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In an age when "the instability of the human subject" is constantly argued for if not assumed, there should be no problem with a poet that is worn from two such different poetic fates. In fact, Baudrillard perfectly answers the early modern conception of a work of creative imagination. (Henry, xvii)

3 French linguist Emile Benveniste noted that they (the active-voice inflections and middle-voice inflections) almost always come down to situating positions of the subject with respect to the process, according to whether it is exterior or interior to it, and to qualifying it as agent, depending on whether it suffers, in the act, or whether it affects, in the middle.

(Benveniste, "Voice," 149-50)

4 Borrowing from Benveniste, Roland Barthes in the late 1960s coined the ancient distinction to serve the discourse of the literary critic for the subject of a verse to be "affected" and "affected": "In the modern world of middle voice to write the subject is immediately contemporary with the writing, being effected and affected by it" ("To Whom," 143).

5 One of Austin's students, Matt Furberg, invents the name "archetypical performativity" for acts performed in an "official capacity" (Furberg, 279). "Archetypical performativity is different. Their performer shoulders no obligations for the future. He has it as he were a button in a social machine" (280). Emphasizing the formal aspects of the "social machine," Furberg notes, "Austin's per performance: promises, warnings, etc. are fairly inerrant compared to the archetypical one" (282). Stroking Lord of the Rings in the foundational discourse of power and knowledge, Jane Chance notes that Tolkien's fictions continue to expose in monstrous "the repressive speech acts" in the academy and other human communities because it threatened intellectuals in attaining the primary goal — the power of language in the pursuit of "truth" ("Lord of the Rings," 27).

6 Middle-earth, the Middle Ages, and the Aryan nation

Christine Chism

I have in this War a burning private grudge — which would probably make me a better soldier at 49 than I was at 22 against that truly little superman Adolf Hitler. . . . Raising, preventing, misapplying, and making for ever assured, the noble northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe, which I have ever loved, and tried to present in its true light.

(J. R. R. Tolkien, Letter to Michael Tolkien, 9 June, 1941)

This chapter examines a conflict created in Tolkien's writing by his love for Germanic medieval sources and their (mis)appropriation by the Nazis before and during World War II, the period when Tolkien wrote The Lord of the Rings. These medieval languages, legends, and sagas (Elvish, Germanic, Finnish, Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon) were close to the foundations of Tolkien's imaginative world-creating enterprise as well as of his scholarly career, and it is a fascinating topic to consider how it extends them from one area to the other. But I want to take seriously the "burning private grudge" that Tolkien describes in this 1941 letter to his son. In "raising, preventing, misapplying, and making for ever assured" the "northern spirit" Tolkien had loved, Nordic race-mythology sharpened an ethical dilemma in the ambitions and costs of his creative writing.

This dilemma was already implicit in Tolkien's ongoing investigation of the power of imaginative writing. Throughout his career he melds the methodologies of scholar and author by thinking metaphorically in his essays and experimenting theoretically in his fiction to scrutinize the uses and powers of both (Ungainly, 15–31; Chance, Tolkien's Art, Ships, Reel). He castigates the textual judgmentalism of the literary criticism that places the critic above the text and often (shamefully) to it (Faraci). He also questions the utility of fantasy writing, most notably in "On Fairy-Stories" and the playfully titled "A Secret Vice," and in allegories, especially Leaf by Niggle and Smith of Wootton Major. His theories of the autonomy (but not self-sufficiency) of created worlds have sparked comparisons with those of Ernst Cassirer (Lehrträchtig, 66–67). But Tolkien questioned the work of created mythologies with a particularly self-consuming intensity during and after the war. I argue that he came to scrutinize his own world-creating enterprise because he had before him a parallel spectacle of world-creation gone wrong — in National Socialist Germany. Tolkien's wartime
Fantasies of power

Tolkien himself ferociously resisted any attempt to historicize his work in the light of the world wars and the progressive industrialization they accelerated. When critics and reviewers began to suggest analogues for The Lord of the Rings in the progress of World War II and modern industrialization (Blissett, 448–56; Filfeil, 841–44; Fulcher, 159-96; Giddens, 7-24; Tolkien dismissed such read-

ings as “allegories” – a form he claimed to “cordially dislike”; he also suggested that “the Lord of the Rings” would never have been allegory without the “allies” of Gandalf, Rohan, and Minas Tirith, the latter two being described as representing “the democratic and aristocratic tradition” (Blissett, 448–56). This is a compelling reason not to believe Tolkien when he says that his narrative wasn’t influenced at all by the war, except that he made such a fan about it. We have C.S. Lewis’s words that “one time ever influenced Tolkien – you might as well try to influence a bunch of sheep!” (Blissett, 201). But I would like to ease Tolkien out of his hands on his text and into the text of the twentieth century and, simultaneously, to shift consideration of the Ring from “the will to more power,” which Tolkien asserted as its primary symbol (J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter, 160) to a dark exploration of the powers of aesthetic production itself. Throughout his writing, Tolkien explicitly and persistently links the creation of fantastic and mythical worlds to the temptations of power, and never more than during the war.
them "war-hypnosis" — within wartime Britain and among the allied powers (Latten, 88). Late in the war, when his third son Christopher was stationed with the RAF, Tolkien condemned this "First War of the Machines" (Latten, 114): "Nothing can arrest my grief that you, my best beloved, have come amongst death, and with it. My sentiments are more or less those that Frodo would have had if he discovered some Hobbit learning to risk his life in the Banks. Set the liberation of the Shires." (Latten, 115) National Socialism was not the only problem — militant nationalism was spreading all over the world.

However, if both Britain and German militarism use war-hypnosis to foster popular support for political imperatives, the pacifist politics of art set Germany apart. At an unprecedented degree the Nationalist Socialist Party aggressively co-opted art, drama, film, and literature into state service. Brandly hard to be institutionally nurtured (Theweleit, 142-269), but so did the diddled ideals that drove it. Hitler, a would-be painter and architectural visionary, took care to nurture the work of artists who suited his aims and to purge those who did not (Ackerbary, 67-79). This mobilization of art to create a national mass culture raised crucial questions about the politics of the artistic imagination. Most famously, the Frankfurt School Marxists positioned themselves as critical theorists against National Socialist state formations and the aesthetics of mass culture (Jay, 113-218). Closer to home, Tolkien reflects the interests and even echoes some of the themes of a group of British writers and artists whose Stuart Sillars has described as twentieth-century Romantics: McNicoll, Auden, Spender, and Britten. Tolkien at once expresses and critiques a similar Romanticist strain which he develops a theory of the artistic that both dramatizes its own laborous production — rather than mythifying its as genius or sublimity — and relentlessly questions its own power to seduce.

This investigation is not simply autobiographical. Tolkien undoubtedly engaged his own experiences and ambitions as he speculated about the production and power of art. However, the sheer amplitude of heroic, aspiring, entrapped, ambivalent, demonic, tragic, and triumphant artist and artifacts in Tolkien’s world reveals as wide-ranging thought experiments. Tolkien's explorations of the aesthetic products show it to be both powerful and terrifying: at times shaping and immobilizing formless moral beings (as with the Silmarche), at times consuming artist and viewer alike with the blank blackness of black hole (as with, I will argue, the Ring). Each of Tolkien’s created peoples opens a different set of ethical questions about the aesthetic. The angelic Valar help Even (Elvish) to create the world and then fal into deep love with a creation that they volunteer to be locked into it — a disaster for the world because the demonic Morgoth and Sauron are among them. The surviving Elves “represent — Men with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties, TolKIen envisioned “beauty and longer life” (J.R.R. Tolkien, Latten, 176; 85, 236). The story of their ‘long defeat’ puts the screws on aesthetic ideologies that propose the immortality of artistic power as a consolation for the transience of world and flesh. Elves (as Morgoth’s parody of Elves) represent art gone wrong, warped to military service, its immortality translated into invasive multiplicity, perhaps

(mischievously) a nightmare version of the work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction.2 The Dwarves express the Vala Alve’s Frankenstein-like desire to bring insensate matter to life, and Dwarves continue to evoke Aës in the life they pour into and draw from stone, gold, and jewels.3 Through these invented peoples, Tolkien’s mythologies theorize the work — both process and product — of art, as it calls forth, disciplines, and consumes the artist’s imaginative and manual labor. Art becomes powerful through this labor, and it repays the labor lavished upon it by radiating a dangerous desirability; Silmarche, Ashenmoor, Dwarfish halls, Elven sanctuaries, and Rings rove anyone who tilts into the field of their beauty.4 Tolkien’s artificer found less often in failure than in the devastation of a long-fought-for success.

These investigations of form and linguistic power intensify during Tolkien’s most difficult and harrowing period of fantasy writing: the war and postwar years between 1938 and 1954. The Lord of the Rings was written from 1938 to 1949 and published in 1954-55. "On Fairy-Stories" was delivered as the Andrew Lang lecture at the University of St. Andrews on 8 March 1939 and worked up and published in 1947 memorial collection dedicated to Charles Williams. "Leaf by Niggle" was written in 1940 and published in the Dublin Review in 1945. "English and Welsh" was delivered as the O’Donnell lecture at Oxford in October in 1955 (the date after The Return of the Ring was released).

