become the British mission led to and defined the Act of Union (1707), legislation that formalised the relationship between England and Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In summary, Hopkins and Cain's reading of the circumstances that led to this notes that as late as 1690 Scottish mercantilists were pursuing overseas imperial projects that both ran parallel and competed with England's own, notably the attempt to establish a Scottish entrepot at Darien. England's movement from a seventeenth-century military-fiscal state to a cohesive nineteenth-century British imperial entity depended on unifying the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish attempts at imperial enterprise into a collective endeavour. By thus incorporating Scottish lairds into the ruling elite, emphasising the (partial) Protestant unity of the British over continental Catholicism and the unifying factors of shared language and monarchy, and celebrating Britishness as a collective project in which all, the Act of Union helped bind together a 'United Kingdom.'[100] It was this unified perspective of which *Robinson Crusoe* became an emblem. Symbolizing the purpose of the new nation, Crusoe's outward-looking perspective emphasized the United Kingdom's engagement with a wider world rather than its previous preoccupations with its own internal divisions. Giles's

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[100] P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000*, rev. edn (London & New York: Longman, 2001), pp. 76–80. These themes are also discussed in A.G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present* (1999), 198–243 (p. 209). A.G. Hopkins, 'The History of Globalization – and the Globalization of History?', in *Globalization in World History*, ed. by A.G. Hopkins (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp. 1–12, C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 81–89, and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 1–9 respectively.

upward mobility from a "yeoman or franklin" farmer of the village of Ham to King of the Little Kingdom echoes both Crusoe's arc of individual achievement, and the collectivizing of disparate identities into one national project Britain achieved in its early-imperial period. In his (ad) ventures outside of the boundaries of home Giles mirrors Crusoe's adaptability and agency, notably when in Chrysophylax's territory and the 'Middle Kingdom.'[101]

Unlike Crusoe, at the narrative's outset Giles's awareness and interest in the world stops not simply at the borders of Ham but the edge of his own farm. His statement "property is property" echoes Hopkins and Cain's assertion that the idea of ownership protected by strong property rights was central to the creation of Britain's centralised nation-state identity. As this chapter has shown, Giles does not have any interest in anything that happens outside the boundaries of his property, even if there are events that could be said to directly concern him (a rampaging giant) happening as close as a day's walk away. It is "their land", not his.[102] Giles is also a linguistic emblem of that property: his identity and his location are one and the same, and when his identity changes so does that of his location. Giles only leaves home reluctantly, when there are direct threats to either his person or it, reinforcing their interchangeable but consistently overlapped nature. This relationship is not presented as limiting one by the text, however. Although rendered comically, Giles' disinclination to get involved in other people's affairs also makes an important point about the strength of an identity predicated on the certainty of spatial proximity: Giles is able to embrace and reject other identities that are thrust on him by the outside world without any intrinsic cost to his own sense of self because he knows and does not question who he is or

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[101] See Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 62, 75.
[102] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 10, 20, 22, 27, and 76.

where he is from. From this perspective, while Giles is the first iteration of the 'reluctant hero' complex offered by Tolkien's canon, an identarian complex crucial to the constructions of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins in the later texts, he does not suffer the dislocation of identity that their own journeys outside of home and the homeland causes them to experience. Although published after *The Hobbit* and as *The Lord of the Rings* was reaching the conclusion of its composition, then, that the production of *Farmer Giles of Ham* predates and accompanies both texts suggests a possible and likely interrelation of thematic concerns in these characters.

Assessed from these perspective, Giles's identity is, then, inherently more complex than that of the "yeoman Franklin" Tolkien suggests he is.[103] In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Edward Said argues that "the conscious effort to enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, to transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories" is one of the duties of writing that intervenes in the dominant narratives of representation. Crucial to this process, Said suggests, is the critical interrogation of the cultural legacies of empire. This interrogation, which Said describes as "the voyage in", involves the appropriation of the discourse of the colonial centre in order to re-deploy its formations from the perspective of the colonized other.[104] Said is writing from a position which seeks to challenge and intervene in the narratives of the imperial world from the perspective of a post-colonial world newly-independent from it but still enmeshed by its structures. By rewriting works from the English canon in this way, Said argues, the fundamental assumptions underpinning the

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[103] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 131.
[104] Said describes 'the voyage in' in terms of the movement and integration of Third World intellectuals into the metropolitan structures of the First World, proposing that this inverts imperial narratives of voyages into the Third World's interiors for colonial purposes (See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 295).

hierarchical order of imperialism can be interrogated and translated in postcolonial terms. As Said notes "the *voyage in* constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work" [Said's emphasis].[105] It is from this viewpoint of the empowerment of the individual and their ability to reject dominant narratives that *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s "voyage in", or engagement with imperial/colonial discourses, can be viewed.

This is not to suggest that the text should be viewed as a post-colonial novel, formally at any rate. As my introduction noted, and chapter's one and two discussed, Tolkien personally clearly felt that the Norman Conquest resulted in the colonization of England and the overwriting of any representative literary, linguistic, and cultural discourses that predated it. As such, Tolkien was consistent in his view that it represented a nationwide act of enforced cultural disenfranchisement. Yet it is equally clear, for example, that *Farmer Giles of Ham* does not narrate a twentieth-century post-imperial marginal experience or describe how "outsiders who were previously held spatially and culturally at a distance have returned or have doubled back to the previously distant imperial centres to which they had previously been connected, as it were, only by their separation" intrinsic to the form.[106] But although Tolkien is a late-imperial author, the text does not fit the template of the Western novel described by Said as representative of this position. Said argues that the Western novel forms and maintains imperial ideology by offering images of cultural identity based on opposition ('us' vs. 'them', civilization vs. barbarism, order vs. chaos). *Farmer Giles of Ham*, through the character of Giles, and in its challenge to the accepted narratives of English/British history, does voyage in, back to an England lost by colonization and the

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[105] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), p. 295.
[106] Stephen Connor, *The English Novel in History 1955 – 1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 85.

overwriting of colonial Monmouths, reversing this template. But although Giles

does offer home vs. other type oppositions, he also rejects the imposition of

identities serially offered by his neighbours and the king of the Middle Kingdom in

favour of forging his own. As such, the text rejects attempts to pigeonhole it as

being simply representative of late-imperial or post-colonial genre conventions. In

its deconstruction of the simplistic binarisms offered by dominant and prescriptive

prevailing cultures, the text suggests the ways in which they compile erroneous

histories for their own ends.

For example, following his nabob-like return bearing treasure, when the

King of the Middle Kingdom arrives with an army to demand tribute, Giles – rich

with the dragon's treasure and respected as "a man who has a tame dragon is

naturally respected" – deploys the power of his new position not only to mark out

the boundaries of 'The Little Kingdom' but also to dictate the nature of its

diplomatic relations with the Middle Kingdom:

> Farmer Giles was obstinate. He would not yield, and he would not fight,
> though the King challenged him to single combat there and then.
> "Nay, lord!" said he, laughing. "Go home and get cool! I don't want to hurt
> you; but you had best be off, or I won't be answerable for the worm. Good
> day!"
> And that was the end of the Battle of the Bridge of Ham. Never a penny of
> all the treasure did the King get, nor any word of apology from Farmer
> Giles, who was beginning to think mighty well of himself. What is more,
> from that day the power of the Middle Kingdom came to an end in that
> neighbourhood. For many a mile round about men took Giles for their
> Lord.[107]

By marking out and claiming the space of the Little Kingdom, Giles defines

whatever remains outside its boundaries as rendered a hostile 'other' to be met

with force. That the text is engaging with the constitution of England and

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[107] Tolkien, *Farmer Giles of Ham* (2000), pp. 72–74.

Englishness is not just heralded by its examination of how historiography writes representative histories, then, or how the identities of individuals and locations become linked and interchangeable, but a combination of both that displays its nostalgic yearning for what is lost at the same time as it recognizes the inevitability of its loss.

In its promotion of a belief in the coterminous link between the self and the land, and the desire to fight for both, Giles's character explicitly adheres to the principle of patriality central to conception of identity codified in *ius soli*. A spatial theory of collective identity, *ius soli* proposes that land has an authentic, identity-bestowing property and connection to it bestows this to the individual. This was not merely a symbolic concept. As Ian Baucom notes, it defined British identity legislatively:

> The concept of allegiance is derived from the medieval notion that any individual born on a lords land, or 'ligeance' owed that lord loyalty, and this concept, in turn, secured the first principle of what was to become the British law of subjecthood: the *ius soli*. Literally 'the law of the soil', the *ius soli* survived unaltered for the better part of nine centuries [...] As Pollock and Maitland declare in their canonical 1895 *History of English Law* "the main rule is very simple. The place of birth is all-important."[108]

The *ius soli* legislation, which had informed the debate on English and British identity for over nine hundred years and was still in place when the text was engaging these themes, was overwritten in the 1981 British Nationality Act. Rather than the criteria of spatial proximity, this legislation proposed that Britain's identity be conceived on racial lines: one's parents had to have been born in the country or legally settled there for offspring to claim right of abode. This change occurs in the

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[108] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 10.

post-imperial period, the point where, as Connor notes, outsiders who could still claim to be British subjects via the *ius soli* but who had previously been held "spatially and culturally at a distance" and distinct from British national identity begin to return or double back "to the previously distant imperial centres to which they had previously been connected, as it were, only by their separation."[109] Faced with large-scale migration, the British Nationality Act rewrote the fact of visible difference by suggesting that "home soil had greater right-endowing properties than the soil beyond the sea," despite the British Empire previously defining all within its bounds as its subjects.[110] Baucom's reading of these legislative changes is essayed to support his thesis that in both its pre- and post-imperial manifestations England and Englishness are coextensive with Britain and Britishness; the latter are concepts that arise from the cultural belief in England's sovereignty, but which are simultaneously held to be subordinate to and quite different to England and English spaces.

Just as Baucom's reading offers a theoretical adjunct to Hopkins and Cain's historical reading of the Act of the Union, so does *Farmer Giles of Ham* suggest a textual exploration of its implications. The text and its central character reinforce the territorial principle of *ius soli* as the sole determinant of identity over the genealogical principle introduced to replace it. From the doubled metonymic potency of his name to his reshaping of Ham into the Little Kingdom, changes which transform the designations given to space without changing its geographical actuality, Farmer Giles of Ham continuously emphasizes and reinforces the interrelation of his identity and that of his location. But in its recognition of the inevitability of change, the narrative foregrounds the issues of estrangement, self-

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[109] Connor, *The English Novel* (1996), p. 85.
[110] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 10.

division, and internalising perspectives that an individual's movement in space creates. Not only are these concomitant with the cultural anxieties regarding British identity surrounding the text's composition, but they are themes central to their discussion in the more celebrated texts of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Where *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s explores how essentially static identities predicated on location change in response to events, the next chapter will discuss how *The Hobbit* develops this theme further, encapsulating a whole generation's experience of the personally and culturally uprooting and dislocating effect of the First World War.

Coda

In conclusion, then, the treatment of England and Englishness in *Farmer Giles of Ham* offers a challenge to Shippey's conclusions on the text. Denying their invocation as originary concepts, the text suggests that examinations of historical representations of home and the homeland consistently reveals if not the non-existence of a home and homeland at least their constantly changing definition. In confronting representative narratives of English history and the acts of historiography that have taken place to inscribe these entities, the text challenges assertions of totalising narratives of origin that seek to yoke identity to particular place like Geoffrey of Monmouth's. In doing so, the text does acknowledge the importance of location to the construction of narratives of national history. But in depicting the ever-changing names and nature of Giles and Ham they undermine the idea of an originary point where a land and a race existed inviolate. As such, the text explores the tension that exists between a narrative of origin and a story of beginning. The cultural and emotional desire for origins can be interpreted from

the perspective of Michel Foucault's 'The Retreat and Return of the Origin' (1973). Foucault argues that in a world where no one feels 'at home' the very notion of origin becomes a central concern, suggesting that this remains the case even though it must remain inaccessible as modernity's teleological grasp on history means that the conception of origins is invariably mediated by ideologically polarised discursive structures:

> We have seen how labour, life and language acquired their own historicity, in which they were embedded; they could never, therefore, truly express their origin, even though, from the inside, their whole history is, as it were, directed towards it. It is no longer origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it.[111]

In *Farmer Giles of Ham,* this separating impulse is initiated and mediated through the Tolkien-as-translator/editor construction. Foucault's position was informed by the idea that the mass migrations of the twentieth century challenged and undermined preceding discourses that propose narratives of national origin and identity.[112] This is the case because, as Robert Young notes, "we are offered narratives of fixity that become uncertain, stories of original plenitudes – whether of the Bible, of nationalist discourse, or colonial authority – that become ambivalent as soon as they are translated elsewhere."[113] But the act of translation has a mediatory function, negotiating the relationship between the self of individual identity and their orientation within interior/exterior designations of location.

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[111] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 329.
[112] For a further discussion of this position see Patricia Waugh, 'Apocalypse Now: Postmodernism and Cultural Pessimism', in *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1992), pp. 7–16.
[113] See Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 121–122.

Read in this way, the cultural insistence in the late-imperial period that England as a place determines Englishness as an identity is met in *Farmer Giles of Ham* by an insistence that this is not the case. This happens in two stages: the metafiction of the foreword frames the text, revealing the relationship between historical and fictional strategies of organization and composition and outlining the linguistic and cultural complexes that underpin the text itself. This linguistic multiplicity, and the text's narration of the consistent inevitability of change in identarian discourses, collapses any attempt to position the text as maintaining national, cultural and linguistic boundaries. The foreword and the text both recognize that Ham shares more than one language and more than one cultural and historical narrative within its space. This, in turn, denies the text's critical positioning as representing an idealized, unchanging post-Roman, pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon English homeland. Far from repudiating the impact of the Roman Empire or the Norman Conquest the text instead emphasizes its activity as crucial to the multiple iterations of Ham as the place of home and homeland.

Amplified by the changing conditions of Britain's relationship with the world during its composition, *Farmer Giles of Ham* acknowledges England in this context as an invaded and contaminated territory, but also as a nation with a substantial investment in its relations with the other that lies outside of its boundaries. As a home and homeland, Ham and the Little Kingdom, are simultaneously discrete, local, and self-contained, but also global, expansive, and self-replicating. It is a textual representation that aligns to Baucom's view that the idea of an 'authentic' England was crucial to English and British self-identity in the imperial period. The discourse of nostalgia is evident in the text. But in denying the idea of an originary homeland, *Farmer Giles of Ham* foregrounds that this England only ever existed

metaphorically and symbolically. *Farmer Giles of Ham* does not preserve or idealize England's essential identity, then, but narrates the cultural reality contemporary to its conception and composition: that for subjects of both a nation and an empire the task of locating English identity becomes increasingly complex when the struggle to define the relationship between home and homeland, and the other, has to acknowledge their ever-changing nature. Even the narrative's opening, which confronts the idea that authentic identities are properly resident inside the nation, makes it explicit that we are doubly removed from any actuality of location, both the act of translation and the distance between us and any nebulous 'origin' in time. Equally, while *Farmer Giles of Ham* does privilege Ham in centrist terms it does not deny the influence of the outside world on its shaping or the mutation of its essence through time. Giles is rooted in place, but it is his movements in space that changes the nature of both. If Englishness, as Baucom suggests, exists as a form of meditation on and mediation with empire, it is an arbitration founded on the logic of covalent affirmation and denial and its rhetoric of affirmation and disaffirmation is played out in *Farmer Giles of Ham's* depiction of home and homeland. As Linda Colley notes in *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707 – 1837* (1992) "this is how it was with the British after 1707. They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to 'the other' beyond their shores."[114] Similarly, ideologies of English nationalism and the tropes of England's cult of memory are present in *Farmer Giles of Ham* – its nods to British history and to the Anglo-Saxon period, to the myth of the green and pleasant land, to local soil of Ham, to rural village life, and to the yeoman figure of Giles. But they are by no means

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[114] Colley, *Britons* (1992), p. 47.

idealized, or presented as unchanging elements, as Shippey suggests. Giles's home changes, as does his homeland of Ham, as does he, and the local history the 'insular' fragment purport to represent narrate events that occur on sub- and supra- local terms. For all Giles's wishes that his home and homeland was untroubled, uninvolved and unaffected by the wide world, the text itself profoundly affirms that what is within and beyond are interrelated and that both are subject to reformation.

In examining Tom Shippey's suggestion that *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949) depicted "a timeless and idealised England (or rather Britain) in which the place and the people remained the same regardless of politics – the triumph of the native over the foreign", chapter three indicated that the text could productively be seen as depicting the fragmentary, partial, narrated, and evolving nature of these entities.[1] Rather than consolidating Tolkien's vision of a prelapsarian, pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon England, chapter three suggested that *Farmer Giles of Ham* questions the established narratives of English history, examining and unpicking their reverence for identities predicated on location. This chapter will argue that *The Hobbit* (1937) covers similar territory, engaging with the themes of England and Englishness, but suggests that it does so by exploring the contemporary anxieties surrounding these entities at the time of its composition. Rather than intervening in the historiography of England, or examining its historical narratives, as *Farmer Giles of Ham* does, *The Hobbit* assesses the importance of the home and the pastoral to the constitution of English identity from the perspective of the concerns regarding these themes that accompanied its production.

Home and *The Hobbit*

Home is clearly a focus in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). In *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (2005) Shippey argues that the narrative trajectory of *The Lord of the Rings* betrays a

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[1] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* ((revised and expanded edn) (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p.112. My introduction and literature review noted the similarities of Shippey's conclusions on these texts.

marked reluctance to leave home. He comments that it is "remarkable that Frodo has to be dug out of no less than five 'Homely Houses' before his quest is properly launched": "first, Bag End, then the little house at Crickhollow with its redundant guardian Fredegar Bolger, then the house of Tom Bombadil, then the *Prancing Pony,* and finally Rivendell with its 'last Homely House east of the sea.'"[2] Shippey positions this as a product of compositional uncertainty rather than intent, arguing that as Tolkien wrote "to present his languages [...] because he loved them and thought them intrinsically beautiful" maps, names, and languages subsequently developed "before plot." Elaborating these elements in narrative form, Shippey proposes, was "in a sense Tolkien's way of building up enough steam to get rolling." As such, he concludes, the momentum and clarity of the plot often lagged behind the inspiration these inventions provided, with the former gathering momentum from Tolkien's attempts to explain and incorporate the latter.[3] This, Shippey suggests, is why the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* appears to accelerate from its midpoint while its beginning appears to be a procession of glad arrivals at, and reluctant departures from, "homely houses."[4]

The text indicates that *The Hobbit* follows a similar pattern. The Hill and Bag End are clearly the text's central and most culturally resonant evocations of home and homeland. But their significance is amplified by the depiction of the other homes within other homelands that Bilbo and the Company stay at in the narrative. In order, these are the Troll's Cave in Wilderland, a dank cave with "bones on the floor and a nasty smell in the air"; Rivendell, a "perfect" house, "whether you liked food, or sleep, or work, or story-telling, or singing, or just sitting and thinking best"; Beorn's "long, low wooden house"; the Elven-King's Palace

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[2] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 118.
[3] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 133.
[4] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 118–133.

(where the Company find themselves imprisoned in the dungeons), Laketown and The Lonely Mountain.[5] Central to Shippey's reading of the procession of homes in both texts is the belief that they occur because although Tolkien's intellectual understanding of how language, literature and culture interrelate to form culturally representative narratives was in place at the start of both narratives he had no imaginative context to place it in. However, rather than position them solely as a product of compositional uncertainty, as Shippey suggests, it can be seen that in *The Hobbit* home attains a talismanic status for Bilbo, becoming an imaginative refuge invoked in extremis: "I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!"[6] In its dual presence as an actual location introduced at the beginning of the narrative, and imagined symbolic place of certainty and safety at moments of anxiety as it progresses, the Hill offers a rendering of home and the homeland at once sympathetic and challenging to their cultural rendering at the text's moment of production.

Compositionally, *The Hobbit* occupies a curious position. This thesis has positioned the text between its analysis of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Nevertheless, it was Tolkien's first published long-form fiction work and its composition and revision overlapped with both. The success of *The Lord of the Rings* has seen *The Hobbit* perennially relegated to 'prequel' status. For example, Peter Hunt suggests that "in comparison with *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* reads as the apprentice piece that it is", concluding that "whatever its limitations, *The Hobbit* remains the forerunner of a great release of fantasy."[7] Hunt's position exemplifies the critical tendency to acknowledge the interrelated nature of

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[5] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937 (rev. edn 1983))*,* pp. 44, 51, 104, 167, and 173.
[6] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 35.
[7] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 113.

Tolkien's work, but divide the texts into what Shippey describes as Tolkien's "hobbit-cycle" (*The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*), on one hand, and the mythologies that came to be *The Silmarillion* on the other. As Shippey argues, while *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* "are the works which have made Tolkien's reputation [...] they were not, however, "the work of his heart."[8] *Farmer Giles of Ham*, in this reckoning, is conspicuous by its absence. If each text is judged on the length of time that Tolkien spent on it, and this is taken as an indication of the author's personal assessment of their worth, then Shippey's point can be conceded. Where *The Hobbit* grew out of the "winter reads" Tolkien gave to his children, then, and *The Lord of the Rings* ultimately came from the commercial desire "for another book with which to follow up our success with *The Hobbit*", the construction of the stories that make up *The Silmarillion* can be traced back to before the outbreak of the First World War.[9] These narratives preoccupied Tolkien until his death in 1973.[10] Given that Tolkien began composing *The Hobbit* in 1929 and was still compiling the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1955, clearly more time was spent on what Tolkien described as his "'pure' fairy stories."[11]

Nevertheless, as the Waldman and Thompson correspondence indicates, Tolkien's work can be considered as an interconnected whole, and the composition of the texts overlapped. Just as *The Book of Lost Tales* provided historical and mythological backdrops to *The Lord of the Rings*, the production of

[8] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 253. Shippey revisits this argument without substantially adding to it in *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (see Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2001), p. 5).
[9] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 181, 188, 245.
[10] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 38.
[11] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 38.

the latter retrospectively influenced *The Hobbit.* Tolkien's process of "writing back"

to create links between both effectively placed them in a relationship, suggesting

their interrelation and conceptual coherence. C.W.S. Sullivan argues that it is the

subsequent success of *The Lord of the Rings*, and this process of revision and

connection, that has amplified *The Hobbit*'s relegation to prequel status,

concretizing the critical view of it as an apprentice piece and a "stopping off point"

on the way to *The Lord of the Rings.*[12] An extreme interpretation of this position is

Brian Rosebury's and Robert Eaglestone's suggestions that within Tolkien's

corpus, *The Lord of the Rings* should be considered a "discrete invention" and

Tolkien's most important work.[13]

Debates about the text's position in the canon aside, two points emerge that

are relevant to this chapter's discussion of its engagement with the themes of

England and Englishness. First, *The Hobbit* was conceived and published as a

stand-alone text aside from Tolkien's ongoing work on the narratives of the Valar

and the Silmarils. Secondly, although composed alongside each other in the

1930s, *The Hobbit*'s secondary world morphology is distinct from the faux-English

landscape of *Farmer Giles of Ham*. *The Hobbit* thus offers a clear gesture towards

the fully realised secondary-world narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, but one

whose concerns are directly embedded in the cultural context accompanying its

production. Where *Farmer Giles of Ham* is firmly rooted in the English landscape,

and its explorations of English history and English identity are specific, *The*

Hobbit's home landscape is not named beyond isomorphic designations: The Hill,

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[12] See C.W.S. Sullivan III, 'Touchstones: Reflections on the Best in Children's Literature', *C. L. Association* (1985), 253–260, and Rosebury, *Tolkien* (2003), pp. 114, 116 respectively.
[13] Brian Rosebury, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 90.

"The Water" and "The Country Round."[14] The exterior landscape beyond these referents, before the production of Thorin's map at least, remains unnamed and designated only as "the Blue," a place where "mad adventures" happen.[15] Bilbo's own map "hanging in his hallway and marked with his favourite walks" reinforces this lack of specificity.[16] It is the symbolism of this landscape, alongside the importance of home to the narrative, which this chapter argues offers the text's distinctive, culturally informed contribution to Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness.

The Hill and Bag End in this context possess a dual resonance: where *Farmer Giles of Ham* was directly imbricated with the English landscape and English history, these designations symbolize the text's disengagement from culturally specific locations and histories. Yet they also acknowledgement the importance of both in shaping the idea of 'home'. Bag End and the Hill are portrayed as safe not simply because they are known spaces, but because they are depicted as being outside the stream of history. Bilbo's continual desire to return to both during the adventure is a clear fictive representation of what Ian Baucom describes as English identity's retreat from the changes initiated by historical events in the late-imperial period and return to the known as embodied by place: "I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!"[17] Throughout his adventure, Bilbo wishes to escape the historical events that are unfolding and return to the safe, ordered, and

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[14] Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, (1983), p. 6.
[15] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–33.
[16] That maps made in the Shire are unconcerned with the lands outside their boundaries is a recurring theme: "Frodo began to feel restless, and the old paths seemed too well-trodden. He looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges: maps made in the Shire showed mostly white spaces beyond its borders" (see J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954) (reprinted London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), p. 56).
[17] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 35.

unchanging environment of home. As chapter one noted, Shippey's reading of the text positioned Bag End and the Hill as representing a closed-in suburban model of England and Britain. Nothing ever changes in these locations because, it is implied, nothing ever happens. This does not mean that they are completely outside of time, however. The narrative's beginning – "I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as they call us [...] one morning long ago in the quiet of the world" – implies both a clear distinction and relationship between the events narrated and the act of their narration. As with *Farmer Giles of Ham*, Tolkien-as-narrator draws attention to his position in the present, and the narrative's setting in the past.[18] It is from this perspective that Bag End and the Hill represent known quantities. In their environs there are no shocks, no surprises, and no changes. Bag End and "the neighbourhood of The Hill" are "respectable", as is Bilbo. Not because he is rich, although he is, but because "they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him."[19] Bilbo's routine is not simply well-mannered and ordered, but unchanging, revolving, as it does, around food and social engagements: "breakfast, elevenses, dinner [...] twice a day, cake, buttered scones, cold chicken and pickles."[20] Moreover, Bilbo can talk about the adventures that Gandalf sent "so many quiet lads and lasses off into the Blue for" complacently because they took place a long time ago and happened to someone else. Thus Bilbo's dismissal of the idea, when Gandalf offers to send him on an adventure, is not simply a startled rejection of the offer but also of the idea of change itself. Bilbo's rejection of Gandalf's offer is a restatement of his manners and his routine, and a reaffirmation

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[18] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–13.
[19] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11.
[20] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 12–15.

of his unchanging nature, but also the unchanging nature of his world: "I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today. Good morning! But please come to tea."[21]

The dwarvish narrative that seeks revenge on Smaug and a return to the ancestral home of the Lonely Mountain changes Bilbo's world. It does so by introducing history to the narrative. History exists before the arrival of Thorin and the dwarves, of course. The text is positioned as Bilbo's account of his adventures, a personal history that Tolkien-as-narrator/translator purports to be translating and narrating for the reader. In this context, Tolkien-as-narrator/translator both explicates Bilbo's own narration of his family history, for example, but also situates the Hill and Bag End in past history via his own interjections:

> I suppose hobbits need some description *nowadays*, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as they call us [...] By some curious chance *one morning long ago* in the quiet of the world, when there was less noise and more green, and the hobbits were still numerous and prosperous [my emphasis].[22]

However, Bag End's and the Hill's statuses as historically stable and unchanging homes and homelands respectively are sharply contrasted with the dynamic historical events that have seen the dwarves displaced from their own and brought them to Bilbo's front door:

> Long ago in my grandfather Thror's time our family was driven out of the far North, and came back with all their wealth and their tools to this Mountain on the map [...] After [Smaug came] we went away, and we have had to earn our livings as best we could up and down the lands, often enough sinking as low as blacksmith-work and even coalmining. But we have never forgotten our stolen treasure [and we] mean to get it back, and to bring our curses home to Smaug – if we can.[23]

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[21] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 15.
[22] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–13.
[23] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 28.

The dwarves' narrative is crucial. The Baggins who eats his baggings in Bag End is locked in an unchanging world. The arrival of the dwarves indicate how history divides this world into what is home, safe and ordered, and what is not home, but is wild, dangerous and threatening.

This perspective can be aligned to Simon Malpas's 'Home'. Malpas argues that *The Lord of the Rings* positions history and its events as crucial to creating the distinction between the safety of home and the dangers and uncertainties of its other. The main focus of Malpas's discussion is *The Lord of the Rings*. However, in discussing *The Hobbit* he notes:

> If Bilbo's adventures lead him through a series of comparatively stable homelands, from Elrond's 'last homely house', via Beorn's homestead, the Elvenking's palace in Mirkwood, Laketown, the eventually re-inhabited Dale and the Lonely Mountain, and back again to The Shire, the journey undertaken by Frodo and his companions is through a world whose peoples exist in states of continual conflict, threat, migration, and vagrancy, which even the destruction of the Ring only problematically renders secure. By opening out the frame of reference, both geographically and historically, *The Lord of the Rings* transforms the meaning of being in Middle-earth fundamentally.[24]

I return to discuss Malpas's reading of home in *The Lord of the Rings* in chapter five, using his interpretation of Martin Heidegger's conception of the *Heimisch* (homely) and the *Unheimisch* (unhomely) to discuss the text's engagements with the themes of England and Englishness in a mid-twentieth century context. However, Malpas's perspectives provide an important insight into how *The Hobbit* engages with the same themes. First, it must be noted that while Bilbo and the Company do stay at the places Malpas indicates, only Rivendell and Beorn's

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[24] Simon Malpas, 'Home', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 85–98 (pp. 85–86).

steading can be described as homely homes. At the Elvenking's palace in

Mirkwood the dwarves are prisoners locked in dungeons while a skulking Bilbo is

forced to wear the ring and hide in a labyrinth of cellars to avoid detection.[25]

Similarly, Dale is part of the Desolation of Smaug. Uninhabited since the time of

Thorin's ancestors it is "wild [...] desolate and empty [...] bleak and barren."[26]

Likewise, the Lonely Mountain itself is "grim and tall [...] dark and silent."[27] As

such, Bilbo and the Dwarves do not progress through quite such a sustained

"series of comparatively stable homelands" as Malpas suggests.[28] Once outside of

the Hill, the Company's movement between all points of refuge is always through

treacherous territory, whether it be Wilderland, the Misty Mountains, Mirkwood, or

the Desolation of the Dragon itself.

Nevertheless, Malpas's discussion of how home is constructed in *The Lord

of the Rings* is readily applicable to *The Hobbit*. While the text is not formally

presented as a history in the way that *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Lord of the

Rings* are, it outlines the division between the safe interior space of home and the

dangerous exterior space of the other far more sharply and cleanly than *The Lord

of the Rings*.[29] Moreover, its exploration of how these themes are responding to,

and depend on, history (albeit the fictional history of the dwarves) echo Malpas's

conclusions on *The Lord of the Rings*. In *The Lord of the Rings* the rests at various

homely houses that mark the early sections of the narrative tend to come after

passages that progressively act to build a sense of the gathering danger. As

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[25] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 147–162.
[26] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 173–175.
[27] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 175–176.
[28] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), pp. 85–86.
[29] *The Lord of the Rings* presents *The Hobbit* as a history, labelling it as "the Red Book of Westmarch [...] in origin Bilbo's private diary" in the prologue (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), pp. 26–27. While there is a foreword in *The Hobbit*, it does not present the text as a history in the same way that *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Lord of the Rings* do, although it does suggest that it is a 'translation.' See *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 9–10.

tension mounts so does the realisation that home, which has always been a safe place for Frodo and the hobbits, is no longer truly safe anymore – something that culminates in and is emphasized by the Black Riders' attack on Frodo's new 'home' at Crickhollow.[30] Following a series of increasingly narrow escapes in lands that were thought to be safe, Rivendell is a refuge as much from the realisation that the lands that the hobbits have been travelling through are fraught with danger as it is from the physical wounds left by the attack at Weathertop and the trauma of the flight to the ford. Shippey's point about the compositional trajectory of the story serves to support this.

By contrast, the more compressed and episodic structure narrative of *The Hobbit* means that the dangers of leaving home are more starkly and consistently emphasized by the text. For example, Bilbo moves straight from the safety of Bag End and the Hill to almost being eaten by trolls.[31] After Rivendell, he narrowly escapes being smashed to pieces by stone-giants, goblin slavery, being killed and eaten by Gollum, being eaten alive by wargs, and being burned alive by Goblins before finding refuge in Beorn's hall.[32] The text consistently emphasizes the perils and hazards that wait outside of its home space, which in turn reinforces the idea of home as a place of safety. Bilbo invokes its talismanic status after each episode by repeating his desire to return to the Hill and the comforts and security of home. Bilbo stays in several 'homely houses' – Rivendell, Beorn's house – and several that are not so homely – the palace of the Elven King, Laketown, and The Lonely Mountain - but each makes clear that within home's boundaries lies safety. To step over them is to step into danger. For example, while staying at Beorn's home, he is warned that "in this hall we can rest sound and safe, but [...] you must not

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[30] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55), pp. 192–193.
[31] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 32–45
[32] See Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 55–57, 58–64, 65–82, and 89–93.

stray outside until the sun is up, on your peril."[33] Similarly, Bombur and Balin, and the Company itself, is only saved from the wrath of Smaug by retreating into the cave which has become their home on the side of The Lonely Mountain.[34] Each home that he stays in as his adventures progress is implicitly compared to the place he considers his real home, Bag End and the Hill – even as he moves further away from it in time and space. Even Rivendell, where Bilbo feels he could "gladly have stopped there for ever and ever – even supposing a wish would have taken him right back to his hobbit-hole without trouble" his wish to return to Bag End soon returns: "Why, O why did I ever leave my hobbit-hole!"[35] Immersed in an uncertain world, then, Bilbo expresses a recurring desire to return to what is known and safe, embodied by place.

The reading of Bag End and the Hill that Shippey proposes supports this interpretation as the mannered politeness he identifies as one of its key characteristics contrasts sharply with the violence of the world outside it. The purposeful non-descriptiveness of the naming methodology in the text, Shippey argues, proposes a close one one-to-one relationship with whatever they brand. As he states, isomorphic names are "extraordinarily useful to fantasy, weighing it down as they do with repeated implicit assurances of the things they label, and of course of their nature and history too".[36] Shippey's reading of this complex can be extended to suggest that unlike the landscapes of *Farmer Giles of Ham* that *The Hobbit* uses referents unencumbered by cultural-historical determinants stresses their symbolic applicability. Tolkien's own reading of these constructions were

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[33] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 113.
[34] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 197–198.
[35] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 50, 63.
[36] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 115.

conceptualised in his lecture 'On Fairy Stories' (1939). In this, Tolkien proposed that

> if a story says 'he climbed the hill and saw a river in the valley below' […] every hearer of the words will have his own picture [...] of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen but specially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word.[37]

This is the principle that motivates the way in which the features of the local geography in *The Hobbit* are designated: "The Hill, as all the people for miles around called it," is established as the central point in relation to "The Water, running at its foot" and "the country round."[38] Spatially arranged in this way, Bag End and the Hill become a centre around which what is known, mapped, defined and therefore 'safe' is mapped cartographically. The presence in Bilbo's hall of "a large [map] of the country round with all his favourite walks marked out in red ink" underscores the idea of a landscape that is familiar, graspable and controlled – not least because his map does not name the space beyond the known. [39]

In their non-specificity, however, Bag End and the Hill also clearly symbolise a particular version of England, and a specific conception of Englishness. Bilbo is not interested in what lies beyond the map's edges because everything that he wants is where he is. With its plethora of "bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries […] wardrobes, kitchens [and] dining rooms", and its uninterrupted views "over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river", Bilbo's home, and his comfortable daily routine, stand for an idealized

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[37] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', *Tree and Leaf* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 9–74 (p. 70).
[38] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11, 12, 26.
[39] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 9, 15, 26.

location and lifestyle.[40] Shippey's interpretation of Bilbo and his home as representing British suburban blandness can be extended by interpreting them as symbols of the self-compartmentalizing way in which Baucom and Rosemary Marangoly George suggest Britain separated itself off from its Empire at the time the text was composed. More pertinently, this self-compartmentalizing can be viewed as a reaction to the trauma of the First World War that nostalgically celebrates England as a lost pastoral homeland and lifestyle. As Shippey's reading of the Baggins/Baggings/Bag End complex suggests, Bilbo's home does represent the functional artifice of British suburban life. He has an "Engagement Tablet" to note his appointments; tea is "at four," social callers are by appointment only and so on.[41] But beyond this, the very essence of Bilbo's character when we are first introduced to him is a pronounced lack of identity, coupled with a desire for anonymity, and an inertia that leaves little room for spontaneity. The codes of formality and good manners that Shippey notes, alongside Bag End's unchanging nature and the respectability of the Hill as a neighbourhood, are symbols of a constricted society. Both Bilbo and his neighbourhood are well-to-do and well-mannered, their affinity is purely imagined as Bilbo's social intercourse with Gandalf introduces all sorts of elements that it would rather not have on its doorstep – adventures, excitement, the world beyond its borders, and the prospect of change. In attempting to deal with these elements, Bilbo is forced to retreat back to what he knows, prompted by a vague, residual sense of neighbourly conviviality and solicitude:

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[40] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11. By contrast, "the Blue" (p. 14) into which the narrative progresses is unknown and featureless.
[41] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 15, 17, and 246.

