

THE LORD OF THE RINGS AS A MYTHICAL NARRATIVE

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I

"There and Back Again, A Hobbit's Holiday," the simple title Bilbo Baggins gave the memoir of his adventure, implies the typical narrative structure that is seen in romance. The title Bilbo gave his journey reminds us of Northrop Frye's definition of the three stages of the romance form, "the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene."¹⁾ No doubt Frye was on the right track when he observed that a narrative of romance "is essentially a verbal imitation of ritual or symbolic human action."²⁾ We now know that anthropological concepts and terms are to a greater or lesser extent available and can be utilized in the investigation of the various structures of literature, and this notion is widely shared by scholars. Indeed the three stages of the romance form can be explained by Arnold van Gennep's concept of *rite de passage*, which is summarized by Victor Turner in his *The Ritual Process* :

Van Gennep has shown that all the rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases : separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the

individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure.... During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous ; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state.....³⁾

In modern fantasy the process of this rite is modified into a structure : the hero's departure from the world of our experience, his pilgrimage in the Other World, and his return from there. By the "Other World" I mean a self-contained world that is ordered by its own rules other than natural laws. Therefore, we might not be wrong in identifying the Other World with what van Gennep calls "'liminal' period." What is interesting about this structure is that in many cases the first and third stages are used to illustrate the relationship between this world and the Other World. We might cite as an example C.S. Lewis's Narnia chronicles where the children's passage through a wardrobe is used as a special device to emphasize Narnia's difference from the world in which they lived before their departure. In this sort of fiction, generally speaking, the hero's movement serves to show the specific situation of the Other World. Tolkien, however, seems to ignore this device. Both in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, how his Middle-earth is related to our world is not clearly shown, and, as is often pointed out, Tolkien always retains the mock scholarly attitude of "a modern scholar who is compiling, editing, and eventually translating copies of very ancient records of Middle-earth which have come into his hands."⁴⁾

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In this regard, *The Book of Lost Tales*, the earliest version of *The Silmarillion* edited in 1983 by Christopher Tolkien, his youngest son, is very interesting. It informs us that Tolkien's mythology once had, in its earliest form, contained the device by which the relationship between Middle-earth and our world is illustrated, and, together with other remarkable details, it was abandoned in the later versions. Therefore, "The Cottage of Lost Play," the introductory chapter of *Lost Tales*, is appropriate for our examination of the original structure of Tolkien's mythology.

Eriol, the great voyager in ancient days, after having wandered long all over the world, finally lands on Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Island, where the remnants of the Elvish people still live. This figure no doubt exemplifies an initiate who has entered what Turner calls "liminal region," the place that stands on the outer rim of our world. Concerning Eriol's character, Christopher Tolkien points out several important details, some of which are worthy to be noted here. First, Eriol is assumed by Tolkien to be the father of Hengist and Horsa, the historical brothers who, as the chieftains of the Jutes, invaded Britain in the fifth century.⁵⁾ Furthermore, it is stated in one of Tolkien's notes that the Elves who are acquainted with Eriol call him "Angol," which means "English." In other words he is the first person to be named "English," and therefore can be assumed to be the ancestor of the British people.⁶⁾ These details seem to show that Tolkien's original idea was to place the whole narrative of Eriol in historical time, in which he attempted to create an ethnic hero like Achilles in Homer's epic. This observation leads us to conclude that Tolkien's Other World, in which his mythology develops, was once somewhat related with our world and it was therefore not so self-contained and self-referential as seen in the later versions.

Another striking point is the fact that Eriol is defined as being spiritually descended from Eärendil the Mariner.⁷⁾ Although Eärendil himself does not appear at all in the first volume of *Lost Tales*, we have enough information to believe that he is the earliest character of all the mythical figures Tolkien invented, whose name appears in a poem written probably before 1914.⁸⁾ Randel Helm is doubtless correct in showing that the narrative of Eärendil is not altogether foreign to the biblical motif of Christ's redemption.⁹⁾ Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize another aspect of this hero. Eärendil is often described as a great voyager who wanders restlessly "by desire of strange lands and the ways and dwellings of unaccustomed folk."¹⁰⁾ In a sense, the spirit of the Romantic poets longing for a more ideal world is represented in his figure.