Tolkien’s power-wary war and postwar writings contrast instructively with a decisively preswar essay probably written in 1931: "A Secret Vice" (Carpenter, Biography, 260; Tolkien, Monsters, 3-4). This is a Victorianstripe of an essay. It delights in attributing guilt to the otherwise almost laughably pedantic hobby of creating private languages and mythologies. Tolkien makes it a pastime, an addiction, a deeply individualizing and pleasurable self-exploration, and a defense against an unspeakable world. His most affectionate encomium of a fellow-addict is drawn from his army training in World War I, when in the middle of some interminable training lecture man sitting next to him suddenly remarked dreamily, "Yes, I think I shall express the affectionate case by a perfect!" (Monsters, 199). The essay relieves the prospect of the little man hugging his private grammar to himself through the tidium and furor of the Great War, only to dismay him with a mordant acknowledgment of the indifference of the world to such delights: "Probably he was blown to bits in the very moment of deciding upon some ravishing method of indicating the subjunctive. Wars are not favorable to delicate pleasures." (Monsters, 200).

Here what is delightful — what compensates for loss of agency during the war — is power over language itself. Born into language, the language creator uses knowledge of the structures and mores of many languages to create and lay claim to a tiny, personal, symbolic territory. The invented language reveals in creator’s individualizing aesthetic explorations with a closure that becomes almost painful. Tolkien pleads indulgence as he reveals some snippets of verses in one of his own languages: “Their bare meaning is... not far of red blood or the heat of the world such as critics demand. Be kindly. For if there is any virtue in this kind of thing, it is in its immensity; in its peculiarly shy individualism”
This passage links aesthetics to both politics and ethics. The fantastic secondary world is divided from the external primary world, but it also bleeds into it—through the author who exerts a sovereign power over the textual world and longs to transfer it to the great, unbridled, life-giving, trenches-like stream of history that he inhabits and most continually integrates. This uncanny and somehow transgressive sliver of longing between what a writer creates and what is "external to his mind" is one of the most productive uncertainties in Tolkien's writing. It is deep-woven through "On Fairy-Stories," where he continually insinuates the independent and sometimes cautionary reality of elves, elves, dragons—interconnected and occurring in a way that might raise serious doubts about the realism of that universe. This desire slips into the consciousness of the last sentence. The longing for power is there; it is enmeshed in the process of writing and cannot be erased.

How could we identify such mimicry? Is such power to be mistrusted by definition? Tolkien positively relies the fraseome power of fantasy within texts ("OFS," 22). He argues “within a profound desire,” he doesn’t necessarily want them in his neighborhood (20), and he does not pursue the question of how the power of reshape reality might be misused in the world “external to our minds.” What would that look like? Delusion? Lunacy? What if the fantasy were powerful enough to convulse others? What if it sought and found the ability to remake the world in its own image? How could its use or misuse be judged? Tolkien leaves such questions unexplored here. However, he opens a transnational ethical no-man’s land between literary and historical worlds, which his wartime writing at once patrolled and irresolutely infiltrates.

Tolkien was conscious that he was sacrificing Middle-earth’s most productive years as a scholar, and that many of his colleagues at Oxford would take (and, judging from his published posthumous letters, did take) a dim view of the free adjective. —You may say soon or even late and set the imagination leaping ("OFS," 219).

Eight years later the same free adjective (even the same example: "soon") has become precious, hedged round with suspicion and the longing for power. In "On Fairy-Stories" Tolkien theorizes how fantasy itself evolves from the free adjective. When these qualities from objective accidents from substances in medieval grammatical terms), they broke into a mother-lode bath of incalculable power: and potential abuse: But how powerful, how stimulating to the very faculty that produced it, was the invention of the adjective: no spell or incantation in Fairy is more potent. . . . When we can take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanting power—upon one plane; and the desire to wield that power in the world external to our mind awakes. It does not follow that we shall use that power well upon any plane. ("OFS," 22; italics mine)

Myth and history in World War II

Christine Olive

(Moonlit, 213). The narrative stance here is at once intensely mannered and revealing, stemming more from a staged shyness than from any sense of genuine defensiveness. The essay ends with a judicious Prometheus call to linguistic creation; only Tolkien's early poem "Mythopoeia" is equally optimistically about the uses of literary power. Forget the prince-hostage of language: "You are the heros of the ages. You have not the grace after the dazzling brilliance of invention of the free adjective. . . . You may say soon or even late and set the imagination leaping" ("OFS," 219).

It is not a story of successful escape but of accountability Niggle the artist finds justification only after death and not through his own merit. He negates away his life (as his name suggests) and does not even complete his canvas, is freed from prejudice (the Workhouse) only through his appreciation of the fruits of scholarship (Peano's processes), and emerges beyond hope to find that a gorgeous and grandiose mare has remedied painting his landscape of Paradise. This self-humble Niggle while submerging his obnoxious, painstaking, futile anxiety into the work of the Creator itself. This substratum doesn’t simply justify Tolkien's fantasy-writing. More instrumentally during the 1940 interlude of the war in Britain, when his writing had stalled for over a year, it gave him the confidence to continue The Lord of the Rings (Carpetone, Biography, 156; Knowing, 32-141; Rosebury, 117).

If Tolkien's wartime explorations of fantasy-writing convey a more besieged sense of accountability, this interwoven into even deeper questioning after the war ended and the vast 600,000-word Lord of the Rings (1954-5) was published. One of the darkest poems Tolkien ever wrote about fantasy was "The Sea-Bell" (1961), included in The Adventurer of Jon Bonfield. If, as many critics have noted, portions of his fantastic or metaphoric uses in literature. This desire slips into the consciousness of the last sentence. The longing for power is there; it is enmeshed in the process of writing and cannot be erased.

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This passage links aesthetics to both politics and ethics. The fantastic secondary world is divided from the external primary world, but it also bleeds into it—through the author who exerts a sovereign power over the textual world and longs to transfer it to the great, unbridled, life-giving, trenches-like stream of history that he inhabits and most continually integrates. This uncanny and somehow transgressive sliver of longing between what a writer creates and what is "external to his mind" is one of the most productive uncertainties in Tolkien's writing. It is deep-woven through "On Fairy-Stories," where he continually insinuates the independent and sometimes cautionary reality of elves, elves, dragons—interconnected and occurring in a way that might raise serious doubts about the realism of that universe. This desire slips into the consciousness of the last sentence. The longing for power is there; it is enmeshed in the process of writing and cannot be erased.

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Here now I stand, king of this land, with gladdened sword and reed lance. Answer my call! Come forth all! Speak to me! Show me a face!

(Acknowledgement, 59)

The traveler’s “gladdened sword” recalls the finding of the Ring in the Gladden Fields (Shipsy, Road, 258); his reed lance is no battle threat but a rudimentary pen. This is Tolkien’s theory of fantasy in its most impatient and desperate genre: the hunger to encounter an animated world, to speak to it and to have it speak back in its own strange and wonderful languages. The traveler invokes it with flimsy majesty and commands an answer. What happens next is unclear: a black cloud shrouds him (or does he become blind?), he falls to his hands and knees and creeps into a desolate wood where he sits for a year and a day, “wandering in wil,” amidst mud, boredom, tattered clothes, and puddles. Finally light returns, and he wakes from his torpor to discover that he has grown old. He has had enough of the eerie land: “But though I be, I must find the seal! I have lost myself, and I know not the way. But let me be gone!” After cold and hardship, he reaches the boat still waiting on the shore, to return home in it. But there he finds an even worse desolation, shattered houses, empty roads, drizzling wind and rain, only grains of sand and a silent sea-shell recalling his journey. The traveler understands that he can never return.

Never again, as in sad lane, in blind alley and in long street ragged I walk. To myself I walk, for still they speak not, men that I meet.

(Acknowledgment, 60)

And there it ends. The sea-boat that rang with far-off echoes has become a dead shell, emptied down the drain with some grains of sand. This poem revives an earlier one, “Lonely” (1936), where essentially the same thing happens, but with less provocation—the traveler simply wanders, without challenging the land to speak, and the black cloud comes upon him without warning. “The Sea-Boat’s” traveler is both more aggressive and more poignant—he transgresses in some way (pride?), but we cannot be punished so severely? Does the black cloud/blindness come from within or without? Can he be blamed for his insane claim to monarchy over the alien land when it dramatically refuges Tolkien’s earlier recognition in “On Fairy-Stories” that fantasy-writing is intrinsically unequipped with longing for mastery? Tolkien is explicitly aware, as Angela Carter muses, that “there is something odd about a grown man who dressed most of his time on the go for the horser of elbland faintly blooming” (454). “The Sea-Boat” is Tolkien’s imagined worst-case scenario: the romantic author-hero waving a fragile pen before an utterly mysterious world—and losing wit, life, and humanity for his bravedo.