> "Good morning!" he said at last. "We don't want any adventures here, thank you! You might try over The Hill or across The Water." By this he meant that the conversation was at an end.
> "What a lot of things you do use *Good Morning* for!" said Gandalf. "Now you mean that you want to get rid of me, and that it won't be good till I move off."[42]

As Shippey's reading of this exchange argues, the more polite and familiar Bilbo's language becomes during these exchanges "the more fossilised" it becomes: "His 'not at all', means 'yes, his 'my dear sir' means nothing, and when he says 'I beg your pardon' he no longer has any sense that he is asking for anything or that pardon might be a valuable thing to receive." It is, he notes, "semantically empty." [43] As such, it is the language of a style of social interaction that is ceremonially mannered, but transmits nothing about the person or their life. Tense and contrived, it presents Bilbo's identity at this point as little more than an interchangeable mass of good manners and social politeness. When the dwarves, strangers, arrive on his doorstep and barge uninvited into his home, Bilbo has neither the resourcefulness nor the agency to send them packing. Instead, he retreats into ossified non-offensive civility:

> "Bilbo Baggins at yours!" said the hobbit, too surprised to ask any questions for the moment. When the silence that followed had become uncomfortable, he added: "I am just about to take some tea; pray come and have some with me."[44]

Ultimately, in reintroducing Bilbo to the world beyond the Hill, the dwarves' adventure disintegrates the formality that characterises him at the start of the text. By the end of the narrative Bilbo can discourse with kings, and sings as rousingly

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[42] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 14.
[43] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 83.
[44] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 16.

on his way home as the dwarves did at the outset of the quest.[45] His immersion into the world outside of the Hill and his subjection to the passage of historical events not only reintroduce the importance of the connections between the individual and community, emphasizing their intrinsic and coeval rather than contingent nature, but enable the agency that is missing at the narrative's beginning.

In the immediate context, however, the tensions embodied between Bilbo, Bag End, the Hill, and the world outside, can be positioned between a pre-war certainty regarding the constitution of Edwardian England and a post-war interwar Georgian anxiety regarding the same subject. In 1919 the British economist John Maynard Keynes argued that, before the First World War, the average Briton lived an ideal life: "life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comforts and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchs of other ages." Keynes reported that a middle-class inhabitant of London "could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep", concluding that "he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural resources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share, without exertion or even trouble in their prospective fruits and advantages."[46] Bilbo, whose life balances ideas of warmth, comfort and security alongside an almost

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[45] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 252–253.
[46] John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, 1920), p. 11.

pathological indifference to what lies beyond the boundaries of the Hill, fits this Keynesian model.[47]

Farmer Giles of Ham depicted a relatively straightforward engagement with English identity in its central character, one that explored the relationships between an individual and their location, emphasizing the dynamic capacity for change in both when responding to historical events. It also took a long historical view to offer a telescoping perspective of how the idea of England had been formed by competing English historiographies. In revealing their focus on the continuity and ownership of the land, the text also revealed the latter's propensity for mutation. By contrast, the identities of Bilbo Baggins and the Hill can be viewed as being much more culturally specific, exploring the contradictions of an English identity caught between pre-First World War expansiveness, comfort and certainty, and interwar introspection and anxiety.

It is when viewed from this perspective that these elements of the text echo *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s engagements with England and Englishness. Effectively sealed off from the outside world depicted in Thorin's map, Bag End, the Hill, and its denizens can be framed in the same threnodic context as 'this fortress built by nature for herself'. A metaphor for England and a certain type of inward-looking Englishness, the narrative rendering of the Hill and Bilbo's lifestyle appears to be no more than a culturally charged rendition of Thomas Babington Macaulay's belief that an 'acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia', itself a paean to what Baucom describes as English identity's coterminous relationship

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[47] As has already been noted, 'Baggins' is both Bilbo's name and the afternoon tea that is one of the many meals with which he punctuates his day and defines his comfortable well-to-do existence. For the etymology of Baggins/Baggings/Bag End see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 82. The correlation between Baggings (food eaten between meals/a substantial afternoon tea) and Bilbo's habit of taking two dinners and second breakfasts suggests a philological pun. Bilbo eats therefore he is Bilbo Baggins.

with "the identity-endowing properties of place."[48] As such, it reinforces the critical

view that Tolkien presented idealisations of his home nation in his texts. But the

actual text of *The Hobbit* reveals the contradictions of its moment of composition

interrogating them in a historical narrative of origins from the off. The narrator's

rhetorical interjection of "what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some

description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as

they call us"[49] emphasizes again that this is a symbolic England. Drawing attention

to his position in the twentieth century also accentuates that he is describing an

England different to his own.[50] On one level, what remains unspoken, yet is

implicitly embedded in these narrative asides, is that it was a better England, an

England of "long ago in the quiet of the world, when there was less noise and

more green and the hobbits were still numerous and prosperous."[51] As chapter two

noted, Baucom argues that throughout history the quality of Englishness has

generally been understood to reside in certain locales on which it imprints itself,

whether "imaginary, abstract or actual".[52] Baucom positions location as a contact

zone "in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of

collective remembrance, and in doing so reveals England as continuously

discontinuous with itself". Therefore, he argues, "the struggles to define, defend or

reform Englishness" have historically been struggles to control, possess and

recast the nation's spaces.[53] By introducing a spatial distinction between the

England of the text's historical interwar moment of composition and the England of

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[48] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 4.
[49] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–12.
[50] As with *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Hobbit* opens with an editorial foreword positioning the text as a translation into "modern English" of a historical document written in "languages and letters […] quite different from ours", Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 9.
[51] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 12–13.
[52] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 4.
[53] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 4.

the text's moment of symbolic representation, Tolkien submits England and Englishness to scrutiny.[54] Testifying to the nation's essential (dis-)continuity across time, the opening of *The Hobbit* thus offers a symbolic rendering of national homes and homelands, homogenising the present by establishing the authority of the past, thus submitting the contemporary moment to the past's sovereignty and inspection. By describing Bilbo's Arcadian existence as a world of "harvesting […] haymaking [and] blackberrying" in a narrative cycle that runs from spring to spring, the text conjures up an England governed by seasonal rhythms and social relationships far removed from the temporal linearity, industrialization and isolation of the twentieth century.[55]

It is this tension between ancient and modern that Shippey suggests represents the crux of Bilbo's character. It is also, I would suggest, the core of the narrative's engagements with England and Englishness: the exploration of the constant friction between the contradictions that emerge when their past and present iterations are compared and contrasted and played out over the course of the narrative. In Bilbo's case, Shippey suggests that this is symbolized by the "archaic" adventurous Took who would like to see himself in a "looking glass" when Thorin presents him with the coat of "mithril" armour and the domesticated bourgeois "Edwardian" Baggins who suspects that he looks "rather absurd" and fears what his neighbours would think back home on the Hill.[56]

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[54] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 5.

[55] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 54. James L. Hodge discusses the importance of the calendar to the narrative of *The Hobbit*. His analysis is more focused on its implications for the plot, rather than its treatment of historical and mythical temporality (See James L. Hodge, 'Tolkien's Mythological Calendar in *The Hobbit*', in *Aspects of Fantasy: Selected Essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*, ed. by William Coyle Contributions to Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy, 19 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 141–148).

[56] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 105. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 203–204.

Shippey defines this as an internal conflict between Bilbo's Baggins and Took natures. While it is Gandalf who (literally) pushes Bilbo out of the door and into the adventure, it is the victory of Bilbo's Took personality the previous evening that really gets him involved in the adventure: "The Took side had won. He suddenly felt he would go without bed and breakfast to be thought fierce", even if the fierceness of his Took side is tempered by the suburban determination not to give offence of his Baggins side that prevents Bilbo from telling Gandalf and the uninvited dwarves what they can do with their quest when he wakes the next morning. This flaring up of the more outgoing side of his personality is a short-lived and inconclusive victory commensurate with the unresolved tensions within his character: "Many a time afterwards the Baggins part regretted what he did now, and he said to himself: 'Bilbo, you were a fool; you walked right in and put your foot in it'".[57]

However, as well as the tension between ancient and modern that Shippey suggests Bilbo embodies, the duality of his character can also be profitably aligned as representing a tension between an imagined national character and its actuality. The idyllic pastoral rendering of Bag End and the Hill and Bilbo, and his constant desire to return home, can be seen as portraying a pre-First World War vision of England and Englishness and the post-war version's anxious desire to return to its imagined safety and comfort.[58] Restating the importance of this pastoral imagining of English identity to this period, then, the next section will show how these elements can be seen in Bag End, the Hill, and Bilbo. Exploring *The Hobbit*'s symbolic contiguity to the war memoir, it will then examine Bilbo's experiences as a fantastic re-reading of the Edwardian everyman experience,

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[57] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 24.
[58] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 35.

assessing the impact of sudden and violent change on this notion of English cultural identity.

The Hobbit and the First World War

In *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (2003), John Garth placed "Tolkien's creative activities in the context of the international conflict, and the cultural upheavals which accompanied it."[59] While there are studies pre-dating Garth's that examine the relationship of Tolkien and Tolkien's work to the First World War, Garth's text bears examination because it offers a thorough and recent biography of the author's life. More specifically focused than Carpenter's broader *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (1977), Garth's narrative follows Shippey's source-study model, mobilising hitherto unreleased documents from the Tolkien estate archives to develop its depiction of Tolkien's life from young manhood to maturity before, during, and after the war and the corresponding growth of his art over the same time.

Garth's thesis is that the disparate elements of Tolkien's fiction form part of a body of work begun before the outbreak of the First World War that underwent continual revision and refinement throughout the author's life. Garth proposes that Tolkien's later and more celebrated work originate in the mythology of *The Book of Lost Tales* which Tolkien began in 1916. This was not, in itself, a new argument. Carpenter suggested as much in his biography of Tolkien in the 1970s as did Shippey in the 1980s, alongside the idea that Tolkien displayed "aesthetic thriftiness" in continually recycling and reworking these central themes and

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[59] John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. xiii.

preoccupations over the course of his life.[60] Where Garth's text is instructive is in its framing of Tolkien and his work in relation to the First World War. In tracing the personal and creative influence of the war on Tolkien's work, Garth restates the point that 1916s 'The Book of Lost Tales' has its origins in 'The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star' (1913), a poem composed by Tolkien as an undergraduate before the outbreak of the war. Culturally, poetry has come to define the period of the war itself, and that Tolkien's early work took this form may be partly ascribed to the spasmodic nature of modern warfare making it impossible to sustain a significant narrative endeavour.[61] As Garth notes, both Edmund Blunden and Charles Douie were, like Tolkien, stationed at Theipval Wood and their experiences support Tolkien's retrospective assertion that "you might scribble something on the back of an envelope and shove it in your back pocket, but that's all. You couldn't write. You'd be crouching down among flies and filth".[62]

By the yardstick of a Wilfred Owen or an Ezra Pound, the war stimulated a radical renegotiation of the relation of literature to reality, but on the evidence of 'The Voyage of Éarendel' and 'The Lonely Isle' it does not appear to have impacted on Tolkien's creative work at all.[63] For example, although written in the same iambic pentameter as 'Dulce et Decorum Est' the sonorous accumulative weight of the poetic voice, tone, imagery and subject matter in 'The Lonely Isle' are in sharp contrast to the hard emphatic rhythms created by the dramatic use of

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[60] See Carpenter, *Biography* (2002)*, p. 102 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 39.
[61] I discuss Tolkien's early poetic voice and its relation to the war poets in more detail in 'Authoring the Century: J.R.R. Tolkien, the Great War and Modernism', *English Literature*: *The Journal of the English Association* (2010), pp. 44–69.
[62] Philip Norman, 'The Hobbit Man', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 15 January 1967, pp. 34–36. See also Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War* (Middlesex and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1937), p. 134, and Charles Douie, *The Weary Road: Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry* (London: John Murray 1929), pp. 141–142.
[63] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Lonely Isle', in *Leeds University Verse 1914 – 1924* (Leeds: Swann Press, 1924), p. 57. See also 'Dedication', *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 25.

caesurae and enjambments that give full weight to the imagery and bitter realism of Owen's poem. The cumulative impact of these traits is displayed in Owen's climactic final stanza. In particular, the line 'If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs' uses the metre of the line to give a jolting, emphatic and arresting value to the word 'blood' and imagery that questions the war in a way that lines of 'The Lonely Isle' do not. The war poets of the established canon pursued directness. When they utilised a poetic voice whose origins could be traced back to Arthurian romance via High Victorian medievalism, the Romantic poets and Shakespeare, it was to highlight the inherited literary language's inability to engage with and depict the realities of the war.[64] Although the linguistic choices of Tolkien's work reached back far beyond the Victorian era that the War Poets rejected, the best that can be said about the goodbye to England of 'The Lonely Isle' is that it lacks the morbid patriotic triumphalism ascribed to those who go perhaps never to return, which can be found in Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' (1914).[65]

Thus while it is inarguable that Tolkien served in the war, and it is clear that it informed his literary efforts, it is not, then, his representative poetry that reflects his wartime experiences. This experience, I suggest, can most notably be found in

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[64] Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' provides an example of this ironic linguistic usage. Owen contrasts trench warfare against the symbols of high diction. The 'passing-bells', rung in church to announce a person's death, are now chattering rifles. War becomes the new religion as they stutter out their 'orisons' – a word for oratory prayers that can be traced back to the courtly Middle English *ureison.* Thus the traditional choirs of remembrance for the dead are replaced by shells wailing over the corpses of those who were called by 'bugles' from the 'shires' – images used by poets from Housman to Mallory to describe respectively the call to arms and the country homes of the Englishman. Owen's juxtapositions highlight the mismatch between the sacramental imagery of the inherited literary language and the reality of the war (See Wilfred Owen, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. by C. Day-Lewis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), p. 44).

[65] Rupert Brooke, 'The Soldier'*, The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke*, ed. by George Edward Woodberry (Ringmanton and New York: The Vail-Ballou Press, 1915), p. 115. Implying that a soldier's worth to his nation was greater in death than life, Brooke exhorted those who he left behind that "If I should die, think only this of me:/That there's some corner of a foreign field/That is forever England."

The Hobbit, and its depiction of the Hill and the development of its central character, Bilbo Baggins. Poetry was undoubtedly the literary method of production in the trenches but its representative prose took shape only much later and this was not published until well into the interwar years. Just as representative prose war memoirs such as Blunden's and Douie's were evidently not written *in situ*, as Garth indicates, Tolkien did not start sketching out *The Book of Lost Tales* narratives that began the process of bringing together his literary, linguistic and cultural interests until he was recuperating back in England. This led, by degrees, to his first major published work, *The Hobbit.*

The Hobbit should not be considered in the same context as trench memoirs simply because of its historical proximity to that canon. There are good reasons to read it as such. Significantly, the personal process of invention and revision begun by Tolkien in 1914 is reminiscent of that of another First World War writer, Siegfried Sassoon. By the time he died, aged 80, Sassoon had spent half his life "endlessly plowing and re-plowing the earlier half",[66] motivated by what he himself called his "queer craving to revisit the past and give the modern world the slip".[67] Thus while Tolkien did not write a trench memoir *per se*, his lifelong pursuit of core aesthetic and cultural concerns, begun as the war broke out and of which *The Hobbit* may be considered the first public herald, mirrors Sassoon's, an author who is an emblem of the dislocating, disruptive impact of the war on those who experienced it. *The Hobbit* was published in the same year as *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (1937), the first three volumes of Sassoon's autobiographical trench memoir, in which the war experiences of the central

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[66] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 92.
[67] Siegfried Sassoon, *The Old Century and Seven More Years,* (London: Faber, 1938), p. 140.

character, George Sherston, are thinly disguised renditions of Sassoon's own.[68] Temporal and topographical references within the text tie the work firmly to the First World War. Although by contrast *The Hobbit* is a children's book, an imaginative fantasy ahistorically cast as "a story of long ago"[69] set in an isomorphically non-specific secondary world, the perspectives afforded by fantasy allow for a confrontational renegotiation of reality. The fantasy mode allows narratives to avoid realism's focus on specific cultural-historical contexts, but it does not deny their significance. In this respect, then, Tolkien's work is as much a commentary on its historical moment as Owen's poetry or Sassoon's prose. While it would be misguided to read *The Hobbit*'s narrative as an allegory of the First World War, when addressed from the viewpoint that the historical has an inveterate propensity to irrupt into the fantastic, it is possible to identify elements in the text that are generically contiguous to characteristic traits of the trench memoir. A comparison with Sassoon's work illustrates this and facilitates the discussion of these contiguities.

Of primary importance to this interpretation is the relationship of Bilbo to his location – a theme central to this chapter's discussion of *The Hobbit*. Like many other war writers, Sassoon used the period before the war and images of pastorality to provide a sharp contrast with the events of 1914 – 1918. In the years before 1914, the cost of paying for the Boer War, the threat of war with Germany and agricultural and industrial setbacks saw the affluence and social certainties of the Victorian era steadily ebbing away. But the war's impact meant that this period became retrospectively viewed and portrayed as a golden age of peace and

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[68] Sassoon ultimately produced six volumes of memoirs, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928), *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), *Sherston's Progress* (1936), *The Old Century and Seven More Years* (1938), *The Weald of Youth* (1942) and *Siegfried's Journey* (1945).
[69] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 9.

prosperity. As Derek Birley commented in *A Social History of English Cricket* (1999), Sassoon depicted the event of a village cricket match in *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*'s (1928) 'The Flower Show Match' not just because its pastoral imagery juxtaposed sharply with the trenches of the Western Front, but because it evoked a way of life that post-war England felt had been lost. Not only the image of rural England, but an idealised version of England's social and cultural past was superimposed onto the surface of a cricket pitch and the act of playing of the game. As Birley notes, in Sassoon's memoir, a village in Kent, the self-styled garden of England, a place where "the teas cost half a crown, the ground is well kept, the lower orders are respectful", the national game is played by a representative, hierarchical social strata: "the public-schoolboy on vacation [...] the wheelwright's son; the groom and the prosperous saddler [...] the ponderous, good-natured yokel, the stalwart fierce browed farmer."[70] Pre- and post-war, this was a fiction. As Birley notes, as early as 1907 it was being argued in *The Times* that it was a "fond delusion" to think that every English village had "a spacious village green where squire's sons, parson's sons, farmer's sons, village lads, the blacksmith, the carpenter and the wheelwright play on terms of equality while others look on with critical eyes."[71] But cricket's potency as a symbol of what England had lost, as Baucom argues, arises from its "ability to house the nation's past in its ordered spaces" in a manner concomitant with the importance of location to the continuity and preservation of national memory. At once individual "in the particular records of performance they enshrine" but interchangeable "as essential and generic locations of memory" the grounds and the game are metonyms of one another, making it an easily replicable symbol of cultural values

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[70] Derek Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (London: Aurum Press Ltd, 1999) (republished 2003), pp. 192–193 (All citations taken from the 2003 edition unless otherwise indicated).
[71] *The Times*, 1907.

that testify to England's "essential sameness across history and geography."[72] The cultural reprisal of such verities and certainties were a comfort following the cataclysm of the First World War. But what actually happens in the invocation of the pastoral, as chapter three discussed, is that the use of location as a repository of cultural memory emphasizes the distance in time between the act of present narration and the remembered past.

This is the case in 'The Flower Show Match': it retrospectively offers a deliberate contrast to what happened next. But this is not a cultural manoeuvre that arises solely because of the First World War. The pastoral is central to England's conception of itself throughout the imperial period. As Mike Marqusee argued in *Anyone but England: Cricket and the National Malaise* (1994), "this is the myth at cricket's heart, the myth of an enduring and natural hierarchy, the myth of the village the green." But cricket's myth, described by Geoffrey Moorhouse as an invocation of the pastoral that re-establishes belief in "a tranquil and unchanging order in an age of bewildering flux" is also that of English identity.[73] Twinned with the fact of English patrimony, cricket's unification with the land suggests the unbroken transmission of culture across the generations that had

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[72] Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), p. 148.

[73] Mike Marqusee, *Anyone but England: Cricket and the National Malaise* (London: Verso, 1994) (Third edition, Aurum Press, 2005), p. 29 (all citations taken from the 2005 edition unless otherwise indicated). Geoffrey Moorehouse cited in *Anyone but England* (2005), p. 30. Marqusee argues that the bounding of the space in which cricket is played preserves the patronymic link between land and people that industrialisation and rural depopulation threatened to remove in the Victorian and Edwardian period. This, Marqusee suggests, is one of the reasons for cricket's burgeoning popularity in these periods – because it offered a glimpse of the vanished pastoral past. Marqusee's argument forms the centre of Baucom's discussion of 'The English Field of Play' (see Baucom, *Out of Place* (1999), pp. 145–155). Both are synthesized here to make the point about the cultural importance of the notion of the English pastoral in this period.

See also J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Viking, 1986) and *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Keith A.P. Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), and Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961) (repr. Broadview Press Ltd, 2001) (all citations taken from the 2003 edition unless otherwise indicated), pp. 173–213 respectively.

been shattered by war. The idyllic pre-war England Sassoon's chapter claimed to represent was a lost space of common belonging which was no less potent for being imaginary.

Deploying the same cultural tropes and utilising the same literary mechanisms it is within this world that the opening chapter of *The Hobbit* is set, as this chapter's discussion of *The Hobbit*'s use of pastoral and culturally specific pre-war imagery has indicated. Of course, there is no reference to cricket in the narrative, or games of any sort aside from one misfiring reference to the invention of golf.[74] However, as I have argued, the isomorphic designations of "The Hill'", "The Water" and "The Country Round" are purposefully non-descriptive to underscore that this is an idealised landscape. Its unchanging, unthreatened, unremarkable pastoral space is an equally powerful make-believe location that defines its central character. At the centre of its clearly delineated space, Bilbo lives the life of a solitary bachelor as a middle-class man of leisure. As noted above, he is "well-to-do," his meat is "delivered by the butcher all ready to cook" and he orders his appointments (and meals) with an "engagement tablet".[75] Extending Shippey's reading, not only is Bilbo recognizably Edwardian, but so are his lifestyle and surroundings. Both recognizably depict the time immediately preceding the First World War and are typical of the way this period came to be viewed in the post-war period. As with Sassoon's memoir that the text is looking back beyond the present is emphasized by its distinction between "nowadays" and the time it is depicting. The era it is looking back to is emphasized by the Baggins/Baggings/Bag End linguistic complex Shippey identifies which firmly roots

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[74] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 24.
[75] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 15.

Bilbo Baggins in the material culture of the Edwardian era.[76] His personality

displays the same love of food and drink that characterised certain classes in that

epoch. For example, his habits of breakfast, second breakfast, elevenses, dinner

"twice a day",[77] his love of routine and order, and his fondness for his pipe appear

to echo the habits of the monarch who gave the Edwardian period its name and its

appetite for indulgence:[78]

> his [Edward's] addiction to tobacco can be judged by his decision to
> 'ration' himself to one cigar and two cigarettes before breakfast. His
> gluttony was compounded, at least in so far as it affected his health,
> by the nature of the food that he enjoyed [...] his dinner (private as
> well as official) normally consisted of twelve courses [...] the upper
> classes naturally followed his extravagant lead. Harold Nicolson
> claimed that "no Edwardian meal was complete without ptarmigan,
> hot or cold."[79]

Bilbo, like Edward, smokes and eats to excess, mirroring the age's uninhibited

enjoyment of material and creature comforts because he can afford them: the

Baggins family are "very respectable" and "rich" while the Tooks "were not as

respectable [...] but undoubtedly richer." It is in this lifestyle as Baggins rather than

Took that Bilbo has "settled down immovably" into.[80] Because Bilbo is irrevocably

connected to his location, at the start of the narrative, at least, his uprooting from

home is traumatic and life-changing – as has been shown. As such, as I will now

discuss, it can be viewed as echoing the everyman experiences of those who went

off on the 'adventure' of the First World War. Similarly life-changing, Bilbo's rite-of-

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[76] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11.
[77] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11–32.
[78] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 11–32.
[79] Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), pp. 27–28. See also P. Magnus, *King Edward VII* (London: John Murray, 1964), p. 268 and J.B. Priestley, *The Edwardians* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 65.
[80] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 11–12.

passage trajectory is comparable with the impact of the First World War on all those who experienced it directly.

In this regard, the cultural resonance of *The Hobbit* does not lie solely in the specificity of its relatable elements, a like-for-like allegorising of the spirit and anxieties of the age, but in its broad depiction of its cultural experiences. For example, when the suburban hero Bilbo Baggins leaves his home to join the dwarves' quest he is unsure of the exact reason why:

> To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out […] running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, [and] across The Water.[81]

In leaving without his personal belongings Bilbo comically re-enacts Tolkien's first war experience. Commissioned as an officer in the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, Tolkien equipped himself with the regular uniform and kit, yet when he arrived in France, all his possessions had vanished in transit.[82] Bilbo is not sure why he is venturing out. The quest is demonstrably the dwarves', not his own; it is they who wish to retrieve their gold from Smaug. Living a comfortable life in the ordered pastoral idyll of the Hill, Bilbo needs neither treasure or glory nor wants adventure, but he finds himself mobilized anyway, propelled by his own hazy sense of needing to "live up to Gandalf's recommendation."[83]

This is not to endorse a strictly biographical reading of *The Hobbit*, or suggest that Bilbo in some way is Tolkien. It is a matter of record that Tolkien

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[81] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 33.
[82] See Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), pp. 88, 144.
[83] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 27.

served in the First World War and that it had a profound effect on him.[84] But Tolkien's experiences were shared by hundreds of thousands of men at that time. In *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell argues that the war left an indelible scar on British cultural memory. So Tolkien's experience was not unique, but it does not make it any the less powerful for that, or less relevant to *The Hobbit*. Its central character may thus be seen as reliving the everyman feelings of those who served in the First World War; whether they signed up enthusiastically in the first patriotic rush of enlistment, or with a grim sense of duty to be fulfilled under conscription, those who served did so under the same vague obligation of duty as Bilbo. As Tolkien noted, "you either joined up, or you were scorned publicly."[85] Like Bilbo, the soldiers ultimately came to question why they found themselves away from home in a foreign land; as with Bilbo, it was not *their* war or adventure, but nonetheless they had to face its dangers.

Bilbo's immersion in the dwarves' quest draws attention to both sides of his character. It is possible to go further than defining his arc as that of a simplistic growth story and placing it within the national cultural context. In his discussion of the growth of national characteristics in *The Divided West* (2006)*,* Jürgen Habermas describes the Anglo-British habit of reserve whilst dealing with others in historicist terms, arguing: "when Churchill urged France and Germany to take the lead in unifying Europe in his famous University of Zurich address of 1946 he saw Great Britain quite naturally as standing alongside the US and Russia as well-wishers and facilitators, but not as participants in the project."[86] Churchill was

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[84] Tolkien's comment that 1914 had seen him "pitched into it all, just when I was full of stuff to write, and of things to learn", among others, indicates the degree to which he felt the events and ramifications of World War One had punctuated and defined his life. (See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 7, 8–10, 12, 53, 54, and 501).
[85] Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 53.
[86] Jürgen Habermas, *The Divided West* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 75.

repeating a world-view originating from the late-Victorian and Edwardian period that had become an embedded British cultural orthodoxy – that of Britain's isolationism. It can be seen that even when embroiled in it, Edwardian Bilbo Baggins remains on the periphery of the quest until circumstances conspire to make him central to its resolution and success. His suburban background means that he is out of his depth in Wilderland. Unlike the dwarves, he cannot skin animals or dress meat, or track, or climb trees to escape wolves, or decipher the speech of birds. Indeed, that he spends much of the time literally being carried on the backs of the dwarves from one place to another is potent metaphor for how ineffectual he is. He literally has to be carried through the adventure, suggesting that Gloin was right to declare that he appears to be "more like a grocer than a burglar": "'Why, oh why did I ever leave my hobbit-hole!'" said poor Mr. Baggins bumping up and down on Bombur's back. 'Why, O why did I ever bring a wretched little hobbit on a treasure hunt!' said poor Bombur."[87] In the first half of the book he survives as much by "pure luck" as any of his own actions.[88]

In this context, in his reserve and unassuming qualities, and in his sheer luck at staying alive, Bilbo shares the everyman qualities of the soldiers of the First World War, his heroic potential remaining invisible for most of the narrative. He spends significant portions of the narrative abject, wretched and scared, thus resembling the figures depicted in much of the war poetry of the period, in which the soldiers are largely passive figures. The war happens to them, as the dwarves' quest to Bilbo. Forced into it by Gandalf, he finds himself transported passively, sometimes literally, from episode to episode. The only aspect in which Tolkien's portrayal differs from that of some of the First World War writers of Tolkien's

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[87] See Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 24, 63.
[88] See Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 73.

generation is the way in which his central figure eventually comes to develop an active role. As the narrative unfolds, Auden's series of tests "by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed"[89] work in favour of Bilbo's character who becomes the hero "so common in fairytales […] the weakest, the least clever […] who turns out to be the hero when his manifest betters have failed".[90] Bilbo's apotheosis occurs in the chapter 'Riddles in the Dark.' Separated from the dwarves, he fortuitously acquires a magic ring, triumphs in the riddle game against Gollum and finds his way out of the mountain tunnels. Even though he continues at times to wonder why he is where he is, from this point he exerts an increasing influence on the outcome of the quest. Bilbo displays physical courage in saving the dwarves from the attention of the Spiders; it is his keen eyesight that allows them to traverse the enchanted river of Mirkwood and his daring and ingenuity that help engineer the escape of the Company from the Elvish dungeons. Marking his growth from "the poor hobbit kneeling on the hearth rug, shaking like a jelly that was melting" in the first chapter, the suburban 'grocer' enters Smaug's lair when the dwarves of epic legend will not: "Going on from there was the bravest thing that he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterwards were nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in that tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait. At any rate, after a short halt go on he did".[91]

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[89] W. H. Auden, 'The Quest Hero', *The Texas Quarterly,* IV (1962), pp. 81–93. (reprinted *Tolkien and the Critics,* ed. by Neil D. Isaacs & Rose A. Zimbardo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 40).
[90] Auden, 'The Quest Hero', p. 46.
[91] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 184. Dorothy Matthews' discussion of Bilbo's development corresponds to Auden's interpretation of the same trajectory (See Dorothy Matthews, 'The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins', *A Tolkien Compass*, ed. by Jared Lobdell (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1975; New York: Ballantine, 1980), pp. 29–42).

Bilbo's heroism, then, is not the type favoured by an Achilles or Jason, but the heroism of the ordinary individual caught in extraordinary circumstances, attempting to do his best. In this way *The Hobbit* therefore offers an antidote to the image of the hopelessly victimised soldier of the war poets. As Garth notes, the latter embodies what Samuel Hynes describes as the 'disenchanted' version of the war, the myth of which "was defined and fixed in the version that retains authority."[92] In this version, action is rendered futile, and courage and heroism are a waste. Accepted as the representative literary voice of the period, the disenchanted view stripped all meaning from what many saw as the defining experience of their lives. As Garth notes, in response to the trench memoirs published after the war, Charles Carrington wrote that "book after book related a succession of disasters and discomforts with no intermission and no gleam of achievement. Every battle a defeat, every officer a nincompoop, every soldier a coward".[93] Carrington later described his own memoir, *A Subaltern's War* (1929), as "anterior to the pacifist reaction of the nineteen-thirties and is untainted by the influence of the later writers who invented the powerful image of "disenchantment" or disillusion. I go back to an earlier history of ideas".[94] So, too, did Tolkien. In '*Beowulf*: The Monster and the Critics' (1936), a lecture delivered a year before the publication of *The Hobbit*, as Shippey notes, Tolkien remarked that "even to-day […] you may find men not ignorant of tragedy and history, who have heard of heroes and indeed seen them […] the old heroes, dying with their backs against the wall", clearly alluding to a line in the Old English poem *The Wanderer,* in which

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[92] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), p. 424.
[93] Charles Carrington, *A Subaltern's War*, (London: Peter Davies, 1920), p. 14.
[94] Carrington, *A Subaltern's War* (1920), p. 14.

the lord's retainers "all perished, proud beside the wall". [95] The allusion was personally and culturally relevant to Tolkien. As Garth notes, Christopher Wiseman used the same image in a letter to Geoffrey Bache Smith, a member of Tolkien's school TCBS club, following the death of their mutual friend Rob Gilson in No Man's Land on July 1 1916: "Now we stand with our backs to the wall, and yet we haver and question as to whether we had better not all put our backs against separate walls". [96] Garth also suggests that the line also echoes Field Marshall Haig's order in 1918 when the German Spring Offensive threatened to break the Allied Line: "With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end". Haig's rhetoric could be read as another version of "The Old Lie". However, Vera Brittain, a dedicated pacifist, who worked as a voluntary nurse at Ètaples during this offensive, later said in defence of Haig's tarnished reputation: "I can only think of him as the author of that Special Order, for after I read it, I knew that I should go on, whether I could or not". [97]

Garth seeks to craft Tolkien's experiences from his six weeks at the front into a compelling biographical account of its impact on him. This means that he is forced to compile his narrative through historical reconstruction, suggesting that the views of those who wrote about it at some length may have been ones Tolkien shared. Tolkien's own perspectives on his part in the conflict, however, indicate a generational predisposition not to over-analyze its impact, dwell on its influence, or

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[95] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and other Essays*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 2006), pp. 16–17.
[96] Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), p. 305.
[97] 'To all ranks of the British Army in France and Flanders', Douglas Haig, 11 April, 1918. Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth,* reissued edn. (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), p. 420. Blamed for the slaughter of the Somme, Haig has recently been substantially rehabilitated as "the man who won the war" by William Philpott's *Bloody Victory: the Sacrifice of the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (London: Little, Brown, 2009) and J.P. Harris's *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Neither book exonerates Haig completely, however, registering reservations about his strategy, personality, ability, politics and personal beliefs.

pass comment on its psychological ramifications. Nevertheless, alongside acknowledging the capacity of the ordinary individual for heroism, Bilbo's conduct in the dwarves' quest acknowledges Tolkien's own experience of the trenches where one simply had to get on with it. It also promotes the far from disenchanted but critically unfashionable view that the worth of an individual is intrinsic rather than measurable by results, and that heroism is about the courage to try rather than simply triumphant achievement.[98]

Thus there is an echo of what happened to the men of Tolkien's time in the narrative. Bilbo is forced to leave this idyllic world to go "into the Blue"[99] where he repeatedly faces death in episodes of ever-escalating danger. His company is threatened by goblins who are recycled from the goblins described in 'The Fall of Gondolin,' the first section of *The Book of Lost Tales* which Tolkien wrote in 1916 immediately after being invalided out of the war. In *The Hobbit* Tolkien-as-narrator is explicit about what they represent, linking them expressly to the mechanised warfare of the First World War: "It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them".[100] As with the canon of the war memoir, the early pastoral imagery of the text gives way to a landscape now laid to waste by the indiscriminate destruction of Smaug, again a direct literary descendant of the dragon Glorund from *The Book of Lost Tales*.[101] "Neither bush nor tree, and only

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[98] The importance to the First World War of the principles of duty and sacrifice are the central focus of Adrian Gregory's *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[99] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 14.

[100] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 60. Tolkien later argued that there was no parallel between the goblins he had invented and the Germans he had fought (see Philip Norman, 'The Hobbit Man', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 15 January 1967, pp. 34–36).

[101] Verlyn Flieger draws a parallel between the shattered landscapes of the Western Front in the First World War and Frodo's broken body by the end of *The Lord of the Rings* (See Verlyn Flieger,

broken and blackened stumps to speak of ones long vanished"[102] greet their

approach, echoing the destruction by war of the green farmlands of France.