Eventually Eriol arrives at the Cottage of Lost Play, which stands in the center of the Lonely Island, and is heartily greeted by Lindo, the lord of the remnant Elves, and his wife Vairë. Lindo and Vairë invited Eriol to a merry banquet, where he sees the Elves drinking a strange wine called *limpë*. He wants to drink with them, but is not allowed to. The fact that Eriol's desire for *limpë* is rejected is an important point, which I am going to discuss further in the last section of this paper. In order to compensate Eriol for not being able to drink *limpë*, Lindo shows him the hidden lores which the Elves in Exile have long preserved. Thus began the Lost Tales, in which all the stories of *The Silmarillion*, the Valar's creation of the world under the guidance of Ilúvater, the revolt of Melko the Archangel, Feänor's making of the Great Jewels and the flight of Gnomes, and other stories are told to Eriol.

II

In "On Fairy-Stories," a lecture given at the University of St Andrews in 1939, Tolkien defines the fairy-story or fantasy as "not ... stories *about* fairies, or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being."¹¹⁾ Considering the fact that Tolkien was writing *The Lord of the Rings* when this lecture was delivered,¹²⁾ we are not altogether wrong in inferring that he attempted in this essay to reveal and illustrate the inward process of his storytelling, that is, the secret of his myth-making. It is illuminating for us to learn that the importance of *Faërie*, the land of fairies, is emphatically stated in many parts of the lecture. What Tolkien stresses here is that *Faërie*, a world full of strange figures and landscapes, is an original and self-contained cosmos through which we mortal men are allowed to wander only "when we are enchanted."¹³⁾ As I mentioned earlier, Tolkien's concept of *Faërie* thus offers the closest analogy with what Turner names "liminality." Liminality, according to Turner's definition,

occurs in the middle phase of the rites of passage which marks changes in individual's or group's social status and/or cultural or psychological state.... Symbols and metaphors found in abundance in liminality represent various dangerous ambiguities of this ritual stage, since the classifications on which order normally depends are annulled or obscured —other symbols designate temporary antinomic liberation from behavioral norms and cognitive rules.¹⁴⁾

Let us keep the elastic term of liminality in mind in examining the structure of Tolkien's *Faërie*.

When Tolkien says that Faërie “cannot be approached without danger, and ... many of the Evils cannot be challenged without weapons of power too great for any mortals to wield,”¹⁵⁾ he certainly is well aware of liminality’s “dangerous ambiguities.” We also have to remind ourselves that Faërie’s perilousness is often referred to in conjunction with its beauty. This notion of Faërie’s ambiguity, however, does not at all lead us to a naïve dualism. An attempt to define Tolkien’s major works simply in terms of the conflict between Good and Evil, or Light and Darkness, is hardly illuminating for our examination. Beauty and peril inside Faërie are connected with each other so intimately that it is almost impossible to classify them paradigmatically. Galadriel’s words might be cited as a good example. When Frodo came to Lórien and attempted to offer her the Ruling Ring, Galadriel replied thus:

And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set the Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair!¹⁶⁾

It is worthwhile to emphasize that Faërie’s beauty is established upon a delicate balancing with its peril. Even Galadriel, who possesses elvish beauty and is the greatest rival of Sauron, has the latent possibility of changing into the Dark Lord. In a cosmological context, Galadriel and Sauron are no doubt twin principles opposing each other. Nevertheless it is also undeniable that Faërie, or Tolkien’s mythological world, subsumes them into a whole organic unity. Strictly considered, Galadriel, or the force that

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she represents, is a metaphor of one of Faërie's aspects, whereas the other aspect is emblematically embodied in the figure of Sauron.

Generally, we shall not be wrong in assuming that Faërie's function is to allow the hero to experience its beauty and peril, and, as a result, to acquire a new recognition, that is to say, to have "Eyes that fire and sword have seen/And horror in the halls of stone."¹⁷⁾ Seen from a ritualistic perspective, Faërie's function should be compared to the great fish that swallowed up Jonah : the hero symbolically dies within the belly of this monster, and then he gets reborn by being vomitted out. This narrative pattern of the hero's death and rebirth is, as seen in the case of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, often modified into the destruction and reestablishment of a society. Metaphorically stated, Faërie is a reservoir full of mythic energy for refreshment and restoration : the hero passes through Faërie to capture its energy, whereby he can save the world that stands on the brink of ruin, or, more accurately, the hero's adventure symbolically represents a channel through which Faërie's healing power flows into the dying world.

