Light: The Diegetic World-builder in J.R.R. Tolkien's Secondary World

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Abstract

This project explores light imagery in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world as the diegetic world-builder. While doing this, it uses the cosmogony narrative in *The Silmarillion* followed by the First and Second Age stories. This project also introduces specific ideas from *The Lord of the Rings* when relevant, and analyses specific stories and quotations from *The History of Middle-earth* series as the external chronology. The aim to introduce the external chronology has been to compare and contrast Tolkien's ideas about his world-building throughout his authorship to show what has changed and what has remained the same regarding the light imagery in the secondary world.

While using these texts, this project engages in formalist and critical world-building approaches. The formalist framework as reanalysed by Caroline Levine (2017) enables a contemporary approach to the close-reading of the keyword light to reveal how light imagery as the diegetic world-builder is formed, ordered and patterned throughout the secondary world narrative. The critical world-building framework as introduced by Stefan Ekman and Audrey Isabel Taylor (2016) enables me to address Tolkien's secondary world as a self-referential product and highlights the significance of my role as a critic in this project.

The main aim of this project is to assign the diegetic task of world-building to a single imagery, light. This aim confronts the overall assumption and discussion by the relevant previous scholarship that a task like world-building can only be associated with authors or their subcreated characters. Therefore, this aim makes this project unique in a sense that as the narrow aim, it also reveals the overall potential of fantasy as a genre in providing new insights into a subcreation, and thus inescapably, the primary world.

Contents

Tables

Abbreviations

Below are the abbreviations used throughout this thesis for the commonly cited and mentioned works.

'Critical Wb'	Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-building.' *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.* 3:3 (2016). 7-18. Web.
Flame	*The Flame Imperishable.* Kettering: Angelico Press, 2017. Print.
Forms	*Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Print.
FR	*The Fellowship of the Ring.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd, 2020. Print.
Imaginary Worlds	*Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation.* Oxon: Routledge, 2012. Print.
Lays	*The Lays of Beleriand.* London: George Allen & Unwin [Publishers] Ltd, 1985. Print.
Letters	*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers,* 2000. Print.
LT I	*The Book of Lost Tales, Part I.* London: George Allen & Unwin [Publishers] Ltd, 1983. Print.

LT II *The Book of Lost Tales, Part II.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd, 2015. Print.

OFS *Tolkien: On Fairy-stories.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers,* 2014. Print.

RK *The Return of the King.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd, 2020. Print.

S *The Silmarillion.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001. Print.

Shaping *The Shaping of Middle-earth.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers,* 2015. Print.

SL *Splintered Light.* Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2002. Print.

'Sub in Subcreation' 'Concerning the "Sub" in "Subcreation": The Act of Creating Under.' *Sub-creating Arda: World-building in J.R.R. Tolkien's Work, Its Precursors, and Its Legacies.* Ed. Dimitra Fimi and Thomas Honegger. Zurich and Jena: Walking Tree Publishers, 2019. Print.

TT *The Two Towers.* London: HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd, 2020. Print.

Chapter One

Introduction

The ethos[1] of J.R.R. Tolkien's world-building is light. This thesis asserts that Tolkien introduces light imagery into Arda, which is the name of his subcreated Earth, as the diegetic world-builder. This argument first requires two concepts to be clearly defined: *light imagery* and *diegetic world-builder.* Light imagery is built on a specific definition of imagery: 'the way in which a thing is represented visually or fashioned'.[2] Therefore, light imagery is by no means a figure of speech, but a phrase used to trace the collective ways of how light *image* is described, represented, used, and thus brought to life throughout Tolkien's secondary world narrative. The concept of diegetic world-builder has two aspects: it refers to diegesis, meaning 'a narrative',[3] and also points to the concept of world-building which has been discussed, used and defined by the previous fantasy and science fiction scholarship since 1820.[4] Therefore, this thesis defines diegetic world-builder as a motif, element, symbol or theme in a secondary world narrative that has the purpose and agency to give meaning to the stories within that narrative by underpinning the basics of world-building. For the main argument of this thesis, it specifically refers to light imagery acting as the creator of Tolkien's constructed world in both theory and practice. The implication of this phrase is that without light, the Earth and universe of the secondary world would never exist, so there would be no secondary world. From the cosmogonic narratives of *The Silmarillion* to the earthly stories of *The Lord of the Rings,* light is one of the few common themes binding all stories about the secondary world together and setting them within a plausible framework for readers to be immersed in secondary belief [5] enough to enjoy, appreciate and discuss the secondary world.

In one of his letters to his publishers, Tolkien specifies the secondariness of his constructed world:

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[1] 'Character or characterization as revealed in action or its representation; the quality of the permanent.', 'Ethos.', *OED Online.*
[2] 'Imagery.', *OED Online.*
[3] 'Diegesis.', *OED Online.*
[4] 'World-building', *OED Online.*
[5] An 'enchanted state' commanded or induced by an 'inner consistency of reality' (Tolkien 2014: 52, 59).