Moreover, in The Company's movement to The Lonely Mountain one recognizes

the stop-start progress of troops to the front line experienced by Tolkien and

described by Carpenter:

> They made their first camp on the western side of the great southern spur
> […] Nothing moved in the waste, save the vapour […] None of them had
> much spirit left […] They prepared to move once more (to the secret door)
> […] They spoke low and never called or sang, for danger brooded in every
> rock.[103]

> Interrupted by innumerable halts […] The battalion marched on, dripping
> and cursing […] From the near distance came […] the whine, crash, and
> boom of the allied bombardment of German lines. [Then] the long march at
> night-time from the billets down to the trenches, the stumble of a mile or
> more through the communications alleys that led to the front line itself and
> the hours of confusion and exasperation.[104]

Bilbo's company move through an eerie, desolate silence towards their final

destination while Tolkien's battalion could hear the front line growing steadily

closer with each hour; however, in both cases, The Company, like the troops, are

ever aware of a force bent on their annihilation lying in wait only a short distance

away, that is, in the case of the British troops, the German lines and guns, and in

the case of The Company, the dragon. In the final, climactic chapters one finds

further echoes of the First World War. Shippey has noted the parallel between

Lord Kitchener's exhortation that Tolkien's 1916 army display "discipline and

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'The Body in Question: The Unhealed Wounds of Frodo Baggins', in *The Body in Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on Middle-earth Corporeality*, ed. by Christopher Vaccaro (North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc. 2013), pp. 12–19 (p.18). See also Sandra Gilbert, '"Rats Alley": the Great War, Modernism, and the Anti-Pastoral Elegy', *New Literary History*, 30.1 (1999), 179-201 (p. 185)).
[102] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 173–175.
[103] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), pp. 175–178.
[104] Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), pp. 114–117.

steadiness under fire"[105] and Bard's grim to-the-last-man (and the last arrow) defence against the assault of Smaug.[106] As Garth notes, we are also shown the wrangling over command and strategy and, in the final battle, the explicit horror of the battlefield. Friend and foe alike are united in death, the goblins lying "piled in heaps till Dale was dark and hideous with their corpses" and next to them "many a fair elf that should have lived yet long ages merrily in the wood."[107] One also finds a final rebuttal of the disenchanted view relating to Carrington's view that in the enormity of battle there can also be a strange affirmative "exaltation": "It was a terrible battle. The most dreadful of all Bilbo's experiences, and the one which at the time he hated most – which is to say that it was the one he was most proud of, and most fond of recalling long afterwards".[108]

Coda

This chapter has argued that *The Hobbit*'s examines the importance of home and the homeland to the individual apprehension of identity, noting the way that English post-war anxiety and longing for pre-war certainties are explored in the text, most notably through the contrast between the pastoral idyll of the Hill and the world outside its boundaries and the tensions and trajectory of Bilbo's character. By the text's conclusion, Bilbo is somewhat more at ease existing between the identity which he was comfortable with at the beginning of the narrative and wished to return to throughout his adventures, and the new

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[105] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 93–95.
[106] Garth's discussion of this parallel builds on Shippey's examination of the origins the phrase "hold one's ground" (see Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), pp. 304–306 and Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 94–95 respectively).
[107] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 240. See also Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), pp. 306–308.
[108] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 238. For a further discussion of the "joy" of battle see Carrington, *A Subaltern's War* (1920), p. 35.

understandings they have given him. The text's treatment of the pastoral acknowledges its symbolic importance to English cultural self-representation, but it ultimately suggests that it is now unattainable. By the end of *The Hobbit*, for example, Bilbo finds that having left the Hill and returned he cannot return to being plain "Mr. Baggins Esquire of Bag–End, Underhill" as he wishes.[109] Indeed, upon his return, he is viewed by "all the hobbits of the neighbourhood as "queer"".[110] While he himself embraces his difference and takes "to writing poetry and visiting elves", to his neighbours he is "mad Baggins."[111] An experience of cataclysm and war means that he is no longer the same hobbit who smoked his pipe in the morning sun. His perception of himself and his home has fundamentally changed, even if the geographical location of his home has not, because he has been out in the world. It is in this way that *The Hobbit* offers a commentary on the tension between the self-imaging of Britain's cultural identity during the interwar period and its actuality.

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[109] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 253.
[110] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 254.
[111] Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1983), p. 254.

Chapter Five

The Lord of the Rings

The previous chapters examined two distinct ways in which the engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work could be interpreted. Chapter three positioned *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s (1949) use of real-world cartography and English history as an intervention in English historiography, examining the text's challenge to the idea that the nation and national identities are pre-given, pre-existing entities, and its examination of the mutual relationship of location and identity. Contrastingly, chapter four assessed *The Hobbit*'s (1937) creation of symbolically applicable landscapes as a corollary to the cultural concerns and anxieties regarding the nature of Englishness and the constitution of English identity that accompanied the text's production in the late-imperial period. Aligning the text's treatment of home, the homeland, and the individual to the importance of the pastoral in constructing English identity, this chapter went on to examine the intensifying impact of the First World War on England's cultural self-perception in the interwar period. In this final chapter, I will discuss the ways in which *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) responds to and develops all of these elements, combining the long historical perspectives on the nature of England and Englishness offered by *Farmer Giles of Ham* with *The Hobbit*'s more culturally applicable reading of the same. Essaying an extended intervention in the representative narratives of English history, and their attendant ideas of England and Englishness, but also offering perspectives on these themes relevant to the time of its composition, the sustained nature of *The Lord of the Ring*'s engagement with these themes can be seen as a consequence of the increased scale and

ambition of the text, and also of its more sophisticated construction and organization. Nevertheless, it should also be viewed as a continuation of the discussion of those elements advanced by those texts.

This chapter, then, will focus on two main areas. It will begin by discussing the significance of *The Lord of the Rings*' alignment of the Shire and hobbits with England and Englishmen, examining the importance of the prologue's use of English narratives of Anglo-Saxon history to create this. *The Lord of the Rings*' foreword and prologue and its provision of maps, genealogies, annals and appendices, and its assumption of the pose of translator/editor far outweigh the construction and deployment of such mechanisms in *Farmer Giles of Ham*. But as with the latter text, *The Lord of the Rings* clearly uses the same strategies to engage with extant historiographies of England. Working to preserve the mimetic illusion of the text's integrity as a fictional history, the metafictional devices of the text also offer a sustained commentary on representative English history and its role in the formation of narratives of national and cultural identity. Contrasting with Shippey's reading of this, however, I will note how the ways in which the prologue works to present hobbits as race and create a homeland that authenticates them conceptually in this context reveals the hollow nature of the very tropes of national origins that it mobilizes to achieve these effects. Outlining the migrant conceptualities provided by the hobbits' status as settlers in a land that becomes known as the Shire, and introducing Simon Malpas's proposal that home in *The Lord of the Rings* is constructed by the narrative's understanding that historical processes divide the world into the *Heimisch* and the *Unheimisch*, I argue that in disaggregating the historical discourses of migration, immigration, and emigration the prologue consciously shows the construction and interrelation of hobbits and

the Shire as deliberate acts of self-creation rather than pre-given originary identities. But, I argue, while these processes draw on, shape, and retreat to the local and they are recuperative, they do not deny or hide their essentially made nature or propensity to change but foreground it.

The second part of this chapter will propose that in its examination of this dialectic *The Lord of the Rings* imaginatively replays the dynamic interaction between memory and history Ian Baucom suggests sacralises England as home for the English in the late-imperial period. Arguing that the text simultaneously reinforces these ideas while at the same time questioning and undermining their integrity, I will examine the way in which the narrative's representation of localised distinctions disrupt the critical idea that hobbits and the Shire represent generic Englishmen and England respectively. Introducing Christopher Garbowski's reading of homelands in *The Lord of the Rings*, I will outline how the irreconcilable local distinctions and tensions within the Shire the narrative presents at its outset are contrastively diffused within the wider context of Middle-earth by the text's ongoing emphasis on the importance of communication to breaking down physical and cultural barriers. I will go on to examine the challenge the text raises to narratives that deploy the biological imagery of birth, parturition and genealogy to naturalize the narrative of the nation and the homeland as one of uninterrupted descent from parents and children down the patriarchal line. Discussing Bilbo and Frodo's relationship as adoptive uncle and adopted nephew respectively, the chapter will then align this complex to the readings of the post-war novel and nation offered by Stephen Connor, suggesting that in its acknowledgement the validity of illegitimate identities, the existence and importance of the wider world

outside the homeland, and the inevitability of change, the text offers its perspectives on England and Englishness.

Hobbits, the Shire, and England

Created in the period between the First and Second World Wars, hobbits possess a distinctive cultural resonance. As Tolkien notes, sometime between 1928 and 1932 he wrote "in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" on the back of an examination paper he was marking. The author maintained that it was a desire to "find out what hobbits were" that led to the production of *The Hobbit*.[1] Exemplifying Tolkien's belief that literary creation starts with linguistic inspiration, he claimed (retrospectively) to have written the text around the word.[2] This aside, however, as chapter two discussed, Bilbo Baggins and hobbits are a modern literary invention in a way that the dwarves and elves of *The Hobbit* are not. As chapter four argued, within the limited world of *The Hobbit* Bilbo's obvious modernity provides a point of tension and orientation that the text profitably explores. However, when Tolkien returned to hobbits in the more fully realised narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*, their contemporary resonance threatened to expose the mimetic illusion of the text as translated archaic history.[3] This, in essence, forms the crux of Tom Shippey's interpretation of Bilbo's character in *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien*

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[1] See Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1977) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 230.

[2] See Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 230. See also J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981) (reprinted London: HarperCollins, 2006), pp. 30–32. Tolkien also discusses the possible roots of the word and his invention at length in a letter that was never sent (see Tolkien, *Letters* (2006), pp. 379–387.

[3] When Tolkien offered Stanley Unwin *The Silmarillion* (1977) as a possible sequel to *The Hobbit,* Unwin replied that he wanted "to hear more from you about your Hobbits!" (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 22–25).

Created a New Mythology.[4] In summary, and as chapter two discussed at length, Shippey argues that the things that Bilbo shares narrative space with in *The Hobbit* all possess demonstrably ancient and philologically traceable linguistic and literary histories. He cites as an example of this Tolkien's use of the word 'dwarves' and 'dwarvish' rather than 'dwarfs' and dwarfish' to describe the race of Thorin, positioning it as a deliberate attempt to link them to the races described by the Old English *dweorh*, the Old Norse *dvergr*, the Old High German *twerg*, the Gothic/High Gothic **dvairgs* and the texts that contain them.[5] As Shippey notes, the linguistic distinction Tolkien insisted on was one made to define both their literary and racial character.[6] Thorin's dwarves, their lust for gold and desire for revenge, and their capacity for taciturnity, pride, and unexpected generosity are drawn from the same race depicted in Snorri Sturluson's account of the Everlasting Battle in the *Prose Edda*.[7] The link, Shippey argues, is made explicit by the appearance at the end of *The Hobbit* of Dain Ironfoot, whose sword *Dainslief* is at the centre of that account.[8]

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[4] See Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 63–107.

[5] For a discussion of these etymological and anterior sources see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 69–72.

[6] As Carpenter and Shippey have both noted, Tolkien entered into arguments with printers determined to change his proofs in order to preserve the linguistic distinctions he wished to make. As he argued at great length in a letter to his publishers, changing the spelling denied the word its age and roots (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005)*, pp. 66–71, Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 290, and Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 313.

[7] As Shippey notes, the pride of Hogni and his refusal to bargain, which means that he and Hethinn (the abductor of his daughter, Hildr) must fight every evening until released by Doomsday is replicated by Thorin's actions in *The Hobbit* (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 71–72). David A. Funk makes much the same point about the similarity of Tolkien's dwarves to their literary forebears (See David A. Funk, 'Explorations into the Psyche of the Dwarves', in *Proceedings of the J. R. R. Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992*: Proceedings of the Conference Held at Keble College, Oxford, England, 17th-24th August 1992 to Celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien, Incorporating the 23rd Mythopoeic Conference (Mythcon XXIII) and Oxenmoot 1992 *Mythlore/Mallorn*, 21; 33:2 (80), ed. by Glen H. GoodKnight and Patricia Reynolds (1995-1996), pp.330–333).

[8] Dain is also named in the *Dvergetal* (see Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda: Tales from Norse Mythology,* trans. Jean L. Young (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes Publishers, 1954) (republished Berkeley and California: University of California Press, 1964, 1992), pp. 41–42 (all citations taken

They are also distinctions and allusions that deny their modernity, making the point that, conceptually, these are the dwarves of ancient poems and sagas rather than those of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* – also released in 1937. However, it has the effect of highlighting that there is no corresponding linguistic or cultural paper trail for hobbits. Where Bilbo has a thematic function as an anachronism in the ancient literary landscapes and literary denizens of *The Hobbit*, drawing attention to the text's negotiation of ancient and modern, within the more sophisticated fictional history of *The Lord of the Rings*, however, his modernity threatens to disrupt the conceits of the text. To maintain this, as Shippey notes, Tolkien created a compelling racial identity for hobbits, one that would allow them to rub shoulders with the other appropriated and invented races within the text without standing out. He argues that the first way this was achieved was by using the metafictional framing of *The Lord of the Rings* to assign the word 'hobbit' a specific historical location within the narrative, placing them on an equal etymological footing. Appendix F notes:

> *Hobbit* was the name usually applied by the Shire-folk to all their kind. Men called them *Haflings* and the Elves *Periannath*. The origin of the word *hobbit* was by most forgotten. It seems, however, to have been at first a name given to the Harfoots by the Fallohides and Stoors, and to be a worn-down form of a word preserved more fully in Rohan: *holbylta* 'hole-builder'[9]

Applying the concept of asterisk-reality noted in chapter two (where something is unrecorded but within the balance of philological probability is likely to have existed) to the construction of *The Lord of the Ring*'s secondary-world history, it is in this context that Tolkien-as-editor/translator suggests that 'hobbit' is derived

from this edition unless otherwise indicated) (see also J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937) (rev. edn 1983), pp. 219, 222–225).
[9] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954) (reprinted London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), p. 1164.

from the Old English *Holbytla "hole dweller" or "hole builder." This linguistic positioning essentially issues hobbits with passports of equal citizenship and rights of residence, permitting them to share narrative space with the older races of the text.[10] As Shippey notes "the implication is that the inspiration was a memory of something that could in reality have existed, and that anyway conformed to the inflexible roles of linguistic history: as a word 'hobbit' was more like 'dwarves' than 'elfin.'"[11]

Assisting this naturalisation, hobbits were further embedded within the narrative by the supply of a homeland for them to occupy in the form of the Shire, and the suggestion of their interchangeable nature as symbols of each other. This is the key focus of this section. As Shippey notes, *The Lord of the Rings* explicitly appropriates and rewrites the history and language of the Anglo-Saxon migration to Britain to locate them within 'the Shire.' He argues that the parallels are obvious and deliberate: Anglo-Saxons and hobbits arrive in England / the Shire in three tribes: Angles, Saxons and Jutes and "Harfoots, Stoors and Fallohides."[12] The two brothers who led the initial Anglo-Saxon influx into England, Hengest and Horsa, are redrawn as the hobbits Marcho and Blanco who cross "the brown river Baraduin (Brandywine) with a great following of hobbits" to enter the lands that will become known as the Shire.[13] That 'the Shire' and Pre-Norman England are being conflated is implicit. Marcho and Blanco, Shippey argues, signify *marh (horse) *blanca* (white), a combination meaning 'white horse', analogous to the 'stallion' and 'horse' of Hengist and Horsa, suggesting the Shire's equivalence to the Vale

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[10] Tolkien uses the same technique to construct Smaug (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), p. 31.
[11] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 52.
[12] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 15.
[13] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 16.

of the White Horse, the West Country, in the English Midlands.[14] As chapter two noted, Tolkien attached great significance to this location: it was, he noted, "*home to me, as no other part of the world is*", and the author considered himself "in English terms a west-midlander at *home* only in the counties upon the western marches [both my emphasis]."[15]

The emphasis of the links between Tolkien and England and the Shire as English from Chance-Nitzsche's *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology for England* (1979) onwards have also been augmented by Tolkien's authorial declarations of biographical resemblance to his creation:

> The hobbits are just rustic English people, made small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imagination – not the small reach of their courage or latent power. I have always been impressed that we are here, surviving, because of the indomitable courage of quite small people against impossible odds.[16]

What is notable in Tolkien's citation is the way it moves hobbits from being literary inventions to being culturally specific symbols of England and Englishmen by its progression from 'I' to 'we'. Essentially moving hobbits from being 'them' to being 'us', it suggests that hobbits are as English as Tolkien and his contemporaries. This inference has noted and redeployed by critics. For example, Peter Hunt notes that "the pleasures of hobbits are those of middle-aged Englishmen: large meals,

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[14] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 116.

[15] Tolkien also suggested that "it is, I believe as much due to descent as opportunity that Anglo-Saxon and Western Middle English and alliterative verse have been both a childhood attraction and my professional sphere" (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 54, 213, 218).

[16] Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), pp. 234–235. Tolkien conflated the two explicitly. In a radio interview, when asked if, as his fiction suggested, he attached importance to "home, fire, pipe, bed" Tolkien replied in surprise "Don't you?" (See Tolkien's interview with Denys Geroult, BBC Radio 4, 16 December, 1970). Tolkien noted the way that the media portrayed him as "a hobbit [...] a fuddy not to say duddy old fireside hobbitlike boozer" (Tolkien, *The Letters,* (2006), p. 390).

pipes, beer, the occasional stroll."[17] This is not inaccurate. When *The Hobbit*

introduces Bilbo he is smoking a pipe after his breakfast, and the pleasures of bed,

board, and drink, are emphasized in both texts and consistently linked to the

pleasures of home. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam only takes his leave of Bag End

only after "saying farewell to the beer barrel in the cellar" and is notably upset

when an unexpected detour means that they will not be stopping in at *The Golden*

Perch, an inn "famous for the quality of its taps."[18] Mobilized to strengthen the

critical and cultural belief that there is an overlap between creator, creation, and

location, such statements not only make analogous synonyms of each other, but

reinforce the assumption that hobbits represent a particular type of Englishness.

Rural, tweedy, old-fashioned, and simple, by association, it is also a lost England.

Within the prologue, then, is a clear and sustained attempt to anchor

hobbits in the same distinct understanding of home and homeland Tolkien

explored in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' (1929). This article, discussed in

chapter two, proposed that Anglo-Saxon culture in the form of literary and linguistic

traditions endured beyond the Norman Conquest in England's West Country. But

their cultural and critical construction also acknowledges the modernity of hobbits,

and places them in relation to late-imperial conceptions of England and

Englishness. The network of parallels between hobbits as Englishmen and their

home, the Shire, as England have been mobilized to reinforce the idea that they

present an idealized version of both. While valid interpretations of the

representation of England and Englishness in Tolkien's work, I suggest that *The*

Lord of the Rings examines and challenges these ideas as much as it promotes

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[17] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 173–175. For Tolkien's comments on the relation between him and Hobbits see also Carpenter, *Biography* (2002), p. 234.
[18] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 85.

them. The idea that hobbits and the Shire are representative of an idealized and unchanging England and English identity, or that each represents an interrelated interchangeable symbol of the other, relies on identarian narratives that present the race and the land as indivisible, immutable, immemorial entities. Yet rather than proposing that racial and cultural identities arise from an originary location the prologue describes how hobbits first came to the land that became known as the Shire as migrants and settlers. In suggesting the paucity and fragmentary nature of early cultural records, in emphasizing that hobbits are migrants, and in narrating the process of homeland formation, the prologue explicitly reveals the mutable nature of the identity of both and their constant exposure to change:

> Of their original home the Hobbits in Bilbo's time preserved no knowledge […] Their own records begin only after the *settlement* of the Shire [my emphasis]. It is clear, nevertheless, that like many other folk Hobbits had in the distant past moved westward. Their earliest tales seem to glimpse a time when they dwelt in the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the misty mountains.[19]

"Why they undertook the hard and perilous crossing", Tolkien-as-narrator/editor concludes, "is no longer certain. Their own accounts speak of the multiplying of men in the land, and of a shadow that fell on the forest, so that it became darkened and its new name was Mirkwood."[20] In its examination of English history and historiography, *Farmer Giles of Ham* explicitly exposed the distinction between "sober annals" (history) and "popular lays" (fiction). Similarly, in the prologue's account of the origins of hobbits, the text suggests that their history has been carried forward by an oral tradition. The text's note that "about this time legend among the hobbits first becomes history with a reckoning of years",

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[19] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 14–15.
[20] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 15.

indicates that the advent of written calendric history begins with "the year of the crossing of the Brandywine."[21] Chapter three argued that *Farmer Giles of Ham* explored the distinction between narratives of origin and stories of beginning, proposing that the text highlighted the way in which the identity of individuals and their locations are combined in the former, but their capacity for change and reinvention is narrated in the latter. *The Lord of the Rings* provides a definitive moment, a point of temporal reference from which "the Shire reckoning" then becomes calibrated and all other significant events recorded against. As such the prologue describes a precise moment in time at which the mythologizing of origins ends and the historicizing and creation of a narrative of identity begins. That 'official' records only begin after the settlement of the Shire suggests that homelands only come into being when an identarian discourse defines them as such. The prologue, then, does not narrate an origin of hobbits, but rather how hobbits and the Shire came to define each other as such.

In the same way that Giles' title, Farmer Giles of Ham, reinforced the link between his character and his location, the prologue's replaying of Anglo-Saxon history metonymically associates hobbits with the Shire in the same way that Anglo-Saxons are associated with England. Yet 'Anglo-Saxon' is a catch-all term for a discrete cluster of separate tribes, based in Europe between Flensburg Fjord and the Schlei, who migrated to and colonised Britain in the late fifth and sixth centuries.[22] This understanding is certainly evident in the text. The prologue positions hobbits as a similarly generic term for distinct "breeds" of peoples living in "the upper vales of Anduin", who migrated to and colonised the Shire sometime

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[21] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 16.
[22] See Rebecca Fraser, *A People's History of Britain* (London: Pimlico, 2004), p. 25 and Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English* (Malden and Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 1–4.

in the Second Age of Middle-earth.[23] In both narratives, the lands both peoples

come to settle have previously been occupied – the Roman Empire in the case of

the Anglo-Saxons and the people of "the North Kingdom" in the case of the

hobbits, although it is only in the case of the hobbits that the land has "far and

wide into waste" so there was "room to spare for incomers." Upon settling the land,

both began to form ordered communities, colonising a land that "had long been

deserted when they entered it."[24] The hobbits' stewardship of the Shire requires

that "they should keep the Great Bridge in repair, and all other bridges and roads,"

echoing the Anglo-Saxon social compact: under Saxon kings, apart from the

defensive obligation of the *fyrd* and the duty to maintain roads and bridges, land

was held freely.[25] But, broad parallels aside, the crucial point is that hobbits, like

the Anglo-Saxons, hail from somewhere else. The hobbits are acknowledged as

"colonists" before which the Shire did not exist.[26] Their relationship with the Shire

and its status as their homeland is not pre-given or pre-ordained, both identities

are constructed and each arises from its relationship with and investment in the

other.

Viewed from this perspective, it can be argued that the prologue does not

depict an idealized static homeland, or present an account of a race eternally

twinned with a land. Rewriting a factual history of migration and settlement, it

presents a fictional account of how identity becomes attached to place and their

interrelation occurs as a result. Hobbits, like Anglo-Saxons, are portrayed as

moving to a geographical location in the vacuum left by the collapse of a previous

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[23] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 15.
[24] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 17.
[25] For further discussion of this compact see Fraser, *A People's History* (2004), pp. 97–98.
[26] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 48.

occupying culture. Both impose their identity on that place to the point where they become interchangeable referents for the other.

Alongside the existing interpretations of hobbits as Englishmen and the Shire as England, there is, then, room for a discussion of the implications of their relationship in this context – particularly as the implications of the status of hobbits as migrants for the representation of this complex have not been fully explored. It is an association, moreover, that offers an alternative perspective on migration and migrants to the one commonly associated with the period in which the text was produced. *The Lord of the Rings* was composed and published during the period that Britain came to terms with what Stephen Connor describes as its "eviction from historical self-possession."[27] The historical process of Britain's imperial deterritorialization meant that those who had previously been held spatially and culturally at a distance "returned or […] doubled back to the distant Imperial centres to which they had previously been connected, as it were, only by their separation."[28] As Britain increasingly disengaged from its Empire and withdrew back within the nation, it also experienced the steady arrival of immigrants from its ex-colonies, which challenged established notions of the nation, its identity and the sanctity of its borders. While this influx of labour was indispensable to facilitate Britain's withdrawal from its empire in the first place, the cultural visibility of the new immigrant groups revealed the tension between what was imagined to be the nation and its actuality, forcing a re-evaluation of the nation's "essence" and constitution.

In *The Conditions of Postmodernity* (1989) David Harvey argues that following the Second World War the world became characterized by an

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[27]Stephen Connor, *The English Novel in History 1955 – 1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 127.
[28] Connor, *The English Novel* (1996), p. 83–86.

increasingly globalised economic, political and cultural interdependence between

nations while at the same time often fiercely reasserting localised narratives of

cultural belonging and affiliation.[29] It is an overlapping, reflexivity between the

national and the international that begins to define this era. Positioning *The Lord of*

the Rings within this context is not to suggest that the text was conceived solely to

engage with migrant conceptualities. Yet *The Lord of the Rings* can be considered

in relation to this conceptual shift in the same way that *Farmer Giles of Ham* is not

a post-colonial novel in a formal sense, but deploys similar strategies to those

found in post-colonial studies in its interventions in English history. It is from the

perspective of the narrative's confrontation of the nation's partial, incomplete,

permeable and always-narrated condition that it can be argued that *The Lord of*

the Rings is intimately concerned with what Connor describes as "the nature of the

narrative processes necessary not only to represent national belonging but also to

enable the nation to constitute itself."[30] The text does not depict the hobbits'

migration as an emancipatory discourse from colonialism, as other mid to late-

twentieth century post-colonial novels might. Nor does it describe a process of

cultural deracination or self-estrangement from locality. Rather, I would suggest

that in narrating how hobbits came to settle in and make the Shire, the prologue

explores the processes of colonization, settlement, adaptation and indigenization

that a culture undertakes and which lead to ideas of race and place becoming

related. Moreover, it does so in a way that reifies the world into the infinite

spectrum of local diversity. The text, then, does not romanticize the relationship of

hobbits with the Shire, but nor does it idealize their migration to or settlement of its

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[29] See David Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Social Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 241–323.
[30] Connor, *The English Novel*, pp. 89, 86.

land either. Instead, I would suggest that what the prologue describes are the ways in which migrants cease to be migrants and come to be at 'home.'

This reading of the text can be placed in the context of the text's location of production. In *The Turbulence of Migration, Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (2000), Nikos Papastergiades argues that the deterritorialization of the West's imperial systems following the Second World War gave rise to "the greatest number of stateless people in history." The number "of self-defined peoples exceeds the number of nation-states by a proportion of five to one."[31] This trend developed into a prevalent social mode that by the late-twentieth century, as Ludger Pries notes, migrancy and migration were considered a "more or less [a] permanent state, and not only [a] one-time, unidirectional change in location but […] a new social reality of life for a growing number of people."[32] What is implicit in readings of this historical phenomenon is that individual and social identities cease to be grounded in specific sites and locations as the concept of roots gives way to one of 'routes', where individuals and their narratives reposition themselves not once, but multiple times. As a result of these social and cultural changes, migrants and migration became potent symbols that challenges narratives of identity based on descent from originary locations. As Iain Chambers comments in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994), the transnational indeterminate and transitional status of the migrant confronts conventionally embedded readings of interior/exterior relationships. Straddling boundary lines, margins and thresholds, Chambers suggests that the migrant is constantly in a process of reinvention "[that] acquires the form of a restless interrogation, undoing its very terms of reference as the point

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[31] Nikos Papastergiades, *The Turbulence of Migration, Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (Malden MA: Polity, 2000), p. 54.

[32] Ludger Pries, 'New Migration in Transnational Spaces', in *Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, ed. by Ludger Piries (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 1–35 (p. 24).

of departure is lost along the way."[33] It is in their revelation of hybrid histories,

argues Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994, 2012) that a

"rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are *neither the One* […] *nor the*

Other […] *but something else besides,* [occurs] which contests the terms and

territories of both [Bhabha's emphasis]."[34] The act of migration, then, means that

the certainties of originary verities and the migrant's connection to them are lost,

forcing a re-evaluation of the accepted touchstones of identity such as culture,

nation, language, ethnic groups and family, opening a "continual return to events,

to their re-elaboration and revision" as a result.[35]

I have shown the ways in which Tolkien's work challenges the idea of

originary touchstones for identity. The prologue of *The Lord of the Rings* carries on

this theme, narrating the processes of identarian re-elaboration and revision noted

above that accompany the hobbits' settlement of the Shire. As Edward Said

argues, of course, there is a fundamental distinction (and considerable distance

between) a theorised, emblematic symbol and the highly diversified lives of

millions of immigrants:

> There is a great difference, however, between the optimistic mobility, the
> intellectual liveliness, and the 'logic of daring' described by the various
> theoreticians on whose work I have drawn, and the massive dislocations,
> waste, misery, and horrors endured in our century's migration's and
> mutilated lives […] liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the
> resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism,
> has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics
> of culture to its unhoused, decentred, and exilitic energies.[36]

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[33] Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 2–4.
[34] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxford, Routledge, 1994, 2012), p. 28.
[35] Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994), p. 3.
[36] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), pp. 402–404.

Said suggests that it is their symbolic positioning rather than a literal existence between worlds that lends the figure of the migrant its representative potency, a positioning neither within nor without that has been appropriated to make them stand for the consciousness of the "intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes [and] between languages." This informs Said's conclusion that while the migrant is a potent theoretical symbol of modernity it would be an act of "the rankest Panglossian dishonesty to say that the bravura performances of the intellectual exile and the miseries of the displaced person are the same."[37]

Said's point is that the power of the migrant's capacity for reinvention and ability to challenge cultural-historical stereotypes must be considered figuratively. Given that the power to affect socio-political and cultural change is simply not available to the vast majority of immigrants – although as a body their presence suggests that change has occurred, as Gayatri Chakaravorty Spivak argues, migrancy and migrants are in danger of becoming simply a "masterword", a catachresis without meaning if this is not acknowledged. As Spivak argues, "there are no literal referents, there are no 'true' examples of the 'true' workers, the 'true' women", noting that "the disenfranchised are quite often extremely irritated with that gesture of the benevolent towards them" which she suggests offers an unwanted "transformation through definition."[38] As such, where Michel de Certeau positions the migrant as the 'central figure' of modernity, declaring "immigrants are the pioneers of a civilization founded on the mixing of cultures",[39] Winifred Woodhull suggests that immigrants exist within "systems of translation between

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[37] Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), pp. 402–404.
[38] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Practical Politics of the Open-End', in *Deconstruction: A Reader*, ed. by Martin MacQuillan (New York: Routledge 2000), pp. 397–404 (p. 398).
[39] Cited in Winifred Woodhull, 'Exile', *Yale French Studies*, 1, 82 (1993), 7–24 (p. 7).

languages, between cultural practices) that enable people living in exile both to adapt to their surroundings and to reshape the environment to their own purposes."[40]

It is within the contexts offered by these discussions of migrant conceptualities that the prologue's description of hobbits as "colonists" who make the Shire into a homeland can be discussed. The shaping of the landscape into home and homeland that the prologue depicts can be considered an extended process of adaptation and localisation. Thus where the critical positions outlined above positions migrancy as a discourse wherein individuals give up local affiliations and immerse themselves in the world, the prologue narrates how hobbits came to be in and settle in the Shire as an act of creative self-formation that draws on the local specificity of one's origins, even if it is understood that these are not truly originary. The hobbits are migrants, but the prologue presents them as being post-migration. They are no longer wandering in search of a home: they have settled and made one. That home is the Shire. The prologue, then, depicts the hobbits' transition from a post-colony group defined by mobility and their temporal and spatial distance from an original location, to a race occupying a homeland.[41] Their construction of their identity within this context is positioned in relation to their global orientation, a phenomenon that Simon Gikandi suggests is attained "by invoking the very logic of Enlightenment that post-colonial theory was supposed to deconstruct [...] the myth of progress."[42] The prologue ties hobbits to, and defines them in relation to, their location within and relationship with the Shire. In depicting how a people and a place become integrated into a sense of solidarity

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[40] Woodhull, 'Exile' (1993), p. 7.
[41] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), p. 15.
[42] Simon Gikandi, 'Globalisation and the claims of Postcoloniality', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100:3 (2001), 627–658 (p. 630).

and unity via the narration of shared history, the creation of customs and traditions, and the establishment and maintenance of cultural institutions, the prologue examines the concepts of the home and the homeland by narrating their founding. In doing so, it highlights that that identities are neither inherited from a premodern past nor arbitrarily created. Instead, it positions them as an act of cultural creativity that recognizes the roles of reproduction, selectivity, rearrangement, and appropriation that it details.

In this context, the hobbits' migration and their refiguring of the space that they colonise into a home and a homeland offers a different perspective to the perception that the Shire is idealized and unchanging. To be sure, nostalgia exists in the prologue's account of a green, pleasant, and long peaceful land, but the narrative's subversion of standard readings of migration as a release from localism acknowledges that this was not always the case and may not be the case in future. As John Tomlinson argues in *Globalization and Culture* (1999) "for most people most of the time the impact of globalization is felt not in travel but in staying at home."[43] Tomlinson's point is made to distinguish between the physical act of journeying to a distant place and travelling to it via a television screen or internet connection, but it is instructive. The narrative of the prologue effectively contracts the world of Middle-earth to the local of the Shire, which is where the main body of the text opens with an account of Bilbo's birthday party. The prologue's intent is actively world-creative, and in doing so it negotiates "the contingent and plural mess of historical becoming" by narrating it as a tidy trajectory from the unformed identity of the past to the settled but subject to change identities of the present.[44]

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[43] John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity 1999), p. 150.
[44] Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 199.

As such, Tolkien's work offers a fictional engagement with way that historical phenomena impact on the formation and narration of identarian discourses. In *Figures III* (1972, 1999), Gerárd Genette argues:

> By virtue of a discovery whose deeper causes escape us, but which is inscribed in the very structures of the language (*langue*) (or, at the very least in the great 'languages of civilization' of Western culture), I can very well tell a story without specifying the place where it occurs, and whether this place is more or less distant from the place from which I tell the story, whereas it is almost impossible for me not to situate the story in time with respect to my act of narration.[45]

Genette's suggestion is that cultural boundaries must be imposed to orientate narratives, bestowing on them a determining presence and present. Genette's theoretical perspective is distilled by Craig Calhoun, who notes the continued construction and importance of nations and homelands in a contemporary world supposedly defined by their increasing irrelevance. In *Nations Matter: Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (2007), Craig Calhoun suggests that while both are routinely "implicated in atrocities" and cause people to think that "arbitrary boundaries are natural and contemporary global divisions ancient and inevitable" they are more than an historical "error smart people will readily move beyond – or an evil good people will reject." Homelands, Calhoun argues, have a vital imaginative function in the organization of valuable social solidarities, suggesting that both help "locate an experience of belonging in a world of global flows and fears" and offer influential and compelling accounts of identities and structures within a global context that help people to "imagine the world."[46]

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[45] Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Editions de Seiul, 1972), trans. Jane E. Lewin as *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 215.
[46] Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 8.

The prologue's depiction of the construction of the Shire, and the text's depiction of it in the wider context of the War of the Ring in *The Lord of the Rings* can be discussed in these contexts. Imaginatively, both follow Genette's argument, depicting, as it does, the series of interior/exterior spatial relations that necessitates cultures attaching a narrative to a place of location in order to reciprocally define its community of listeners and readers. As my discussions of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit* indicated, this is a recurring theme in Tolkien's fiction: each text begins by locating their narrative within a home or homeland space. Their representative forewords, prologues or introductions work to reinforce this spatial grounding. Where *Farmer Giles of Ham* grounded itself in cartographically recognizable England, *The Hobbit* located itself in an idealized pastoral rendering of England. The same is true of *The Lord of the Rings* whose calquing of Anglo-Saxon history in its prologue offers a similarly metonymic act of reconstitution: the 'thing' or the concept is not called by its real name but the name of something intimately associated with that concept. In this case, the 'thing' is the metaphorical, historical, and actual place of 'England', refracted into the symbol of 'the Shire.' But the narration of the act of migration to and occupation of 'the Shire' is also a recognition that the world, whether invented or 'real', cannot be represented from a single impersonal narrative point of view as the unavoidable presence of multiple, competing narrative strands, unacknowledged, would shadow any attempt at presenting the single narrative account, undermining its attempt to consolidate a viable audience and ensure its own transmission and reproduction.