Frye writes in *Anatomy of Criticism* that there is an explicit analogy between a quest-romance and a dream.¹⁸⁾ Faërie shows in its function a great resemblance to a dream world that we create out of our own unconscious desires. "This dream collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience and yet proves strong enough to impose the form of desire on it."¹⁹⁾ Probably Tolkien had the same concern when he stated : "Fairy-stories were plainly not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability. If they awakened *desire*, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded."²⁰⁾

Strictly speaking, the word *Faërie* in Tolkien's terminology seems not only to represent a land where fairies live, but also to imply its function

that affects the hero's (or, absolutely, the reader's) recognition. This we can infer from Tolkien's own statement : "Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic—but it is magic of peculiar mood and power, at the furthest pole from the vulgar devices of the laborious, scientific, magician."²¹⁾ His words remind us of *The Tempest*, in which magic performs an important role. Prospero's island, which is completely disconnected from human society, is "full of noises,/Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not"(III. ii. 132-134). Needless to say, the setting of this play is a variation of Faërie. As is often pointed out, the disorder of the world is metaphorically recovered by Miranda's being wedded to Ferdinand. Prospero's magic enables Ferdinand and Miranda, the hero and heroine of this play, to acquire a new recognition, whereby they can bring Faërie's healing power to the suffering society and transform it into a "brave new world" (V. i. 183).

One important point of this play remains to be considered. Prospero's breaking of his magic staff with his own hands is a symbolic action to denote that Faërie has fulfilled its function. As soon as the metamorphosis of a suffering world into a higher and better ordered one is completed, Faërie loses its meaning. Thus the gate of Faërie is closed, and it disappears from our sight.

III

I have already mentioned that Tolkien seems to ignore literary devices to illustrate the difference between this world and the Other World. However, this is not to imply that he has diverged from the track of romance convention. It is not difficult for us to observe the There-and-Back-Again-structure latent in his major works. Although Tolkien seems to have created

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a perfect world with its own inhabitants, geography, history, theology, and all other elements of society, it is also undeniable that there remain some differences even among various areas of his Middle-earth. To begin with, in order to understand the inner structure of Middle-earth, we shall center our attention upon Shire, the homeland of the Hobbits, from which Frodo set out on his journey.

What we should remind ourselves here is the fact that Shire's isolation from outer regions is emphatically stated in many places in the story. This means, in an anthropological context, that Shire has confined itself in a so-called "profane" world, and accordingly it has little or no communication with liminality, that is, the outer mythical worlds. The situation of Shire is illustrated in this passage :

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.²²⁾

The people of Shire are confined in a profane world so closely that they can hardly understand the meaning of mythical phenomena. Although the Hobbits certainly know that something strange is taking place beyond Shire's borders, they have already forgotten how to translate the mythical events into a temporal context. Ted Sandyman's cynical words exemplify the ignorance of the Hobbits : "Well, that isn't anything new, if you believe the old tales. And I don't see what it matters to me or you."²³⁾ Frodo's mental state of constant irritation symbolically denotes that Shire has disconnected itself from liminality. Thus, we can easily realize the reason why Bilbo's adventure is entitled "A Hobbit's Holiday" : his journey into mythical

regions forms a specific experience largely different from the ordinary life of Shire.

This observation leads us to understand the symbolism of the Ring. The Ring is, as it were, the special key to unlock the secret gate of Faërie : it reveals a hidden passage to the hero and urges him to follow it. In contrast to *The Hobbit* which tells how Bilbo brought the Ring from the outer worlds to Shire, the Ring in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy reveals to Frodo the way to the liminal regions. Although critics have differed as to whether Frodo voluntarily departed from Shire or not, it is hardly deniable that the Ring formed the greatest motivation for Frodo's departure, or, more accurately, the greatest motivation that propels the narrative forward. What is fascinating here is that the Ring remained, as long as its true nature was hidden from Frodo's eyes, only something that "may be useful"²⁴⁾ for him. This must be taken to mean that Frodo has been confined within a profane world so long that he is blind to the mystical aura of the Ring. However, no sooner has he realized the Ring's secret nature than it rigorously threatens to make him give up his native country. Thus liminality's "dangerous ambiguities" are symbolically condensed into the Ring itself. That Bilbo might be unconsciously aware of it is hinted in his keeping the Ring hidden from the eyes of others. While in *The Lord of the Rings* the stress is mainly placed upon the dangerousness of the Ruling Ring, its other aspect, the beauty of the Ring, is also mentioned in several places. The One Ring is, as is mentioned in Isildur's scroll, "of all the works of Sauron the only fair."²⁵⁾