> ‘Middle-earth’, by the way, is not a name of a never-never land without relation to the world we live in (like the Mercury of Eddison). It is just a use of Middle English *middel-erde* (or *erthe)*, altered from Old English *Middangeard:* the name for the inhabited lands of Men ‘between the seas’. And though I have not attempted to relate the shape of the mountains and land-masses to what geologists may say or surmise about the nearer past, imaginatively this ‘history’ is supposed to take place in a period of the actual Old World of this planet. (*Letters:* 220)

Although Tolkien points to Middle-earth as the fantasised mythological past of the primary world, this alternative mythology still presents readers with a complete secondary world that belongs to the genre of fantasy. The reason is that although the stories take place in the same shared universe, the historical period is completely imaginary, it thus requires a certain level of invention expected in a world-building process in fantasy. Therefore, this thesis thereafter refers to the secondary world as *the constructed world, fantasy world, imagined world, created world* and *fictional world.*

During his lifetime as an author, Tolkien used the imagery of light both literally and figuratively, in many of his texts in addition to his created world. In his famous poem *Mythopoeia,* Tolkien depicts mankind as ‘the refracted Light/Through whom is splintered from a single White/To many hues’ (2021: 2), which has the biblical implication of presenting mankind as lit by the same light of God, and the rest of the poem also uses light imagery metaphorically as the creative force we obtain from God. One his letters to his son, Christopher Tolkien, mentions a perception, or rather a vision he had in a church, where he ‘perceived or thought of the Light of God’ which comprises a small mote and a ray from the *Light* holding and lighting that mote, with which he identifies: ‘the shining poised mote was myself (or any other human person that I might think of with love’ (*Letters:* 99). I argue that these divine implications of light, which Tolkien associates with God and his love towards humankind, reverberate in the secondary world: building on his inspiration from the Catholic notion of divine light, Tolkien reveals a unique imagery of light that becomes creationist in his constructed world.

As discussed further in Chapter Three, light in Arda originates from the godhead Eru Ilúvatar[6] in the form of the Flame Imperishable: this flame is a specific fraction of Ilúvatar's light. During the cosmogony, which is conducted by Ilúvatar, the themes of light and flame are used transitively:

> 'Therefore I say: *Eä!* Let these things Be! And I will send forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable, and it shall be at the heart of the World, and the World shall Be; and those of you that will may go down into it.' And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame; and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing: Eä, the World that Is. (*S:* 20)

In the Void where there was no form of existence before, both the Flame Imperishable and the light that the Ainur[7] see come from the godhead Ilúvatar, making him the sole source of light and flame for the remainder of all stories. As for the transitive relationship between Ilúvatar's light and the Flame Imperishable, it is also important to note that *The Silmarillion* presents Melkor first as 'seeking *the Imperishable Flame*' (*S:* 16), then reveals light imagery as the primary reason for his malice: 'He began with the desire of *Light*' (*S:* 31).

From that moment onwards, the Flame Imperishable explicitly becomes the earthly version of Ilúvatar's light which allows the secondary world to exist, exactly like it brings the Ainur to life when Ilúvatar kindles them with this flame (*S:* 15). This is diegetic world-building in progress, revealing a unified quality in light imagery: *it creates the secondary world via illumination.* After Arda's creation, light imagery's purpose and agency as the diegetic world-builder do not end, but *adapt to* an already existing realm: the remainder of the stories shows that via illumination, light brings along life and hope, and symbolises good against evil in the major encounters of those loyal to Ilúvatar versus those that follow the orders of Melkor, who is 'the great rebellious Vala, the beginning of evil' (*S*: 340). Light's association with creativity in *Mythopoeia* is reiterated in Tolkien's legendarium through the making of specific things containing light; namely the Lamps (Illuin and Ormal), Two Trees (Telperion and Laurelin), Silmarils, Sun, Moon, Star of Eärendil and Phial of Galadriel. These things are hereinafter referred to as *artefacts* as an umbrella term. Artefacts

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[6] The names Eru and Ilúvatar both refer to the same godhead in the secondary world. The significance of the difference between the two names is minimal for this thesis. For more information, 'Index of Names' (*S:* 329, 336).

[7] The angelic beings who originate from Ilúvatar's light, 'the Holy Ones' (*S:* 15).

are made via the transmission of light: light from one artefact is used to make another, therefore they all are related. This relationship is also hereinafter referred to as *chains of light* and explored further in Chapter Three.