The prologue's narration of home and homeland creation also foregrounds the fact that two registers of narrative operate within the text: the plot or diegesis

with its development of character and event in the main body of the text on one hand (the narrative of the War of the Ring) and the extradiegetic conditions of its telling with its culturally explicit communal function on the other (the prologue). Both surface in the text as a negotiation of the tensions inherent in the act of culturally representative narration. The metonymic quality of the Shire within the diegesis, and its currency as a representative metaphor idealising the homeland, which it was clearly Tolkien's personal desire to transmit to his audience, is continuously called into question by both the act of narration itself and the representative account. The narration of the origins of hobbits and the Shire emphasizes the 'made' nature of both. The contradictory impulses of the Shire as a touchstone of origin, the prologue a narrative of its beginnings, and the text as the narrative of its continued change highlight the processes of interpretation, translation, mutation, adaptation and indigenization that that hobbits as an incoming culture have undergone and imposed on a space that was previously occupied by another culture, collectively undoing the narrative's will to emphasize the specificity and interrelation of space and race.

The prologue, then, represents the homeland neither as an inheritance always already there nor simply a set of values and beliefs which might become obsolete or be corrected, but rather as a discursive formation, a rhetoric, a structure of loyalties and sentiments that takes place within history and the formation of historical narratives. The text's responsiveness of identarian narratives to historical phenomenon can be viewed from the perspective of Simon Malpas's engagements with the narrative in 'Home'. Malpas argues:

> Frodo's decision to undertake his quest is justified precisely through
> reference to the Shire as home: "[...] I shall find wandering more bearable: I

shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again" (FR, I, ii, 82).The Shire is presented here as a foundational space, an ontological ground for the Hobbit's identity, that lies securely outside of the conflict that he is about to enter: Frodo's journey will be bearable given that there is always the possibility of imaginative recourse to the stability of a home that retains its life-sustaining virtues irrespective of the threats and difficulties of the protagonist's unhomeliness.[47]

Applying Heidegger's distinction between home and the unhomely, Malpas suggests that the home and homeland of the Shire is something that is to "be realized through the essential historical encounter between the foreign and 'one's own.'" Malpas argues that it is only via the progression of the narrative that Shire is opened to history, "making contingent that which had appeared foundational and transforming its status by bringing it into the historical space of conflict and migration that shapes Middle-earth."[48]

In focusing specifically on the Shire as home, and mobilizing Heidegger's discussion of the *Heimisch* (homely) and the *Unheimisch* (unhomely), first put forward in a lecture in 1961, the article suggests that "What is at stake here is a re-description of home: no longer a secure ground, a point of origin that resists the transformative flux of the modern to hold open the possibility of an undisturbed identity." The text, Malpas argues, suggests that "home must be preserved in the midst of the dissolving forces of the unhomely so as to retain its sustaining and nourishing powers in the face of the loss of its foundational status."[49] Malpas's argument is that in *The Lord of the Rings*, home becomes defined in the process of a historical encounter between the *Heimisch* and that which is foreign and other to it – the *Unheimisch*. Implicit in Malpas's argument is that the Ring introduces the

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[47] Simon Malpas, 'Home', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 85–98 (p. 96).
[48] Malpas 'Home' (2005), p. 96.
[49] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), pp. 94–95.

processes of history to the Shire. As chapter two's discussion of the relationships between history, mythology and the fantasy world of Middle-earth noted, the narrative of the ring is embedded within the wider narratives of the Valar and the Silmarils. These narratives represent two things: they are simultaneously the foundational mythology of Middle-earth and a history that predates the formal commencement of the present moment in chapter one of *The Lord of the Rings*. The circumstantial expansiveness provided by the wider temporal view offered by the pre-history of the ring creates the wider contexts within which *The Lord of the Rings* fits as a 'history' of the War of the Ring. From the view of compositional precedents, introducing a historical back-story is a mechanism common in Tolkien's work. For example, chapter four noted the way in which Thorin's account of the events that brought the dwarves to Bilbo's door provided a historical context that predates the given opening of *The Hobbit.* In doing so, I suggested, it introduced the linear impetus of history to the cyclical rhythms of the Hill.

Compositionally, then, in both texts, the predating historical narrative can be said to enable and energize the story at hand. In Malpas's reading of *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the turbulence of exposure to the foreign and the 'other' and the experience of historical events that allow the individual and the community to recognizes one's home. To put it another way, it is the historical narrative of the Ring that introduces the processes of history to the Shire. As Heidegger notes:

> [C]oming *to be* at home in one's own in itself entails that human beings are initially, and for a long time, and sometimes forever, not at home. And this in turn entails that human beings fail to recognize, that they deny, and perhaps even have to deny and flee what belongs to the home. Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign. And if the becoming homely of a particular humankind sustains the historicality of its history, then the law of the encounter [...] between the foreign and one's own is the

fundamental truth of history, a truth from which the essence of history must unveil itself.[50]

Malpas's analysis explores Heidegger's proposition that the relationship between what is *Heimisch* and what is *Unheimisch* that threatens to overwhelm what is defined as *Heimat*. To summarise Malpas's argument: rather than a straightforward opposition, Heidegger sees these ideas negotiating an ongoing relationship, presenting them as a tension between modernity, community and the cultural potency of the pre-technological past in the formation of identarian narratives. Arguing that the inescapability of mankind from progression undermines a natural nostalgia for the past and perceived lost modes of existence, Heidegger suggests that modernity and history work to enact change and that this change threatens the possibility of home. Malpas cites Heidegger's framing of this as evidence:

> Spellbound and pulled onward by all of this, humanity is, as it were, in a process of emigration. It is emigrating from what is homely [*Heimisch*] to what is unhomely [*Unheimisch*]. There is a danger that what was once called home [*Heimat*] will dissolve and disappear. The power of the unhomely seems to have so overpowered humanity that it can no longer pit itself against it. How can we defend ourselves against the pressure of the unhomely? Only by this: that we continually enable the bestowing and healing and preserving strength of what is homely to flow, to create proper channels in which they can flow and so exert their influence.[51]

Noting Curry's attempts to reposition *The Lord of the Rings* as a green text, Malpas suggests that reducing the novel to "a straightforward depiction of victory over development" positions Tolkien's texts "as an escape from the modern world into a Middle-earth in which the transformative power of the modern can still be

[50] M. Heidegger, *Holderlin's Hymn 'The Ister'*, trans, William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 49 (cited Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p. 95).
[51] G. Pattison, *The Later Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 60 (cited Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p.94).

overcome."[52] Concluding on the theme of ecology vs. technology, Malpas comments:

> The novel produces a much more ambivalent conclusion, one which gives rise to a complex set of compromises between agrarian stability and technological development. Victory for the allies does not put an end to history, safeguard their communities from change or restore a 'natural balance' that Sauron and Saruman's imposition of industrialization had come to disrupt.[53]

In suggesting that Tolkien's work can be read in the light of Heidegger's engagement with modernity, Malpas endorses a reading that suggests that the latter's sense of the modern is one "of unceasing transformation and technological development." He argues:

> Like Tolkien, Heidegger refuses to present modernity and community as a straightforward binary opposition, and sees no hope in the sentimental idea of a return to a pre-technological past. Although there are moments in his writings that might strike the reader as overly romantic [...] ultra-rightwing invocations of an agrarian homeland under threat from industrial development, his analyses of philosophy's history of thinking of the world in terms of its capacity to be 'put to work' for human ends remains irreducible to a simple nostalgia for a lost mode of life.[54]

While the sense of loss is not presented as the end point of an engagement with history, Malpas suggests, that it is an outcome of its process is, then, not denied.

I agree with Malpas's suggestion that in *The Lord of the Rings* the Shire exists as a constant negotiation between its narrated foundational status in the prologue and the changes that occur to its constitution because of its exposure to the War of the Ring. Malpas's reading can be extended to the prologue's construction of the Shire's homeland status. While it is of the text, the prologue

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[52] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p. 88.
[53] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p. 88.
[54] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p. 89.

strategically precedes the main body of the narrative in order to frame its concerns. It also narrates the formation of home and the homeland as a historical process. Thus Malpas's argument that the Shire is open to history's narratives and historical phenomena and epiphenomena is made explicit in the prologue. It is true, as he notes, that before he has even left the Shire, Frodo is informed by Gildor that "it is not your own Shire [...] Others dwelt here before Hobbits were and others will dwell here again when Hobbits are no more."[55] But this echoes and reinforces the prologue's point that hobbits are "migrants" and "colonists." Both frame and narrative make the point that spaces and the individuals that inhabit and give and receive identity to and from them are historically mutable and changeable. Thus Malpas's proposal that the text's "vision of home as a stable space whose redemptive efficacy is inexhaustible" is not solely dissipated by its encounter with the events and processes of history depicted by the text. The prologue, I would suggest, explains that this has always been so, narrating the fundamental differences between the hegemonic idea and the historical reality of home and the shared structures of creation, revelation, and denial that inform their construction. The Shire's formation and definition as 'home', narrated in the prologue, occurs because of the historical processes narrated therein, revealing that the Shire does not change as a result of the War of the Ring: it is an entity already under constant renegotiation and represented as such. In its appropriation and writing of Anglo-Saxon history the prologue emphasizes the hobbits' journey from a place previously defined as home to a place which is the other, but which becomes defined as home over time. The role of historical processes and the narration of history in forming this concept is shown to be crucial, but in narrating

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[55] Malpas, 'Home' (2005), p. 96. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 111.

them, the prologue also foregrounds their impermanence and instability. This is true of their depiction in *Farmer Giles of Ham, The Hobbit,* and *The Lord of the Rings.* History, then, is central to the engagements with home and the homeland in Tolkien's work, his conception of both, and their interpretation of England and Englishness in this context.

That the hobbits and the Shire coexist is a culturally invented narrative does not detract from the prologue's statement of their identarian solidarity, however. Although the idea of invented traditions suggests that they are artificial and unnatural, as chapter two noted, demonstrating a point of origin more recent than the primordial past does not debase the integrity of a national culture. The prologue's narration of identarian formation suggests that antiquity does not define or validate tradition, but that it can better be seen as a by-product of the social practices of cultural reproduction. If tradition looks back to pass on and preserve a concept of the past, as a project its act of replication is forward-looking, implicitly acknowledging that transformative change occurs because of a wider system of integrations and loyalties than the local. It also depends on the understandings produced by and embedded in interpersonal experience. The next section will explore these ideas, examining the ways in which *The Lord of the Rings* compares homelands, and emphasizes the porous nature of national borders and how these can affect and influence the world-views of specific cultures.

Homes and Homelands

In *Recovery and Transcendence for the Contemporary Mythmaker* (2000), Christopher Garbowski explores the importance of interior/exterior relationships to the construction of narratives of home and homeland, framing his discussion in

terms of the multiple homelands of *The Lord of the Rings*. Garbowski positions

Tolkien, and Tolkien's work, in relation to Viktor Frankl's psychological theories. A

concentration camp survivor, Frankl viewed motivation as a quest for meaning that

responded to the 'pull' of discerned values rather than the 'push' of instinctual

drives, arguing that this meant that human growth was possible even in the worst

circumstances. In this regard, the correlation between nations and nationalism(s)

and the construction of homeland identities is not the primary focus of Garbowski's

work. His monograph mobilises Frankl's ideas to yoke the theories of

'eucatastrophe' practiced in Tolkien's work (and Tolkien's belief in the recuperative

power of 'art') to this ethic of human growth, ultimately arguing that creative myth-

making, particular in the *evangelium* of *The Silmarillion*, offers both antidote and

alternative to Theodore Adorno's pessimism about the role, function and

possibilities of art in the post-holocaust period.[56]

However, although Garbowski avoids an explicit attempt to read *The Lord

of the Rings* in relation to the impact of Soviet Communism in Eastern Europe his

Polish heritage might have inspired, his discussion of homelands in the text does

see him debate them in terms of what constitutes good social living:

> In *The Hobbit*, along with its residents, Tolkien discovered the Shire, the almost archetypal small homeland, a geographical unit that adorns the entire Middle-earth of the Third Age from the Grey Havens to Fangorn Forest and beyond. The geographical distances may be reminiscent of Europe [...] but the social geography is based on what the Germans call *Heimat* [homeland] [...] Large as the Kingdom of Gondor is, it actually constitutes a federation of small states rather than a uniform one. The only large state can be said to be Mordor, which is centralist to say the least [...] Milosz writes that "in comparison with the state, the homeland is organic, rooted in the past, always small, it warms the heart, it as close as one's own body" [...] Different homelands introduce genuine diversity, while the large state, whether benign or threatening imposes uniformity.[57]

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[56] See Christopher Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence for the Contemporary Mythmaker* (Lublin: Marie-Curie Sklodowska University Press, 2000).
[57] Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence* (2000), pp. 180–181.

Garbowski's analysis is not an engagement with England and Englishness *per se*. It is culturally general in the sense that its comparative ontology draws from a Europe-wide perspective rather than attempting to draw equations from any one national project. Thus rather than attempting to draw parallels to English history and the English homeland, his analysis focuses notably on its explication of the limitations of small homelands:

> Not that the small homeland is without faults. A well-known example is the all too familiar division of orbis-interior/orbis-exterior, where those who are outside the community are frequently the unwanted *other*, to be treated with suspicion [...] Even within the Shire there is a mistrust of citizens from far flung parts: Breelanders consider hobbits from Hobbiton strange and vice versa [...] Much of the conflict between elves and dwarves can be considered along this orbis-interior/orbis-exterior fault line [...] A journey develops, or at least requires, openness and brings with it the risk of change [...] The journey [in *The Lord of the Rings*] often leads from one small homeland to another. The *Heimats* of the *other* are the repositories of values that often challenge cherished beliefs of the traveller, and lead to an awareness unavailable from the limited perspective of home [...] Dialogue is in fact a precondition for the survival of the free peoples who must overcome their isolation if they are to adequately deal with the danger facing them [Garbowski's emphasis].[58]

Garbowski's analysis of the construction of nations, nationalisms, and homelands in *The Lord of the Rings* suggests three things: 1) that they rely on categorical identities, where each individual figure is an equivalent token of a larger 'national' type, 2) that Tolkien's texts equate 'races' as being the equivalent of or

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[58] Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence* (2000), pp. 182–183 (Tolkien noted the structural organization of Middle-earth into self-sufficient but interrelated homelands, commenting:

> Gondor has sufficient 'townlands' and fiefs with a good water and road approach to provide for its population: and it clearly has many industries although these are hardly alluded to. The Shire is placed in a water and mountain situation and a distance from the sea and a latitude that would give it natural fertility [...] the Dwarfs are agents; and in the Mountains of Lune are some of their mines ...

He also noted that the Shire was "half-republic, half-aristocracy" (see Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 196, 241)).

representative of 'nations', or that they at least does so in cultures defined as the 'Free Peoples' of Middle-earth, and 3) that these constructions breed parochialism.

The representation of race in Tolkien's work is not the main focus of this thesis or this chapter. However, the critical discussion of it is informative. Tolkien personally was anti-racist and explicitly rejected racial theories informed by biological ideologies, such as those propagated by the Nazi Government.[59] Outwith of Tolkien's personal statements on the subject, the moral cartography of his work, notably a suggested correlation of good and evil to white and black colourations (with their culturally loaded referents), has caused some heated academic debate. Patrick Curry notes that "it is grossly insulting to his readers to assume that they automatically transfer their feelings about Orcs to all the swart or slant-eyed people they encounter in the street."[60] Two strands of this debate are apparent. In 'An Anthropologist in Middle-earth' (1995) Virginia Lulling argues that outside of a single moment of individuation when Sam wonders about the identity of the fallen warrior, the Southrons "remain vague, undeveloped figures, swarthy, in scarlet, and waving scimitars, or bearded and axe-wielding, never moving beyond the derived stereotype."[61] Holly A. Crocker replays this approach in 'Masculinity' (2005), suggesting that "to speak of masculinity in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1988) is ridiculous", arguing that the text's topography of difference is "overtly racialized."[62] However, somewhat problematically Crocker's argument does not acknowledge the very clear series of engagements with

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[59] See Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 37–38
[60] Patrick Curry, *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth, and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Floris Books; New York: St. Martin's Pr., 1997) (London: HarperCollins, 1998), pp. 127.
[61] Virginia Lulling, 'An Anthropologist in Middle-earth', in *Proceedings of the J.R.R. Tolkien Centenary Conference, Keble College, Oxford,* (combined issue of *Mythlore* 80 and *Mallorn* 30), ed. by Patricia Reynolds and Glen H. GoodKnight (Tolkien Society: Altadena CA: Mythopoetic Press), pp. 52–57 (p. 56).
[62] Holly A. Crocker, 'Masculinity', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 111–123 (p. 111).

different historical and cultural readings of men and masculinities that have been shown to operate within Tolkien's work by Shippey, Garth and Flieger – notably Shippey's discussion of the anthropological theory of northern courage and its correlation to Victorian and Edwardian ideals of manhood, and pre-First World War, interwar, Second World War and post-Second World War ideas of masculinity.[63] In transposing 'masculinities' to 'peoples' to 'races' without these contextualisations, I would suggest that Crocker somewhat misses what is otherwise clear in the text: while Tolkien's construction of 'peoples' can be associated with 'races' great care is taken to individuate them. For example, the appendices show that despite differing cultural practices the Umbar Corsairs have the same racial origin as Gondorians.[64] Even the relation of Orcs to men, cited by Crocker as problematic, is explored and highlighted with great clarity in these resources. In the context of my own argument, it is possible (in *Lord of the Rings* at least) to make a strong case for suggesting that racial idiosyncrasies take on the identity of national characteristics within the text. Although Shippey notes that it the War of the Ring is essentially a conflict between species, rather than a race war *per se*, the step from peoples to races representative of different homelands appears entirely natural in this context. It is a war between species, which can be a metaphor for race, but does not have to be and while Tolkien's peoples have racial characteristics they are not nationally definitive. That these distinctions are not pursued or apparent in the main fiction of the text is not the same thing as saying that they do not exist.

Within these parameters, Garbowski suggests that the 'world-view' of nationally representative individuals is parochial, especially that in the case of the

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[63] See, for example, Shippey's discussion of the Rohirrim in these contexts (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 140–145).
[64] See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 1022–1023.

'English' hobbits. While this is a representative strand of their distinctive character, my analysis will show that this parochialism is juxtaposed with other cultures, challenging and forcing them to recalibrate when brought into contact with the wider world.

In *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* (2003), Jane Chance advances the proposition that the text problematises the provincialism of the hobbits, arguing that it is only through the "queer" hobbits – Bilbo, Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Peregrine – who seek adventures outside of the Shire's boundaries that a tolerance for cultural difference is promoted. At a wider level, she suggests, the text endorses cultural isolationism as the norm.[65] I would argue that *The Lord of the Rings* does not offer a straight choice between provincialism or worldly sophistication, however, but a much more nuanced reading of how such discourses emerge and change. A pertinent example would be that while Bilbo and Frodo are irrevocably changed by their experiences in the other, as Malpas notes, Sam is enriched by his experiences outside of the Shire because his adventures give him an appreciation of the cultivated simplicity that it offers and which has been taken for granted in the past:

> The Hobbits named it the Shire, as the region of the authority of their Thain, and a district of well-ordered business, and there in that pleasant corner of the world they plied their well-ordered business of living, and 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. They forgot or ignored [...] what made possible the long peace of the Shire.[66]

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[65] See Jane Chance, *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* rev. edn (Lexington: KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2003).
[66] Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 17. See also Malpas 'Home' (2005), pp. 85, 98.

This indicates that parochial insularity that Chance identifies as problematic is as much a product of historical circumstances as a racial characteristic. But the text also suggests that parochialism is a trait of all of the homelands and peoples of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth rather than just the preserve of provincial hobbits at large in the wider world. What is more, it promotes the idea that venturing outside the borders of the homeland and coming into contact with what otherwise remains defined as the 'other' can dissolve parochial mindsets. Rather than attempt this on a communal group level, the text does this via a series of one-to-one encounters that deliberately explore modes of social organisation and registers of cultural difference in a much more pointed and effective fashion.

On one hand, then, the insularity and parochialism of the Shire can be seen positioned as a narrative necessity: the dramatic impact of war is greater on lands that are otherwise perceived as peaceful and the narrative begins and ends in the Shire, which is furthest away from the events that threaten it. But the blinkered nature of such self-involved cultures is also a thematic preoccupation of the text. Having shown how self-referential localism enables the construction of the identities of the Shire and the hobbits in the prologue, the narrative displays a preoccupation with the theme throughout the rest of the text. For example, the goods arriving at Bag End from Dale for Bilbo's birthday party are described as being carried by "outlandish folk", or people from outside the Shire.[67] Similarly, on learning that Frodo has taken after his adoptive cousin, Bilbo Baggins, and begun walking "far from home" and consorting with elves, local gossip holds that he should settle down and "learn some good hobbit sense" – essentially saying that

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[67] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 37.

he should remain in Bag End and the Shire.[68] Yet the opening chapter's depictions of the Shire as a peaceful, secure, rural idyll are punctuated by reports of the "queer things" that have been seen stalking its borders and rumours of the "queer folk [that] are crossing the Shire" with "more being turned back at the borders."[69] Such interjections serve to introduce a sense of a wider world whose concerns will first encroach on and then become the concerns of the Shire itself. If the prologue has depicted the Shire as being constructed over time into a sacred place shaped by historical events but now outside of its direct stream, the piercings of its borders deflates this idea. This has a two-fold effect. Despite the prologue revealing the 'made' nature of the Shire and hobbits, the threats to their identity serve to reinforce the status of both as a coterminous entity. Although Frodo admits that he does not really know what he is leaving to save, that he will try and save the Shire suggests that it is something he feels is worth saving. His admission privileges the Shire's identity and importance to the identity of hobbits, even as it admits the inevitability of its change, by contrasting it with what is not the Shire and a threat to its continued existence.

It is in sequences like this that the text imaginatively explores the importance of 'authentic' locations to individual and cultural perceptions of identity. Frodo departs to save a Shire that has "never seen so fair a summer, or so rich an autumn: the trees were laden with apples, honey was dripping in the combs, and the corn was tall and full."[70] The symbolic shift from summer's promise to autumn's harvest with winter still to come does not solely deny the presentation of the Shire as belonging to a natural circadian rhythm at odds with history's linear narrative. Rendered in the same pastoral Arcadian terms as the Hill of *The Hobbit* it also

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[68] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 55.
[69] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 57–58.
[70] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 80.

depicts the type of space that Ian Baucom suggests is central to English identarian discourses – a rural idyll where there is no distance between the land and the people. Yet the text's engagements with the culturally resonant idea of authentic identity-bestowing locations acknowledge too, however, that while they may be potent they may also be imaginary.

That this is the case is reinforced by the depiction of the Shire's interior divisions. Fracturing the idea of a unified race and land, they emphasize that within the Shire's boundaries localised distinctions are fiercely reinforced. The pub dispute over Frodo's ancestry serves is a pertinent example:

> "But what about this Frodo that lives with him [Bilbo]?" asked Old Noakes of Bywater. "Baggins is his name, but he's more than half a Brandybuck, they say." [...]
> "And no wonder they're queer," put in Daddy Twofoot (the Gaffer's next-door neighbour), "if they live on the wrong side of the Brandywine River, and right agin the Old Forest. That's a dark bad place, if half the tales be true."
> "You're right, Dad!" said the Gaffer. "Not that the Brandybuck's of Buckland live *in* the Old Forest: but they're a queer breed [...] Mr. Bilbo never did a kinder deed than when he brought the lad back to live among decent folk."[71]

In 'The Speech of the Individual and of the Community in *The Lord of the Rings*' (1997), Nils-Lennart Johannesson explores the distinctions that speech creates in the wider context of Middle-earth.[72] However, the Shire offers examples specific to the themes of England and Englishness that this thesis addresses.In this passage, the text continues the narrative strategy of conflating names and places to locate and reinforce the identity of the individuals concerned. Here each name and location is presented in sequence: Ham Gamgee (Bagshot Row), Old Noakes of Bywater, Daddy Twofoot (the Gaffer's next door neighbour), Sandyman, "the

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[71] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 34–35.
[72] See Nils-Lennart Johannesson, 'The Speech of the Individual and of the Community in *The Lord of the Rings*', in *News from the Shire and Beyond: Studies on Tolkien*, ed. by Peter Buchs and Thomas Honegger (Zurich and Berne: Walking Tree Publishing, 1997), pp.12–47

Hobbiton miller."[73] Presented as intrinsic to each character, the narrative also suggests that they are interchangeably self-defining, each composite of name and location serving as points of orientation for what they are and what they are not. The Gaffer's comment that "you shouldn't listen to all you hear, Sandyman" is an admonition that as Sandyman is "the Hobbiton miller" what is happening at Bag End is none of his business.[74] It is the Gaffer's business, however, because he lives there, which qualifies him to pass comment on current events in a way that Sandyman is not:

> He spoke with some authority, for he had tended the garden at Bag End for forty years [...] Both father and son were on very friendly terms with Bilbo and Frodo. They lived on the Hill itself, in Number 3 Bagshot Row, just below Bag End.[75]

Replayed throughout the sequence, this dynamic is a refraction of its larger argument, which is whether or not Frodo, a Bucklander, belongs at Bag End. Tied to specific locations within the Shire, each character in the conversation feels that they are "decent folk", while Bucklanders are a "queer breed" (as by extension is Frodo). However, the ironies are multiple. The Gaffer denies Sandyman's right to comment on events at Bag End (because Sandyman is not from there) by claiming the authority engendered from being a resident of the Hill (in order to defend Frodo, who is not from there either). Yet Buckland is within the boundaries of the Shire. By the logic of the discussion and a sequence that depicts each character reaffirming the authority of their own specific place and identity by denying that of their interlocutors, if Buckland must be peopled by both "decent folk" and "a queer breed" then so too is the rest of the Shire. While the sequence reinforces the wider

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[73] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 35.
[74] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 35.
[75] Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 34–35.

idea of the Shire, it also reinforces its local and fiercely held divisions at the same time.

Such passages reveal how individual entities predicated on place work to reinforce each other, but in doing so emphasize their own complexity and proneness to what Connor describes as "interior self-division."[76] If Tolkien-as-editor/translator exposes the reality of the Shire's/England's fundamental hybridity in the prologue, Tolkien-as-narrator similarly reveals in sequences such as these in the main fiction that the individuals concerned are a collection of identities whose only connection to one another is that they are hobbits of the Shire. The critical positioning of hobbits as generic Englishmen and the Shire as England is, then, supported by the text. But the text also undermines such readings via its continual disclosures of the diversities and differences of both. Positioned by the prologue as a hybrid whose various branches have been collected in one place from a range of sources, the text's depiction of hobbits, the Shire, and its locations, reveals them as simultaneously generic and distinct entities. The dispute in *The Green Dragon* challenges the myth of community that is the endpoint of the prologue's narration. As such, while the main narrative replays the symbolic identity created by the prologue "in order to enhance its own dominion", the concept of community is "incessantly disrupted by the specific sharings among the singular beings that are the sole bonds of communication and community."[77] Indeed, it can be argued that the prologue does the same, as its narration of the link between hobbits and the Shire makes explicit the precarious nature of such assertions.

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[76] Connor, *The English Novel* (1996), pp. 89, 86.
[77] B.C. Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (Chesham: Acumen, 2005), p. 121.

The theme of how provincialism and parochialism work to simultaneously reinforce and upset ideas of shared identity continues throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. The first movements of Frodo, Sam, Meriadoc and Peregrine outside of Bag End but within the Shire excite hostility and inspire tension and suspicion. At Bamfurlong Farmer Maggot greets them with ferocious dogs. Although this is because a Black Rider has recently called at Farmer Maggot's farm and his defensiveness dissipates when he realises that he is dealing with hobbits Farmer Maggot still displays overt hostilities towards strangers, even when those strangers are of the same race:

> "Well, if it isn't Master Pippin – Mr. Peregrine Took, I should say!" he cried, changing from a scowl to a grin. "It's a long time since I saw you round here. It's lucky for you that I know you. I was just going to set my dogs on any strangers. There are some funny goings on today. Of course, we do get some queer folk wandering in these parts at times. Too near the river."[78]

The emphasis again is on the queer nature of strangers. But as the quartet leave the Shire and move around Middle-earth the tone of the narrative shifts to stress the ability of those from small homelands to be culturally open, tolerant and interested in the rituals and mores of other societies. An example of this can be seen in Sam's and Frodo's experiences as the captives and then guests of Faramir and his men in Gondor:

> Now more torches were being lit. A cask of wine was broached. Storage barrels were being opened. Men were fetching water from the fall. Some were laving their hands in basins. A wide copper bowl and a white cloth were brought to Faramir and he washed.
> "Wake our guests," he said, "and take them water. It is time to eat."

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[78] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 105–106.

> Frodo sat up and yawned and stretched. Sam, not used to being waited on, looked with some surprise at the tall man who bowed, holding a basin of water before him.
>
> "Put it on the ground, master, if you please!" he said. "Easier for me and you." Then to the astonishment and amusement of the Men he plunged his head into the cold water and splashed his neck and ears.
>
> "Is it the custom in your land to wash the head before supper?" said the man who waited on the hobbits.
>
> "No, before breakfast," said Sam. "But if you're short of sleep cold water on the neck's like rain on a wilted lettuce. There! Now I can keep awake long enough to eat a bit [...]"
>
> Before they ate, Faramir and all his men turned and faced west in a moment of silence. Faramir signed to Frodo and Sam that they should do likewise.
>
> "So we always do," he said, as they sat down: "we look towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that is, and to that which is beyond Elvenholme and will ever be. Have you no such custom at meat?"
>
> "No," said Frodo, feeling strangely rustic and untutored. "But if we are guests, we bow to our host and after we have eaten we rise and thank him."
>
> "That we do also," said Faramir.[79]

While the passage stresses the dissimilarities of the two races by comparing their pre-meal rituals, it does so in a manner that emphasizes their mutual tolerance and interest in each other's culture. A comic note is struck in Sam replying "no, before breakfast" as it misses the emphasis of the man's question, but it serves to open a productive dialogue on the differences between the men of Gondor and the hobbits of the Shire. Faramir's comment that in Gondor the custom is to look to the West before eating has the effect of making Frodo feel "rustic" and "untutored", but the provincial hostility that characterises the exchanges of hobbits within the Shire is not apparent here. Instead, Frodo and Faramir conclude by emphasising their shared customs, indicating a burgeoning understanding that their apparent differences are actually an effect of cultural perspective that can be dealt with by communicating openly.

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[79] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 702–703.

This aligns with Garbowski's suggestion that *The Lord of the Rings* establishes the geo-political complexity of Middle-earth through comparisons and juxtapositions. But in the context of this chapter's discussion of the text's representation of identity it can be shown that the narrative also uses its moments of reciprocal contact and the act of comparisons to break down insularity and parochialism. Faramir's wonder at Frodo's and Sam's lack of even minimal religious ritual is echoed by the hobbits' interest in the men of Gondor's appearance. Again, this is a consequence of cultural perspective. As the prologue and the opening of the narrative serve to emphasize, the Shire has the values of a peaceful land, one unacquainted with war and the wider world. That these values persist despite the War of the Ring and the episodes that occur in 'The Scouring of the Shire' is seen in the attitudes that confront Sam and Frodo when they return from destroying the Ring. Far from being grateful that Frodo has saved the Shire and hobbits from enslavement respectively, Sam's father, Gaffer Gamgee, only has thoughts for his 'taters':

> "Good evening, Mr. Baggins!" he said. "Glad indeed I am to see you safe back. But I've a bone to pick with you, in a manner o' speaking, if I may make so bold. You didn't never ought to have a' sold Bag End, as I always said. That's what's started all the mischief. And while you've been trapessing in foreign parts, chasing Black Men up mountains from what my Sam says, though for what he don't make clear, they've been and dug up Bagshot Row and ruined my 'taters!"[80]

The Gaffer's implicit lack of interest in the world outside of the Hill is stressed by his focus on his potatoes, something that makes an explicit connection between root vegetables place in the soil and identities rooted in the same: "In the matter of 'roots', especially potatoes, the Gaffer was recognized as the leading authority by

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[80] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1051.

all in the neighbourhood (including himself)."[81] The text's gesture towards this complex can be viewed from the perspectives established in chapter three, where the identity of Farmer Giles was shown to have contiguities with Benedict Anderson's reading of the importance of 'local soil' to discussions of identity.

In *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998). Anderson drew on Acton's premise that "exile is the nursery of nationalism" to illustrate the distinctions between identities linked to feudal, hierarchical societies and those defined by mobility. As chapter three discussed, Anderson's analysis focused on Acton's use of Bossuet's formulation where the "home-village" is understood in relation to the "home-region" and ultimately "the home-country", or *Patria*.[82] Similarly to Giles and his belief that "property is property", the Gaffer is as rooted in home-soil as his potatoes, making him a literal embodiment of the tendency of hobbits as a race to be defiantly localised. Singularly marked by complacent self-interest and a lack of ambition (against which the adventures of the central characters stand in stark relief) their cultural distance from places like Gondor is marked spatially by the cartographic position of the Shire. It is in the remote West, buffered by several national removes from Gondor and Mordor, which is where the focus of *The Lord of the Rings* lies and the bulk of its climactic action take place.

As with the text's conflation of historical and mythical modes of temporality discussed in chapter two, this physical geographical distance is powerfully reinforced by presenting it also as a distance in time:

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[81] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 34.
[82] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (London, New York: Verso, 1998) (reprinted 2002), p. 60.

> For a thousand years [...] 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. There had been no king for nearly a thousand years [...] Yet the Hobbits still said of wild folk and wicked things (such as trolls) that they had not heard of the king. For they attributed to the king of old all their essential laws; and usually they kept the laws of free will, because they were The Rules, both ancient and just.[83]

As the prologue notes, there has been no king for over a thousand years. At this point, Aragorn is yet to appear as Strider in the *Prancing Pony* inn at Bree, let alone manifest himself as Isildur's heir and return to claim the throne of Gondor, empty for a millennium. Judged from the perspective of the relationship between historical and mythic time in *The Lord of the Rings* established in chapter two, this is long enough for what was historical fact to be sliding into a myth in the Shire. However, that the king's memory has been tacitly preserved in a proverbial suffix does not indicate that the Shire is eternally unchanging. The Gaffer's concerns in 'The Scouring of the Shire' chapter indicate how much it has changed. But both indicate the lack of general ambition for such developments. This is reflected in the language not changing since a king last ruled in Gondor over one thousand years ago.[84] Imaginatively, this makes the central point of '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*': continuity of language can represent the cultural continuity and endurance of a community, even when the historical circumstances argue otherwise.

From the Gaffer's perspective, then, Sam's armour is bewildering. Although the tone is comic, the Gaffer cannot understand why Sam is dressed the way he is because there is no need in the Shire for such dress: "What's come of his weskit?

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[83] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 17, 21–22.

[84] The prologue makes it clear that the Shire's peace is due to a specific and transitory set of historical circumstances – sheltered from conflict, protected by rangers. In pre-Shire days hobbits fought bitterly "to maintain themselves in a hard world" (See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 14).

I don't hold with wearing ironmongery, whether it wears well or no."[85] Yet as

chapter two noted, Gondor is the historical antagonist of Mordor and in both peace

and war it is permanently on a war-footing. This explains the war-like appearance

of Faramir's men that was of such wonder to Frodo and Sam in 'Of Herbs and

Stewed Rabbit' and it explains why Faramir interrogates the hobbits' as hostages

in 'The Window on the West' before they explore their common ground. His rueful

tone indicates his understanding that his wariness springs from historical

imperatives:

> "War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would
> devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow
> for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they
> defend; the city of the Men of Númenor; and I would have her loved for her
> memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom [...] So fear me
> not! I do not ask you to tell me more [...] But if you will trust me, it may be
> that I can advise you in your present quest."[86]

As Shippey argues in *The Road to Middle-earth*, by comparison with Éomer of the

Mark, who is impolite to the point of truculence, that Faramir appears wiser, more

patient and more dignified over the course of these two chapters is "a function of

his society not himself. He [Faramir] keeps using the post-Anglo-Saxon word

'courtesy', which like civilisation' or 'urbanity' implies a post-nomadic and settled

state of culture."[87] What Shippey implies is another, less savoury manifestation of

this settled culture – Faramir's ability to dissemble, if not lie – can be viewed from

the perspective of this primary wider historical context. Both Éomer and Faramir

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[85] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 1051–1052. Bilbo's mithril silver armour, acquired during his adventures in *The Hobbit* ends up in the mathom house as a novelty in the later text.
[86] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988) p. 698.
[87] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 147. Tolkien also suggests that Faramir's tendency towards courtesy and consideration rather than action, as well as his ability to dissemble and demur, come from having a "bossy" brother and a "stern proud father" (Tolkien, *The Letters* (2006), pp. 323–324).

claim to hate lies and liars, the latter declaring "I would not snare an orc with a falsehood" when Frodo accuses him of trying to trap him.[88] As a representative of the nation most directly at war with a duplicitous and misleading enemy it is more persuasive to suggest that Faramir is exercising due caution in his encounter with the hobbits.