Here it may be well to remind ourselves again that the purpose of Frodo's journey is to destroy the Ring. When Frodo cast it into the Crack of Doom, the Middle-earth suffered a great change ; the undoing of the One

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Ring not only caused Sauron's ruin but also realized what Elrond had already foretold in his Council : "But maybe when the One has gone, the Three will fail, and many fair things will fade and be forgotten."²⁶⁾ Here again the parallel with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* might be helpful to our examination. Just as Prospero's breaking of his magic staff is a sign of recovery, the undoing of the One is a symbolic event to denote that Middle-earth is reestablished and revitalized as a whole under the New King. As I have already pointed out elsewhere,²⁷⁾ the millennial vision that the medieval Christianity long preserved is reflected upon the restored kingdom of Aragorn :

In his time the City was made more fair than it had ever been, even in the days in its first glory ; and it was filled with trees and with fountains, and its gate was wrought of mithril and steel, and its streets were paved with white marble ; and the Folk of Mountain laboured in it, and the Folk of Wood rejoiced to come there ; and all was healed and made good, and the houses were filled with men and women and the laughter of children, and no window was blind nor any courtyard empty ; and after the ending of the Third Age of the world into the new age it preserved the memory and the glory of years that were gone.²⁸⁾

To sum up the structure of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy : the Ring, in which Faërie's beauty and peril are condensed, works upon Frodo and unlocks the gate of Faërie for him. However, as soon as the hero fulfills his errand, the Ring itself is unmade, so the gate is closed again. In other words, Faërie *per se* is removed from the Middle-earth to more marginal regions, "beyond the Sea" in Tolkien's language, whereby the whole of

Middle-earth is reduced to a homogenous space. The state in which the difference between profane and mythical regions no longer remains is represented in the restored kingdom of Aragorn. As mentioned in the Preface and Appendix to *The Lord of the Rings*, under the reign of King Elessar the Hobbits of Shire enlarged their vision and came to have much traffic with outer regions. This is to imply that all the regions of Middle-earth are integrated into a whole unity over which one king rules, that is to say, there exists in Middle-earth no liminality, at least spatially.

Aragorn's marriage to Arwen, the climax of the trilogy, is the last point to be examined in this chapter. Needless to say, the hero's wedding to a princess is a typical conclusion of a romance which indicates that the world to which the hero originally belongs is re-vitalized by his adventure. What is interesting for our present purpose is, however, the fact that the spirit of Faërie, or whatever one should call it, was preserved by Arwen's being wedded to Aragorn ; Arwen Undómiel, of all elvish maidens the fairest in shape as well as in wisdom, is the daughter of Elrond, from whom "has come among Men the blood of the Firstborn and the strain of the spirits divine that were before Arda."²⁹⁾ As is well known, the mortal hero's marriage to the immortal virgin is in general the sign of the last hope in Tolkien's mythological context. This is particularly true in case of *The Silmarillion* where the union of Eldar and Edain tribes, as is represented in Beren's espousing of Lúthien and Tuor's of Idril, at last generates Eärendil the Mariner, the greatest hero of the Elder Days who is to save the perishing world from the malice of Morgoth the Dark Lord. It should become evident at this point that this motif, the union of Elves and Men, is employed in *The Lord of the Rings* as a special device by which Tolkien illustrates that the communion with Faërie should be maintained, at least on a symbolical

level, even after Faërie has fulfilled its function.