Shipsy discusses “The Sea-Boat” as a sign of Tolkien’s growing misgivings about his own tremendous investment in his fantasy worlds:

One senses that Tolkien was doubtful … of the legitimacy of his own mental wanderings. For many years he had held to his theory of “sub-creation.” … But by the 1960s he was not so sure. It is hard not to think that by then he saw himself (perhaps only at times) as a mortal dozzy by the immortal and barred from their company. He no longer imagined himself regaining his own creations after death, like Niggle; he felt they were lost, like the Silmarils.

(Shipsy, Road, 251)

This longing for a lost congress with a fantastic world (and was even that a delusion?) is perplexed even further by “The Sea-Boat’s” sense that the narrator should never have gone in the first place—or should have gone less hungrily. And, interestingly, the poem does not link itself closely with the Silmarils as Shipsy suggests but with something much darker: the Ring of sorrow. We are told that in its fictional source, the Red Book of Westmarsh, “The Sea-Boat” was annotated “Frodo’s Dreme.” This subtitle recalls the nightmares Frodo suffers in the last part of his life in Middle-earth, in which he measures the Ring to which he has succumbed and which took his third finger—for weddings and bindings to other mortal creatures—with it. The empty shell cast away by the traveler in “The Sea-Boat” is what Frodo in his darkest moments feels he has become. Shipsy suggests that Tolkien increasingly felt the same way—no only shores of further ability to create but more and more radically questioning the legitimacy of such creation in the first place.

If the lost Ring haunts the traveler’s narrative of the sea-boat, it shadows the longing for fantasy—so eagerly defended, so astonishingly pursued in Tolkien’s writing—with the most powerful symbol of evil he ever came up with. This raises two questions: (1) How do we get from Prometheus-like shape of language to shadowy Ringbearer?—did anything ease the way for this darkening of the conception of fantasy? (2) Shouldn’t we complicate our reading of the Ring accordingly? There has always been something mystified and frustrating about the eminence of the Ring of power (what powers? power over what?)—so obviously a magical symbol in a text so otherwise resistant to merely magical symbolism. What explains its allure? How does it grow on its own even when it is not used—can we understand and organize some power corrupts? Why are Hobbits relatively immune when even Gandalf and Aragorn can’t trust themselves to touch it? What, in short, makes it the Precious? The rest of this chapter treats each of these two questions in turn.

Worlds at war

Tolkien was acutely aware that the National Socialist Willkommung had mobilized and transformed the very medieval Germanic legends that he had studied
all his life and that echoed through his own imaginative worlds. In the British
wartime climate of blind hatred for Germans and all their works, he wrote to his
son Michael, who was underaging military training at the Royal Military College
at Sandhurst.1

There is a great sense of grieve (and truth) than ignorant peoples imagine to
the “Germanic” ideal. I was much attracted by it as an undergraduate when
Hitler, I suppose, dabbling in paint, had not heard of it. . . . You have
our duty in understanding it, in not to detect the real evil. But no tele-
calls upon me to “broadcast,” or do a postcard. Yet I suppose I know better
than most what the truth about this “Nordic” nonsense.

(Lebens, 55)

This letter crackles with the indignation of the territorial scholar. Tolkien claims
a prior knowledge of “Germanic matters” to Hitler, the ignorant chilblain. He
also claims a better knowledge than that of either the German ideologists who
produced the “Nordic” nonsense or his British countrymen who cannot see
the “good” in the Germanic ideals – let alone the “real evil.” Tolkien goes on to
define the heart of his assertion, the “turning private groups” quoted in the
epigraph to this chapter. Tolkien’s language is strong – “ruining, perverting,
ruining, and making for ever accursed” (Lebens, 55). Long before the war, his
fiction is obsessed with such tragic corruptions of noble and holy things; the
poisoning of the ”Two Trees,” the curving of the Silmarils, the treachery
surrounding the Gouor’s treasure. Tolkien’s imagination tempered by Catholic
belief in a fallen world and an Augustanian sense of historic inevitability, is
thoroughly primed to realize and mourn the intimacy with which cruelty and
ideology, violence and beauty can come to interpenetrate.

Tolkien’s terminology in his letter to Michael (“Nordic nonsense”) evokes the
writings of Alfred Rosenberg, one-time editor of Hitler’s Bachakhe (the
National Socialist Party paper), idiator of the Nordic or Nilghakurean, anti-Semite, anti-Semitism, and anti-Catholic – and therefore notorious to Tolkien on at least four fronts. His work both influenced Hitler and proved a useful instrument to him as an early stage in his climb through channels toward executive power in
Germany. Rosenberg was indefatigable though not entirely silenced since Hitler was
denounced in 1933; the influence of Rosenberg’s wider theories against
Catholics (and Christianity generally) needed refining as he Hitler successfully
wrestled opposing Catholic, Protestant, and oragnic faction to keep himself in
place (Abercromby, 117-22). Rosenberg’s vast 1930 work, Myths of the
Jahrestanz (Myths of the Twentieth Century), drew upon the drop of German
Romanticism, the grand gestures of Astonios and the pseudoscientific
racist theories of Arthur de Goldsquea and Houston Stewart Chamberlin to
brew a weird draught of racialist/strait paranoia. He reserve world history in
the light of a mythology (Myths) that elevated the Nordic race soul as a fragile
wellspring of positive, creative, artistic, masculine vigor against the stifling mass
of southern subhuman race >exemplified by democracies, Jews, blacks.

Asiam, Catholics, Pauline Christians, and urbaniyes. Rosenberg traces the
etiology of Nordic honor back to primordial times. He speculates wildly about
Atlantic or Hyperborean origins, but he lights on the Vikings as the oldest
Nordic migration well-documented enough for him to sink his teeth into. In his
hands they become freedom-fighting individuals motivated by honor (Rosenberg,
Kant, 102). Most appropriate to Tolkien’s concern (especially his privileging of the virtues of pity and compassion in both The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings) is Rosenberg’s simplification of race war to an essential conflict between the orga-
nizing virtues of Nordic honor and race-chaotic love. Rosenberg shapes history
into a perpetual mythological crisis in which honor must ruthless defend itself
against the smothering flood of compassionate-seeing (actually hypocritical and
dominance-seeing) race-chaos. This battle becomes both a “mythical occurrence” (101) and a constant danger: “The moment . . . in which love and
pity (or, if one wants, compassion) become predominant, racial hatred and
cultural degeneration begin to occur is at Nordic-conditioned states” (102).

Throughout his immense mythology, Rosenberg emblazoned particular historic moments as flashpoints of triumphant individualism and thus invigo-
rates the Nordic with the force of those particular. At the same time, any sense
of historic accuracy and atomization is projected onto the enemies of the
Nordic life-force, who repeatedly emerge in a web of criticizing fecency
and overwhelm the Nordic. The Nordic creative force thus emerges parasita-
cally as simultaneously vigorous and unbroken – and fragile and threatened, a
very useful picture for provoking a crisis. To Rosenberg, this crisis comes to
a head in World War I. Rosenberg drags out the heavy mythological artillery to
make this clear.

A new centre of our Being – sparkling, glorious and life-filled – has come
to joyful activity. This new and yet-old Aflatu . . . was threatened from
within our own nations . . . when once again there dawned an age when the
Frawis Wolf bade his chains, when Hel, exalting an odour of decay moved
cross the earth and the Mednard-singing [Medgar serpent or serpent of Middle-earth] stirred the oceans of the world . . . At the same time that
Aflatu of the blood, for which heroes had died, stirred anew in the bowld
souls of those left behind by the departed warriors, until this Aflatu was
grasped and experienced in its final ramifications. The inner voice new
demands that the myth of blood and the myth of soul, race and ego, Ego
and personality, blood and honour; that this myth, alone and uncompromis-
ingly, must penetrate, bear and determine all life.

(Rosenberg, 96-97)

Rosenberg here forges a frame of linked mythologies of blood, soul, and racial
courage to strangle the rest of the world, and he tempers it with the medieval
Germanic writings that Tolkien loved, respected, and sought to realize, both
imaginatively and academically.
Tolkien's response is quite clear. Although there is no evidence that he read Rosenberg (or Feden or any other facetious racial apologist for National Socialism), he was intimately familiar with theirPhilological antecedents. In "On Fairy-Stories," he describes the racial strain in Dawsen as "a mishmash of haggard pre-history founded on the early surmises of Comparative Philology" (20) - a description that fits Rosenberg just as well. 14 As a medievalist and philologist, Tolkien was sensitive to the cultural and linguistic differences among Germanic peoples - the constant interplay between Norse and Early Germanic. Tolkien considered ancient Germanic a timeless and non-essential tradition. He believed in the timeless and non-essential nature of these Germanic peoples into a transcendent Aryan life force, let alone Rosenberg's Aryanian Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Egyptians, and Nordic Jesus. Tolkien, like Rosenberg, also wrote about the essential traits of mythology (Carpenter, Biographies, 91-92, 147).

How could Tolkien dismiss his own mythologies, his own scholarship, which drew from the same material as Rosenberg?

This is where the philologist and scholar could come to the aid of the fantasist. In 1938 Tolkien wrote an incomparable pedantic and distinguished letter to a German translator of The Hobbit, who inquired about Tolkien's own racial prejudices.