In *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), Brian Rosebury suggests that rather than being the "federation of small states rather than a uniform one" that Garbowski suggests, Gondor could be viewed as a large nation-state. Rosebury proposes that Gondor "is much more like the Polish-Lithuanian republic, say, than it is like the bureaucratic state of the nineteenth-century Tsars, or the Soviet Union." However, Rosebury notes that while the formal sovereignty Aragorn's kingship creates extends over the Shire his return does not knit heterogeneous national differences into an age of "uniform polity." Aragorn leaves its exclusive government in its own hands. As such, he concludes that Gondor owes "more to feudalism than to subsidiarity."[89] This aside, what its moments of cultural contact suggest is that while the text presents provincial suspicion as a default position among Middle-earth's homelands, it also consistently suggests that the boundaries and divisions between them can be dissolved by the cultural comparisons enacted and shared by individuals. In this context, while his analysis does not directly cite Garbowski, Rosebury's statement that "this endorsement of diversity, apart from its contribution to the internal realism of Middle-earth, protects *The Lord of the Rings* from any accusation of invoking a narrow and prescriptive version of the

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[88] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 6.
[89] Brian Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 173.

good life" seems to draw on Garbowski's less textually informed, more theoretical reading of what might constitute 'good social life.'[90]

There are differences between the two positions. Garbowski suggests that the parochialism of the small homeland is an intrinsic part of its theoretical make-up and that this is inherent in the text throughout. By contrast, Rosebury acknowledges the text's general tolerance for difference (beyond the examples of the initial knee-jerk suspicious reactions already noted) in those characters who actually travel outside of their homes in the narrative. In both readings, however, the localised perspectives of the text are given world-wide relief by these acts of contact and comparison. It is true that as a race, hobbits don't know and don't care about what happens outside of the borders. It is also true that they fear Elves, know little of men, and stay away from the borders of the Shire as this is a space of contact with the other. Comparable tensions exist between other races. While Galadriel takes pains to mollify Gimli, bridging the hostility between the two races (and by extension) nations, the other elves remain suspicious of the dwarf. To the Rohirrim Elves are "wights", creatures associated with sinister sorcery. But the text also shows how cultural contact and one-to-one communication between individuals break down prescriptive interior/exterior relationships. Thus Garbowski's comment that "dialogue is in fact a precondition for the survival of the free peoples who must overcome their isolation if they are to adequately deal with the danger facing them" finds an echo in Rosebury's discussion of the "universal value of courtesy" that enables different races to communicate and transcend national differences.[91] The following section will assess how this fictive recognition of the need to acknowledge the wider world can be addressed in the context of

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[90] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 173.
[91] Garbowski, *Recovery and Transcendence* (2000), p. 183. See Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (2003), p. 43.

post-Second World War nationhood. More specifically, it will discuss Frodo's

parentage as a symbolic examination of the relevance of the idea of legitimate and

illegitimate identities to the perpetuation of ideas England and Englishness.

'You're a Brandybuck': Frodo and England
Alongside the prologue's presentation of the Shire as a home and a homeland

created by historical action, and the narrative's depiction of it as a bounded entity

but one prone to interior self-division, the text's representation of Frodo's

parentage can be positioned as a trope investigating the post-war inheritance of

English identity. Previously, the texts have presented a mutual relationship

between their central character, their home, and their identities. As chapter one

argued, Tolkien's word choices place Bilbo in a version of England through

linguistic reclamation and repetition in *The Hobbit*: in Bag End Mr. Baggins eats

his 'Baggings.'[92] Chapter three argued that *Farmer Giles of Ham* deploys the same

strategy, emphasizing through tautologically reinforced metonymic inference Giles'

connection to the land and his home. In this context, I would suggest that Bilbo's

and Frodo's relationship is significant. Positioned by the text as adopted uncle and

nephew, Frodo's subsequent inheritance of Bag End offers a challenge not simply

to the relationships proposed by the earlier texts, but also to generative models

which utilise the biological imagery of birth, parturition and genealogy to naturalize

the narrative of the nation and the homeland as one of uninterrupted descent from

parents and children down the patriarchal line.[93] In this light, if Frodo is considered

coextensive with his location in the same way that Giles and Bilbo are, then *The*

Lord of the Rings can be viewed as offering a more complex view of origins and

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[92] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 81–82.
[93] These uninterrupted lines of descent are illustrated in the "Family Trees" of Appendix C (See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 1135-1139.

inheritances than has hitherto been critically proposed. Rather than presenting the Shire as an idealised, unchanging England, as Shippey proposes, the text raises the question of the legitimacy of such cultural ideas and the identarian complexes that they endorse.

Narratives of identity that promote a belief in what Baucom describes as "authentic identity-bestowing places" can be seen as having their roots in an imperial discourse that co-opts and utilizes the concept to legitimize national narratives. Uncovered by postcolonial studies, this narration of identity also emphasizes the deferral of the colonial margins to the parental power of the imperial centre by stressing the latter's "age, experience, roots, [and] tradition" to position it as "the origin and therefore claim the final authority in all questions."[94] The deterritorialization of the British Empire occurred over the course of Tolkien's lifetime, accompanied by a concomitant shift from a late-imperial to a post-colonial mindset. Yet that these tropes continue to be deployed in contemporary historiography indicates both their cultural persistence and their importance to discursive definitions and narratives of national, homeland, and individual identity. For example, post-millennially, in the popular history *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (2004)*,* Lawrence James mobilises them to paraphrase the historical event of Indian Independence, stating that no British government after 1945 "ever took a conscious decision to dissolve the [British] Empire" but in the absence of the ability to preserve it "come what may [...] saw themselves as *midwives*, facilitating the *birth* of new nations which were emerging from the Imperial *womb* [my emphasis]". In the wider context of deterritorialization, he comments "the conventional bipartisan wisdom [of the British government] which

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[94] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 16.

held sway for the next twenty-five years, insisted the *infant* states would grow up within the extended *family* of the new, multi-racial Commonwealth, whose members shared a *maternal* affection for Britain" [my emphasis].[95]

Such representations seek to place nation, home, and the individual in a hierarchy where the latter are acknowledged but only as subordinate parts of the wider entity of the nation and the national project. The examination of how these elements interrelate, are culturally represented, and narrated by historiography has been shown by this thesis to be a key theme of the engagements with England and Englishness in Tolkien's work. Where examples such as James' attempt to show them depicting the prime unit of the nation describing an unbroken line of descent through history, Tolkien's fictions emphasize the breaks and disjunctures created by historical processes and expose the strategies and fictions that official representative narratives of national history use to maintain this illusion. While this is certainly the case in *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s deconstruction of Geoffrey of Monmouth's representative history of Britain, and *The Hobbit*'s examination of the culturally representative myths of late-imperial Britain, I would suggest that the engagement with these themes in Tolkien's work reaches its culmination in the implications for the relationship between national and individual identities suggested by Bilbo's and Frodo's status as adoptive uncle and adopted cousin rather than natural father and son respectively.

Where the tropes deployed by James outlined above naturalize by suggesting legitimacy, Bilbo and Frodo, although naturalized by adoption, do not share a direct patronymic line, something central to the debate in *The Green Dragon* discussed earlier. Yet in *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit*, Giles and

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[95] Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, rev. edn (London: Abacus, 2004), p. 543.

Ham, and Bilbo and Bag End, were presented as interchangeable: the individual stood for their location, and their location embodied the individual. Frodo is the natural son of Drogo and Primula Brandybuck. Following the death by "drownding" of his parents, he is adopted by Bilbo and made the legal heir of Bag End:

> When Bilbo was ninety-nine he adopted Frodo as his heir, and brought him to live at Bag End; and the hopes of the Sackville-Bagginses were finally dashed [...] They thought that they were going to get Bag End [...] And suddenly he produces an heir, and has all the papers made out proper. The Sackville-Bagginses won't never see the inside of Bag End now.[96]

That the latter turns out to be not strictly true is noteworthy. Frodo's sale of Bag End to the Sackville-Bagginses means that it returns to the patronymic line of descent. It is while it is under their ownership that the Shire declines to the state it is in when Frodo returns from Mordor – a significant point to which I will shortly return. Bilbo's adoption of his nephew makes the relationship between Frodo and the Shire explicit. The idea of their filial relationship is foregrounded by the text. Bilbo refers to Frodo as "my lad", for example, but for all the closeness of their relationship, its use is gestural and affectionate rather than biological.[97] Following Bilbo's departure, despite the best efforts of the Sackville-Bagginses, Frodo does become the legal inheritor and thus master of Bag End:

> "One thing is clear to me," said Otho, "and that is that you are doing exceedingly well out of it. I insist on seeing the will."
> Otho would have been Bilbo's heir, but for the adoption of Frodo. He read the will carefully and snorted. It was, unfortunately, very clear and correct (according to the legal customs of hobbits, which demand among other things seven signatures of witnesses in red ink). [...]
> "You'll live to regret it, young fellow! Why didn't you go too? You don't belong here; you're no Baggins – you – you're a Brandybuck![98]

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[96] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 33–35.
[97] See Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 247.
[98] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 51-52.

Yet the exchange also makes clear Frodo's distance from the direct line of descent.

The symbolic importance of Bag End and Frodo's ownership of it is also underlined by the text's cartography, which places Bag End in the geographical middle of the Shire, and its suggestion that it retains a purity that other locations do not. Buckland, we are reminded is "on the wrong side of the Brandywine River" and its hobbits are "queer" in the opinion of the "decent folk" who live in and around The Hill.[99] Bag End is both the central character's home and the symbolic and geographic heart of the homeland of the Shire. As the inheritor, symbol, and self-appointed protector of the Shire's identity, then, the text's rupturing of the patronymic line of direct descent, and Frodo's adoption, raises the question of whether what descends to us is a legitimate identity, asking if it can be overwritten or changed by action. Even though it acknowledges that the Shire has been made and remade by historical processes, the version proposed by the prologue can perhaps be seen as its 'natural' identity as it has been passed down through history. Although a made identarian complex, the act of narration promotes a sense of permanence, continuity and essence. Frodo, is part of that narrative. His descent is explicated in detail in Appendix C: he is a Brandybuck, descended directly from Gorhendad Oldbrook of the Marish, attached to the Baggins family by Primula Brandybuck's marriage to Drogo Baggins before his adoption by Bilbo.[100] But as this chapter has argued, while it is within the Shire's boundaries, Bucklanders are seen as "queer" on the Hill. Moreover, from the perspective of patronymic descent, Frodo is not Bag End's natural inheritor. Frodo is the eldest of Bilbo's younger cousins, adopted as Bilbo's heir.

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[99] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 34–35.
[100] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1138.

Otho's sniping echoes the episode in *The Green Dragon*. Here, the exchange emphasizes that for all the legality of Frodo's inheritance of Bag End, he is not from its line of natural descent. He is not a Baggins. He is a Brandybuck. Otho's implication is that while Frodo may legally legitimately own Bag End his ownership of it is not in the natural order of things. Focusing on the same elements, Otho's description of Frodo and the discussion in *The Green Dragon* reveal the way that localised identities both reinforce and deny the idea that Shire and hobbits are unified – except in the broadest terms. As each example illustrates his point, Paul Gilroy's discussion of monolithic identarian narratives in *After Empire: Melancholia or a Convivial Culture* (2004) are instructive here. Gilroy argues that exchanges of this type make "a nonsense of closed fixed and reified identity."[101] Gilroy's work examines the forms that identity might take in a post-imperial, post-colonial globalised milieu. It argues that entrenched identity politics prevent and deny the communal conviviality that would otherwise inform everyday existence. Positioned as an examination of identity's social and cultural trajectories in the context of the latter half of the twentieth century Gilroy suggests that "cohabitation and interaction" make "multiculture an ordinary feature of social life," removing distinctions and breaking down differences by emphasizing the shared intercommunality of disparate individuals.[102] Gilroy is discussing the theoretical impact of globalisation from a cosmopolitan standpoint. Yet the examples cited illustrate that within the Shire, which the introduction and literature review indicated tends to be presented as representing the specific cultural bloc of England, a place whose inhabitants the prologue argues are defined by their openness, frankness, and courtesy, the rigidity of traditional identarian lines persists, and the phobic and

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[101] Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. xi.
[102] Gilroy, *After Empire* (2004), pp. xi–xii.

reactionary nature of identities predicated on localized understandings of place are readily apparent. Rather than comfortable coexistence, what is shown to define the Shire and hobbits more frequently are the rifts and gaps between individuals and the places they stand for. Otho's exchange with Frodo, with its insistence on paternal lineage, inheritance, and descent within patriarchal structures masks a deeper anxiety about the naturalized entities of nation, history, and identity – something foregrounded by the text's subversive treatment of the language of family. Openness is strictly confined to legal frankness, which emphasizes that patriarchal descent is the natural order of things, or the inconsequentialities of barroom chat; an everyday intercourse whose mutuality of encounter repeatedly proscribes the primacy of the local and the distinct over the whole and the shared, and which again reiterates that whatever Frodo is, he is a Brandybuck, not a Baggins.

The importance, identity, and fate of Frodo, Bag End, and the Shire are clearly indicated and overlapped from the outset of the narrative, then, as is Frodo undertaking the quest to destroy the ring to save the Shire. When Gandalf reveals the nature of "Bilbo's old ring", stating that it must be destroyed, Frodo replies that he will do whatever it takes "to save the Shire", albeit reluctantly.[103] But the text's proposal that its identities are multiple, disparate, and inherently fractured, raises two questions: first, what is it exactly that Frodo is setting out to save? Secondly, if the emblematic relationship of the central character to their home/homeland location is replayed in *The Lord of the Rings* in the same way that it was in *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit*, then what statement does it make on England and Englishness that Frodo ultimately leaves the Shire? The answer to the first

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[103] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 75–76.

question perhaps lies in the relationship of *The Lord of the Rings* to its moment of production. The text was written at a time when the disjuncture between England imagined and actual was in its endgame, and the empire against which Baucom suggested England and Englishness had been defined and positioned as at that point was disintegrating. The juxtaposition of the prologue's presentation of the Shire and the narrative's depiction of its changes can be seen as echoing the division between what the home nation was imagined to be and what it was in this context. Like the England of the late-imperial identarian complex, the place that Frodo thinks that he is setting off to save does not exist.

'The Council of Elrond' examines what Frodo might be setting out to save, indicating, perhaps, that his journey to Mordor is not to preserve or enshrine an idealized version of the Shire, but simply to ensure its continuation in some form in the future. As with *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit*, the text acknowledges the mutability and propensity to change of identarian narratives:

> "Very well, very well, Master Elrond!" said Bilbo suddenly. "Say no more! It is plain enough what you are pointing at. Bilbo the silly hobbit started this affair, and Bilbo had better finish it, or himself [...] When ought I start?" [...]
> "[Y]ou are making a valiant offer. But one beyond your strength, Bilbo. You cannot take this thing back. It has passed on. If you need my advice any longer, I should say that your part is ended. [...]
> "I will take the ring," he [Frodo] said, "though I do not know the way."[104]

This exchange perhaps suggests that who gets to shape and choose the narratives of cultural representation also changes as time passes. In this sequence Bilbo is gently but firmly told that the future of the Shire is for a younger generation to decide. If Bilbo's departure from Bag End and Frodo's inheritance of the property opens a dialogue between what constitutes a legitimate or an

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[104] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 287–288.

illegitimate identity, then this suggests that the world has "passed on" from the type of Englishness and the idea of England that Bilbo and Bag End and the Shire of his generation embody. Chapter four suggested that *The Hobbit* examined an England symbolically caught between the post-First World War imagining of its pre-war constitution, and the cultural anxieties and concerns about the constitution of Englishness of the interwar period. There is a suggestion in this passage that whatever the concerns had been regarding the nature of England and Englishness in the late-imperial period, they were passing, and that new questions were to be raised regarding their constitution. It could be said, perhaps, that Tolkien acknowledged this – albeit indirectly. His note in the foreword of the text that the changes that occur to the Shire over the course of the narrative were the changes that he felt had occurred in England over a longer historical perspective is an admission that his primary interest was what England's cultural inheritance might be. His rebuttal of the critical perception that 'The Scouring of the Shire' represented an allegory of post-war Britain and statement that it was "an essential part of the plot, foreseen from the outset" suggests that text's destruction and rebuilding of the Shire vitally communicates an inherent understanding that what seems certain and stable is subject to perpetual disintegration and renewal. Encapsulated by Frodo's comment "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me", Tolkien's acknowledgement that the section reached "much further back" than the Second World War to an England that he felt had been "shabbily destroyed" since his early childhood "in the name of progress" can be seen as a clear-eyed recognition of the inevitability of change and the inadvisability of hankering after lost homelands.

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But outwith of Tolkien's personal perspectives, it is more in the sense of the evolving trajectory of Tolkien's work, then, that *The Lord of the Rings* can be said to offer an engagement with the mid-twentieth century nature of English identity, one foregrounded by the text's quite deliberate questioning of patronymic lines of descent and inheritance. The implications of Frodo's relationship to the Shire for English identity in a post-war context are evident when one considers how the nexus of character and location has been shown to work in the texts preceding *The Lord of the Rings*. Giles and Ham offered a certain late-imperial palimpsestic perspective on how location has informed and made English identity. Bilbo's relationship with the Hill and the Wilderness examined the tensions inherent in England's interwar condition. It may therefore be possible to suggest that Frodo's relationship with Bag End and the Shire exists as a similar complex, offering a perspective on the issue of English identity in a mid-twentieth century context. The text is not an allegory of Britain's post-Second World War privations, but in this context its consistent foregrounding and discussion of Frodo's adoption and inheritance questions hereditary hierarchies and all that they imply. Whatever was essential in the past has been mislaid, or dislocated in the present. The implication is that the notion of a coextensive relationship between identity and location on which ideas of England and Englishness have been predicated and perpetuated no longer have any foundation, if they ever did. In doing so, both prologue and text highlight the difficulties of articulating national and individual models of identity based on authentic locations. The idea of uninterrupted descent proposes, as Jonathan Rée notes, "that nations are as old as the hills", stemming from "time immemorial" or "the first creation", nearly always involving "the affirmation of a continuous chain of racial inheritance going back to a biologically pure past, whose

contamination will be thought of as an ever-present danger".[105] But Frodo's status challenges these assumptions. His relationship with Bilbo, and his quest, denies the system of *filiation*, which Edward Said defines as a "linear, biologically grounded process, that which ties children to their parents" and offers instead the notion of *affiliation* "that is, those creeds, philosophies, and visions reassembling the world in new non-familial ways."[106] The legitimate/illegitimate question raised by Frodo's character that the text explores is, then, a rejection of what Said described as the unconscious vertical *filiations* that tie nations, individuals and histories together just as his quest to save the Shire represents a conscious adoption of horizontal *affiliations* where new perspectives are formed by "social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation."[107] Frodo chooses to save the Shire even though the text implies his remove from its natural order. Choosing affiliation over pre-ordained filiation challenges the naturalised orders of descent.

It is a distinction emphasized by Frodo's name. Notably, unlike the examples of Giles and Bilbo the text does not seek to locate Frodo's character in England at the level of his naming. Frodo's location at the heart of the Shire, and his symbolic role as the inheritor and guardian of England, is only achieved by a process of adoption that changes his name from Brandybuck to Baggins. The former I will return to following a discussion of the latter. In both, the question is what significance does Frodo's name have for *The Lord of the Rings* engagements with post-war England?

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[105] Jonathan Rée, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1998), pp. 77–90 (p. 81).
[106] Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975, 1983), p. xiii.
[107] Said, *Beginnings* (1983), pp. 24–25.

In *The Road to Middle-earth*, Shippey notes that as a central character

Frodo is "strikingly left uncharacterised". Whereas the origins of the other

character's names are explained in the appendices notes concerning the naming

of hobbits, Frodo's is not. For a symbol of English identity this lack of origin and

lack of meaning is telling. Support for this section's assertion that Frodo is cut

loose from location and agency to make a deliberate point arises from Shippey's

philological analysis of his name. Shippey suggests that the character's first name

is a derivation, "an English form of [the] original Fróda", which can be traced in Old

English through an incidental character in *Beowulf* to the Norse, Fróthi, a character

who appears in work by Saxo Grammaticus (c.1200) and Snorri Sturluson (c.1230)

that Tolkien would have been aware of.[108] To paraphrase Shippey's argument, in

both instances the characters are described as being wise men who attempted to

bring peace to their respective lands, who failed, and who slipped into history as

symbols of fruitless nature of genuine altruism and who were remembered for all

the wrong reasons:

> "[The name has] the ring of nostalgic failure [...] everything was good, but it
> ended in failure both personally (for Fróthi was killed) and ideologically (for
> Fróda's son returned to the bad old ways of revenge and hatred, scorning
> peace-initiatives and even apparently his own desires) [...] For all these
> reasons the composite figure of Fróda / Fróthi became to Tolkien an image
> of the sad truth behind historic illusions, a kind of ember glowing in the
> dark sorrow of heathen ages.[109]

There are, Shippey suggests, clear parallels between Fróda the pacifist and Fróthi

the peacemaker, and the way that history remembers them, and Frodo. From a

character who wonders why Bilbo "didn't kill Gollum when he had the chance" and

who does kill to defend himself in Moria, Frodo is a pacifist by the time he returns

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[108] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 232.
[109] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 232–234.

to the Shire. Even Saruman's direct murderous attack does not provoke him to action. But, as Shippey notes, Frodo is resigned to the fact that he can only adopt this attitude himself, he cannot impose it on others or force them to follow his lead, especially if the prevailing tide of history demands it. He may "wish for no killing" during the 'Scouring of the Shire', but he does not actively stop others from doing it. When Merry puts forward his plans for reclaiming the Shire by force, Frodo notes "Very good. You make the arrangements" passing the responsibility on to him for the bloodshed that follows.[110] While he actively brings peace to Middle-earth and the Shire specifically, Sam is "pained to notice how little honour [Frodo] had in his own country." As this chapter has noted, for example, Gaffer Gamgee does not treat Frodo as a hero on his return: Frodo may have saved the Shire, but the Gaffer is angry with him because Frodo did not save his potatoes at the same time. History, the text tells us, gets things wrong from its facts to the individual motivations and actions that shape it. Shippey illustrates this reality, commenting:

> One may remember Ioreth repeating to her cousin in Gondor that Frodo 'went with only his esquire into the Black Country and fought with the Dark Lord all by himself, and set fire to his Tower, if you can believe it. At least that is the tale in the City.'[111]

Frodo may have set out to save the Shire, and does, but this is how history will remember his actions: a quest that fulfilled its primary purposes but one destined to be misrepresented and misremembered. Thus like his namesakes Fróthi and Fróda, Frodo is heroic, but a heroic failure, as the pacifism and acceptance that his sufferings generate in his character are not transferable, and the peace that his sacrifice buys is not everlasting, which empties his character of historical meaning.

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[110] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1047.
[111] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), p. 234.

The result of Frodo's quest, then, as Shippey notes, "is nothing." He writes: "Bilbo turns into a figure of folklore ('mad Baggins'), the elves and dwarves percolate through to our world as time-shifters and ring-makers, even 'the Dark Tower' remains as an image [...] of Frodo, though, not a trace."[112]

There are implications for the text's engagements with England and Englishness in Shippey's analysis. Where Bilbo and Giles are left with identities as a result of their actions, albeit significantly changed ones, Frodo is not. His quest acknowledges the importance of home and homelands, even if they are imaginary, while its result disavows their necessity for identity-formation: "I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me."[113] In *Farmer Giles of Ham,* Giles returns home, materially richer from his adventures and increasingly rooted in place even as his home evolves from farm to Worminghall. Home, in the end, is enough for him. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo returns and finds himself and his home changed by his experiences outside of it, but the text also reasserts the comfort of domesticity, proposing that he has harvested both wealth and experience and can now enjoy them.

It is true that *The Lord of the Rings* ultimately questions the idea that Bilbo goes there and back again to end up complacent and content. As he explains to Gandalf, his adventures and bearing the ring has left him "thin, sort of stretched, of you know what I mean: like butter that has been scraped over too much bread. That can't be right." That some of this is a consequence of the actions of the ring, as Shippey suggests, is undeniable, but it reveals that there are desires that home does not fulfil now that the wider world has been seen: "I want to see mountains again, Gandalf. *Mountains*: and then find somewhere I can *rest.*" When Bilbo

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[112] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2003), p. 236.
[113] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1067.

leaves Bag End for the last time, he declares that he is "as happy as I've ever been."[114] By contrast, Frodo has foretold his fate:

> I should like to save the Shire, if I could – though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again.[115]

In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Roland Barthes inquires whether every narrative cannot be read as a retelling of the Oedipus story, a quest for origins, during which the discovery of one's true identity is only made possible through a radical requestioning of the Law. I would argue that *The Lord of the Rings* cautiously answers Barthes' rhetoric in the affirmative. The importance of filial relationships to the formation of identity is established early on by its discussion of Bilbo and Frodo's relationship. But the strategies outlined thus far in the text's engagements with England and Englishness indicate the ways in which the text shifts the emphasis from the biological to the locatory, from the vertical, literal and assumed to the lateral and the chosen. Saving Bag End is an act of affiliation, of choice, for Frodo. But also for Frodo, its legal inheritor, the assumed immutability of the Shire he seeks to save has already been shown to be false by the prologue, long before the narrative's end confirms the inevitability of its change. Thus Bilbo's and Frodo's relationship does not just question the idea that identity and the land naturally pass down from generation to generation. It actually questions the idea that the Shire represents the natural successor to the homes and homelands of the Hill and the Little Kingdom. Frodo's illegitimacy, in identarian terms, breaks the

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[114] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, p. 48.
[115] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), pp. 75–76.

chain of inheritance. Moreover, Frodo (and Sam) return home to the heart of the

national symbol and find that what they left to preserve has irrevocably changed in

their absence, something foregrounded by the changes to Bag End they find:

"They've cut it down!" cried Sam. "They've cut down the Party Tree!" He pointed to

where the tree had stood under which Bilbo had made his Farewell Speech." [116]

The tree is replanted from the seed Sam received in Lothlórien, but the implication

is clear: what will be rooted in the Shire in future is not what was there before.

Coda

The new perspectives that Frodo emerges with from the process of rejection and

acceptance that he undergoes over the course of his quest perhaps suggest the

future shape of the Shire. Like him, it is much changed on his return. That the text

embraces the uncertain nature of their respective identities is only possible

because of its appropriation and subversion of the naturalised language of family

for its own ends. Linda Hutcheon suggests that family is the basic unit in the

constitution of identity from individual to national levels, but also that it is

defamiliarized in texts whose intertextuality complicates the concept of original

creation. This, she argues, is because the intertexts call into question "the

authority of [...] writing by locating the discourses of history and fiction within an

ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or

simple causality."[117] In examining Shippey's contention that Tolkien's fiction offer

paeans to an "unchanging England", I have argued that its knowingness augments

its engagements with and rejection of authoritative narratives that propound unified

identarian discourses. The acknowledgement of the complicity between history

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[116] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (1988), p. 1054.
[117] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 129.

and fiction in the forewords and prologues of Tolkien's work, and the negotiation of the collision between cultural memory and nostalgic imagination in the symbolic constructs of the texts, for example, certainly subvert the idea that it solely proposed recuperative, reductive and reactionary renderings of England and English identity because they foreground the reality that any quest for the past will be beset by difficulties, if only because memory is fallible and language estranging. In *Farmer Giles of Ham*, this was framed as a consequence of the problematic nature of historical knowledge: Tolkien-as-editor/translator was shown as being confronted by a history whose mooted archive resources complicated his task of narrating the history of 'The Little Kingdom.' Similarly, the discussions of the migratory origins of hobbits and the formation of the Shire in the prologue of *The Lord of the Rings* stress the distortions and omissions that take place in the narration of history. In providing alternative imaginative versions of history which openly address the politics of representation, and in attempting to reclaim and offer suppressed and alternative histories and versions of English nation and home, Tolkien's work is, as I have argued, consistently aware of the complicity of its own writing in the processes that it denounces.

But beyond the implications of the text's metafiction for the representations of national historiography, I would argue that this knowingness also underlines that the filial relationship between Bilbo and Frodo is significant. Its importance is foregrounded by its reiteration both in the metafiction of the appendices and the constant allusions to it in the text itself, and I would suggest that it challenges the idea of uninterrupted descent even as it acknowledges that the models of identity proposed and explored in the earlier texts *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit*, models which are present at the narrative's beginning, are subject to change in the

future. Both of these texts begin by reinforcing the patronymic association between the character and their location. In *The Hobbit*, Tolkien's word choices place Bilbo in a version of England through linguistic reclamation and repetition: In Bag End Mr. Baggins eats his 'Baggings.'[118] *Farmer Giles of Ham* utilises the same strategy, emphasizing through tautologically reinforced metonymic inference Giles' connection to the same. In both instances, the choice of name foregrounds and defines the nature of the connection. Bag End, as Shippey notes, is "defiantly English", as rooted in a rejection of early to mid-twentieth century class distinctions as Bilbo's insistence on the proprieties of "appointment tablets" and "afternoon tea" initially appears an embrace of them. Baggins is who he is, but also something that he eats, far too regularly, making him a symbol of how material comforts can promote the ossification of the individual and a too narrow world view that reflects badly on the culture they represent. Similarly, Giles is doubly a Farmer, tied to the land and his social place in name (Giles = Farmer) and profession (Farmer = Giles) respectively and mutually in a village that is doubly a village, its name (Ham = village, village = Ham) underscoring its purpose and positioning as a symbolic synecdoche, a representation of a prelapsarian national homeland even as it deconstructs the ontology attendant on that concept.

Of course, it must be noted (as chapters two and three do) that the text constructs its identities in this way is so that it can go on to challenge the naturalized assumptions that accompany them. Bilbo is neither archaic Took nor Edwardian Baggins anachronistically adrift in an ahistorical fantastic narrative, but a hybrid of the two whose negotiation of the dwarves' adventure is also an exploration of the manifest tensions between a pre-First World War existence that

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[118] See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 81–82.

was falsely viewed as a golden age by the well-mannered but anxious and uncertain post-war suburbs that were looking back. *The Hobbit* explores the transition English identity underwent in the interwar period, positioning it as a negotiation between past and present that is irresolvable because it is ongoing and perennial. Similarly, Giles is demonstrably not a yeoman symbol of Old England. He is a self-interested individual whose actions fundamentally change his identity and that of the land that he is steward of in a manner that foregrounds the mutability of national, homeland, and individual identarian narratives even while the text reveals the strategies of the authoritative narratives that seek to present them otherwise. Yet the protagonists are also the inheritors of their location. Both change in response to outside forces and historical processes but Giles and Bilbo essentially remain or return to where they started. Frodo is the only one whose quest is specifically undertaken to preserve his homeland. Not only does he fail to do that in a recognizable form, as he himself acknowledges, but he does not remain there. His actions cut him loose from location and the identity it offers, even as he seeks to preserve it.

Conclusion

This thesis offers an extended examination of J.R.R. Tolkien's engagements with the themes of England and Englishness. Founded on a rigorous acknowledgement of and engagement with the existing interpretations of these themes proposed by secondary critics, and moving through a sustained series of readings of their representation and treatment in Tolkien's literary-critical and fictional work, the central thesis I propose is as stated in the introduction: a reclamation of Tolkien's work from the perception that it offers uncritical nostalgic renderings of nation and home. This does not deny that nostalgic recuperation and reclamation form a constituent part of their representative complex. But in my discussions of primary and secondary material I show that while the reclamation and recycling of the representative tropes of location and identity endorsed by English cultural memory as 'authentic' by Tolkien's fiction emotionally amplifies their representations of English homes and homelands, these strategies also draw attention to the made nature of these entities, and the texts foreground the constancy of their changing nature far more than they present them as originary or inviolate. It is precisely the conscious nature of these engagements with English history and historiography in Tolkien's work, I would argue, their redeployment and exploration of the central tropes of English cultural self-representation, and their treatment of the theme of location and home, that signals a more complex and nuanced representation of England and Englishness than has hitherto been presented.

That my thesis focused specifically on Tom Shippey's statements regarding Tolkien's representation of England in *Farmer Giles of Ham* (1949), *The Hobbit*

(1937), and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) in this context as well as emphasising their development and influence on subsequent criticism, was a conscious decision. It was also, perhaps, a somewhat inevitable one. As Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne suggest in 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982' (2000), it is difficult to undertake a long-form critical analysis of Tolkien's work without also entering into a dialogue with the work of Shippey to some degree.[1] As chapter one indicates, Shippey's engagements with Tolkien, and their source-study methodology, mark the inception of serious critical work on Tolkien. They have directly informed the approach of a large number of studies that take Tolkien as their subject. In directly citing the work of Rosebury, Flieger, and Obertino, for example, and noting other relevant works in parenthesis, chapter one, then, outlines the extent to which Shippey's conclusions on Tolkien's treatment of England have been recycled and thus perpetuated. It does not suggest that the list is exhaustive. Although I have acknowledged and covered relevant material published since Shippey's first emergence over the course of this thesis, much has been written about Tolkien, and much continues to be written. However, although chapter one notes that Jane Chance-Nitzsche's earlier work, *Tolkien's Art*: *A Mythology for England* (1979) proposed the same reading via a similar critical methodology, albeit without Shippey's rigour or depth, it also illustrates that it is Shippey's statements, reiterated and restated, that have come to embody a consensus opinion on the subject of Tolkien, England, and Englishness, and their representations in the texts. This is why I chose to use Shippey's conclusions on

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[1] Michael D.C. Drout and Hilary Wynne, 'Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982', *Envoi*, vol. 9. no. 2 (Fall, 2000), 101–167 (p.116). See also Jane Chance-Nitzsche and David D. Day, 'Medievalism in Tolkien: Two Decades of Criticism in Review', *Studies in Medievalism* 3 (1991), 375–387.

Tolkien, England, and Englishness as a starting point for the discussions of my thesis: Shippey's statements on Tolkien and England are a formative and enduring influence on the critical perception that Tolkien's work depicts England in idealised and unchanging terms.

Shippey's dominance and importance to the field in this context also informed the critical approach that this thesis took. As chapter one establishes, intrinsically embedded in the cited range of critical responses to Tolkien that adopt Shippey's source-study methodology either in whole or in part are the importance of Tolkien's own views as author, critic, linguist, and philologist. While chapter one notes that no critical analysis of any other author would ignore their correspondence and archive material, the figure and opinions of 'Professor Tolkien' problematically pervades the critical canon that addresses his work. As Drout notes, the critical habit of referring all interpretations back to Tolkien's arbitration has turned "Tolkien into his own leading critic"[2] and seen the area defined as Tolkien Studies frequently guided "down the narrow channel of finding a single, 'theological' meaning for Tolkien's works, more often than not a meaning found in the *Letters*."[3] Finding a possible source that may have inspired Tolkien's creative imagination, analogue in another text, or homological connection of etymology, and then relating it to Tolkien's professional engagements or personal interests is a valid approach to Tolkien's work, of course. Yet, as Drout also comments, one of the problems of a source-study methodology conducted in these terms is that it does not solve the problem of interpretation, it merely defers it. Chapter one foregrounds that the central concerns of this thesis and the critical

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[2] Michael D.C. Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism', in *Reading* The Lord of the Rings: *New Writings on Tolkien's Classic* ed. by Robert Eaglestone (London, New York: Continuum 2005), pp. 15–29 (p. 18).
[3] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 21.

contexts which inform them means that I have by necessity engaged with this complex. But it also acknowledged that to move beyond the conclusions previously drawn from such materials on the subject of Tolkien and England an alternative method of deploying it was needed.