At the core of Tolkien's imagined world is the light of art: one of his letters to Milton Waldman elucidates this claim. His secondary world comes into being in *The Silmarillion,* which 'receives its name because the events are all threaded upon the fate and significance of the *Silmarilli* ("radiance of pure light") or Primeval Jewels' (*Letters:* 148). In addition, he defines the light of the Two Trees as 'the light of art undivorced from reason, that sees things both scientifically (or philosophically) and imaginatively (or subcreatively)' (*Letters*: 148). Here Tolkien considers the Two Trees themselves as 'art', instead of which this thesis uses the umbrella term *artefact.* Based on this letter, this thesis argues that there are two fundamental issues about light in artefacts, which also answer the question why artefacts are made. First, while illuminating Arda, light forms the secondary world's philosophical background, which has Thomistic and prelapsarian qualities: light in artefacts emanates from Ilúvatar's light and becomes the origin of life as well as the symbol of good and hope. This thesis describes these symbolisms as the purpose of light imagery to *keep building* the secondary world, which also becomes the purpose of artefacts since they serve as the vessels containing light. Tolkien and Aquinas scholar Jonathan McIntosh argues that Tolkien agrees on 'the role of art in acting as a "prism" through which the light of divine beauty may be further refracted' (*Flame:* 23). McIntosh's observation relates to Tolkien's life and ideas in general; however, it reverberates in his subcreated artefacts as they become manifestations of Ilúvatar both literally and metaphorically: these artefacts not only contain his light, but also are the embodiments of the creative force first practised and revealed by Ilúvatar, and then applied by the Valar and Elves.

Building on McIntosh, this thesis takes the argument further by asserting that light is a critical imagery not only in Tolkien's life and experiences related to the primary world, but also in Tolkien's subcreation: the light in artefacts is a refracted form of the Flame Imperishable, set at Arda's heart by Ilúvatar. Based on how Melkor seeks the Flame Imperishable to 'bring into Being things of his own' (*S:* 16), McIntosh stretches his reading to discuss the Flame Imperishable as the power to create out of nothing:

> Two things may be noted about the Flame Imperishable here: first, it is, at least as viewed by Melkor, the only means by which one's own thoughts might be "brought into Being," suggesting that it is a kind of power to create *ex nihilo,* to bestow, that is, existence as such. Second, it is said that Melkor does not find the Flame Imperishable, "for it is with Ilúvatar," indicating that this power to create *ex nihilo* is something exclusive to the Creator himself. (*Flame:* 52)

Building on McIntosh, this thesis asserts that Ilúvatar's light, and so the Flame Imperishable as its earthly form, have everything to do with creative power. What McIntosh fails to explore here is what happens with the Flame Imperishable after Arda is made. As discussed further in sections 3.1 and 3.2, this flame is temporarily and partially captured in artefacts. Their light thus manifests the power to create *ex nihilo* within the limited framework of spatiotemporality which all these artefacts are subject to: their light literally brings animals, plants and places to life, defines time, gives hope, and defies Melkor's destructive powers by simply defending, practising and centralising *life and existence.* Built on these qualities, the secondary world reveals a unique philosophy: in Tolkien's subcreation, life, good and hope are only possible through Ilúvatar's light being contained in artefacts. There are specific instances where some of these artefacts are misused: the Silmarils lead different clans of Elves to clash and the Noldor to be banned from the Undying Lands until after the War of Wrath and thus the First Age. However, this does not change the fact that one remaining Silmaril is set in the skies in the form of the Star of Eärendil as a symbol of good and hope: 'Now when first Vingilot was set to sail in the seas of heaven, [...] the people of Middle-earth beheld it from afar and wondered, and they took it for a sign, and called it Gil-Estel, the Star of High Hope' (*S:* 250).

Going back to Tolkien's letter to Waldman, the second fundamental issue about light in artefacts is agency: as Tolkien assigns the capacity to *see* to the light of the Two Trees, this personification brings along the concept of agency. Agency is defined as 'ability or capacity to act or exert power; active working or operation; action, activity'.[8] Building on this definition, this thesis asserts that light has the overall agency to build the secondary world. Tolkien's letter implies a major, anthropomorphic perspective of light by describing light's capacity to see as both literal and metaphorical. Light in artefacts not only has the capacity to