I regret that I am not as clear as to what you intend by anti-Semitism. I am not of an Irish extraction: that is Indo-European; as far as I am aware some of my ancestors spoke Hindustani, Persian, Gypsy or any related dialects. But if I am to understand that you are enquiring whether I am of Jewish origin, I can only reply that I regret that I appear to have no ancestors of that gifted people.

(Lettern, 37; italics Tolkien's)

And in his lecture "English and Welsh," delivered in October of 1955 as the last volume of Lord of the Rings was being published, Tolkien fiercely dismantled the whole mythology of racialism in successive ages that correspond closely to Rosenberg's decisive categories for assembling his definition of the Nordic: race, blood, soil, and unchanging essence. To Tolkien, Guts and Tantons alike, first, are people not races (Mannert, 167); second, they are to be defined by the language they speak. Tolkien does not think they are 169; third, any language in which the languages in which a language is spoken are in soil (but not soil). All the people in and around areas products of Rosenberg's shabbily built, racial miscegenation (168-70). Tolkien end this peroration - which is actually beside the point in an essay intended to inaugurate a lecture series on Celtic language influences on English - by half-apologizing and half insisting upon its relevance: "My excuse must be that, though the dog that I have been beating may seem .... to be dead, they are still alive and barking in this land at large" (173). I would suggest that they are particularly loud to Tolkien because he is so appallingly close to them, grappling with the same problems of my mythology and history, and driven by the same consciousness of crisis that had brought them forth. 15

Rosenberg was not the only mythmaker mobilized by National Socialism who struck deeply at Tolkien's work as a medievalist and writer. There was also that other obliterist in medieval and poetry - Richard Wagner. Like Tolkien, Wagner had transformad both medieval and contemporary and his legend is woven into the cultural matrix of the young man's discovery of the Ring of Nibelungen and The Poetic Edda to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's German Folktales and their four-volume summary, Teutonic Mythology. Wagner drew upon the cumulative and vitalizing context of contemporary nineteenth-century philologists to stitch together medieval sources into a rich mythology for Germany. 16 He had his work cut out for him. During their quarter-century composition, the Rings cycle underwent (but did not always survive) many revisions. Robert W. Gottin describes how, "especially in the two final dramas, fascinating strata of the cycle's literary formation for pre-modern and folkstock rock in an exhausted quarry" (Gottin, 156). A powerful experimental unity is imparted by Wagner's seamless and texture music and a supple alternative libretto whose libretto is derived from exclusively Germanic roots. Yet as a text, the Ring is still packed with the agglomerates of its medieval sources: The Nibelungen's focus on the family feud of medieval Austrian tulipers, the Volksage's unceasing encyclopedic energy, the glittering, disquieting, story-tellers of The Poetic Edda - including the solemn and prophetic Fingolfin - the brick repoussoir of Siegfried's Ring's Prose Edda, and the bumptious humor of Thörsk's saga and the Grimms' story The Blue Who Never Knew Fear. Like Siegfried grinding down the foundations of his father's shattered sword, Wagner with less success struggles to consolidate his medieval sources' integrative modality, the same modality that Rosenberg overlooked in his rush toward a totalizing Mythos, and that Tolkien spent his scholarly career resisting and repudiating upon. Adding to the confusion, Wagner shaped these medieval sources to serve as contemporary imperatives that were themselves far from self-consistent, ranging from revolution to monarchical, salvation-through-klese to the will-to-power, materialism to reification, triumphal epiphany to fatalist apocalypse. 17 Wagner's determined canibalism of the old to bring forth the new undoubtedly recommended him to Hitler, whose programs also yoke reformation to revolution, folk-mythology to modern nationalism, reform. In Men Knew! Hitler credits Wagner with turning him into an artistic revolutionary (16).

Tolkien and Wagner's Ring cycle - and perhaps in the early 1930s had enjoyed it. 18 His friend C. S. Lewis was a Wagner enthusiast who collected gramophone recordings of the Ring cycle, treasured a copy of the text illustrated by Arthur Rackham, and in his youth had begun collaborating with his musician-friend Arthur Greaves on his own opus envisioned "Loki Unbound." In the early 1930s C. S. Lewis, his brother Warnie, and Tolkien spent a long evening together rehashing The Hobbit aged in the original German and then discussing it until
When the war began in 1938 and the National Socialist Party was radicalized, the situation was functionalized even further: "It became the Führer’s gift to influence the moral behavior of innocent soldiers, deserving munitions workers, nurses and others." (Grüninger, 412). Karl Ritter von Stempel, Stuka, tells the story of a shell-shocked pilot who is told by doctors that he needs a profound experience to bring him back to health. He goes to Bavaria and is miraculously cured during the march from Stalingrad (1986). Stuka recognizes Wagner’s Siegfried as a cultural relic, whose "profoundity" reinvestigates and corrects even the most war-worn.

The choice of Siegfried for this sanctification is significant; in it Wagner’s revolutionary art and Hitler’s need to moralize "the terrible seriousness of the racial problem" can march hand in hand. In Siegfried, Mime enunciates Wagner’s low opinion of nineteenth-century artists who timidly soldier together pieces of past traditions into sterile reproductions. (1985) The dwarf becomes a failed artist who can’t forge a steel strong enough for Siegfried to wield. Conversely, Siegfried’s reforging of Nibelung dramaturgy Wagner’s conception of radical artistic creation; fearless, headless of past forms, and ruthless. Siegfried begins by flinging the fragment of his dead father’s sword down to a powder so that one can see them "zerstört in Späne" (spun into spatters) before melting them down completely and building them out anew. This building ["legen"] is soon transferred to the body of Mime himself (Wagner’s Ring: 296 n. 18). Just after directly touches, it is counteracted by the distant view of the Silberhöhe who, enthusiastic his creator, leaves them, sometimes disastrously, to their own devices. In one crucial area—the choice of pity over sadism, compassion over vengeance—Tolkien makes his difference from Wagner a defining moment of his mythos.

This rejection remains contemporary urgency because Siegfried’s dramatic sub-learning had sparked for both Rosenberg and Hitler a foundational mythlogy for their own genocidal state-formations. Though it should not be underestimated, the Wagnerian project has been overtaken. For my purposes, Wagner’s work teaches us heartbreak in the figure of Lohengrin [1] through Hans Sachs, it teaches us... to honor all things German... In the Ring of Feile, without our consciousness, with unspoken clarity the terrible seriousness of the racial problem..." (1996). For Tolkien, it shows us that the only religion Germans can embrace is that of struggle towards a life made divine. (1996)
Christine Ohm

Bilbo almost stopped breathing... He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrid darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must steal the fault thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Golimm had no sword. Golimm had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden sense of impending, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment; hard stone, cold flesh, sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed over in flash of a second. He trembled. And then quite suddenly in another flash... he leaped.

(H, 97)

The free indirect discourse investigates the difficulty of this decision. At first, like Siegfried, Bilbo feels repulsed for "the fault thing" and would genuinely like to kill and "put it in every sense of fair play prevents him, and there isn't yet admirable evidence for Golimm's intentions. Then Bilbo is struck by "a sudden understanding" which leads not just to pity but to real compassion as he feels his way into the misery of Golimm's existence. Finally he leaps, not just over the lurking Golimm, but over the whole vicious Siegfriedian, Rosenbergian Nazi mindset that finds it more self-justifying to kill an enemy it views as threatening and contemptible than to try to understand it.

The Hobbit was written down from 1931 to 1937, but this scene was added in its 1947 revision in the light of developments in The Lord of the Rings - and, arguably, of World War II and the horrendous revelations that followed it. Both the Hobbit/revision and The Lord of the Rings make this moment of pity pivotal to the design of Tolkien's Ring cycle. At the beginning of The Lord of the Rings, Gandalf tells Frodo Golimm's story and Frodo exclaims that Bilbo should have stabbed the vile creature while he had the chance. Gandalf gives him a significant glare and warns him that Bilbo's pity "may rule the fates of many - years not at least" (FR, 69). Later, when Frodo meets Golimm himself, he replays Bilbo's dilemma and attains the same sympathy. The repeated sparring of Golimm will eventually save Frodo's quest; Golimm will destroy the Ring, not Frodo.

By making this scene, Tolkien gives us a point of view for which Wagner's devotes must still negotiate: how can one separate enjoyment of the complex aesthetic/diagetic world from the political and cultural uses to which its power may be put. Given Wagner's ring experiences must be understood in quite the same way when we know that Hitler fantasized about Wagner, altered his hair to evoke a picture of Wotan (Hausend, 145), and spent his last days in his hamer foundling Wagner's precious hologram scores (later lost in the smoulders); that at the very end he scripted a Wagnerian love-death for himself; and Eva Braun married and the next day committed joint suicide lying to Gesinnungswarg, and within a few hours radios throughout Germany were broadcasting Siegfried's funeral march (Kahler, 6–23). In short, can the work of art remain innocent in itself though cursed in its use? This question beset Tolkien's writing throughout his

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life, but it is not until The Lord of the Rings, written between 1938 and 1949, that he fleshed it out a negative answer.