Firstly, it was necessary to deploy Tolkien's archives and literary-critical work to highlight what I feel is a key tension in Tolkien's work between sentimental nostalgia and intellectual understanding. Directly pertinent to my position on Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness, my thesis ultimately argues that it is possible to discern the presence of both in the treatment of these themes in the texts discussed. It is clear, on one hand, that Shippey is right: Tolkien did believe in the idea of a lost England, and he did position it as something lost because of the Norman Conquest. This is as evident in Tolkien's professional stance as it is in his personal views. For example, as chapter one notes and chapter two discusses in more detail, in proposing that a pocket of representative English culture survived the Norman Conquest, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhaď*' (1929) essentially argued that the rest had been obliterated by the arrival of William the Conqueror – a view endorsed wholesale by Shippey's interpretation of Tolkien's work. As I have demonstrated in my readings of the texts in chapters three, four, and five, Tolkien's sentimental view that England has been 'lost' is evident in his work's treatment of it as a trope. Depicted as pastoral idylls at the start of each narrative, Ham is lost to Farmer Giles in the same way that the Hill is lost to Bilbo and the Shire is lost to Frodo. But, as I have also demonstrated throughout, Tolkien's work not only displays an intellectual understanding that this is inevitable, part of the cycle of change, loss, and renewal inherent to the processes of history and the changes in circumstance and perspective that they

engender, but actively depicts these processes too. As my readings indicate, this too is evident in the texts. Giles and Ham evolve into the King of the Little Kingdom respectively, but the text positions this as one change of many in the location's history, part of a mutability of national, homeland, and individual identarian narratives in response to cultural-historical imperatives that stretches back before Roman times and continues through the revisionism of the Norman historiographers. Equally, the Shire that Frodo sets out to save is not the one he returns to. But the narrative's prologue similarly indicates the way that the Shire and hobbits have been formed by the historical processes of migration and settlement, suggesting too that its intrinsic nature is not one of unyielding stasis, but one of continual change and movement.

This tension between the personal emotional belief in the idea of a 'lost' England and an intellectual understanding of its impossibility is, I feel, what Shippey is gesturing towards when he notes:

> With hindsight one can see that this philological vision of ancient Herefordshire was a strong component of Tolkien's later conception of the hobbits' 'Shire': also cut-off, dimly remembering former empires, but effectively turned in on itself to preserve an idealised 'English' way of life. But 'the Shire' is fiction, and philology fact. The questions which begin to show themselves in Tolkien's work from about this time on are: how far did he distinguish between the two states? And how much of his later success was caused by reluctance to make a distinction?[4]

But while the main body of Shippey's works acknowledges Tolkien's deep understanding of history, of its writing and rewriting in response to cultural and political phenomena, and its essentially endless malleability in this context, it is his conclusions that have become critical shorthand for Tolkien's representation of

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[4] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How J.R.R. Tolkien Created a New Mythology* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 48.

English and Englishness. It has been those conclusions and their perennial recurrence that this thesis addresses. It is this 'reluctance to make a distinction', apparent in Tolkien's work, that my introduction identified as key to understandings of Tolkien's engagement with the constitution of England and the nature of Englishness. To return, in conclusion, to a point advanced in my introduction, it is clear that the texts do not offer a straight choice between past or present, nostalgia or change, or recuperation or change. To restate what was argued at the outset, the evidence suggests that Tolkien's work offers a continuously negotiated tension between a fundamentally interrogative mode of critique which subjects the existing discourses of identarian narratives to critical scrutiny, and an initializing impulse that springs from an emotively rooted reconstructive perspective. Evident in my readings of the texts, it can be seen that in presenting the narratives that present England as lost, that this loss is inevitable is not shirked, therefore. While the narratives tell the story of a lost England they also uncover the ways in which official narratives appropriate this culturally resonant trope for their own ends. As such, they do not simply idealise a lost England, but acknowledge the inevitability of its loss by acknowledging the processes of history that make and remake narratives of nation and belonging. In doing so, the texts serially unsettle the received methods and processes of conceptualising and writing the nation and its history.

Secondly, it was in examining these propositions that this thesis deployed Tolkien's correspondence, critical, and archive materials. But crucially, they were not taken as "holy writ".[5] Instead, they were actively positioned within their cultural context and tested by critical engagement. An example of this can be seen in

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[5] Drout, 'Towards a Better Tolkien Criticism' (2005), p. 19.

chapter two. This argues that Tolkien's personal views on the impact of the Norman Conquest on representative English culture, cited by Shippey and long deployed to endorse the view that Tolkien's versions of England represent a pre-Norman idyll, can be positioned as a perspective arising from cultural location. It notes that in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods the idea of the Norman Yoke and the Anglo-Saxon root of representative Englishness were common ideas. But it also argues that the sense that 1066 represented a definitive cut-off point was much-debated in Tolkien's time. The idea of what Shippey describes as Britain's literary 'defoliation' and 'demythologizing' following its colonisation is an arresting image. Indeed, it is central to the link Shippey draws between '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' and the belief in philology's resuscitative capacity that lay at the heart of Tolkien's creative approach, his own views of England, and the representations of it in his work. However, the evidence presented in chapter two suggests that while this was a culturally resonant view during Tolkien's formative years, it is perhaps an oversimplification to suggest as Shippey does that "England must be the most demythologised country in Europe, partly as a result of 1066 (which led to near-total suppression of native English belief [...] partly as a result of the early Industrial Revolution, which led to the extinction of what remained."[6] Yet the cultural belief in an oppressive Norman Yoke was balanced by the view that there had been no such thing. Chapter two's historical analysis of the actual impact of 1066 on the language and culture of the country problematises the interpretations of this complex offered by Tolkien's article, his personal preoccupations, and Shippey's analysis of both. While the former, embodied in the opposed perspectives of Carlyle and Freeman, offer no more than the back-and-

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[6] Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 345–346. Tolkien's and Shippey's interpretation of the impact of the Norman Conquest on England is discussed in more detail in chapter two.

forth of held opinions, examination of the latter themes through the work of John La Patourel et al indicates that the central point advanced by Tolkien and Shippey (that the Norman Conquest destroyed English language, literature and culture) is doubtful. Of course an incursion occurred, and of course it had an impact on the history of the island, but the scholarship discussed in chapter two indicates that any assertion a complete extirpation of English culture had occurred is difficult to entertain. Secondly, compounding this, Tolkien's and Shippey's position assumes that there had been a definitively representative 'English' culture and heritage to be lost – itself an intensely problematic assertion that raises the question of how one separates representative English and British cultures, presuming that such things could definitively be said to exist anyway. The Anglo-Saxon 'English' were no more 'native' than the Normans who became 'British.'

Chapter one concluded by suggesting that this issue of representation was foregrounded in both Tolkien's 'mythology for England' correspondence and early literary experimentations – both of which acknowledged the difficulties of how best to define and separate English and British cultural-historical discourses and explored how best to represent them.[7] It noted the irony in a phrase created by Carpenter's editorial conflation becoming a centrepiece of critical debates about these topics, but suggested that anyone seeking to define what Tolkien's mythology for England might be first had to define what might be meant by England. Most critical perspectives had previously achieved this by returning to what Tolkien thought it might be: a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon England. Yet while culturally potent and nationalistically seductive, originary homelands simply do not exist. Nor do they exist in Tolkien's texts. A more productive interpretation of this

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[7] Shippey uses the idea of 'the Fall' in a prelapsarian sense, using it to describe England as an "unstained land." As it is part of a discussion of the impact of the Norman Conquest on England the inference is clear (see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* (2005), pp. 345–347.

complex, I suggested in conclusion, was to be found in Tolkien's 'dedication' of his work to England and his early attempts to accommodate them in *The Book of Lost Tales*. Tolkien's consciousness of the overlapping nature of the cultural-historical discourses of England and Britain focused his pursuit of those questions on how England is represented in that complex. I proposed that Tolkien used the word "dedicated" in his correspondence with Waldman and Thompson deliberately. Signifying a personal act of devotion to the "sacred person, purpose, or place" of England, and his own lifelong devotion to the "special task or purpose" of his work, it compounds that it and his endeavours were offered "in honour or recognition" of his country, nominating 'place' as the site of engagement and representation.[8]

Chapter two examined this contention by framing Tolkien's world-creation within the critical contexts of theoretical understandings of the ways in which the nation is narrated into being. Establishing the ways in which Tolkien's aesthetic methodology engaged with the idea of England as a land, a place, and a location, chapter two examined the ways in which these elements have been used to denote or bestow Englishness, and how these elements align to more theoretically considered perspectives on the construction of narratives of nation and national belonging. Noting the relationship between Tolkien's apprehension of philology and his use of the fantasy mode, chapter two tested his concepts against critical models of the same ideas to establish that Tolkien's engagement with England and Englishness were in a manner entirely concordant with the cultural preoccupations and anxieties surrounding this issue. This was framed via Ian Baucom's discussion of the relationship between English identity and place in *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999). Baucom

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[8] *Oxford English Dictionary,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 217.

argued that when confronted by 'the other' of the British imperial dominions and the prospect of English identity being diluted or contaminated by competing identarian discourses in the imperial period, a distinction is drawn between Britain's imperial space and British imperial subjects and England's home space and English subjects that privileged the latter over the former. In doing so, Baucom suggests, history and cultural memory combined to sacralise location as the place of authentic English identity. Chapter two noted the contiguity between the emergence of this complex and the production and focus of Tolkien's work. In the same era that English identity becomes metonymically attached to England's locations as a reaction to the identarian disorientation prompted by British imperialism, Tolkien produces representations of England characterized by their presence in the past and absence in the present. It is in this context that I suggested that Tolkien's representations of England and Englishness can be seen as symbolic rather than literal arrangements of space and identity: representing the safe ordered past they were simultaneously celebrated for what they were felt to represent and mourned because they had failed to survive.

I also argued that in their assumption of the narrative mechanisms of history as a representative mode Tolkien's texts claimed the objective authority of the historical mode for their fictions. But while I noted how the reclamation and recycling by the texts of the representative tropes of location and identity, endorsed by English and British cultural memory as 'authentic', emotionally intensifies their representations of English homes and homelands, I also established the ways in which their narrative strategies simultaneously draw attention to the made nature of these entities, and the texts foreground the

constancy of their changing nature far more than they present them as originary or inviolate.

It was in the contexts established by chapter one and two, and in the sense that Tolkien's work offers a progressive programme of engagement with ideas of England and Englishness that I proceeded to my discussion of the texts. Chapter three positioned *Farmer Giles of Ham*'s use of real-world cartography and English history as a significant intervention in English historiography. I examined the text's challenge to the idea that the nation and national identities are pre-given, pre-existing entities, and established its interrogation of the mutual relationship of location and identity. Through its discussion of the central character's coextensive relationship with his location, this chapter illustrated that the text explicitly challenges the propensity of national narratives to propose the inviolate unity of land and identity. Although operating on a localised, parochial scale, Ham and the Little Kingdom are clearly synecdoches for the West Country that Tolkien positioned in '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meiðhad*' as being representatively 'English'. Both a farmer and 'of Ham' Giles is doubly tied to the land. Yet both identity and location change as the history the narrative relates unfolds. Foregrounding that fiction is complicit in the creation of historical narratives in its discussion of the difference between 'sober annals' and 'popular lays', it is clear that the text highlights that just as historical narratives, and narratives of national belonging, are subject to the same methods, strategies and slippages of rhetorical construction as fiction, so too is their proposals of a relationship between location and identity.

Contrastingly, where chapter three shows *Farmer Giles of Ham* depicting this as a consequence of the text's engagement with the problems associated with

the historiography of England, chapter four assessed *The Hobbit*'s creation of symbolically applicable landscapes as a corollary to the cultural concerns and anxieties regarding the nature of Englishness and the constitution of English identity that accompanied the text's production – concerns identified in chapter two's discussion of Baucom. Acknowledging Shippey's exploration of the tension in the text between Edwardian Baggins and archaic Took, this chapter expanded on this theme to consider the text as investigating the lacuna between Britain's interwar imaginative understanding of its pre-war identity and the realities of both. Following chapter three's discussion of the role of the trope of the green and pleasant land in *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and introducing the perspectives of Paul Fussell and Raymond Williams on the importance of the pastoral to English cultural self-representation, chapter four aligned *The Hobbit*'s treatment of home, the homeland, and the individual to this theme. This led to its discussion of these elements as symbolically contiguous to the conventions of the war memoir, and my assessment of Bilbo's experiences as a fantastic re-reading of the Edwardian everyman experience that depicted the role the sudden and violent changes of the First World War had in creating this notion of English cultural identity.

Chapter five brought the themes that my readings of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit* introduced together in its discussion of the ways in which *The Lord of the Rings* responds to and develops all of these elements. In combining the long historical perspectives on the nature of England and Englishness offered by *Farmer Giles of Ham* with *The Hobbit*'s more culturally applicable reading of the same, I argued that *The Lord of the Rings* essays an extended intervention in the representative narratives of English history, and their attendant ideas of England and Englishness while also offering perspectives on these themes relevant to the

time of its composition. I argued that the sustained nature of *The Lord of the Ring*'s engagement with these themes could be seen as a consequence of the increased scale and ambition of the text, and also of its more sophisticated construction and organization – but that it should also be viewed as a continuation of the discussion of those elements advanced by those texts. Chapter five, then, began by discussing the significance of *The Lord of the Rings*' alignment of the Shire and hobbits with England and Englishmen. In working to preserve the mimetic illusion of the text's integrity as a fictional history I argued that the metafictional devices of the text also offer a sustained commentary on representative English history and its role in the formation of narratives of national and cultural identity. While I acknowledged Shippey's readings in this context, I contrastingly noted that the ways in which the prologue works to present hobbits as race and create a homeland that authenticates them conceptually simultaneously reveals the hollow nature of the very tropes of national origins that it mobilizes to achieve these effects. In its treatment of the historical discourses of migration and settlement, I argued that the prologue consciously shows construction and interrelation of hobbits and the Shire as deliberate acts of self-creation rather than pre-given originary identities. But, I argued, while these processes draw on, shape, and retreat to the local and they are recuperative, they do not deny or hide their essentially made nature or propensity to change.

Chapter five went on to examine how the irreconcilable local distinctions of the Shire disrupt the idea of it representing English homogeneity and homeostasis, and how its identity is contrastively diffused within the wider context of Middle-earth. The text's emphasis on reciprocal contact between cultures indicates how communication can break down the physical and cultural barriers that separate

what is considered 'native' and what is considered 'foreign.' Finally, I addressed

the relationship between the central characters and their location. As the

discussions of *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Hobbit* indicated, in Tolkien's work,

this relationship is coextensive. But I suggested that the text offers a challenge to

its nostalgic representation of England in its deployment of the biological imagery

of birth, parturition and genealogy in this context. Used by narratives of nation and

national belonging to naturalize the narrative of the nation and the homeland as

one of uninterrupted descent from parents and children down the patriarchal line,

the adoptive relationship of Frodo and Bilbo appears to acknowledge the role of

cross-pollination and dynamic change in this context.

Finally, this conclusion addresses what the implications of my reading for Tolkien

studies and literary studies. It may be that the historical dominance of the

interpretation of Tolkien's engagements with England offered by Shippey can be

palliated by the readings offered here. Both as a direct engagement with Tolkien's

work and also as a critical re-evaluation of its statements on those themes through

a literary-critical analysis that acknowledges but does not wholly embrace

Shippey's source-study methodology, it suggests the possibilities of re-

categorising Tolkien's works as part of a body of literature can now be turned to in

order to explore the constructedness of imagined communities or repositioning it

within commentaries on the English pastoral. It is clear in my discussion of the

critical interpretations of Tolkien's engagements with England and Englishness,

and my readings of the representation of these themes in the texts, that Tolkien's

work does not depict the homes and homelands of Ham, the Hill, and the Shire

respectively wholly as Shippey suggests. It is also apparent that in their treatment

of the relationship between location and identity, the texts do not celebrate the primacy of a pastoral pre-modern past over the contemporary moment or reject the exterior foreign 'other' in outright favour of the native or local. Rather than attempting to recover or reclaim lost English utopias, then, my thesis argues instead that Tolkien's work consciously engages with England as an absent centre around which ideas of Englishness have been constructed and lays bare the processes involved in such manoeuvres. In doing so, Tolkien's work does privilege the English soil of the home country and its identity-bestowing properties. But it also acknowledges the strategies by which such relationships are built, deconstructed, and remade in response to historical imperatives.

Appendix A

Writing Arthur, Writing England: Myth and Modernity in T.H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*[1]

The tendency in previously published work on T.H. White's Arthurian texts has been to consider either biography or educational aspects and to consider nationalism (if at all) in terms of White's pacifism. *The Sword in the Stone* (1938) represents the first instalment of White's fictional series of works based on Arthurian mythology, specifically Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth century romance *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1485) and this article will argue that it offers a paradigmatic example of Rosemary Marangoly George's assertion that "imagining a home is as political an act as imagining a nation. Establishing either is a display of hegemonic power" (George, 4) and betrays the cultural unease and uncertainty of the British interwar experience. The novel recounts the boyhood of King Arthur, also known as the illegitimate Wart, under the stewardship of his foster father Sir Ector in the Castle of the Forest Sauvage and details his education for Kingship through a series of fantastical lessons under the tutelage of Merlyn the magician. This article will suggest that far from offering simplistic laudatory allegories of English identity or a return to the known as personified by place, White's narrative is a hybridised and metalinguistic construct that incarnates the fragmentation English identity underwent during the period of its composition. Noting that the text's evocation of medieval English pageantry, the pastoral and the fantastic turns on the question of legitimate and illegitimate identities, this article will argue that the narrative

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[1] This article was published as Aaron Jackson, 'Writing Arthur, Writing England: Myth, temporality and intertextuality in T.H. White's *The Sword and the Stone*', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Vol. 33, Number 1 (Jan) (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2009), 44–59. For formatting continuity the endnotes required by the journal have been changed to footnotes. Including the Works Cited section it appears here otherwise as published.

examines the late-imperial interwar difficulties of articulating national and individual models of identity. In this context, the text's representational strategies will be interrogated as being simultaneously contiguous to the traditions governing the recycling of Arthurian mythology and the reprocessing strategies employed by twentieth century modernism desire 'make it new.' Beginning with a reading of modernism's treatment of mythology and temporality, the article will investigate the text's mobilisation of intertextual allusion, mythology and problematised temporality as being at once integral to its questioning of the narratives of interwar identities and implicitly modernist.

M.H. Abrams defines myth as a "system of hereditary stories…which served to explain…why the world is as it is and things happen as they do" (Abrams, 170). Correspondingly, T.S. Eliot described modernism's "mythical method" as a way of "controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense paranoia of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot, 177). Myth is thus represented as a formula with which to impose order upon a reality where certainties have collapsed. Simply put, in both, when faced with the difficulty of realist renditions of chaotic existence, mythological narration offers a way of reasserting artistic authority over subject experience and time. This is a definition applicable both to the perpetual recycling of Arthurian mythology at moments of cultural crisis throughout English history and the literary modernism that emerged at the close of the First World War. The deployment of myth, which is "by definition both impersonal and ahistorical"(Emig, 181 +), imposes relevance and order, offering a way of endowing a text with external validity beyond cultural or historical specificity. Citing the authority of ancient myths by allusion or direct quotation results in an appropriation of the myth's explanatory unifying locus. As

Michael Bell notes, myth "represents precisely the lost unity, real or imaginary, which preceded the modern division of realms" (Bell, 5) which is commensurate with what Rainer Emig describes as "the desire for wholeness and the claim for universality…inherent in all facets of modernism" (Emig, 192).

These desires are fundamental both to the Arthurian legend of origin, and myth of rebirth, and modernism. Both arise when moments of cultural crisis need to be negotiated. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136), allegedly the "first definitive or coherent account" of the Arthur myth, was written to legitimise the Norman conquest of England, which it achieved by laying its emphasis "not on the race of Arthur, but upon the land he administered and defended" (Ackroyd, 108 –109). Similarly, the loss of Normandy in 1204 resonates through Layamon's *Brut* (c.1225), perhaps explaining its intrinsic "sense of 'England'" (Allen, 28) and narrative emphasis on the continuity between the people, the land and their shared past. The line "*An ald Staene weorc; stithe men hit wurhthen*" (Ackroyd, 111) with its reference to the 'old stone' and the 'hard men' who shaped it, symbolically places the themes of native inheritance and the enduring presence of the past in the present at the centre of the text. Gabrielle M. Spiegel notes the evolution of literary language "is socially generated by precise cultural needs and possesses ideological functions and meanings" (Spiegel, 2) and the text's use of the alliterative line in the vernacular in contradistinction to Monmouth's Latin can be seen as an attempt to interpolate the wider national community of English speakers into a shared cultural hegemony. Similarly, the civil unrest generated by the Wars of the Roses informs Malory's fifteenth-century regeneration of the Arthur myth *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the text sternly denounces 'all Englysshemen' who have yet to lose the old Plantagenet period custom of being

discontented with their anointed king, linking the collapse of Arthur's court with the socio-political unease of the author's own time.[2]

White laid explicit claim to being Malory's legitimate successor by concluding his Arthurian sequence in 1942 with the words "pray for Thomas Malory, Knight, and his humble disciple who now voluntarily lays aside his books to fight for his kind" (White, *Merlyn*, 137). His series of Arthurian works was written at a similar time of cultural unease: following the end of the First World War, shell-shocked by its brutality and cost, Britain suffered a "collective attack of doubt…a creeping crisis of confidence" (Ferguson, 323) concerning its identity and role in the world. By declaring himself Malory's disciple and heir, White designated himself as the author to negotiate "the matter of Britain," noting "that is what it has been called since the days of Malory and it is a serious subject…I hope that the moral is not too heavy, but the story was always a deep one. After all, it is the major British Epic" (White, *Sword*, i). In explicitly identifying the text with the interwar period and subsequent outbreak of the Second World War, White's alignment to Malory has the effect of dissociating *The Sword in the Stone* from the last major retelling of the story, namely Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859 - 1885) and the pseudo-medievalism of High Victorian Arthuriana. In a further effort to distance himself from Tennyson and the Victorians, White significantly also elects to recount the story in prose rather than poetic verse. As Helen Cooper argues, during the medieval period prose embodied "a new literary

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[2] There is an irony in Malory denouncing civil unrest. Caxton prefaced Malory's *Mort Darthur* by informing the reader that the book is designed to see "that we fall not through vice and sin but exercise and follow virtue" pointing to the text's description of "renowned acts of humanity, gentleness and chivalry" as examples of how to behave. The reader is not told that Malory wrote the *Mort Darthur* "during a term of imprisonment for robbery with violence, attempted murder, sacrilege, extortion, cattle-raiding and 'felonious rape'" (Morris, 41-42) and was twice refused a pardon by King Edward IV.

form in which to express a bleaker and more realistic view of the world they lived in" (Cooper, 143). This is a sentiment that could also apply to the rejection of an inherited literary tradition, specifically Victorian high diction, made by the writers of the First World War and Modernism when it became clear that such traditions could no longer adequately represent contemporary reality. By deliberately allying his narrative to medieval readings of the Arthur myth, White performs a similar rejection. Moreover, with further allusions to Malory and the medieval Arthurian canon surfacing in the text, White's strategy of representation may be considered contiguous to modernism's conscious incorporation of ancient material within the artist's own vision.

For example, in Chapter Six, Merlyn's successful completion of the "private education of my master Bleise" ultimately enables him to trump the Wart's captor Madame Mim's "double first at Dom – Daniel" (78) and win the wizard's duel by turning himself into the microbes of "hiccoughs, scarlet fever, mumps, whooping cough, measles and heat spots" to cause Mim's death and liberate Wart (82). While White adopts the spelling 'Bleise', this is clearly a direct allusion to the relationship of Bleyse and Merlyn found in Malory: "All the batayles that were done in King Arthur's dayes Merlyn caused Bleyse his master to write them" (Malory, i.15). It also returns the character to pre-eminence, in contrast to Tennyson who, in 'The Coming of Arthur' (1869), presents the power of his Merlin as causing 'Bleys's' (Tennyson's spelling) retirement from magic. Tennyson's Anton, Arthur's foster father, also reverts to Malory's Sir Ector in White's text. (Tennyson, 'The Coming…' p.25) In addition, there are allusive nods to Layamon's *Brut* in White's affectionate pastiche of Layamon's alliterative accentual line and his interspersion

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of Middle English with rural vernacular in Master Passelewe's orally delivered Christmas verse:

> Whe – an/*Wold* King – Cole/was a/wakkin – doon –
> t'street
> H-e/ saw –a-lovely laid-y a/*steppin*- in- a- puddle./
> She-e/*lifted* hup-er-skeat/
> For to/
> *Hop* acrost ter middle,/
> An ee/*saw* her/ an –*kel.*
> *Wasn't* that a fuddle?/
> 'Ee could 'ernt *elp* it,/ ee *Ad* to. (191)

The otherworldly knowledge displayed by Layamon's Maerlin when asked about the magical construction of Stonehenge – *"thus seiden Maerlin and seoththen he saet stille/alse theh he wolde of worlden iwiten"* (Thus said Merlin and then he sat still, as though he would go out of the world) (Ackroyd, 111) – can still be seen beneath the comicality of White's Merlyn, who we see brooding on the foreknowledge of Arthur's tragedy in chapter twenty:

> "Suppose they didn't let you stand against all the evil in the world?"
> "I could ask," said The Wart.
> "You could ask," repeated Merlyn. He thrust the end of his beard in his mouth, stared tragically in the fire and began to munch it fiercely. (253)

What these comparisons demonstrate is that whilst the text is not quite the tissue of quotations and allusions we find in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the allusive quality of *The Sword in the Stone* identifies White as writing – as Eliot said a writer must – not merely with a sense of "his generation in his bones," but also with a "historical sense," that is, a sense "that the whole of the literature from his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a similar order" (Eliot, 38). This historical

sense manifests as an apparent tension between contemporary modernity and the historically archaic when the opening of White's narrative, in particular its construction of England, is analysed.

White's description of The Castle of the Forest Sauvage appears to be no more than an expanded reading of Thomas Babington Macaulay's belief that an acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia, itself a paean to what Ian Baucom describes as English identity's coterminous relationship with "the identity-endowing properties of place" (Baucom, 4). Under a shining midsummer sun, and the eye and (mis) direction of the benevolent and paternalistic Sir Ector, a contented and hardworking peasantry carry out the haymaking in a feudal model of the English countryside:

> Sir Ector's castle stood in the enormous clearing in a still more enormous forest. It had a big green courtyard and a moat with a pike in it…As soon as you had crossed the draw-bridge you were at the top of the village street…the street divided the clearing into two huge fields, that on the left being cultivated in hundreds of long narrow strips, while the right ran down to a little river and was used as pasture. Half of the right-hand field was fenced off for hay. (10)

But the narrative does not conceal the contradictions of its moment of composition simply by recasting them in a historical narrative of origins. The statement that "it was July, and real July weather, such as they only had in Old England" (10) alongside the text's description of the ruins of Castle Sauvage as a modern tourist site – "the Castle of the Forest Sauvage is still standing, and you can see its lovely ruined walls with ivy on them, standing broached to sun and wind" (47) – draws attention to the narrator's position in the twentieth century by accentuating that he is describing a different England to his own. Implicit in the description is that it was

a better England. Even the weather, the narrator implies, was better then. This division between the England of the text's interwar moment of composition and the England of the text's moment of mythological representation is further reinforced by the description of the harvest and harvesters:

> Sir Ector stood on the top of a rick, whence he could see what everyone was doing, and shouted commands all over the two-hundred-acre field…The best mowers mowed away in a line where the grass was still uncut, their scythes roaring altogether in the strong sunlight. The women raked the dry hay together in long lines, with wooden rakes, and two boys with pitch forks followed up on either side of the line turning the hay inwards so that it lay well for picking up. (12)

From the aristocrat at the top directing operations to the boys at the bottom doing as they are told, this offers a thumbnail sketch of a socio-politically ordered British society applicable as much to the Victorians as to the Norman system of *fiefdom* it describes. The presence of the whole castle, each member occupying specific mutually interrelated roles in a seasonally specific task, forwards a notion of communal interdependence that frames the narrative as one describing an England governed by seasonal rhythms and social relationships far removed from the temporal linearity and individual isolation of the twentieth century.

Baucom argues that throughout history the quality of Englishness has generally been understood to reside in and imprint itself on certain locales, whether "imaginary, abstract or actual." Accordingly, he concludes, "the struggles to define, defend or reform Englishness" (Baucom, 4) have historically been struggles to control, possess and recast the nation's spaces. Therefore, by introducing a spatial distinction between England's past and present into his narrative, White is submitting Englishness to scrutiny, a process proximate with

modernity's representation of fragmented identities amid the palimpsest of history. As Baucom notes, location is a contact zone "in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of collective remembrance, and in doing so reveal England as continuously discontinuous with itself"(Baucom, 5). Testifying simultaneously to the nation's essential (dis) continuity across time, the opening of White's novel presents a synecdoche of national space that establishes the authority of the past and homogenises the present by submitting it to the past's sovereignty and scrutiny. More precisely, White submits the present to the examination of myth, specifically the myth of England's green and pleasant land.

This myth may appear faintly absurd to the post-millennial urbanised, ring-roaded and shopping-malled world. But if one British Prime Minister's claim to govern a nation ("England is the country, and the country is England"(Baldwin, 1924)) can be echoed seventy years later by another, claiming "fifty years from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on county grounds, warm beer…and old maids cycling to holy communion through the morning mist" (Major, 1993) with no regard for the political, social and cultural changes in between and no apparent irony then the potency of the myth ought not to be doubted. In terms of White's narrative, Macaulay's above cited tribute to Middlesex may have the benefit of being short, quotable and eminently located to allow comparisons between the Victorian certainty and interwar uncertainty about England's place in the world, but it does not express an isolated sentiment. From Shakespeare's eulogy of John of Gaunt's dying speech to Henry C. Warren's morale-boosting *England is a Village* (1940) the idea that the soul of England lies in the countryside is perennially recurrent and intrinsic to narratives of English identity:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.
(Shakespeare, *Richard II,* II,I, 42-54)

Although it retains its power today – significantly, as Jeremy Paxman notes, "when the successful businessman makes his first £10 million, he starts scanning the pages of *Country Life* for a manor house to buy" (Paxman, 175) – the myth of England's pastoral soul reached talismanic proportions in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Barely four years before the outbreak of the highly mechanised Second World War, the Londoner Sir Philip Gibbs chose to cast England as an agrestic paradise in his celebration of the Silver Jubilee of George V. "England," he commented, "is still beautiful when one slips away from the roar of traffic and the blight of industrialism…All this modernisation is, I find, very superficial…it has not yet bitten into the soul of England or poisoned its brain" (Gibbs, 3-4). At the time Gibbs spoke, Britain was the most heavily industrialised nation on earth per capita. The immemorial sights and sounds Stanley Baldwin had claimed defined England in 1924 no longer existed, if they ever had. Baldwin had spoken of:

The tinkle of the hammer on the anvil of a country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been England since England was a land. (Baldwin, 1924)

But by this time, Britain had been a predominantly urban society for more than seventy years, its landscape permanently changed by the Industrial Revolution. As Paxman notes, the scythe and the plough team had been replaced by harvesting machines and internal combustion engines, the blacksmith no longer shoed farm horses, but the ponies owned by children whose businessmen fathers had bought the cottages of those driven from the land by mechanised farming which in turn had reduced the corncrake to an occasional summer visitor by destroying its breeding habitat. In a chapter of *The Great War and Modern Memory* appropriately entitled 'Arcadian Resources,' Paul Fussell has defined the invocation of the myth of England's green and pleasant land during the interwar period as a cultural reaction to the trauma of the First World War. According to Fussell, "recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamity of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against it" (Fussell, 235). Contrasting sharply with the dark events of 1914 – 1918, the invocation of the myth at this time thus represents the buttressing of nostalgia against the contemporary reality of a beleaguered Britain.

White's negotiation of the chasm between the imaginative England and the real England is thus culturally symptomatic. In this context the Castle of the Forest Sauvage and its location are symbolically resonant. Effectively sealed off from the rest of the world by the "great jungle" (White, 18) of the forest, as natural a barrier as the sea, the castle and its inhabitants can be framed in the same threnodic context as 'this fortress built by nature for herself' and hence viewed as a metaphor for England. In this construction, the geographical and political construction of England as 'home' in relation to the rest of the Empire and the dislocation of that identity by the shock of the First World War can be seen. As

Niall Ferguson notes, it is in this period that the hitherto arch-imperialist English identity, beset by a collective crisis of confidence, begins to mutate "into a Little Englander" (Ferguson, 323). But it is with sardonic comicality that White's narrative negotiates Marangoly George's contention that "it is in the heyday of British Imperialism that England gets defined as 'Home' in opposition to the Empire which belongs to the English but which is not England" (George, 4). Representing the known as embodied by place, the castle is represented as a place of safety and security: "Sir Ector's home was called the Castle of the Forest Sauvage. It was more like a town or a village than any one man's home, and indeed it was the village during all times of danger" (White, 47). But when the King of England Uther Pendragon dies without an apparent heir, a sword in a stone appears in a London churchyard with the inscription "Whoso Pulleth out This Sword of this Stone and Anvil, is Rightwise King Born of All England" (271). Presented with the opportunity to travel to London and take part in a jousting tournament for the right to try, Malory's fearless noble knights suddenly become reticent gentlemen farmers:

> "Couldn't think of it," said Sir Ector bashfully.
> "Long way to London," said Sir Grummore, shaking his head.
> "My father went there once," said King Pellinore…
> "We all know the family has no chance," said Sir Ector, "that is, for the sword" (272).

When they finally commit to travelling to London for "a shot at that sword" (272), Wart and Kay's nurse spends all her time knitting woollen undergarments for everyone "on the principle that the climate of any place outside the Forest Sauvage was treacherous in the extreme" while the sergeant at arms polishes the armour and sharpens the swords "till they were almost worn away" (272 –275) so

that they can defend themselves in the hostile world of the capital. This movement

from bold arch-imperialist to timid little Englander is also neatly caught in White's

reworking of the archaic folk-tune 'The Lincolnshire Poacher.' Its traditional

celebration of English pluck, devil-may-care behaviour and readiness to "wrestle

and fight, my boys, and jump o'er everywhere" for sheer "delight of a shiny night, in

the season of the year" jars markedly with King Pellinore's decision to stay at

home in a feather bed rather than go questing: "Oh, Ay was born a Pellinore in

famous Lincolnshire/Full well Ay chased the Questing Beast for more than

seventeen year/Till Ay took up with Sir Grummore here/In the season of the year

(since when) 'tis my delight/On a feather bed night/To sleep at home, my dear"

(189). Such narrative representations bathetically expressing the divide between

the myth of Britain and its reality and if, as Sedgwick suggests, "the whole point of

ideology is to negotiate invisibly between the contradictory elements in the status

quo [sic]" (Sedgwick, 613), then it must be concluded that *The Sword in the Stone*

ultimately problematises subject identity more than it consolidates it. This is due

mainly to the narrative's palimpsestic juxtaposition of the past and the present and

its crucially ambivalent temporality at the point of interface between mythology and

history.