IV

From our discussion so far, it can be seen that the hero gains a specific experience through his journey in Faërie. It is because Faërie is a place where, in an anthropological context, "the classifications on which order normally depends are annulled or obscured." In *The Lord of the Rings* the hero's specific experience, or his mental state, in Faërie is expressed correctly in Sam Gamgee's words: "It is like being at home and on a holiday at the same time."³⁰⁾ Unlike Frodo or Aragorn whose experience is colored beforehand by various knowledge of Middle-earth, Sam's simple reactions to his journey often supply us with the optimum model for the hero's specific experience in Faërie, which I would like to point out now. Here again a close analogy between a dream and a journey through Faërie might be helpful for the purpose of our examination. In confirmation of this analogy, we may refer to Merry Brandybuck's confession immediately before his return to his homeland Shire: "Well here we are, just the four of us that started out together.... We have left all the rest behind, one after another. It seems almost like a dream that has slowly faded."³¹⁾

Strictly considered, one who is dreaming does not recognize his experience as a dream as long as he is dreaming. It is when he awakes that he can translate his dream-experience into the context of the actual world. Likewise, the hero while wandering through Faërie is generally ignorant of his own presence in Faërie. No sooner has Faërie fulfilled its function and closed its gate to the hero than he understands that *he was in Faërie*. A striking transformation of Faërie takes place before the hero's eyes: for him it is no longer Faërie itself, but a memory of Faërie. Wide and deep

is the gulf between the vivid reality and the faded memory, and this is keenly stated in Gimli's grievous cry for his loss of Galadriel: "Memory is not what the heart desires. That is only a mirror, be it clear as Kheled-zâram."³²⁾ What we ought to consider here is, however, the fact that this sense of detachment from Faërie forms the greatest source of Tolkien's elegiac ethos, according to which all of his works are created. Tolkien's elegiac ethos, or his sense of beauty, is metaphorically expressed in the second theme of the *Ainulindalë*, the Music of Ainur, that is, the cosmogeny of *The Silmarillion*: "The one [music] was deep and wide and beautiful, but slow and blended with an immeasurable sorrow, from which its beauty chiefly came."³³⁾ To quote at least one other example, there are the words of Haldia, the warden-elf of Lothlórien: "The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater."³⁴⁾ Here it may be well to remind ourselves again that Faërie has in its nature nothing to do with the simple dichotomy of Good and Evil. Strictly speaking, the perilousness of Faërie has its origin in the fact that the loss of Faërie arises in the heart of a mortal a sadness so keen that his heart is broken, often fatally. Gimli's words afford us again a good example:

Tell me, Legolas, why did I come on this Quest? Little did I know where the chief peril lay! Truly Elrond spoke, saying that we could not foresee what we might meet upon our road. Torment in the dark was the danger that I feared, and it did not hold me back. But I would not have come, had I known the danger of light and joy. Now I have taken my worst wound in this parting, even if I were to go this night straight to the Dark Lord. Alas for Gimli son of Glóin!³⁵⁾

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This is particularly true in the case of Frodo. As my illustration has already made obvious, the essence of Faërie, its beauty and peril, is symbolically condensed in the One Ring, and Frodo, the Ring-bearer as he is, is too deeply fascinated in Faërie, or he has dreamed too deeply to awake. It should become evident at this point that Frodo, as the hero of a quest-romance, is placed in a peculiar situation. This we can easily realize in comparison with Aragorn, in whose figure a typical romance hero is embodied; first, he comes on stage in the guise of one of the Rangers, a group of strange warriors who are wandering in the frontier district of Middle-earth, although he is in fact directly descended from Isildur, the founder of the Dúnedain Dynasty. Second, he takes an important part in the battle against the Antagonist, Sauron the Dark Lord in this case. Furthermore, as is metaphorically represented in his passing through the Paths of the Dead, he suffers a symbolical death and rebirth. Third, he comes at last to Minas Tirith, the center of Middle-earth, where he marries a princess, Arwen Undómiel, and restores the kingdom of his ancestors. In spite of the fact that Aragorn thus possesses all the attributes of the hero of a quest-romance, the part of the hero in *The Lord of the Rings* is assigned, not to Aragorn Isildur's Heir, but to Frodo Baggins, a Hobbit who originally, at least if he had not possessed the Ring, would have had no relationship with the outer mythical world. What is striking is the fact that Frodo, in contrast to Aragorn, receives no benefit from the restoration of Middle-earth. Conversely he suffers an injury too heavy to be healed: "I have been deeply hurt.... I tried to save the Shire, and it was saved, but not for me."³⁶⁾ Metaphorically stated, his dream is so deep that he cannot find the way to wake himself; every step of the return journey is for him "more like falling asleep again."³⁷⁾ Here we ought to recall what was inscribed on the Ring :

“One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, / One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.” The Ring involves Frodo in the journey through Faërie and binds him in it forever. Therefore, the undoing of the Ring is for him not a sign of liberation but a loss too great to endure. Together with the Ring, something precious in Frodo is buried “certain fathoms in the earth” (V. i. 55) as is Prospero’s magic staff.