Resonating the Ring and returning to history

There is much to enjoy in Middle-earth, its polyglot diversity, its unexplored distances, in intoxicating sense of banalness - all produced by the enticingly gap-ridden layering of mythological and narrative texts into which Tolkien poured his time and scholarly skill. But amidst all this richness, the Ring hangs, empirical, symbolic, and magical. In itself it is a mere form, or form itself, abstracted from context, content, and narrative and refined to a blank tyranny. From its first appearance when Tolkien had no idea what it would become, even stoic Bilbo is provoked to wonder, "What have I got in my pockets?" The Ring engenders the last riddle Bilbo asks Golimm, which Golimm couldn't guess - a true riddle after all, which Tolkien spent fifteen hundred pages explicating. It begs for narrative explanations, and that is precisely what it produces. Alberich's ring beggars gold; Tolkien's beggar stories. That is what makes it precious.

Tolkien didn't know what the Ring was until surprisingly late in the process of composition (Shippey, Road, 255). He selected it as the link between The Hobbit and The New Hobbit, its projected sequel. He gave it a capital initial. In 1938 it was still "not very dangerous, when used for good purpose. But it exacts its penalty. You must lose either it, or yourself" (House, 42; italics Tolkien's). That doesn't sound dangerous at all! But up through the third draft, Tolkien was still weighing other motives for the protagonist's quest: last for more dragon's gold, wauderlust, looking for BIbloc; ring-longing was still an afterthought. By late 1938, it was the single ring that Sauron was still missing but not yet the master Zing (Shade, 327). By its fifth rewrite it was speaking its mastery in letters of fire (in the one-ring incantation that Tolkien apparently composed in the bath). By 1941 it was more or less settled. But questions continue to be asked about it all through the finished narrative. What is this Ring - "a little ring, the least of rings... a trifle that Sauron fancies" (FR, 254) - that it should be so questioned? - at Bag End, at Bombadil's house, at Bree, and at the council of Elrond, where its eventual exhibition, tiny and trembling in Frodo's hand, seems oddly innocuous, and in the end, after the great mountain of lore that has prepared its spectators for the view. Boromir is impressed, but what does the reader think?

This contrast between empty form and burgeoning narrative is precisely the point. Tolkien's 

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This degradation from art to power is suggested by the circumstances of the Ring's forging in the Second Age. Sauron, a demigod of many masks, for the first and only time poops as an artist interested in cultural uplift — and art in his hands becomes the most intimate form of domination. He seduces the Elves-smiths of Eregion by appealing to their creative ambitions (Silk., 287-88). In the version in Unfinished Tales, Sauron finds an especially willing student in Celebrimbor, who "desired in his heart to rival the skill and fame of Faeiron," his grandfather and the creator of the Silmarils (LT, 236). Sauron exploits the Elves' creative ambition to claim the panoply of power of a writer over them — he hopes to make them his characters, transparent and manipulable. Like Wagner forging a master-Ring that cannibalizes his Germanic sources, or like Hölder forging a vicious nation-state that instrumentsalizes a Wagnerian fantasy, Sauron's consummate artistry destroys what it engages, an irresolvable destructive supercession. The Elves do the only thing they can do. They smash off their rings and never use them again as long as Sauron holds his master-Ring.

The link back to the Silmarils through Celebrimbor is significant. Tolkien's conception of the Silmarils evolved as gradually as his conception of the Ring, and it darkened similarly as it evolved (Shippey, Rad. 259-60). As Derek Brewer says, "Tolkien is never afraid of a cliché" (in Sahn and Farrell, 258) — part of his power as a writer is to reinscribe them — and Faeiron is almost a pastiche of a fiery semantic genius. His shaping of the Silmarils signifies at Tolkien's theory of subcreation and prefigures the idea of the Ring as the retransmitting form. Faeiron takes light from the two Trees that illuminate the world and locks it into three crystals; his masterpiece transforms a brilliant, natural, perishable substance into an immortal, irresistible, and ultimately deadly work of art. Succumbing to their allure, the demonic Melkor poisons the two Trees and, unbeknownst to Faeiron, steals the Silmarils as he lies. Faeiron is beggared by the Valar to break his Silmarils and give back the borrowed light in hope that it might revive the Trees. Faeiron refutes: "It may be that I can unlock my jewels, but never again shall I make their like; and if I must break them, I shall break my heart" (Silk., 76). This transformation of artwork into heartache does Faeiron. When he discovers Melkor's theft of the Silmarils, he vows a terrible vengeance, and the rest of The Silmarillion tells how he and his sons destroy themselves and virtually all of the Elda kingdoms in the process of getting them back. In the meanwhile, until Melkor is finally tossed into the outer darkness by the Valar, the holy jewels adorn his iron crown — an implausible rape of the hallowed by the demonic.

The eventual fate of the Silmarils is an object lesson in the corrosive pursuit of art. Faeiron's last living sons become so debased in their bloody recovery that the jewels burn their hands. In despair, Marchosias flings himself and his Silmarils into a chasm of fire (forswearing Holm); Maglor Cain his into the sea and wavers berserk and singing on the shore (forswearing the narrator of "The Sea-Ball"). The last Silmaril, stolen from Melkor's crowns by Breth and Luthien and bequeathed to Eäwe and Earendil, becomes the evening star, a message both of loss and hope to Middle-earth, safe because it is unsmearable. Similar
degeneration of art preoccupy Tolkien's later work. Silmarils, Arkenstone, multilith, Rings -- all come to sink of power, desire, and doom. The problem is they also provoke good stories; there's something delectable in the fear and longings they stir. It is not high and sublime. It is an appetite.

The Lord of the Rings brings that message home, demonetizing Frodo's fierce longing for his lost behavor into Gollum's more homely greed. Even Gollum's name is a spasm of pride, and by the time Frodo meets him, his single remaining delight is eating fish. This delight kicks him revealingly to a character from the Fëanog saga and Smörrir Strothmun's Òra Èadha: Otr, Otr is the middle brother of Fafar the fairest dragon and Regina the smith who will rear Sigurd, urge him to kill Fafar, and be killed by him. Heirdor, a wealthy man, is their father. Otr spends his days in outer shape, catching fish, which he eats (with wonderful vivisex) "alone with his eyes shut, because he could not stand seeing his food diminish." (Byock, 57).

In a brilliant gesture of corporeal demystification, the Fëanog saga places the self-emaciating figures of Otr's greed at the heart of Fafar's ring-crown'd board; Otr's death and burial in the board intertages the curse of the ring and the whole ensuing tragedy. Heirdor damns a huge weight for his soul's death: to stuff Otr's skin with yellow gold and then cover it entirely with red gold. Luki stabs Andurin's board including the ring, incurring Andurian's curse in the process. He returns with the board and Otr claims the ring for himself. They stuff the oven, skin until it stands upright and then cover it with red gold, but when they are finished, one whisker is still protruding. Odin is forced to give up the ring to hide the whisker, thus saving Otr's now mythically expanded greed and dooming Heirdor, Fafar, Regina, and eventually Sigurd himself.

When Wagner adapts the incident, he gets rid of Odin and substitutes Fehn, a goddess of love and immortality whose burial within Alberich's smith board figuratively possesses him. Tolkien does something equally interesting; he transfers Otr's oral greed to Gollum, the ring's most craving heke. This then demystifies the lure of the ring from a Romantic urgency to a helpless creaturely hunger. Gollum's power fantasy wonderfully disembles the sublimities of magic.

Perhaps we grow very strong… Lord Sméagol! Gollum the Great? The Gollum! Eat fish every day, three times a day, fresh from the sea. Most Precious Gollum! Must have it. We want it, we want it, we want it!

(TT, 241)

The longing for mastery thus darken into addiction but also becomes more understandable and -- it has to be said -- terribly appealing. Attraction to the Ring is not Gollum's only defining hunger; he catches even more intimately at his author's witless self-satisfaction as a myth-creating philo-

logist. Before Gollum was Gollum he was Sméagol, "the most inquisitive and curious minded" of his family, "interested in roots and beginnings … his head and his eyes were downward ("(PR, 51–50). "Sméagol" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon stægol  (to scrutinize, investigate, penetrate, examine), and its adjectival form stægol (sagacious, sharp, crafty, subtle). When Gundlach recon-
nvenes Gollum's origins, he discovers a significant darkness within the seemingly innocent name. Sméagol had a friend aptly enough named "Dagol" (Anglo-Saxon dagol, dagol [secret, mystery, deep, profound]). In Anglo-Saxon writing dagol has a wide semantic range: from the mysteries of God to the dark vis- cousness of Grendel's mere, from the angelic to the demonic.