In *Work on Myth* Hans Blumenberg argues that humanity cannot accept the

indifference of time and both myth and history aim to overcome this indifference by

imposing structure upon a random temporal flux. Dividing the past into epochs and

eras structured around designated key events (wars, revolutions, natural

disasters) gives it a structure and implies that it has meaning as it anticipates the

present and explains our position in the world. Both mythology and historiography

are therefore ways of emplotting the past. As Blumenberg notes, "what we need

from history tends towards indicators having the clarity of mythical models, indicators that enable the individual subject, with his finite time, to determine how he can set himself in a relationship to the large-scale structures that reach far beyond him" (Blumenberg, 100). In White's novel we find a convergence of mythological and historiographical strategies contiguous with the elements acknowledged by Blumenberg. As a linear history, White's own life could be structured around the events of the twentieth century – the First World War, the Second World War and so on. Similarly, the death of Uther represents a central structural device in a narrative which in otherwise marking time by the passing of the seasons treats time with the circularity demanded by myth: "It was haymaking again, and Merlyn had been with them a year. The wind had been, and the snow, and the rain, and the sun once more. The boys looked longer in the leg, but otherwise everything was the same" (White, 247). However, mythological time is rendered problematic by historical time, specifically the history of the twentieth century, made present, active and immanent in the text through White's treatment of Merlyn. If we accept Peter Ackroyd's description of Arthurian mythology as a "legend of origin combined with the myth of revival" (Ackroyd, 112) then any of its subsequent incarnations are inherently circular. From birth Arthur will forever go to his doom. The story demands it. But the legend of origin and the myth of rebirth demands that the story perennially be retold, as this essay has shown. The retelling of Arthur's story to its unchanging conclusion in different historical eras imposes on its narrative myth's cyclical temporality, something signalled by the title White gave to his tetralogy, namely *The Once and Future King* (1958). Yet, the presence of Merlyn disrupts the ambiguous mythological historicity of the text's 'Old England' location. In stating that "I unfortunately was born at the wrong end of

time, and I have to live *backwards* from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind" (White, 48), a linear model of historical time, emerging out of a clearly defined past into the present, is introduced, albeit inverted. This upsets the narrative because at any given moment Merlyn's linear temporality is at odds with the circularity the Arthurian myth demands the text achieve. To compound matters, an argument could be made that Merlyn's "second sight" (40) foreknowledge of Arthur's ultimate failure acts as the catalyst for the story's circularity and recurrence. As Merlyn sorrowfully tells Arthur at his moment of apotheosis:

> I know the sorrows before you, and the joys […] there will never again be anybody who dares to call you by the friendly name of Wart. In future it will be your glorious doom to take up the burden…of your proper name […] my dear liege lord, King Arthur (285 –286).[3]

This point of the narrative, where the Wart is revealed as Arthur, the rightful king of all England, is the beginning of the story of Arthur's kingship. But as Merlyn has already lived through the tragic conclusion to Arthur's reign, the narrative is predestined to end as it always has done, as it has always been told. Furthermore, Merlyn's active linearity promotes a shift from the symbolic mode of discourse engendered by the narration of the myth to an allegorical mode of discourse. Whereas White's landscapes, characters and events are symbolic and temporally passive, Merlyn's introduction of active modern linear time into this world again brings the idealised past and the flawed present under scrutiny. This interpretation,

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[3] In this instance, spicing up the temporal mix, White enjoys a pun upon the word 'doom'. Merlyn's foreknowledge means that the word can be taken in a modern fashion, describing Arthur's ultimate failure in gloomy terms. However, it can equally be read archaically to mean 'fate.' It is an archaism that we also find in Tennyson: 'And Arthur said, 'Behold, the doom is mine.' ('The Coming of Arthur' (466). However, Tennyson perhaps lacks White's sense of mischief.

of course, rests heavily on Paul de Man's view of language as an allegory of its own deconstruction – a claim that rests upon the structuralist distinction between the synchronic and diachronic poles of language according to which tropes, such as symbols, belong to the synchronic axis and possess a spatial structure whereas other tropes, such as allegory, rest upon the diachronic axis and possess a durational structure. As de Man argues, "whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of temporal difference" (de Man, 187 – 208). White's interface of archaic and modern temporalities is deliberate. On regarding a modern hat his magic has conjured across the temporal void to the Castle of the Forest Sauvage, Merlyn declares, "this is an anachronism…a beastly anachronism" (White, 128). For all its theatrical sarcasm, Merlyn's introduction of the accoutrements of modernity into the mythical world of Castle Sauvage is ultimately White's introduction of its tensions.

These tensions are apparent when we return to White's representation of the land and English identity. *The Sword in the Stone* is quick to legitimise its claim for the illegitimate Wart to be 'The Once and Future King of all England' by establishing the latter's connection to the land, stating "the Wart loved haymaking and was good at it" (12). This complies with the requirements of Arthurian mythology as Monmouth, Layamon and Malory all stress that the ideology of legitimation resides in the connection of the people to the land and vice versa. While there is not a scene in Malory that is comparable to White's haymaking scene, where various classes work together, it emphasises Wart's connection to the land and connection to the common people despite the existing hierarchies. In

complying with Arthurian mythology, White also acquiesces to the traditions surrounding the narration of English identity in which the myth of England's green and pleasant land is fundamental to conceptions of Englishness. Wart may be illegitimate but he is connected to the land and understands its natural rhythms. By contrast, hay – a product of a world operating to a natural rhythm – is "loathed like poison" (12) by Kay, Sir Ector's legitimate son. The difference between the legitimate and illegitimate heirs is illustrated by other similar episodes. The loss of Hob the falconer's temperamental goshawk Cully is fully established as Kay's fault "because he knew that he had flown the bird when he was not properly in yarak" (17). It is Wart, not Kay, who shares "some of the falconer's feelings" and, aware "that a lost hawk was the greatest possible calamity" (17), has the courage to spend the night alone in the Forest Sauvage to attempt to retrieve the bird. It is also Wart, rather than Kay, who when confronted with "the great jungle of Old England" displays "a stout heart" and does not want to "give in" (19). The legitimising connection between the land and Wart is ultimately consummated at the moment of the Wart's apotheosis, when he uncovers his birthright and draws the sword from the stone:

> All around the churchyard there were hundreds of old friends…otters and nightingales and vulgar crows and hares and serpents and falcons and fishes and dogs and dainty unicorns and newts…Some of them had come from the banners in the church, where they were painted in heraldry, some from the waters and the sky and the fields about, but all, down to the smallest shrew mouse, had come to help on account of love. Wart felt his power grow. (280)

Nevertheless, for all its apparent climactic resonance, this ending remains without true resolution. The Wart is illegitimate. He may be Uther's son, but he is the fruit

of an illicit tryst between the King of England and Igrayne, a union only made

possible by Merlyn's deceiving magic. The identity he offers England, founded on

the connection of the land and the people, the myth of the green and pleasant

land, is thus shown to be an illegitimate one in White's modern England. Hence,

undermining the interwar national investment in a pastoral English identity, at one

bitterly comic stroke White's deliberate contraction of Arthur to 'Art' and the name's

subsequent forging to 'The Wart' turns this idea of England into an unsightly

growth of dead scar tissue: "The Wart was called the Wart because it rhymed with

Art, which was short for his real name. Kay had given him the nickname" (7). As

Sir Ector's legitimate son, Kay's petulant, proud and condemnatory disposition and

his penchant for overreaching himself might be considered White's wry take on

what he thinks England's interwar identity really is:

> As the years went by, Kay became more difficult. He always used a bow too big for him, and did not shoot very accurately with it either. He lost his temper and challenged nearly everybody to have a fight, and in those few cases where he did actually have the fight, he was invariably beaten. Also, he became sarcastic…(248 –249)

Reinforcing the theme of England's dislocated, illegitimate identity, the patriarchal

figures of Sir Ector, Sir Grummore Grummursum and King Pellinore are nimbly

caricatured as the out-of-date huntin'-shootin'-fishin' public-school officer class of

pre-1914 England, a caste facing extinction in the new realities of the interwar

world:

> Sir Ector said, 'Had a good quest to-day?'

Sir Grummore said, 'Oh not so bad…Found a chap called Sir Bruce Saunce Pite choppin' off a maiden's head in Weedon bushes, ran him to Mixbury Plantation in the Bicester, where he doubled back and lost him in Wicken Wood. Must have been a good twenty-five miles as he ran.' (8)

Fox hunting is replaced by giant killing – "we kill all of our giant's cubbin'" (9) – and placed in the same context as a quest. This neatly frames the quest for the Holy Grail – the spiritual focus of Arthurian mythology – as a futile pastime pursued by the upper classes. The ideology of Sir Ector's class is displayed in the predominance of martial training Kay and Wart undergo prior to Merlyn's arrival: On Mondays and Fridays, the boys are taught "tilting and horsemanship; Tuesdays, hawking; Wednesdays, fencing; Thursdays, Archery; Saturdays, the theory of chivalry" (7). Linking the regime of a Knight's training to the pre-First World War belief that life was essentially a game, White's rendition of Sir Grummore Grummursum's old school song reverberates with Henry Newbolt's imperially symbolic message of play up, play up and play the game: "We'll tilt together/Steady from crupper to poll/And nothing in life shall sever/Our love for the dear old coll/Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up/Follow-up, follow-up/Till the shield ring again and again/With the clanks of the clanky true men" (85). Newbolt's culturally symptomatic paean to the imperial idea that playing a straight bat can solve all of life's problems is an extended reading of Shakespeare's "God for Harry! England and St. George", a patriotic quadrivium combining the same complex of God, Homeland, Monarch and Moral purpose, albeit in a series of octets rather than one line of blank verse. What such sentiments imply is that the sense of fair play and sportsmanship garnered by playing Rugby and Cricket at school gave the ruling class the qualities to lead the nation, something echoed in the text by Sir Ector's

Duke of Wellington-like assertion "that the battle of Cressy had been won upon the playing fields of Camelot" (76).

However, the onomatopoeic qualities of conjugated Latin – "'Hic, Hac, Hoc,' said Sir Ector. 'Have some more port.' 'Hunc," said Sir Grummore" (White, 11) – neatly imitate the comic sound effects of inebriation as the pair discuss the necessity of "a first rate eddication" (10) for Kay and Wart. Thus White suggests that for all their prowess at games the ruling class of England – and by extension, the Empire – are benevolent incompetents more interested in working their way down a bottle than deliberating on matters of governance. The mere fact that Wart's future, essentially the future of England, is decided over a bottle of port confirms this reading. Drawing comparisons between the marital prowess of the knight and the martial prowess underpinning successful imperialism, the novel's interwar moment of composition also trenchantly reminds us that playing up and playing the game, as well as the notion of *Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori*, had died upon the wire in the slaughter of the First World War, slain alongside the notion that war was "a brief armed version of the Olympic Games. You won a round, the enemy won the next"(Sitwell, 26). Clearly, the disillusioned note that "Sir Ector tied a knot in his handkerchief to remember to start a quest for a tutor" but "was not sure how to go about it" suggests that in White's view, expressed vituperatively by Merlyn, that England's future orientation should not be derived from the archaic and outmoded background of "a lot of brainless Unicorns swaggering about and calling themselves educated just because they can push each other off a horse with a bit of stick!"(88).

In conclusion, White's novel does not satisfactorily resolve quite whence, instead, England's future should take its cue. *The Sword in the Stone* and the

wider cycle of *The Once and Future King* (1958) suggest that England's journey towards the apotheosis of a viable contemporary identity may be, like Wart's, a long, difficult and complex one. To illustrate this, let us return to the Forest Sauvage, a space where "wolves might be slinking behind any tree, with pale eyes and slavering chops" or "magicians…strange animals…outlaws (and) even a few dragons" (19). In *The Sword in the Stone* the outlaws, hostile natives and wild beasties that make up the nuts and bolts of children's adventure stories inhabit the forest. As a space, it is also symbolic of the world outside the England of the Castle and the once and future saviour of England does not exactly impose himself on it confidently. Without Merlyn's interventions, Robin Wood, and blind luck he would either have been cooked and eaten by Madame Mim or shot by the poisoned arrows of the Anthropophagi. Wart's impotence in intertextual space can be seen as symbolic of England's increasing impotence in dealing with the problems of its imperial identity in the changing world order of the interwar period. In this respect, Wart's illegitimate orphan status is required by the mechanics of the narrative so that he can uncover his birthright and gain his apotheosis. However, within the tensions of the narrative, it also suggests that golden visions of Macauley, Gibbs, and Newbolt may be displaced conceits when it comes to negotiating modernity's Englishness. White's textual organisation implies that instead of being the stage upon which nationality and identity can strut, the novel by dint of its reflexivity denies the emergence of any one single-subject position as the sole articulator of the text. Accordingly, White's narrative does not offer a clear-cut orientation for the future. A children's novel, the opening instalment of White's recycling of Arthurian mythology is ultimately a highly organised work of art, the

representation of a limited world commenting upon the tragedies and mitigations of a larger one.

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Appendix B

<u>Authoring the Century: J.R.R. Tolkien, the Great War and Modernism</u>[1]

'How was it that Tolkien […] could have gone through the Great War with all of its rants and lies and still come out committed to a 'feudal' literary style?' [2] Questioning Tolkien's position within twentieth-century literature and culture Hugh Brogan's interrogation is representative of a critical consensus that routinely demotes Tolkien's status to that of an 'unworldly figure' [3] dismissed for failing to engage with his immediate historical context. Without doubt Tolkien is difficult to place in literary history. A contemporary of the First World War poets, he did not publish his best-known work – *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) – until after the Second World War, and he chose to work in genres and with themes apparently at odds with any of the prevalent literary or critical modes of the century. Ironically, this sense of being forever out of step has also been used to burnish the Tolkien myth. In his biography Humphrey Carpenter makes much of Tolkien's suburban ordinariness which appears so irreconcilable with his fantastical vision as a writer:

> [Tolkien's] eyes fix upon some distant object […] in all externals he resembles the archetypal Oxford don, at times even the stage *caricature* of a don. But that is exactly what he is not. It is rather as if some strange spirit has taken the guise of an elderly professor. The body may be pacing this shabby little suburban room, but the mind is far away, roaming the plains and mountains of Middle-earth. [4]

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[1] This article first appeared as Aaron Isaac Jackson, 'Authoring the Century: J.R.R. Tolkien, the Great War and Modernism', *English Literature* (The Journal of the English Association) (2010), 44–69. For formatting continuity the endnotes required by the journal have been changed to footnotes. The article otherwise appears exactly as published.
[2] Hugh Brogan, 'Tolkien's Great War', in *Children And Their Books: A Celebration Of The Works Of Iona And Peter Opie,* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 356.
[3] Brian Rosebury, *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p. 136.
[4] Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1977) p.17.

On both sides of the critical divide, this kind of mythologizing has precluded dispassionate analysis of Tolkien's literary concerns, output and position. Assertions like Carpenter's that 'though Tolkien lived in the twentieth century he could scarcely be called a modern writer' [5] effectively sever Tolkien from the twentieth century as neatly as his critics, enabling him to be categorised as a 'one-off', an author who, as Tom Shippey once concluded, possesses 'no literary context.' [6] The only difference appears to be that Tolkien's supporters present his apparent disengagement from the twentieth century as a badge of honour, his detractors see it as a mark of lack and shame.

In many ways, Tolkien – the man, his fiction, and the brand – has been a victim of his own success. As Shippey documents, the critical opprobrium customarily heaped upon the author increases in direct proportion to his work's tremendous popularity. [7] When *The Lord of the Rings* was first published, its anonymous *TLS* reviewer who declared authoritatively that 'this is not a work that many adults will read right through more than once' [8] could not have foreseen that Tolkien's sales figures would steadily go up with each decade, but later critics have no such excuse. When in 1961 Philip Toynbee declared that Tolkien's supporters had finally sold out their shares so that 'today these books have passed into a merciful oblivion,' [9] he did so after the trilogy had gone through more than nine hardback impressions in only five years. By the mid-1960s the American paperback version of *The Lord of the Rings* surged past the sales mark of one

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[5] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings,* (Unwin Paperbacks, 1981) p. 157.
[6] Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth,* (George Allen & Unwin, 1982, 2005) xix.
[7] Tom Shippey, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: Harper Collins, 2000) xx – xxiv.
[8] The anonymous reviewer was actually the historical novelist Alfred Duggan. Stepson of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, immensely rich and socially well connected, Duggan was a contemporary of Evelyn Waugh's and a member of his group at Oxford. For the literary allegiances that this implies see Shippey, *Author of...* pp.316 – 317.
[9] Shippey, *The Road to...* p .1.

million copies, and yet, although the sales figures are still rising, as a critical position Toynbee's dismissal endures. As late as 2000, while reviewing Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Andrew Rissek was prepared to assert that 'almost no-one accepts Tolkien as one of the great writers of the twentieth century except the hard-core Tolkien addicts who've elevated his books to the status of a cult,' [10] even though Tolkien so clearly represents considerably more than a minoritarian or subcultural obsession. Even in the age of the Harry Potter phenomenon, *The Hobbit* remains the most successful children's book ever written, having sold tens of millions of copies in over forty languages, and despite the judgement of successive generations of critics, *The Lord of the Rings* has sold millions of copies to a readership encompassing all ages, genders, ethnicities and classes. As the Tolkien phenomenon entered the new millennium, it found an even larger audience when between 2001 and 2003 Peter Jackson released his cinematic adaptation to immense critical acclaim. Arguably the most successful films ever made, with a box-office gross of £1, 279 million by January 2004, hundreds of millions of people have seen or will see Jackson's trilogy. [11] I am not equating commercial success with literary worth but rather making the point that the critical inability to link Tolkien's work with any particular literary school, movement, or prevalent trend has led to 'statements not about literary merit […] but about popular appeal,' [12] with the latter widely understood to compromise and disable the former.

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[10] Andrew Rissek, Review of Tom Shippey, *J.R.R Tolkien*: *Author Of The Century,* (2000), *Guardian* (London) 2 September 2000.
[11] See Shaun F.D. Hughes, 'Postmodern Tolkien,' *MFS Journal of Modern Fiction Studies,* Volume 50, number 4, Winter (2004) pp. 807 – 813. (808) As these figures are augmented by subsequent DVD and VHS sales, it is safe to say that hundreds of millions of people have seen or will see the film.
[12] Shippey, *The Road to…* pp.1 – 2.

Even in Tolkien's own lifetime most readers encountering his work came to associate the pre-modern world of Middle-earth with the photographs of the elderly Oxbridge professor on the flyleaf. Invariably, the unworldly, aged academic eclipsed – and ever since has continued to eclipse – the young writer who grew to personal and artistic maturity in the first half of the twentieth century. This detachment of Tolkien from his early, intellectually formative years cannot but lead to critical distortions. Compounding the author's dislocation is what Shippey defines as the 'culture-gap' dividing Tolkien from both his supporters and detractors; while disparities of age, temperament, intellectual training, religious and moral values, as well as historical and social context inevitably drive a wedge between any author and his commentators, Shippey is specifically concerned with Tolkien's work as received and theorised by established literary criticism:

> The toolkit of the professional critic […] does not work at all on whole *genres* of fiction (especially fantasy and science fiction, but including also the bulk of 'entertainment' fiction, i.e. what people most commonly read). Furthermore it has a strong tendency to falsify much of what it does attempt to explain by assimilating it, often unconsciously, to familiar models. Tolkien may be a peripheral writer for the theory of fiction. However, it seems time to pay more attention to the peripheries, and less to the well-trodden centre. [13]

The critical practice of categorically excommunicating Tolkien from any progressive cultural and literary history is ultimately as unwise as the critical tendency to dismiss his work as 'the prank of an elderly don'[14] unconcerned with 'English Literature.' Not only did Tolkien live in the twentieth century, he

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[13] Shippey, *The Road to…*p.215.
[14] There are many variations on this theme. Rosebury describes it as the 'Don's whimsy' school of criticism (p. 8), citing Bryan Appleyard's 'tweedy academic whimsy' variation in *The Pleasures of Peace* (Faber, 1989) p.13.

professionally played a significant central role in shaping 'English Literature' as an academic discipline. [15] Tolkien's reforms of the Oxford English School in his capacity as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon, implemented in 1931, would crucially inform the study of English at Oxford for a significant proportion of the twentieth century and can scarcely be regarded as the action of a man with no concern for his immediate present. Given the number of writers and critics graduating from the University during that time – including Kingsley Amis, W.H. Auden and John Wain – it is not unreasonable to suggest that Tolkien's professional interventions have markedly shaped our modern understanding of 'English Literature,' both as an art and as a discipline. Without doubt Tolkien was aware of contemporary debates surrounding the subject; rather than an 'act of deliberate defiance of modern history,' [16] therefore, Tolkien's relationship to twentieth-century literary practice should be viewed as a deliberate, intellectually motivated act of aesthetic positioning, 'a welcome variant, rather than a lamentable failure of adjustment to the dominant cultural trend' [17] and as such, it represents as valid a response to the twentieth century as any made by his literary contemporaries.

The critical repositioning of Tolkien within twentieth-century literary history has already begun. Shippey, a leading figure in Tolkien criticism, recently revised his early view of Tolkien as a writer with 'no literary context' to eulogise him instead as 'author of the century.' Following on from *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, which radically reviews Tolkien's standing in the present day, Shippey's

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[15] What constituted 'literature' was a question to which Tolkien repeatedly returned. As Shippey notes, Tolkien was "from the start of his learned career barely able to use the word 'literature' at all without putting inverted commas around it to show that he couldn't take it seriously" (*The Road to…* p.7).

[16] Brogan, 'Tolkien's Great War,' p. 356.

[17] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A…* p. 157.

preface to the revised third edition of *The Road to Middle-Earth* finds Tolkien voicing 'the most pressing and most immediately relevant issues of the whole monstrous twentieth century – questions of industrialised warfare, the origin of evil, the nature of humanity.' [18] Accordingly, with regard to his choice of both themes and genre, Shippey argues that Tolkien in effect 'wrote' the most resonant and enduring cultural response to the twentieth century's traumatic manifestation and passage. Correspondingly, in *Tolkien: A Cultural Phenomenon* Brian Rosebury suggests that in order to understand Tolkien's cultural resonance, his work must be 'harmonised with a coherent overall view of literature, and of literary history,' concluding that Tolkien 'belongs to the same century as Proust, Joyce and Eliot, and is read with pleasure by many of the same readers [and] criticism needs to confront this fact and make sense of it.' [19] Another recent effort to reposition Tolkien has been launched by John Garth in *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003), in which it is argued that Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth reflects an experience of the First World War. Thus, whereas Shippey portrays Tolkien as a post-WW2 writer, Garth – and, similarly, Janet Brennan Croft in *War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (2004) – stresses the impact of the First World War on Tolkien's work.

Sparked by the realisation that the endurance and ever-increasing influence of Tolkien's work might merit some serious academic attention, in 2004 *Modern Fiction Studies* dedicated a special issue to Tolkien. [20] Possibly its most pertinent article for my own enquiry is 'Stolen Language, Cosmic Models' by Margaret Hiley who, unlike Shippey, analyses Tolkien's work not in order to discover the anterior literary-historical sources of Tolkien's mythic invention, but to assess the very

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[18] Shippey, *The Road to…* xix.
[19] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A…* p.7.
[20] contributions to which were balanced between traditional concerns within Tolkien studies and innovative poststructuralist readings of the author.

function of myth in Tolkien's creation of a secondary world fantasy. However, in concluding that Tolkien's artistic method is 'markedly different from that of modernists such as Eliot and Pound,' [21] Hiley's stance typifies traditional critical thinking on Tolkien. Garth equally concludes that Tolkien's stylistic values stand in direct opposition to Pound's famous aesthetic imperative to 'make it new!'[22] While Tolkien, it seems, may finally be admitted to twentieth-century literary studies, a general reluctance persists in to viewing him as anything but a 'one off.' Challenging this reluctance, by highlighting the impact of twentieth-century history on his work, as well as the contiguity of his aesthetic method with that of war literature and modernism, I will argue that Tolkien must unequivocally be considered a significant late-imperial twentieth-century author. Resituating Tolkien in his historical-cultural context I will analyse the pre-war origin of his 'mythology for England' [23] before moving on to an analysis of the effect of the First World War on his aesthetic outlook. Then tracing the concurrence and divergence of general aesthetics and particular representative strategies between Tolkien and other literary figures of the First World War (notably Siegfried Sassoon), I will reveal Tolkien's intimate affinity with the strategies of modernism – especially in his treatment of mythology and other literary (re)sources.

Although the works for which Tolkien is best known were not published until over a generation after the conflict, Tolkien is essentially of the same generation as the writers of the First World War. Born in 1892, he was a contemporary of those he survived (Wilfred Owen [1893 – 1918], Rupert Brooke [1887 – 1915] and Isaac

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[21] Margaret Hiley, ''Stolen Language: Cosmic Models: Myth and Mythology in Tolkien', *MFS Journal of Modern Fiction Studies,* Volume 50, number 4, Winter (2004) pp. 838 – 860. (839 – 851)
[22] John Garth, *Tolkien and the Great War*, (Harper Collins, 2003) p.291.
[23] (eds) Humphrey Carpenter, Christopher Tolkien, *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien: A Selection*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1981) p.144.

Rosenberg [1890 – 1918]) and those who survived with him (Robert Graves [1895 – 1985) and Siegfried Sassoon [1886 – 1967]). Ten years younger than James Joyce (1882 – 1941) but eleven years older than George Orwell (1903 - 1950), Tolkien was at once junior to the major figures of modernism in the 1920s and older than the social realists of the 1930s and 1950s. As Tolkien began *The Lord of the Rings* in 1937, Joyce was finishing *Finnegan's Wake.* By the time Tolkien's work was published in 1954 –55, the second generation of anti-modernist social realism was underway. [24] As a result Tolkien found himself paradoxically a generation older than his 'contemporaries' – some of whom remembered being taught by him at Oxford – and was widely (re)viewed as aesthetically and stylistically opposed to them. In such a cursory chronology Tolkien does indeed appear to be untouched by and irresponsive to the main trends in English literature from the First World War to the end of his life in 1973; however, this is mainly because the origins of Tolkien's aesthetic have not been fully traced and his work's context of publication has persistently been confused with its actual framework of composition. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* form constituent parts of a conceptual whole begun before the outbreak of the First World War that underwent continual revision and refinement throughout Tolkien's life. In a much-quoted article in *The Listener* John Carey deplores Tolkien's apparent lack of interest in 'the writers who were moulding English Literature in his own day – Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence,' [25] but the writers who were shaping English literature in Tolkien's day were not Eliot, Joyce and Lawrence, or Orwell and Amis. Tolkien's literary style, vision and subject matter were formed before the advent of the First World War, yet remained unrealised, and only emerged – somewhat

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[24] Rosebury, *Tolkien: A…* pp.147 - 148.
[25] John Carey, *The Listener,* (12th May, 1977) p.631.

anachronistically – in its aftermath in a manner coeval, if also significantly at odds, with the artistic and aesthetic beliefs and tenets of his generation.

Tolkien's comment that 1914 had seen him 'pitched into it all, just when I was full of stuff to write, and of things to learn; and never picked it up again' [26] show that he felt that the First World War had indelibly punctuated and defined his aesthetic outlook and artistic disposition. In *Tolkien and the Great War,* Garth's central argument is that *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* as well as the posthumously published *The Silmarillion* and 'The Book of Lost Tales' represent constituent parts of an overarching legendarium that finds its origin in the mythology of 'The Book of Lost Tales' which Tolkien began in 1916. This is not, in itself, a new argument. Carpenter suggested as much in his biography of Tolkien three decades ago and Shippey in *The Road to Middle-Earth* two decades ago. [27] Where this idea is instructive is in framing Tolkien's relationship to the First World War. Thus it can be argued that 'The Book of Lost Tales' has its origins in 'The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star,' a poem Tolkien composed as an undergraduate on the outbreak of the war. Coming across the name 'Éarendel' while studying Cynewulf's eighth-century poem *Crist*, Tolkien 'felt a curious thrill, as if something had stirred in me, half wakened from sleep. There was something very remote and strange and beautiful behind those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond ancient English.' [28] Moved by the hero's name, Tolkien was inspired to write his own poem:

Éarendel sprang from the Ocean's cup

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[26] Carpenter, *Letters of…* p.46.
[27] See Carpenter, *Biography,* p. 102. Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth,* p.39. "The Silmarillion had begun its sixty-year gestation by 1914."
[28] As Tolkien later said through the character of Arundel Lowdham in 'The Notion Club Papers,' J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Notion Club Papers,' *Sauron Defeated,* p.236.

In the gloom of the mid-world's rim;
From the door of night as a ray of light
Leapt over the twilight brim,
And launching his bark like a silver spark
From the golden fading sand
Down the sunlit breath of Day's fiery Death
He sped from Westerland.

And Éarendel fled from that Shipman dread
Beyond the dark earth's pale,
Back under the rim of the Ocean dim,
And behind the world set sail;
And he heard the mirth of the folk of earth
And hearkened to their tears,
As the world dropped back in a cloudy wrack
On its journey down the years.

Then he glimmering passed to the starless vast
As an isled lamp at sea,
And beyond the ken of mortal men
Set his lonely errantry,
Tracking the Sun in his galleon
And voyaging the skies
Till his splendour was shorn by the birth of Morn
And he died with the Dawn in his eyes. [29]

Tolkien wrote this poem about a lone wanderer at the same time as hundreds of thousands of men found themselves in direct conflict in Belgium and France. As men everywhere rushed to fight for King and Country, Tolkien, under immense familial pressure to join up, did not, choosing to finish his degree at Oxford first. His poem does not eulogise the collectivist martial spirit of the time, as exemplified by Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier', in which the individual is subordinate to nationalist ideals. Written as war engulfed Europe, Tolkien – self-excluded from it but feeling its effects keenly – chose to focus on the individual in search of self-realization: as solitary Éarendel flies from the world, he hears it weep. In November 1914 Tolkien read the poem aloud to Exeter College's essay club, and

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[29] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star': *The Book of Lost Tales II,* (ed) Christopher Tolkien, George Allen & Unwin, 1984) p.267 – 269.

when his friend Geoffrey Bache Smith asked him what it was about, Tolkien

replied: 'I don't know. I'll try and find out' [30] – a statement that would trigger a

lifelong process of mythological invention and review. In response to Smith's

enquiry, within weeks of writing the poem Tolkien had devised the outline of a

whole story:

> Éarendel's boat goes through North, Iceland, Greenland, and the wild
> islands; a mighty wind and crest of great wave carry him to hotter climes, to
> back of West Wind. Land of strange men, land of magic. The home of the
> Night. The Spider. He escapes from the meshes of night with a few
> comrades, sees a great mountain island and a golden city – wind blows him
> southward. Tree-men, Sun-Dwellers, spices, fire-mountains, red sea:
> Mediterranean (loses his boat (travels afoot through the wilds of Europe?
> Or Atlantic […] [31]

As Christopher Tolkien notes in his preface to *The Children of Húrin* (2007), at this

point J.R.R. Tolkien had no 'inkling of the tales that were to form the narrative of

The Hobbit or *The Lord of the Rings.*' [32] But while the outline represents nothing

more than a scribble of *ad hoc* ideas, it is startling to find that it shows certain

fundamental themes of Tolkien's mythology already to be in place. Tolkien

returned to his Éarendel verses early in 1915 as he prepared for his finals. In the

interim, inspired by his study of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic assembled

by Elias Lonnrot from fragments of archaic oral folk songs, Tolkien began to

devise 'Qenya', an entirely fictitious language. In the belief that language required

a people to speak it, a history to support it, and a literature to represent it – a

position symptomatic of Tolkien's lifelong conviction that language, literature and

culture were coterminously interrelated – Tolkien then began working on the 'Lay

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[30] Carpenter, *Biography…* p.107.
[31] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part Two,* pp. 261 – 3.
[32] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Children of Húrin*, (Harper Collins, 2007) p.8.

of Éarendel,' a poem describing the character's journey across the world. Tolkien decided that 'Qenya' would be the language of the Elves Éarendel encounters on his journey, derived from an ancestral tongue he called 'Primitive Eldarin.'

Disrupted by the advent of his mobilisation in 1916, Tolkien could not 'find out' more about his nascent linguistic and mythological inventions until trench fever saw him removed from the front four months after his participation in the Battle of the Somme. It was during this period of convalescence that Tolkien started work on 'The Book of Lost Tales,' a mythological cycle he envisaged as fragments salvaged from the wreck of history, significant parts of which would eventually inform and become known as *The Silmarillion.* [33] Although it was not published until 1977, four years after Tolkien's death, *The Silmarillion* constitutes the overarching matrix in whose wider mythological cycle the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings* is no more than an elaborately explored fragment. Accordingly, Tolkien's process of 'finding out' more about a fragment of poetry he penned at the beginning of the First World War came to occupy most of his creative life. In other words, the creative ideas he was contemplating before and during the First World War crystallised into the artistic bedrock that he subsequently spent his lifetime mining, extrapolating and polishing.

After graduating from Oxford in 1915, Tolkien set off for the Western Front in June 1916. While at Etaples he began the poem 'The Lonely Isle,' which described his crossing from England:

O glimmering island set sea-girdled and alone –
A gleam of white rock through a sunny haze;

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[33] See Carpenter, *Biography*…p. 102.

O all ye hoary caverns ringing with the moan
Of long green waters in the southern bays;
Ye murmurous never-ceasing voices of the tide;
Ye plumed foams wherein the shoreland spirits ride;
Ye white birds flying from the whispering coast
And wailing conclaves of the silver shore,
Sea-voiced, sea winged, lamentable host
Who cry about unharboured beaches evermore,
Who sadly whistling skim these waters grey
And wheel about my lonely outward way –

For me for ever thy forbidden marge appears
A gleam of white rock over sundering seas,
And thou art crowded in glory through a mist of tears,
Thy shores all full of music, and they lands of ease –
Old haunts of many children robed in flowers,
Until the sun pace down his arch of hours,
When in the silence fairies with a wistful heart
Dance to soft airs their harps and viols weave.
Down the great wastes and in a gloom apart
I long for thee and thy fair citadel,
Where echoing through the lighted elms at eve
In a high inland tower there peals a bell
O lonely sparkling isle, farewell! [34]

This is an unremarkable piece of poetry in all but two ways: along with 'The Voyage of Éarendel' and 'The Lay of Éarendel' it indicates that Tolkien's linguistic, literary and aesthetic concerns, sensibilities and aims were fixed before he went to war and that they were fixed in a way which, critically misconstrued, was utterly anathema to twentieth-century literary culture.

In *The Great War and Modern Memory* Paul Fussell provides a lexicon of the traditional poetic code of epic heroism as inherited from previous conflicts. 'A friend,' notes Fussell 'is a *comrade*. Friendship is *comradeship*, or *fellowship*. A horse is a *steed* or, *charger*. The enemy is *the foe*, or *the host*. Danger is *peril*. To conquer is to *vanquish*. To attack is to *assail*. [35] An elevated, feudal code of high

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[34] 'The Lonely Isle': *Leeds University Verse 1914 – 1924,* p.57. Dedication: *The Book of Lost Tales, Part One,* (ed) Christopher Tolkien, (George Allen & Unwin, 1983) p.25.
[35] Paul Fussell, *The Great War*, (Cambridge University Press, 1975) pp. 21 – 22.

diction, a language of valour inherited from Shakespeare, from *Boys' Own* type adventure stories, the male romances of Rider Haggard and the high-Victorian Arthuriana of Alfred Lord Tennyson, it represents a language of stable, reliable values from a stable, reliable world where abstractions such as *honour* or *glory* could be assigned definitive worth – in short, that is, a language underpinning a coherent stream of history which links the present solidly and conclusively to the past. However, as Jay Winter explains, the transpositional nature of this language meant that there was ultimately no mimetic connection between the war as described in the poetry, the newspapers or the recruitment literature of the time and its squalid reality on the Western Front. 'Those too old to fight,' Winter writes, 'created an imaginary war, filled with medieval knights, noble warriors, and sacred moments of sacrifice.' [36] One reaction to this inauthenticity was the production of the type of literature now seen as representative of trench warfare, that is, the war poetry of Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, and its 'disenchanted' view of the war. Indeed, the most famous poem of the whole conflict –Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' – relies entirely on highlighting the discrepancy between the ceremonial imagery of the inherited code and the reality of war:

> If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
> Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
> And watch the white eyes writhing in his face…
> My Friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
> Pro Patria Mori. [37]

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[36] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning,* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 204.
[37] Wilfred Owen, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen,* (ed) C. Day Lewis, (Chatto & Windus, 1963) *Dulce et Decorum Est.*

That which supports or confirms 'the old lie,' suggests the poem, such as inherited language, is also complicit in it. In a war in which 20,000 British soldiers could die in one morning, as they did during the Somme offensive, writing that depicted war as 'heroic', 'epic', 'valorous' or 'glorious' was, as Winter writes, 'worse than banal: it was obscene.' [38] In declaring that his poetry was not about 'deeds, or lands, or anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War,' [39] Owen representatively rejected the inherited literary lexicon. Indeed, the poets of the First World War owe their cultural import as much to the negotiation of their relationship with literary history and their bitter, disillusioned repudiation of the 'old' literary code as their gritty, close-up depictions of life and death in the trenches.

Such an aesthetic negotiation could take place because the First World War was an unusually literary war. The relative proximity of the Western Front to Britain and the efficiency of the postal service made the presence of books common at the front while 'the universal commitment to the ideal of cultural self-improvement' meant that they were read voraciously. [40] It was this widespread familiarity and engagement with the conventions of literary representation that enabled such a widespread recognition of traditional literature's inability to represent the war. As Fussell observes, culturally the impact of the war meant 'leaving, finally, the nineteenth century behind.' [41] The war, then, stimulated a radical renegotiation of the relation of literature to reality, and by the yardstick of a Wilfred Owen or an Ezra Pound, the First World War does not appear to have impacted on Tolkien's creative work at all. Moreover, in producing an epic fairy-tale mythology Tolkien's work contradicts the received view of literary history, which is that the First World

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[38] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning,* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 204.
[39] Wilfred Owen, *The Collected Poems*, (ed) C. Day-Lewis, (1963) p.31.
[40] Fussell cites the case of Herbert Read as an example of this cultural voracity, *The Great War*… pp.161 – 163.
[41] Fussell, *The Great War*… p.174.