The point I wish to raise here concerns the Ring’s similarity to *limpë*, the strange wine of the Elves, to which I have already referred to when discussing Eriol, the hero of *The Book of Lost Tales*. Actually there is a striking resemblance between the Ring and *limpë*. Just as the Ring enchants the Ring-bearers, binding them forever in Faërie, “those that drink [*limpë*] must dwell always with the Eldar of the Island until such time as they fare forth to find the lost families of the kindred.”³⁸⁾ In spite of Lindo’s rejection and Vairë’s warning, Eriol cannot resist his “thirst for a draught of *limpë*.”³⁹⁾ The *limpë* is a product of Faërie that tempts a mortal to give up his own nature. As Tolkien left his *Lost Tales* unfinished, we are unfortunately not informed as to whether Eriol is eventually allowed to drink *limpë* or not.⁴⁰⁾ Nevertheless, from what we have already discussed, it might be inferred that the *limpë* in *Lost Tales* is somewhat related to the Ring, or, more accurately, the *limpë* constitutes a prototype from which Tolkien afterwards develops the symbolism of the Ring.

What is fascinating to note is that the whole narrative of the *Lost Tales* is offered to Eriol in compensation of his want of *limpë*. There is an abundant store of sources to prove that for Eriol the narrative is told for the equivalent of *limpë*. To quote at least one example :

Now it is not to be thought that as Eriol hearkened to many tales which

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spake of divers sorrows of the Elves that the thirst for *limpë* grew less within him, for it was not so, and ever as the throng sat about the Tale-fire he was an eager questioner, seeking to learn all the history of the folk even down to those days that then were, when the elfin people dwelt again together in the isle.⁴¹⁾

In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy the analogy between a narrative and Faërie is offered in a more refined form. Here again, Sam Gamgee's rude experience, his simple reaction to each step of his journey, affords us with the key to solve the structure of this analogy. At the beginning of his journey, when Frodo's company is near the hill of Weathertop, Sam requests Aragorn the Strider to recite the Lay of Lúthien :

Then tell us some other tale of the old days, a tale about the Elves before the fading time. I would dearly like to hear more about Elves.⁴²⁾

In this stage he still remains a reader, or one of audience, to hear intensely a text, which is, the narrative of Faërie. However, when the company comes to Lothlórien, the land of Elves, Sam expresses his impression :
"I feel as if I was inside a song."⁴³⁾ Furthermore, when he and Frodo are hiding at the threshold of Cirith Ungol, in the scene immediately before the climax, Sam asks himself : "I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?"⁴⁴⁾ and finally he reaches the recognition that :

Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course,

and goes on past happiness and into grief and beyond it—and the Silmaril went on and came to Eärendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got--you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?⁴⁵⁾

In this instance an archetypal image arises to his mind as a reality. Just as an initiate imitates symbolically the actions of mythical heroes in his rite of passage, Sam suddenly finds himself to be identified with Beren, the hero who appears in the Lay of Lúthien. As Sam's experience in Faërie is disconnected from the stream of ordinary time, he can enter "the timeless land that [does] not fade or change or fall into forgetfulness,"⁴⁶⁾ or, in Tolkien's language, such a mythical narrative opens "a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, maybe."⁴⁷⁾ This is also the instance when Sam, who has been one of the audience of a play, finds himself on the stage as an actor of the play. Or, more correctly, in this instance the explicit relationship between Sam and the mythical narrative, that is, the relationship between a reader and a text, has faded away and thus a new narrative, Sam's own adventure in Faërie, is born. What is interesting is the fact that this new narrative is made on the model of a proceeding narrative rather than of an actuality : it is a text established not by *imitatio naturae* but by *imitatio narrationis*.