Dagol is the finder of the Ring -- it belongs to mystery before it falls into the clutches of investigation. Tolkien's first idea was that Dáagol should find the Ring at the roots of a riverside thorn tree, thus associating the Ring with roots and also with magic (thorn trees and magic are associated in Anglo-Saxon charmers and in Kipling's The Book of Pooh's Hill, where the leaf of the thorn tree is one of the three leaves for working an enchanted forgetfulness). It also recalls the Anglo-Saxon rune dões (os, of which The Rune Poem sententiously cautions "swarvō yg ‘ylf [grazing is evil/painful] (Rune Poem, I, 8, in Dobson). This is a nice shadowy origin story complete with a hint of sorcery and warning against promiscuous (seizing). But Tolkien decides against this. The published version is less realistic and more inspirational. Dáagol is fishing in a pool in the river (while Sméagol roots profitably about on the banks). Suddenly a great fish grabs his line and drags him to the bottom. There he sees something glittering in the mud, and grabbing blindly, he makes his way back to the surface. Washing away the river slimes he finds the beautiful Ring in his hand. The fish who leads to treasure oceans one of the bizarre creatures in Beowulf orJonah's fish who acts as a terrifying instrument of God. There is a sense of triumph -- to bring up brilli-

ance in a handful of mudd -- that would appeal to a philologist or historian sitting patiently through the dreariness of ancient writing to come up with a single crucial connection. It is a much more heroic origin story and smacks of epiphany.

Sméagol murders Dáagol for the Ring. This original murder of "mystery" by "investigation" makes deadly the seed to search into visibility (imagine) what is lost or hidden. It moves toward the ravenous imagination that takes its darkest shape in the visible form of Sauron himself: conditioned to a single devouring Eye and a grasping hand. Yet is it clear that this investigation of mystery steers Tolkien's own artistic production. Sméagol expresses the consuming curiosity about origins that Tolkien shares with many medieval scholars; the philologist incessantly searching for roots upon which to graft imaginative reconstructions (Ungöld, "Wurdhold," 15–31; Shippey, Road, 53). Glauzing the distant splendor of the Misty Mountains, Gollum surmises that "the roots of those mountains must be roots indeed; there must be great secrets buried there which have not been discovered since the beginning." But when he "wurm[n] his way like a maggot into the heart of the hills," revealing another ornithological affiliation with A-S images [no creeps through a hole] and thus a strange brotherhood to the dragon Sméagol of The Hobbit (Shippey, Road, 82), he finds that "all the great secrets" under the mountain had turned out to be just empty night: there was nothing more to find out, nothing worth doing, only nasty furrow eating and
resonant remembering" (FR, 53, 54). "The Ring itself both catalyzes and signifies this disenchantedment of curiosity into appetite, the aching (or crafty [mishal]) investigation of mystery into a murder, and Stroganov into Golom.

This is a customary framework for any writer who harasses the skills of philological inquiry into an appetizer for fantastic production. It accomplishes more self-questioning disenchantment in one stroke than the tragic rape of the Silmairis does in several hundred pages. Yet Tolkiens does not lose his sympathy for his Ring-devoured creature. Instead, Golom becomes the most incessantly spurred and forgotten creature in The Lord of the Rings. The narrative possesses Golom, treats him like the precious creature he names himself, puts off discerning him, tracks his consumption to its bitter end along with Frodo's. Golom's death with the Ring imprints a spiritual ruin not only for imaginative production but also for its ongoing scrutiny, the yoked team of fantasy and scholarship that drives Tolkien's continuation investigation of the uses of the aesthetic. The playfully disavowing that ultimately makes Golom's fortunate fall into the Cracks of Doom both inseparable and self-inflicted in an act of faith (or individual despair) that the Ring can be given up at all.

Golom thus play out not only the vicious potential of the fantastic imagination but also the cruelty of its resurrection. For Tolkiens to give up mythology would be tremendously difficult— even a poisoned mythological imagination was still precious in its origin and in the labor that had gone into it. Tolkien was profoundly invested in his own mythologies— and for many of the same reasons that Rosenberg was: they had both been galvanized by crises and the trauma of World War I. Tolkien writes of the genesis of his own love of fantasy: "A real taste for fairy-stories was wakened by philology on the threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war." (OFS, 42). He had begun inventing Middle-earth during his recovery from trench warfare at the Somme in World War I, and he had been nurturing a proliferating legendarium from his own philological skill and a reimagining of medieval eddas and sagas since 1917. Even if these sources were "ruined, misappplied, perverted, and surrendered altogether" (OFS, 42), it would be horrific to relinquish them.

But one pivotal scene makes clear why it is crucial to do so. The most suggestive association of the Ring with imaginative vision comes uply on the summit of Amon Hen (the Hill of the Eye). Frodo, as he looks out over the world, wearing the Ring, sees

a world of mist in which there was only shadows: the Ring was upon him.

Then here and there the mist gave way and he saw many various small and clear as if they were under his eyes upon a saddle, and yet remote. There was no sound, only bright living imaginations.

The Ring makes its wearer invisible and dematerializes the world into a pallid mist, but it also refines its wearer's vision; we see Frodo learning to see through the mist, drawing the whole of known Middle-earth into the compass of his gaze. This intimates the shaping power of the imagination as it turns chaos into world. The effect of this scene, however, banishes ambitions of world-modesty to the fairest biblical echo of Christ's temptation by Lucifer on the heights. For Frodo, this is a world not for the taking but rather imminent danger of being occupied by someone else. Frodo's vision shows him the extent to which this little, clear, remote, table-top world—which lies like an open manuscript before him—is under siege:

Everywhere he looked he saw the signs of war. The Misty Mountains were crawling like ant hills: ores were issuing out of a thousand holes... The land of the Bree-sheens was allame... Horses were galloping on the grass of Rohan; wolves prowled from forestland. From the haven of Harad ships of war put out to sea; and out of the East Men were moving endlessly: swarmsmen, spearmen, bowmen upon horses, chariots of chieftains and laden wains... Mount Doom was burning; and a great red shadow (FR, 416-17)

This apocalyptic panorama is at once the text's widest vision of a world overrun by war and Frodo's closest encounter with Sauron. It is also a cren where the text works through the impacts of its own cultural moment. Alan L___appositely suggests that such moments of apocalyptic imagination offer both an escape from and an incomparably intimate encounter with history. Apocalyptic imagination was that which suffered firsthand the most brutal facts of history and then dipped itself in the blood of those facts to etch the handwriting on the wall—the writing that says, "No, this should not be," by means of fantastic figurations saying, in essence, "No, this is not." That such figuration desires history is indisputable. But surely such denial is also the strongest kind of engagement with history. (L___, 35)

Tolkien's introduction to The Lord of the Rings denies direct allegory and strives hermetically to seal his diachronic world into a "No, this is not"— and I actually trust those denials: Sauron does not "equal" Hitler; Frodo does not "equal" Tolkien— both figures are more extensible than that. But I think that the scene of apocalyptic conversion on Amon Hen admits to the bright, remote world of Middle-earth an oblique engagement with contemporary history that becomes more gripping for its obscurity. In this scene, the terrifying intimacy of this pressuring history becomes a call to action and resistance. As Frodo looks out over the world that undeniably evokes the widening sweep of a world war, his gaze is drawn to the center of occupation, the black tower of Barad-dûr, a distillation not just of Hitler's Germany but of all the inexorable forces of industrial degradation at work in the twentieth century, from before the Great War forward: "wall upon wall, battlement upon battlement, black, immeasurably strong, mountain of iron, gate of..."
steel, tower of adamant ... All hope left him" (FR, 417). At that point he feels the searing light of Sauron's Eye, looking on him personally, stripping away his anonymity and, worst of all, his denial, finding an answering yearn
in his heart: "Verily, I come, I come to you" (FR, 417). Frodo withers between the pressure of Sauron's hunger and an acerbic counterfeiter (who later turns out to be Gandalf): "Take it off! Take it off! No, no! Take it off! Take off the ring!" in a moment of free will, he is aware of himself again. "Forsoo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose and with one remaining instant in which to do so." (FR, 417). He takes off the Ring and from this moment pursues the rest of Moriel with single-mindedness. Frodo thus transforms his whisper of compliance to Sauron into the means of his destruction. Frodo will come to Sauron but as an infuriator, not a shee.

This scene rescues Frodo as an agent amidst terrible historical forces. It is not a rebirth of a self essentially free from these forces; it is not a version of Rosenberg's triumphant Nordic individualism. It doesn't deny determinative press
ures and penetrations; rather they inform Frodo's choice as they drive him from within. Northerly, it pierces a tiny, valiant middle space between historical determinism and romantic subjectivism. The subsequent narrative is unfailing in
showing that this tiny space left for agency will not be enough to save Frodo — the pressures are simply too great, and Frodo will succumb to the Ring and never recover from its loss. But it will help in overthrowing Sauron. This space of choice wrested from the seething trauma of war becomes exemplary, implicating not only Tolkien and his own struggle with the poisoning of the imagination but Tolkien's readers and all who, in Gandalf's terms, live to see such times. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is thus not a reflection or allegory of the war but a responsive defiance against the war and against war-hypnotism wherever it might be found. The narrative not only registers but also strategizes against the impact of the National Socialist corruption of mythology, its state constriction of aesthetics, its deflation of nobility.