War finished off the epic in any serious, non-ironic form. As a result, Tolkien work has become tainted with the mark of hopeless anachronicity.

There are, however, also a number of significant contiguities between Tolkien and his contemporaries. Tolkien was quite evidently a product of the liberal ideologies Fussell trenchantly mobilises to account for the literary nature of the First World War and its cultural aftermath, and in particular society's faith in the power of education as a means of individual self-improvement. Far from the popularly held image of him as an Oxford Professor with its privileged connotations (one misguided American critic wrote that he belonged to the 'aristocratic academic conservative tradition'[42]) Tolkien's social background was in actual fact by far more impoverished and urban than any other English writer's of the period bar, perhaps, D.H. Lawrence. Unlike many of his literary contemporaries, Tolkien was not raised in the country or educated at a public school. Orphaned in 1905, Tolkien was brought up in noisy, industrial Birmingham and only attended both King Edward's day school, a soot-blackened building in the heart of the city surrounded by railway lines, yards and factories, and subsequently Oxford, after winning fiercely competitive scholarships.

While Tolkien's poetry and prose do smack at times of the diction of the High Victorian Medievalists described by Fussell as 'tutors' to the war propagandists [43], it is crucial to understand that his commitment was to the authentically archaic ethos of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* rather than the crypto-valiant poses struck by the Victorians and vilified by the new avant-garde. In an unsent letter (to Brogan) Tolkien affirms this position: 'Not being

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[42] Richard C. West, *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* (Kent State University Press, 1974) p.41. West is paraphrasing the claims of William Ready, *The Tolkien Relation* (Henry Regnery Company, 1968).
[43] Fussell, *The Great War…* p.21.

especially well read in modern English, and far more familiar with works in the ancient and 'middle' idioms, my own ear is to some extent affected; so that though I could easily recollect how a modern would put this and that, what comes easiest to my mind or pen is not quite that.' [44] Thus the war poets' and modernists' rejection of archaic diction clashed fundamentally with Tolkien's aesthetic sensibilities:

> The building up of a poetic language out of words and forms archaic and dialectical or used in special senses – may be regretted or disliked. There is nonetheless a case for it: the development of a form of language familiar in meaning and yet freed from trivial associations, and filled with the memory of good and evil, is an achievement, and its possessors are richer than those who have no such tradition. [45]

But his view that literary traditions ought not to be discarded lightly did not mean that he was blind to the realities of war. Like the war poets Tolkien objected to language being used fraudulently and disingenuously. In a letter to his son Christopher Tolkien during the Second World War, he noted 'the utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual is so staggering to those who have to endure it. And always was (despite the poets) and always will be (despite the propagandists).'[46] His own sustained active service in the First World War had made him well aware of the 'animal horror' and 'universal weariness of all this war.' [47] Indeed, if duration at the front were to be considered some kind of critical measure for literary merit, Tolkien's four months at the front during the First Somme offensive compare well to Owen's only five weeks.

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[44] Carpenter, *Letters…* p.255.
[45] J.R.R Tolkien, 'On Translating Beowulf,' *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,* (Harper Collins: London, 2006) p.55. Tolkien was talking about the poet who had written poet *Beowulf* but his views fit his own aesthetic conception.
[46] Carpenter, *Letters…* p.75.
[47] Carpenter, *Letters…* p.72 and p.10.

Tolkien also proved remarkably consistent in his stylistic choices. In 1940, in the introduction to the revised Clark Hall translation of *Beowulf,* supplying a list remarkably similar to Fussell's, Tolkien wrote in defence of the 'high style' that 'we are being at once wisely aware of our own frivolity if we avoid *hitting* and *whacking* and prefer 'striking' and 'smiting'; *talk* and *chat* and prefer 'speech' and 'discourse'; *well-bred*, *brilliant* or *polite noblemen* (visions of snobbery columns in the Press, and fat men on the Riviera) and prefer the 'worthy, brave and courteous men' of long ago.' [48] As he wrote this, Tolkien was working on *The Lord of the Rings*, begun in 1937 following the success of *The Hobbit*, and it is notable that the comparatively colloquial style of the early chapters had begun to give way to an increasingly solemn diction more supportive of the growing scale and purpose of his tale during this period. [49]

During his time at the front Tolkien's creative output was, like that of other war writers, poetic in form. The predominance of poetry may largely be ascribed to the spasmodic nature of modern warfare making it impossible to sustain a significant narrative endeavour. Both Edmund Blunden and Charles Douie were, like Tolkien, stationed at Theipval Wood and their experiences support Tolkien's retrospective assertion that 'you might scribble something on the back of an envelope and shove it in your back pocket, but that's all. You couldn't write. You'd be crouching down among flies and filth.' [50] Blunden's and Douie's prose memoirs were evidently not written *in situ*; similarly, Tolkien did not start sketching out the 'Book of Lost Tales' mythology until he was recuperating back in England. This

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[48] Carpenter, *Biography…* pp.256 – 257.
[49] This is discernible in the process of revision the manuscript underwent. See *The Return of the Shadow,*
[50] Philip Norman, 'The Hobbit Man,' *Sunday Times Magazine,* 15th January, 1967. pp. 34 – 36. See also Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War,* (1928) p. 134, and Charles Douie, *The Weary Road: Recollections of a Subaltern of Infantry* (1929) pp. 141 – 142.

fact redresses one of the most common arguments against Tolkien's status as a writer of the First World War, namely that he did not begin to produce his work until long after the war had finished. Put simply, neither did many of his contemporaries. Poetry was the literary method of production in the trenches; the prose of the First World War took shape only much later, reaching publication in the interwar years as the veterans eventually broke their silence.

Significantly, the process of invention and revision begun by Tolkien in 1914 is reminiscent of that of another First World War writer, Siegfried Sassoon. By the time he died, aged 80, Sassoon had spent half his life 'endlessly plowing and re-plowing the earlier half,'[51] motivated by what he himself called his 'queer craving to revisit the past and give the modern world the slip.'[52] Admittedly, Tolkien did not write a trench memoir *per se* but his lifelong single-minded pursuit of an aesthetic core obsession, begun as the war broke out and of which *The Hobbit* may be considered the first tentative herald, mirrors Sassoon's. *The Hobbit* was published in the same year as *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, the first three volumes of Sassoon's autobiographical trench memoir, in which the war experiences of the central character, George Sherston, are thinly disguised renditions of Sassoon's own.[53] Temporal and topographical references within the text tie the work firmly to the First World War. By contrast, *The Hobbit* is a children's book, an imaginative fantasy ahistorically cast as 'a story of long ago'[54] and set in a secondary world whose topographical landmarks are isomorphically

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[51] Fussell, *The Great War*… p.92.
[52] Siegfried Sassoon, *The Old Century and Seven More Years,* (1938) p.140.
[53] Sassoon ultimately produced six volumes of memoirs, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man,* (1928), *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) and *Sherston's Progress* (1936), *The Old Century and Seven More Years* (1938), *The Weald of Youth* (1942) and *Siegfried's Journey* (1945).
[54] J.R.R Tolkien, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1937, 1983) p.9.

non-specific: 'The Hill,' 'The Misty Mountains,' 'Mirkwood,' 'Laketown' and 'The Lonely Mountain.' [55] The hero, Bilbo Baggins of The Hill, a pastoral land, is employed by a group of Dwarves, on the recommendation of the wizard, Gandalf, to help them regain their treasure under The Lonely Mountain, a bleak and inhospitable place far to the east, taken from them by the dragon, Smaug.

Tolkien's dislike of allegorical inference is well documented. [56] Nevertheless, it is tempting to mobilise his own views on fantasy narratives, as outlined in 'On Fairy Stories,' to examine his work, particularly with regard to how fantasies' relate to their moment of production. Tolkien proposed that the 'arresting strangeness' of fantasy was to be coterminous with its 'hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun;' [57] in other words, there must always be a close link between the primary world from which the narrative originates and the secondary world created by it. Tolkien's employment of the fantasy genre has routinely been defined as 'escapist.' According to Brogan, it represented 'therapy for a mind wounded by war.' [58] Interestingly, Tolkien admits that his commitment to fantasy was indeed a consequence of the war: 'A real taste for fairy-stories was wakened by philology on the threshold of manhood and quickened to full life by the war.' [59] However, Brogan's implication is of course that Tolkien's fiction constitutes an escape from the war and that therefore the author and his readers are guilty of failing to engage with real life. Yet conversely, as

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[55] Tolkien, *The Hobbit*… p.9.
[56] Tolkien once said "I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence." As with his statements regarding the French, this has to be taken with a pinch of salt. Tolkien did use allegory in his work. *Leaf by Niggle* (published in 1945 but written in 1943) for example.
[57] J.R.R Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories,' *Tree and Leaf* (Unwin,) pp.
[58] Brogan, 'Tolkien's Great War,' p. 358.
[59] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories,' p.135.

Tolkien suggests in 'On Fairy Stories,' critics like Brogan could be accused of wilfully confusing 'the escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter':

> Just so a Party-Spokesman might have labelled departure from the misery of the Fuhrer's or any other Reich and even criticism of it as treachery. In the same way, these critics…so to bring into contempt their opponents, stick their label of scorn not only on to desertion, but on to real escape, and what are often its companions, Disgust, Anger, Condemnation and Revolt. [60]

As far as Tolkien is concerned, escape may be 'very practical, and may even be heroic.' [61] Moreover, the escape afforded by fantasy allows for a confrontational renegotiation of the real. As noted by Mikhail Bakhtin, 'the fantastic serves […] not in the positive embodiment of the truth, but in the search after the truth, its provocation, and, most importantly, its testing.' [62] In other words, the nature of fantasy is to expose reality's accepted norms and recast the limits of its ontological and epistemological frame. While the use of fantasy allows literature to sidestep realism's fixity of historical context, it does not deny the resonance of the historical moment of its composition. In this respect, then, Tolkien's work is as much a commentary on its historical moment as Owen's poetry. While it would be misguided to read *The Hobbit* as an allegory of the First World War, when addressed from the viewpoint that the historical has an inveterate propensity to irrupt into the fantastic, it might be possible to identify elements in the text that are generically contiguous to characteristic traits of the trench memoir.

Tolkien's tale of a life-changing rite of passage past the jaws of death is commensurate with the impact of the First World War on all who experienced it,

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[60] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories,' p.148 – 50.
[61] Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories,' p. 148 – 50.
[62] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* tr. By R.W. Rotsel, (Ardis, 1973) p.94.

not just Tolkien. When the middle-class hero Bilbo Baggins leaves his home to join the Dwarves' quest he is unsure of the exact reason why:

> To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water and then on for a mile or more. [63]

In leaving without his personal belongings Bilbo comically re-enacts Tolkien's first war experience. Commissioned as an officer in the 11th Lancashire Fusiliers, Tolkien equipped himself with the regular uniform and kit, yet when he arrived in France, all his possessions had vanished in transit. [64] More poignantly, Bilbo is not sure why he is venturing out. The quest is demonstrably the Dwarves', not his own; it is they who wish to retrieve their gold from Smaug. Living a comfortable life in the ordered rural world of The Hill, Bilbo needs neither gold nor wants adventure, but he finds himself mobilised anyway, propelled by his own hazy sense of needing to 'live up to Gandalf's recommendation.' [65] Why he leaves home is a question Bilbo never truly resolves, the sentiment 'Why, O why did I ever leave my hobbit-hole?' [66] recurring at key moments throughout the text. In this respect, his character may be seen as reliving the feelings of those who served in the First World War; whether they signed up enthusiastically in the first patriotic rush of enlistment, or with a grim sense of duty to be fulfilled under conscription, those who served did so under the same vague obligation of duty as Bilbo. As Tolkien

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[63] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p.33.
[64] See Garth, *Tolkien and…* p.88 and 144.
[65] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p. 27.
[66] Tolkien, *The* Hobbit… p. 63.

noted, 'you either joined up, or you were scorned publicly.' [67] Like Bilbo, the soldiers ultimately came to question why they found themselves away from home in a foreign land; as with Bilbo, it was not *their* war or adventure, but nonetheless they had to face its dangers.

Bilbo himself shares the 'everyman' qualities of the soldiers of the First World War, his heroic potential remaining invisible for most of the narrative. Indeed, he spends significant portions of the narrative abject, wretched and scared, thus resembling the figures depicted in much of the war poetry of the period, in which the soldiers are largely passive figures. The war happens to them, and so does the Dwarves' quest to Bilbo as he finds himself transported, sometimes bodily on the backs of the Dwarves, from episode to episode. The only aspect in which Tolkien's portrayal differs from that of the First World War writers is the way in which his central figure eventually comes to develop an active role. As the narrative unfolds, Auden's series of tests 'by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed' [68] work in favour of Bilbo's character who becomes the hero 'so common in fairytales […] the weakest, the least clever […] who turns out to be the hero when his manifest betters have failed.' [69] Bilbo reaches his moment of apotheosis in the chapter 'Riddles in the Dark', in which, separated from the Dwarves, he fortuitously acquires a magic ring, triumphs in the riddle game against Gollum and finds his way out of the mountain tunnels. Even though he continues at times to wonder why he is where he is, from this point he exerts an increasing influence on the outcome of the quest: Bilbo displays physical courage in saving the Dwarves from the attention of the Spiders; it is his keen

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[67] Carpenter, *Letters…* p.53.
[68] W. H. Auden, 'The Quest Hero', *The Texas Quarterly, IV,* (1962) pp.81 – 93. Reprinted: *Tolkien and the Critics,* (eds) Neil D. Isaacs & Rose A. Zimbardo, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) p.40.Auden, 'The Quest Hero,' p. 44.
[69] Auden, 'The Quest Hero,' *Tolkien and the Critics*, (eds) Isaacs & Zimbardo, p. 46.

eyesight that allows them to traverse the enchanted river of Mirkwood and his daring and ingenuity that help engineer the escape of the Company from the Elvish dungeons. Marking his growth from 'the poor hobbit kneeling on the hearth rug, shaking like a jelly that was melting' in the first chapter, he enters Smaug's lair when the Dwarves will not: 'Going on from there was the bravest thing that he ever did. The tremendous things that happened afterwards were nothing compared to it. He fought the real battle in that tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait. At any rate, after a short halt go on he did.' [70]

Bilbo's heroism, then, is not the flashy show-stopping kind favoured by an Achilles or Jason, but the heroism of the ordinary individual caught in extraordinary circumstances, attempting to do his best. In him we find an antidote to the image of the hopelessly victimised soldier of the war poets. The latter embodies what Samuel Hynes describes as the 'disenchanted' version of the war, the myth of which 'was defined and fixed in the version that retains authority.' [71] In this version, action is rendered futile, and courage and heroism are a waste. Critically accepted as the representative literary voice of the period, the disenchanted view stripped all meaning from what many saw as the defining experience of their lives. In response to the trench memoirs published after the war, Charles Carrington wrote that 'book after book related a succession of disasters and discomforts with no intermission and no gleam of achievement. Every battle a defeat, every officer a nincompoop, every soldier a coward.' [72] Carrington later described his own memoir, *A Subaltern's War*, as 'anterior to the pacifist reaction of the nineteen-thirties and is untainted by the influence of the later writers who invented the

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[70] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p. 184.
[71] Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture,* (The Bodley Head, 1990) p.424.
[72] Charles Carrington, *A Subaltern's War,* (1920) p.14.

powerful image of 'disenchantment' or disillusion. I go back to an earlier history of ideas.' [73] So, too, did Tolkien. In his 1936 British Academy lecture '*Beowulf*: The Monster and the Critics,' delivered a year before the publication of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien remarked that 'even to-day […] you may find men not ignorant of tragic and history, who have heard of heroes and indeed seen them […] the old heroes, dying with their backs against the wall' [74], clearly alluding to a line in the Old English poem *The Wanderer,* in which the lord's retainers 'all perished, proud beside the wall.' Alongside acknowledging the capacity of the ordinary individual for heroism, it acknowledges Tolkien's own experience of the trenches where one simply had to get on with it. It also promotes the far from disenchanted but critically unfashionable view that the worth of an individual is intrinsic rather than measurable by results, and that heroism is about the courage to try rather than simply triumphant achievement.

Sassoon's desire to forget about the modern world by revisiting the past also pertains to *The Hobbit*. Sassoon, like many other war writers, used the period before the war and images of pastorality to provide a sharp contrast with the events of 1914 – 1918. Little did it matter that in the years before 1914, the cost of paying for the Boer War coupled with agricultural and industrial setbacks had resulted in the affluence of the Victorian era steadily ebbing away while the threat of international conflict loomed ever larger; after the war, this period was viewed as a golden age of peace and prosperity, and it is within this world that the opening chapter of *The Hobbit* is set. Living the life of a solitary bachelor, Bilbo is a middle-class man of leisure. He is 'well-to-do,' his meat is 'delivered by the butcher all ready to cook' and he orders his appointments (and meals) with an

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[73] Carrington, *A Subaltern's War,* (1920) p.14.
[74] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,' (Harper Collins, 2006) pp.16 – 17.

'engagement tablet.' [75] His home is 'comfortable, without smoke, with panelled walls…tiled and carpeted' and contains a superfluity of 'bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens (and) dining rooms,' the best of which 'look over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.' [76] The setting is recognisably that of the time immediately preceding the First World War and typical of the way this period came to be viewed in the post-war period. Hence, far from being 'without any literary context,' Tolkien's vision follows the same narrative trajectory as that of his immediate contemporaries while maintaining its connection to his pre-war and wartime imaginings: Bilbo is forced to leave this idyllic world to go 'into the Blue' [77] where he repeatedly faces death in episodes of ever-escalating danger. His company is threatened by goblins who are the descendants of the goblins described in 'The Fall of Gondolin,' the first section of 'The Book of Lost Tales,' which Tolkien wrote in 1916 immediately after being invalided out of the war. In *The Hobbit* Tolkien is explicit about what they represent, linking them expressly to the mechanised warfare of the First World War: 'It is not unlikely that they invented some of the machines that have since troubled the world, especially the ingenious devices for killing large numbers of people at once, for wheels and engines and explosions always delighted them.' [78] The Company reach the end of their quest across a once green and pleasant landscape now laid to waste by the indiscriminate destruction of Smaug, again a direct literary descendant of the dragon Glorund from 'The Book of Lost Tales.' 'Neither bush nor tree, and only

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[75] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p.15.
[76] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p.11.
[77] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p. 14.
[78] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p.60. Tolkien later insisted that there was no parallel between the Goblins he had invented and the Germans he had fought: 'I've never had those sort of feelings about the Germans. I'm very anti that sort of thing." (Norman, *Sunday Times Magazine,* 15 January 1967, 34 – 6).

broken and blackened stumps to speak of ones long vanished' [79] greet their

approach, echoing the destruction by war of the green farmlands of France.

Moreover, in The Company's movement to The Lonely Mountain one recognises

the stop-start progress of troops to the front line experienced by Tolkien and

described by Carpenter:

> They made their first camp on the western side of the great southern spur
> […] Nothing moved in the waste, save the vapour […] None of them had
> much spirit left […] They prepared to move once more (to the secret door)
> […] They spoke low and never called or sang, for danger brooded in every
> rock. [80]

> Interrupted by innumerable halts […] The battalion marched on, dripping
> and cursing […] From the near distance came […] the whine, crash, and
> boom of the allied bombardment of German lines. [Then] the long march at
> night-time from the billets down to the trenches, the stumble of a mile or
> more through the communications alleys that led to the front line itself and
> the hours of confusion and exasperation. [81]

Bilbo's company move through an eerie, desolate silence towards their final

destination while Tolkien's battalion could hear the front line growing steadily

closer with each hour; however, in both cases, The Company, like the troops, are

ever aware of a force bent on their annihilation lying in wait only a short distance

away, that is, in the case of the British troops, the German lines and guns, and in

the case of The Company, the dragon. In the final, climactic chapters one finds

further echoes of the First World War. Shippey has noted the parallel between

Lord Kitchener's exhortation that Tolkien's 1916 army display 'discipline and

steadiness under fire' [82] and Bard's grim to-the-last-man (and the last arrow)

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[79] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* pp.173 - 175.
[80] Tolkien, *The Hobbit,* (1937) pp. 175 – 178.
[81] Carpenter, *Biography,* (1977) pp.114 – 117.
[82] See Shippey, *The Road to…*pp.93 – 95.

defence against the assault of Smaug. We are also shown the wrangling over command and strategy and, in the final battle, the explicit horror of the battlefield. Friend and foe alike are united in death, the goblins lying 'piled in heaps till Dale was dark and hideous with their corpses' and next to them 'many a fair elf that should have lived yet long ages merrily in the wood.' [83] One also finds a final rebuttal of the disenchanted view relating to Carrington's view that in the enormity of battle there can also be a strange affirmative 'exaltation': 'It was a terrible battle. The most dreadful of all Bilbo's experiences, and the one which at the time he hated most – which is to say that it was the one he was most proud of, and most fond of recalling long afterwards.' [84]

The Hobbit is not a trench memoir, but it reverberates with the war experience of a whole generation. In reconsidering Tolkien, Shippey framed him as one of a group of literary figures 'traumatised' by war, 'writing fantasy, but voicing in that fantasy the most pressing and most immediately relevant issues of the whole monstrous twentieth century – questions of industrialised warfare, the origin of evil, the nature of humanity.' [85] Indeed, Tolkien's work is informed by the author's war experiences; however, while Shippey assumed Tolkien was responding to the Second World War, it should now be clear that the First World War had a more direct impact on him. As the examples of Tolkien and Sassoon demonstrate, very different artistic outputs can arise from the same cultural event and, in this respect, Tolkien's peculiar choice of diction, genre and style may be argued to express aspects of the war experience neglected – and indeed effectively erased – by his contemporaries and their subsequent exclusive literary

[83] Tolkien, *The Hobbit,* (1937) p. 240.
[84] Tolkien, *The Hobbit…* p. 238. See also Carrington, *A Subaltern's War…* "There was an arguing realism, a cynical side to ones nature that raised practical objections and suggested dangers and against it there strove a romantic ardour for the battle that was almost joyful." (p.35).
[85] Shippey, *The Road to…* (2003) xix.

canonisation. There can be no doubt that Tolkien, too, wrote – as T.S. Eliot said a writer must – with his 'own generation in his bones.' [86]

Tolkien's stylistic and aesthetic choices can be argued to reveal his contemporary location; so can his idiosyncratic belief in the coterminous interrelation of language, literature and culture and his daily professional philological praxis be found in his creative work. When Tolkien proposed his reforms for the Oxford English School in the 1920s it was because 'he thought both linguistic and literary approaches too narrow for a full response to works of art.' [87] Tolkien proposed a third way, namely the philological approach in which language, literature and culture would assume one entity. As an inherently comparative discipline, philology is concerned with 'the study of national culture […] something much greater than a misfit combination of language plus literature.' [88] Rather than revealing something about words or texts, philology is about people(s); it is also by necessity an imaginative pursuit. Philology sees culture as encoded in the linguistic footprints a people leave behind, however compromised, fragmentary or corrupted, and hence always potentially retrievable. Frequently, in Tolkien's day and age, Shippey explains, from no more than a few fragments scholars would draw 'conclusions from the very *letters* of a language […] They were prepared to pronounce categorically on the existence or otherwise of nations and empires on the basis of poetic tradition or linguistic spread.' [89] The characteristic activity of the philologist is reconstruction and this reconstruction,

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[86] T.S.Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot,* (ed) F. Kermode, (Faber, 1975) p.38. Eliot wrote this in 1919 when Tolkien was developing his mythology in 'The Book of Lost Tales.'
[87] Shippey, *The Road to…* p.8.
[88] Leonard Bloomfield, 'Why a Linguistic Society?' *Language,* vol.1 (1925) p.1.
[89] Shippey, *The Road to…* p.21.

even if carried out in accordance with established linguistic theorems, inevitably also always relies heavily on critical intuition. What no longer exists is retrieved by the philological concept of 'asterisk-reality,' where something may be unrecorded but on the balance of philological probability be said to have existed, in the process of which traditional distinctions between reality and the imagination tend to become blurred and elided. Based upon the logic of linguistic and cultural support structures, Tolkien's conception of 'fantasy' closely resembles this philological 'asterisk-reality.'

Tolkien was professionally well aware of the propensity of entire cultures to vanish from history without trace. Indeed, he famously blamed the Norman invasion of Britain for destroying indigenous English culture, leaving philology to resurrect it from fragments of poems such as *Beowulf*, *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*. [90] During these periods of cultural upheaval, literature came to be identified as a focus of continuity and reassurance. As Lee Patterson notes of medieval literature, Tolkien's specialism, 'the disruptions of medieval political history were typically healed with the soothing continuities of a founding legend, and insecure rulers bolstered their regimes by invoking honorific if legendary precedents.' [91] Given the world-political cataclysm and national trauma surrounding Tolkien's composition of 'The Book of Lost Tales', it is tempting to view its inspiration and subject matter, as well as its subsequent refinement into the narratives of *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, as an attempt to moor and make sense of a chaos-ridden world. Likewise, given Tolkien's philological disposition, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to suggest that

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[90] Tolkien famously wrote on all three. *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,* (), *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad* 'Essays and Studies, (1929)

[91] Lee W. Patterson, 'Historiography of Romance and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies,* 13.1 (1983) pp. 1-32.

his burgeoning mythology was a direct response to the war and a serious, however idiosyncratic, attempt to repair the havoc it had wreaked on the map of English history.

Hence, contradicting both John Garth's and Margaret Hiley's positions on Tolkien and modernism, might there possibly be quite a significant correlation between Tolkien's work and modernist writing? After all, both constitute responses to the war, albeit informed by entirely different temperamental inclinations? It should by now be clear that Tolkien was not the anachronism his supporters (sometimes) and his detractors (frequently) would have us believe. He was not the *skald* of some pre-medieval mead hall but a WWI infantry communications officer and, after the war, a professional academic and suburban family man writing in the contemporary moment. Demonstrably an artist of the twentieth century and responding to the same cultural trauma as both the war poets and the modernists, it seems signal that Tolkien was not alone in returning to archaic and medieval sources to negotiate the uprooting of western culture caused by the First World War. Robert Graves, for example, implicated Anglo-Saxon poetry in his trench imagery, imagining 'Beowulf lying wrapped in a blanket among a platoon of drunken thanes in the Gothland billet.' [92] Nor was Tolkien alone in stressing the contemporariness of the past by appropriating it. Famously, Ezra Pound rewrote *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, cashing in on the currency of ancient-for-modern and engaging with the modernist idea of history as at once a palimpsest and a complex matrix of perennial synchronicity. Of course, a crucial difference between Tolkien, on the one hand, and Graves and Pound, on the other, is that Tolkien did not mix and match cultural sources as the modernists did. As stated in his oft-

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[92] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That,* () p.304.

quoted letter to Waldman, he downright rejected modernist classicism; instead, his work was to 'possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our 'air' (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe; not Italy or Aegean, still less the East).' [93] Nevertheless, Tolkien consciously engaged in a post-war project of restoring 'to the English an epic tradition and present [ing] them with a mythology of their own,' [94] and in doing so, his methodology conspicuously came to resemble T.S. Eliot's idea of the 'mythical method' as a way of 'controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense paranoia of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.' [95]

To the modernist aesthetic, myth presented a formula with which to impose order upon a reality whose certainties of science, time, religion and culture had collapsed. Myth – 'by definition both impersonal and ahistorical' [96] – offered a way of affording validity beyond cultural or historical specificity. Specifically, faced with the realist impossibility of accurately rendering the chaos of modern existence, myth offered modernism a way of reasserting artistic authority over the ambivalencies of subjectivity and time. As Michael Bell notes, myth 'represents precisely the lost unity, real or imaginary, which preceded the modern division of realms.' [97] Appropriating the authority of ancient myths by allusion or direct quotation afforded access to myth's unifying locus. Thus, strikingly redolent of modernism's 'mythical method,' Tolkien's whole work is composed of a multiplicity of stories together forming a whole; *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are

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[93] Carpenter, *Letters…* p. 144.
[94] Carpenter, *Letters…* p.231.
[95] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot,* Ed. Frank Kermode, (London: Faber, 1975) p.177.
[96] Rainer Emig, 'Macro-myths and Micro-myths: Modernist Poetry and the Problem of Artistic Creation,' *Myth and the Making of Modernity. (*Ed. Bell and Poellner) pp.181 – 196.
[97] Michael Bell, 'Introduction,' *Myth and the Making of Modernity*, eds. Michael Bell and Peter Poellner, (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1998) p.5.

ultimately fragments of the wider cycle of Tolkien's mythology – itself a collection

of disparate stories whose effect and coherence emanate from their intrinsic

intertextuality. As Tolkien remarks in 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,'

'myth is alive at once and in all its parts, and dies before it can be dissected.' [98]

Introducing his mythological objectives in his letter to Waldman, Tolkien outlines a

creative rationale that fulfils many of the theoretical criteria characteristic of

modernist myth-making, pursuing the notion of independent stories that interrelate

to form an overarching structure which explains why the world is as it is and things

happen as they do. [99]

In *Work on Myth*, as Margaret Hiley notes, Hans Blumenberg argues that

humanity cannot accept the indifference of time; both myth and history are

attempts to overcome this indifference by imposing a structure on time's apparent

arbitrariness. Dividing the past into epochs structured around designated key

events (e.g. wars, revolutions, natural disasters) endows it with meaning by

establishing a sense of essential contiguity between the present – that is, our own

position in the world – and the past. The convergence of myth and history in

Tolkien's work is marked by the same strategies. Whereas a historiographical

account of Tolkien's lifetime would be structured around major twentieth-century

events (e.g. the First World War, the rise of communism and fascism, the Second

World War, the decline of the British Empire, the Cold War), in *The Silmarillion*

great wars end the first, second and third historical ages of his mythology. The

War of Wrath, the Last Alliance, and the War of the Ring are thus historical

structuring devices whilst also representing purely mythological events, thus

fulfilling the dual necessity for historical time to be linear, emerging out of a clearly

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[98] Tolkien, 'Beowulf…' p. 15.
[99] Tolkien's expression of myth in the 'On Fairy Stories' lecture as "hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun." is echoed in Abrams definition of it.

defined past into the present, and mythical time to be essentially cyclical. Tolkien's work constitutes simultaneously the mythology and the history of Middle-earth. According to his legendarium, the Valar created Middle-earth, yet as gods they are not exclusively the imaginary beings of myth; they exist for real, or else the Elves meet them. The events of *The Silmarillion* are temporally located within the First Age of Middle Earth and therefore fixed in 'history,' yet by the time of *The Lord of the Rings,* set in the Third Age of Middle-earth, that time is past and designated as remote enough to function as a mythological background, even though the presence of Galadriel provides a living connection to its historical reality. This might appear as a rather problematic conflation of linear and cyclical temporalities; however, it fulfils humanity's desire for continuity, described by Blumenberg as the need for 'mythical models […] that enable the individual subject, with his finite time, to determine how he can set himself in a relationship to the large-scale structures that reach far beyond him.' [100]

Perhaps more strikingly, the deeply fragmented nature of modernist textuality is paralleled by Tolkien's construction of his mythology from the vestigial fragments of the Anglo-Saxon and Norse mythologies. Their incompleteness did not impede Tolkien's vision for the wholeness of his work. If anything, as Shippey notes, it was their sense of 'hovering, forever on the fringe of sight that made them more tantalising and the references to them more thrilling.' [101] Their very fragmentedness appealed to Tolkien's philological imagination; after all, 'a language that had defied conquest and Conqueror' [102] could surely survive the Great War. In the same way that Eliot enhanced his own vision by interweaving literary-historical voices in *The Waste Land*, Tolkien conflated ancient material with

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[100] Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, p.100.
[101] Shippey, *The Road to…* p.22.
[102] Shippey, *The Road to…*p.46.

his own imaginings, a technique positively endorsed by the fantasy mode. In contradistinction to the direct address of the trench poets, Tolkien's highly allusive, reflexive narratives deny the emergence of a single subject position while the allusive nature of the text and its confluence of forms shifts literary representation from what Bakhtin describes as 'the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow framework of a sealed off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality.' Tolkien's fantasies can be seen as parodic in their 'process of revising, replaying, inventing and transcontextualising previous works of art'[103] and as dialogically reflexive in the way they draw attention to their status as artifice.

Hence, rather than literary curiosities, Tolkien's narratives form a bold complexity in which, in Linda Hutcheon's words, 'the creating consciousness stands, as it were, on the boundary between language and styles.' [104] Just as Éarendel sprang from Cynewulf's *Crist*, a multitude of further examples of the imaginative catalysis provided by ancient sources can be found throughout Tolkien's work. The names of Thorin and Gandalf are transplanted into *The Hobbit* directly from the 'Dvergatal' of the Old Norse *Prose Edda* and the 'Voluspa': 'Dvalin […] Bifur, Bafur, Bombor, Nori […] Oin […] and Gandalf […] Thorin […] Fili, Kili […] Gloin, Dori, Ori.' Likewise, the landscape of *The Hobbit* is derived from Eddic poetry; both 'The Misty Mountains' and 'Mirkwood' find their origin there. In the Norse sagas Mirkwood is the forest that separates Hunaland from other countries, whereas in *The Hobbit* it is the dark forest that lies between the Company and their destination. Shippey traces the Elves of Mirkwood back to the Hunting King of *Sir Orfeo*, a text translated by Tolkien and Bilbo's conversation

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[103] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic…*p. 61.
[104] Linda Hutcheon, 'Modern Parody and Bakhtin', *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, (ed) Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1989) p. 93.

with Smaug to the Eddic poem *Fáfnismál*, in which Sigurthr and Fáfnir talk while the Dragon dies of the wound the hero has dealt him. Similarly, Bilbo's riddle contest with Gollum is traced back to the riddle-contests of *The Saga of King Heidreck*, another text Tolkien had translated and the method by which Gandalf despatches the trolls can be traced back to the Old Norse poem 'Alvissmal.'

Of course, Tolkien's myth-making also significantly contradicts the methodologies of modernism. Whereas in *The Waste Land* Eliot sweeps across the frequencies of history and myth to record the babble of disparate voices as he turns the dial, Tolkien's aim is to construe a *coherent* new mythology, endowed with the authority of antiquity and a sense of completeness suggesting that it had been given rather than crafted. The final vision was to appear intact rather than self-consciously fragmented. However, contrary to one of Hiley's main contentions, this is not to say that Tolkien sought to conceal the fragments upon which he built his work; like the modernists, he flaunted the intertextuality of his work. For instance, alongside the 'borrowed' resuscitated peoples, dragons, landscapes and scenes of *The Hobbit,* Tolkien also utilised some of the most characteristic stylistic tropes of Old English poetry. Thus, whenever men gather to do battle in Old English poetry, some combination of carrion beasts – ravens, eagles and wolves – gathers as well, and so they do too – in the form of *wargs* – at the climactic Battle of the Five Armies in *The Hobbit.* However, rather than hiding them in his work, as Hiley contends, Tolkien proudly exposes such allusive correspondence in full view. Whereas in the Anglo-Saxon originals such tropes tend to remain peripheral, their presence intended to comment on the action by euphemism, [105] Tolkien conspicuously appropriates them as central components of his vision. Thus,

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[105] For example, *The Battle of Maldon*: 'There an outcry was raised up, ravens circled/and the eagle eager for carrion: there was an uproar on the earth.'

ravens appear not as mere carrion birds, but as 'the great Ravens of the [Lonely] Mountain,'[106] an ancient and noble race used to convey vital messages on behalf of the company at the end of the narrative. Similarly, the eagles rescue The Company from the goblins and *wargs* of Mirkwood and return at the climactic battle of the five armies to help tip the balance to the allies.

In 1919, as Tolkien began the work on 'The Book of Lost Tales' that would occupy him until the end of his life, T.S. Eliot wrote in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent':

> The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with the feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature from his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a similar order. [107]

While Tolkien's intuition as a writer was 'to cloak such self-knowledge as he has, and such criticisms as life as he knows it, under mythical and legendary dress,' [108] his work fulfils one of Eliot's most important aesthetic imperatives – that a writer should be both connected to his own generation and to history – and his output from that position reflects his cultural and historical location in a way that literary history can no longer deny. It would be implausible to present Tolkien as a typical war poet, or to reclaim him as one of the modernists; however, as his vision, aesthetic sensibility and creative method demonstrate, his work is far more intimately and intricately embedded within its historical and cultural context than hitherto accredited.

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[106] Tolkien, *The Hobbit...* p. 218.
[107] Eliot, 'Tradition and...' p.38.
[108] Carpenter, *Letters...* p.211.

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