The examination of the difference between Frodo's and Sam's situations after their journey might be helpful for us to understand this point. As Sam did not possess the Ring as long as Frodo, he can barely shake off the spell of Faërie. This we can confirm from his active contribution in the

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reestablishment of Shire which had suffered serious damage from Saruman's despotic reign. Thus Sam's experience in Faërie forms for him a text from which he can extract some affirmative meanings, that is, the conclusion of *his* narrative. Frodo's situation is largely different from Sam's : he takes no part in the Scouring of the Shire, the revolt of the Hobbits against Saruman's malicious force. Just as a dreamer is ignorant of his own presence in the dream, Frodo is still caught in the magical net of Faërie. In short, his narrative has not yet come to its conclusion.

This observation leads us to understand the final episode of *The Lord of the Rings* which describes Frodo's passage over the Sea together with the other Ring-bearers. As mentioned earlier, the Land beyond the Sea forms the 'liminal' region in which the archetype of mythical narratives is preserved : no tale comes to its conclusion in the land that stands "outside Time." For Frodo there is no other way than to withdraw himself into a mythical narrative, and thus his own figure is woven into a text entitled *The Lord of the Rings*. In a sense, this is a conclusion too painful to appreciate. It is also true, however, that the enchantment of Faërie is often irresistible to people confined within the profane world. As Tolkien says, the "Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation."⁴⁸⁾

NOTES

1. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J., 1971), p. 187.
2. Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 55.
3. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (London, 1969), pp. 94-95.
4. Paul Kocher, "Middle-earth : An Imaginary World?" *Tolkien : New Critical Perspective*, ed. N. D. Isaacs & R. A. Zimbardo (Lexington, 1981), p. 118.
5. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales* (London, 1983), p. 23.
6. Ibid., p. 24.

7. Ibid., p. 13 et al.
8. This fact is mentioned by Tolkien himself in the draft for a letter to one *Mr Rang*. This draft was probably written in 1967. Cf. *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. H. Carpenter (London, 1981), p. 385.
9. Randel Helm, *Tolkien and the Silmarils* (Boston, 1981), pp. 37-38. The name *Eärendel* (now spelled *Eärendil*) is originally borrowed from an old Anglo-Saxon poetry. This fact was first mentioned by Clide Kildy in his *Tolkien and the Silmarillion*.
10. *Lost Tales*, p. 14.
11. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London, 1983), p. 113.
12. Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien, a Biography* (London, 1977), p. 191.
13. "On Fairy-Stories," p. 113.
14. Turner, "Metaphors of Anti-structure in Religious Culture," *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (London, 1975), p. 273.
15. Tolkien, "Smith of Wootton Major," *Smith of Wootton Major & Farmer Giles of Ham* (London, 1969), p. 24.
16. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (London, 1966), p. 381.
17. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (London, 1978), p. 253. This stanza is cited from "The Road Goes Ever On And On," the best-known song among all the poems Bilbo Baggins made.
18. *Anatomy*, p. 193.
19. Ibid., pp. 183-184.
20. "On Fairy-Stories," p. 134.
21. Ibid., p. 114.
22. *The Fellowship*, p. 52
23. Ibid., p. 57.
24. Ibid., p. 45.
25. Ibid., p. 266.
26. Ibid., p. 282.
27. Cf. my graduate thesis "The Structure of Tolkien's Mythology."
28. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (London, 1966), p. 246.
29. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion* (London, 1977), p. 254.
30. *The Fellowship*, p. 376.

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31. *The Return*, p. 276.
32. *The Fellowship*, p. 395.
33. *The Silmarillion*, pp. 16-17.
34. *The Fellowship*, p. 363.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
36. *The Return*, p. 309.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
38. *Lost Tales*, p. 17.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
40. Christopher Tolkien's commentary informs us that there remains a note in which J. R. R. has written "To come after the Tale of Eärendel and before Eriol fares to Tavrobel--after Tavrobel he drinks of *limpë*. "(*Lost Tales*, p. 230.) However, what this passage means is unclear, since, as Christopher Tolkien points out, Eriol's actions as indicated in this note are inconsistent with the sequence of the whole of Eriol's narrative.
41. *Lost Tales*, p. 174.
42. *The Fellowship*, p. 203. It is supposed that the Lay of Lúthien is also called the Lay of Leithian, the Release from Bondage. The etimological analysis of the word *Leithian* is not done in Robert Foster's *The Complete Guide* nor in Ruth Noel's "The Tolkien's Dictionary."
43. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
44. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (London, 1966), p. 320.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
46. *The Fellowship*, pp. 365-366.
47. "On Fairy-Stories," p. 129.
48. *op. cit.*

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