And it is akin to the costs of its own strategies. They are beset by "an"
immodestly in Frodo, who after the Ring's destruction is left crippled and will-
tless, worn from without and eaten from within: a tiny image of collateral damage. But Frodo is only the beginning — Middle-earth itself fades from mythology to history. After the dizzying joy of the Ring-bearers' coverage at Cormallen Fields, which brought Tolkien to the point of tears in 1949 when he finally reached it (Tolkien, Letters, 321), Middle-earth gradually succumbs to temporality, stills, grays, and etiolates.11 We feel the force of Gollum's final long-ago riddle in *The Hobbit*: "This thing all things devours", of which the answer is Time. Every last-ditch immortality finally relinquishes its hold: Lórien fades, Rivendell is abandoned. After our celebratory summer, we seem to be perpetually in summer. Companions are left behind; the Elves, who distill and incarnate the immortal aesthetic and creative aspects of humanity, pass away to the West. Any observer of the last conversations of Gandalf, Celeborn, Galadriel, and Eolw would have seen "grey figures, carved in stone, memorials of forgotten things now lost in unpeopled lands" (JR, 283). Finally, we are brought to the

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Grey Havens, as a refuge as its name suggests. Frodo doesn't die; he goes west — but as the phrase suggests, it might as well be death. His healing will be possible only beyond the circle of the world in the last imaginary refuge, a glimmer of consolation that remains remote. Sam returns to the poignant embrace of family life and generation. I don't know how I can convey the power of this ending; scholars seem to be coded at the generic level for receptiveness (or its lack) to Tolkien. But I believe it partly comes from the intensity of *The Lord of the Rings*’s engagement with its own historic moment — which doesn't reduce the story or make it derivative but rather becomes the event it matters. It is a fantasy that wills its own disenchanted intimation into history, a mythology that (unlike National Socialist visions of the Thousand-Year Reich or other nationalisms) asserts its own mortality and agrees to fade. Unlike Wagner, it refuses apocalyptic, laboriously carves out history's costs, pressures, and fragile delights, drops its remaining fingers through the blood and brings itself to the end. It won't. How does one return to mythology after this? For several years Tolkien attached the Silmaril manuscripts with enormous energy, attempting to reinvigorate its entire framework as the tale of Morgoth's corruption of the creation-wide artwork of the world itself — "the whole of "Middle-earth" was Morgoth's Ring" (Morgoth's Ring, 400) — a tremendous task which seemed to grow larger at every turn. He involved himself in maneuvers to get *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* published together — like one long narrative journey — but the Silmaril manuscripts were neither in good order nor consistent with their sequel. Tolkien was unsuccessful in playing Collins against Allen & Unwin, and so *The Lord of the Rings* was issued alone. Afterwards, revision of the many competing, inconsistent, experimental narratives of *The Silmarillion* to a single authoritative version may have seemed like a step backward in more ways than one — though he spent a lot of time expanding the annals, genealogies, cartographies, and etymologies of his fourteen invented languages; in other words, his revisions often accentuate historical divergence and accidence rather than mythological unity.

Eighteen years went by between the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien's death, and while he managed to produce some long-expected scholarly projects, his capacity to bring his longer literary projects to completion seemed short-circuited. He started a sequel, "The New Shadow," but soon abandoned it; after the destruction of the greater demons of the Ring, Aragorn's regime "would not contain any tales worth recounting" (J. R. R. Tolkien, Letters, 419). The valdeci-
tory Smith of *Hobbit* fame is the only work of literature Tolkien completed subsequently, and it nostalgically glosses through Tolkien's central themes from a graceful distance (Helms, *Tolkien*, World, 118-25). However, no master is possible in Smith's Farry; the landscape is too surreal, projectional, and expa-
nsive even for its attempt, and Smith gives up his imaginative star with a melancholy sense both of blemish and defeat. In a 1967 letter to Roger Lancelyn Green (who reviewed it), Tolkien himself describes Smith as "an old man's book, already weighed with the presence of "bewaldment"" (Letters, 388). Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien's excellent biographer, writes of Tolkien's awareness during the
his last years of "a perpetual discontinuity, a breaking of threads in his work which delayed achievement and frustrated him more and more" (Carpeaux, Biography, 240). In a letter dated a month before his death, Tolstoy thanks a generous reader, Lord A. A. Milner, for the warmth of his appreciation and the offer of his future help with manuscripts, writing of his own sensing inability to finish, "Over and above all the afflictions and obstacles I have encountered since The

Life of the Bourgeois Gentleman (Letters, 431). This may have paradoxically resulted from his dazzling success and his depression at his cult status. But I think also that Tolstoy’s war-driven, self-questing investigation of the uses of mythology has brought the point with no energy to move forward and yet had worn away at the enabling presuppositions for going back.

But Tolstoy did not abandon his own mythological labors just because he could not finish them. For the rest of his life he treated Middle-earth not as an allegorization of twentieth-century events but as a key to them — applying his characters’ names to historical developments with gusto in letters and interviews. Subsequent readers have followed suit; Tolstoy’s characters exemplify recognizably recognizable tendencies and character types that are still around us. We could see Adolf Hitler as the silver-tongued Saurman, spearheading a country with his speeches, but we could also choose to hear echoes of Winston Churchill or even George W. Bush. So used, the fantasy world bleeds into the external world in a way that is wonderfully underdetermined and provocative. Its fantastic geography choppily and exemplary, and the world of history with which it grapples becomes the strongest, shiftest, most fantastic and mysterious world of all.

When his wife, Edith Bratt Tolstoy, died in 1917, Tolstoy had no sense from his Slavophile mythologies carved upon her tombstone; Tolstoy, the interjual Elf who gave up immortality to wear the mortal Beren. Together they steal a Silmaril from Morgoth’s crown and, even though they die for it, their love presides over the few bright interludes in The Silmarillion’s edifyingly mundane mythology. When Tolstoy himself died two years later, he instructed that the name “Beren” he written upon his own stone. This could be read in a number of ways. One would say it is a wistful echo between fantasy and history, a defense of heroic significance, an act of faith in the immortality of his hand so his wife throughout their sometimes troubled marriage and beyond death. But as self-chosen appellation, “Beren” has an additional resonance as the name the mere-dinger Frodo, Beren had lost his right hand. It was bitten off by Morgoth’s devious weapon as Beren waved the Silmaril before it in defiance. Given The Lord of the Rings’ exploration of the myriad ethics of renunciation, its willingness to question creativity to the point of disillusionment, it seems fitting that Tolstoy should claim the mantle of a hero mained as he deflect a ravining wolf with his half-recovered Silmaril.

Notes

1 The famous story遇见 in “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” is one instance, while Smith, Austin Aeger began as the introduction to a new edition of George Macdonald’s The Gruesome Key. Tolstoy often showed up at meet-ups at which he was expected to present an essay only to read a story or poem instead.

2 Mary Faner’s contribution to this volume (chapter 5) was initially presented at the Thirtieth International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2001.

3 Recent scholars have suggested other profitable ways to historicize Tolstoy, T. A. Shippey’s exemplary study, The Road to Middle-earth, draws him away from the pedestal of fantasy as solid (or out of its realm) by linking him to other British writers of the postwar period such as George Orwell, William Golding, and T. H. White (Shippey, Road, 298). Sebastian D. G. Kontzis historicizes “Leaf by Niggle” as a war text that enables Tolstoy to write The Lord of the Rings (132-34). Brian Roseberry also convincingly situates Tolstoy within twentieth-century literary history, linking him to the lost generation of World War I writers but also showing his affinities with modernism and its critical afterlives (133-52); Lee D. Ross attributes “a literature of political despair” to both C. S. Lewis and Tolstoy but he emphasizes their similarities grappled the difficulty of the historical problems with which they were faced (1-6, 89-154).

4 There are, of course, other useful directions to take myth in Tolstoy. Ann C. Perry delineates a Levi-Straussian structural anthropological “mythic impulse” at work in Tolstoy’s Two in a Blank Dunn both Tolstoy and Koheleth sensitively read the Christian mythic structures and oppositions within Tolstoy’s work in, respectively, Tolstoy: World and Mirror of Middle-earth, and Randell Helm carefully delineates the historical principles that distinguish Middle-earth in Tolstoy’s History, 76-108.

5 Susan Sallis gives Tolstoy a single dismissive citation as a populare of one of the symbolic reflexes of the modern world: British Romanticism (n° with the natural world) (130), but I think Tolstoy is actually much closer to the center of Sallis’s definition of this group’s defining concerns, which include nature as a refuge from individualism and a questioning of the arts of creativity in the modern world.

6 Daniel Hughes shows how Tolstoy grapples with neoclassical and romantic theories of art; he outlines the different romantic influences in Tolstoy’s romantic writing, from Blake’s mythologizing Ulisses to Coleridge’s linking of the imagination and the self in the Biographia Literaria (85-96).

7 About which Walter Benjamin was writing in 1936.

8 About the novel counterexample is Glen’s leaving the unadorned structures of the Glittering Caves.

9 “On Fairy-Stories” makes this link between fantasy production and desire very clear: “Fairy-stories were partly just naturally concerned with possibility out with dreamability. If they achieved duties, satisfying it while often admitting a useful, they succeeded” (“On,” in Morris, 60).

10 Janice Blumner explores the creativity of careness to Tolstoy’s writing in Tolstoy’s Act.

11 Helen reads it particularly as staging the conflict between pursuits of art and duty to community (Tolstoy’s History, 109-18).

12 In letters Tolstoy inveigled against the anti-German prejudice endemic in English radio broadcasts and printed media, using the same general sentiments at home as abroad, especially as the prospect of victory (lightened Lern, 79).

13 An arresting instance is Galdot’s striking version of herself as the beautiful Lady of the Ring culminating in “I shall not leave you and despair!”

14 Tolstoy’s respect for particular Jews and Jewish cultures emerges sharply in his private letters: Letters, 37-38 (1919), 67 (1947), 394-95 and 410 (1921) (where he considers the possible Jewish ancestry of the author of Sam Gange’s name).

15 I am citing from the excerpts of Myth translated and collected in Race and Race History, which anthologizes a transnational reading of Rosenberg’s writing.

16 It is easy to see why M. L. Rosschew, with its"vow of violence, truncated, rhythmic chiasm, David Rothenberg so very scribbling.
18 Velma Fryar beautifully contextualized Tolkan's theories to fantasy's philological, anthropological, and racial scholarly antecedents in her address at the Thirty-ninth International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2001.

19 Many readers see, in fact, quite critical of the facetious implicit in Tolkan's creation of "good" and "bad" races (division he complicates), his fastidiousness of historical re-tracing under heavy microscope that accompanies it, and even his use of light and dark imagery (which he also complicates deliberately — "Aragon's standard is nearly black; Sarattin's is white, etc."). Robert Parrish adds these laurels cogently and ends with a provocative speculation about Tolkan's address to the twelfth-century authorities of the "Blackwell View of Fascism," in Lodlbar, Tolkan's Corpus, 105—12. Jane Chaucer's Mythology of Phase contextualizes "The End of the Longbow" appeal to 1906's counter-revolutionaries, and outlines how Tolkan systematically de-acclimatizes and neutralizing ideologies of power in favor of the underdog facade, authoritarianism, and the old. For a gradual evolution of democratic mutual respect, the contrasting view of Tolkan's appeal as an anti-traditionalist, except "safe trip" for 1969's adolescents, sees, Walsamley, "Tolkan the 60s," in Gildings, 75. I'm delighted to point out from twenty years later that Walsamley's report that Tolkan had his moustach and then died a not underserved cultural death has been exaggerated.  

20 Ruth Noel details Tolkan's very different images of society and earlier mythological terms in Mythology of Middle-earth.  

21 Tolkan's own longing to create an English nationalistic mythology is discussed at length in Jones (Nineteenth) Chapter's study of Englishmen and social sources and infuences in Tolkan's det. More briefly, in Badd (2007) Shapley urges a distinction between nationalistic as a passion rather than a nation- alism. However, I think that Tolkan's construction of Englishmen in his characterizations comes from his character from his Nordic nationalistic, chiefly by its self-positioning as already always then, precautions, and half-lose. It emerges in the shadow of 20 descriptive to ineradicable that nothing could remove a writer a triumphant political, cultural, and military nationalist program (which would destroy itself as Hamman shows) nor a purer-sounding poetry of heritage. The Red Book that Frodo bequeaths to Sam ends page to open subsequent narration. We are continually reminded that the Sire is a part of Middle-earth and that the parallelism Hobbits is both deflate and idiolect. An open-ended country, an open-ended history book, and a need to open the minds of principal inhabitants to the larger world they inhabit— all offer interesting resistances to tradition nationalisms. I am grateful to Frank Grady for the trenchant question that provided me room to explore this.  

22 Elizabeth Magre outlined the scope of Wagner's problem in trying to "reduce this man of sources into a gripping narrative form."  

From north to south across the spectrum it found voices of events which tallied nowhere for the quelled Siegfried against the dragon, winning a hoard and marrying Gutham's sister ... What was Wagner to make of a hero who appears now as an adolescent champion, now as a victim of Demons the Mone and Derpender Der? "In Pursuit of the Purely Human," in Wagner, 29—32; also Guneman, 35, 43, 62, 121—22, 196—66.  

23 Over its twenty-five-year gestation, Wagner revised the text in the light of every philosophy he found elucidating in his transition from revolutionary republican to tragic resurrection: social, Romantic, anarchic, utopian, Hegelian, Prussian, and Freibachian — all bound together with that last syzygy synthesized to a master thesis of Schopenhauer (Roger Hollinshead, "Epiphany and Apocalypse in the Ring," in Wagner, 41—47.)

24 Marty Morgan moves the most systematic and documentary one for Hitler as revolu- tionary, John Lukacs sees him as imaginatively combining conservative and utopian impulses (76—72).

25 He came to Hitler's time, when critics persisted in likening his Ring to Wagner's or to the Nibelungen ring in Wagner's medieval sources. An acute literary complaint about his Swedish translator's  

26 Joachim Kühler recently went so far as to reduce Hitler to a self-reinventing definition of the eternally, anti-Semitic, fixed-revolutionary, Wagnerian vision. Even more from essentializing Wagner's self-identified and disparate corpus to an internally coherent program and giving him a sinister posthumous agency mediated unapologetically through his Bayreuth descendents, this reading seems like a little romantic (even Wannsee) in itself.  

27 Cirlot or Guenier, 412. Kühler discusses how, as early as 1925, the festival approxim- ately forces Hitler's rise to power (191—98).  

28 In Wagner's medieval sources, Meinin or Regis forgets the sword instead of Siegfried (837—31).  

29 This is one of Wagner's own antecedents — he retains Siegfried's revolutionary triumph even after he comes to a disaster recognition of the folly of any real break with the past.  

30 This imaginative search for a lost past triggered by a fragment or rain is another place where Tolkan comes powerfully with English Romanticism. This genre of recreation from loss can be understood initially as Wagner himself, but in centralizing the gap between past and present rather than learning to smooth it over with powerful continuities, it defines itself very differently his movement is toward heritage, a tragic immerseness in the loss of history even as it works toward the past's resurrection.  

31 Bremanian Christians compare initial and revised versions of "Riddles in the Dark" to argue that Tolkan systematically deepened the naivete of Gollem's charac- ter — which makes Bilbo's restraint more dramatic (9—38).  

32 Rosedale brilliantly discusses the "sinisterly deprived expansions" (9) of Middle-earth as a sordidly effective archetypal struggles (7—53); his argument counsels Christine Brock-Rohe's illustration at the hypothetic realism and redundancy she sees as weighing down the narrative (53—55).  

33 I am grateful to my colleague Colin Jagger for suggesting this reading.  

34 It's why Robin, immersed in the everyday and the pragmatic, are relatively insensitive to the Ring, while Elers, Aussies, Mess, and Wazzal, all enclosed with stirring power of inquiry and craft, don't dare touch it or are quickly consumed if they do.  

35 One example (of many) is the first appearance of the Black Rider, which could be paraphrased thus: "Who is this Black Rider who just rode up out of nowhere? Oh, just Gandalf being dramatic. Whoa, no. We don't know who he is. Or should that be what's it?" (J. R. R. Tolkien, Shards, 47—48).  

36 Also Luk's excellent study, "Wardrobe: The lance of Helere, is the most powerful state- ment of this trend (32—49). I am oversimplifying Lukas' discussion and turning it upside down by foregrounding the imagination rather than nature and history.  

37 Randell Holley explores The Silmarillion's Christian and theological contents in Tolken and the Silmaril: Chris Kyley gives a revealing account of its author's attitude toward it and struggles with it in Tolken and the Silmarilins.  

38 Tolken's 1952 recording of the Gollum passages from The Hobbit should not be missed. In a letter to his publisher, he bounces with joy that "I do a very pretty Gollum." (Letter, 164).
Shirley discusses it as the modern type of addiction in *Road* (126-27) and at greater length in *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*.

In a letter to a reviewer, Tolkien links Frodo's situation—a subject to pressures beyond his resistance—to "saturated situations" possible throughout history but becoming more common during and after the war.

I did not foresee that before the tale was published we should enter a dark age in which the technique of torture and destruction of personality would rival that of Mordor and the Ring and prevent us with the greatest possible concrete view of good being broken down into sponges and traits.

(Lothian, 734)

41 Vedan Fieger eloquently discusses Tolkien's experiments in temporality in *Quotations from Text*.

42 It thereby follows the example of Galadriel, a character whose dominance with particular economy Tolkien's narrative attempts to succumb to the urge toward counter-creation: the making of eternal realms within the world as bastions against historical recurrence and change. In successive versions she is variously (1) implicated in Faramir's exile but not guilty of blood-letting, (2) invited by ambitions toward dominion (which she democratically relinquishes in *The Lord of the Rings*), and (3) wholly innocent of anything but the bad timing with which she abounds Valour. When Galadriel finally relinquishes Middle-earth, the reverberations of her surrender continue Tolkien's own final concern to history in the narrative.