[8] 'Agency', *OED Online.*

see things as they are, but also underlines the fantastic characteristics of Tolkien's imagined world where the Two Trees, which start all chains of light, have the ability to see things. I argue that Tolkien's anthropomorphic approach to light enables artefacts to have agency, which provides the secondary world with its fundamental quality of operating on Ilúvatar's providence. Mark J. P. Wolf, whose books provide an up-close analysis of the elements of world-building,[9] looks at this quality along with many others required for world-building in general, and identifies *invention, completeness and consistency* as the key properties of a secondary world. He constructs these properties as a must to present readers and audiences with an *illusion of an independent world;* however, his discussions on Tolkien lack the specificity to work on the secondary world in depth, let alone focusing on the significance of light imagery in Arda. What Tolkien defines as literary belief and discusses as *Secondary Belief* in 'On Fairy-Stories' is described as an illusion by Wolf. The most relevant definition of illusion reads as 'the fact or condition of being deceived or deluded by appearances, or an instant of this; a mental state involving the attribution of reality to what is unreal; a false conception or idea; a deception, delusion, fancy'.[10] Therefore, although Wolf prefers to use a more general terminology to address secondary worlds both in prose and media via the word *illusion,* I find his choice negative and too broad to touch upon the significance of Tolkien's secondary world. However, Wolf and Tolkien's message is the same: a fictional world should convince us enough to be immersed in the inner reality of that world, and for Wolf, a secondary world can only achieve this via invention, completeness and consistency.

Wolf then moves on to define these three properties, yet his definitions are purposely broad at times to be applied to any secondary world, meaning they lack the depth to address Tolkien's constructed world in relation to light imagery, which this thesis aims to achieve. He defines invention as the degree of change from the primary world defaults in all the basics of life relevant to readers, like nature with its flora and fauna, the geographical conditions, physical characteristics, societies and ways of life in a realm. This change should also demonstrate credibility to provide the fictional nature of a secondary world with a logical framework for readers to make sense of and relate to it. Wolf does not take completeness literally since a secondary world can never be as complete as the primary world: he defines completeness as the extent to which an imaginary world can provide readers with background

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[9] Namely *Building Imaginary Worlds: the Theory and History of Subcreation* and *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: a Subcreation Studies Anthology.*
[10] 'Illusion', *OED Online.*

details about its characters and secondary world infrastructures. By using the concept of *secondary world infrastructures,* Wolf seeks to discuss a constructed world's main elements that underpin its completeness as a fantasy world. Amongst these infrastructures are maps, genealogies, timelines, cultures and mythology, all of which are also what readers use to make sense of the primary world. Completeness is critical in relation to these infrastructures because without sufficient background information, readers and audiences would not be convinced that the fictional work in question reveals a secondary world quality including all the necessary infrastructures. Wolf defines consistency, the last key property of a secondary world, as the degree of plausibility, logic and coherence between inventions revealing secondary world infrastructures. Although these three key properties are useful to analyse light imagery in Arda, this thesis asserts that Tolkien's world-building is unique: light stands for all the key properties and provides the secondary world with all the fundamental infrastructures that it needs to be regarded, discussed and analysed as a secondary world.

Building on Wolf, I argue that Tolkien achieves invention, completeness and consistency solely through the journey of light: transmission of light from artefact to another forms *chains of light*, which play a consistent, effective and major role in creating, defining, adapting, balancing, deepening and completing secondary world infrastructures. Among these three properties, invention is particularly achieved by light imagery on all its levels. In his article 'Concerning the "Sub" in "Subcreation": The Act of Creating Under', Wolf's exploration of invention branches out into four different levels: *nominal, cultural, natural and ontological*. Nominal level points to inventing new names, phrases, and in its deepest form, new languages. Cultural level regards any different race, tradition, art and creative practice in a secondary world. Natural level includes new geographical features, continents, flora and fauna. The most difficult one to achieve of all, invention on an ontological level, requires defining laws of physics, boundaries of existence, and logic and philosophy behind these in a secondary world.

Light imagery takes an active part in all of these in Arda. On the nominal level, Ilúvatar's light manifests itself with different names in Arda, like the Flame Imperishable or the Secret Fire. Different clans of Elves get their names based on their relationship with light imagery; *Eldar* meaning 'People of the Stars' (*S:* 326), *Sindar* underlining that 'the Grey Elves were not of the Light (of Valinor)' (*S:* 348). Influence of light imagery on the nominal level is reiterated on the cultural level: light also defines cultural differences between

different clans of Elves, based on whether they have seen the light of the Two Trees or not. Light brings the nature of Middle-earth to life via the Lamps. Light establishes Arda's spatiotemporal rules by defining and redefining time perception via the Two Trees, and then via the Sun and Moon. Light *is* the main invention leading to smaller inventions on these four different levels.

Therefore, this thesis argues that there are two main issues about light imagery in the secondary world: purpose and agency. This introduction chapter addresses these issues by building on Wolf's concept of secondary world infrastructures,[11] and discussing Stefan Ekman and Audrey Isabel Taylor's new insights regarding Wolf's analysis. This chapter also explores and discusses the secondary world's philosophical background, which is shaped by the purposefulness of light imagery as a diegetic world-builder. Building on Wolf, Ekman and Taylor, Chapter Three analyses how the agency of artefacts introduces invention, completeness and consistency into the secondary world. Chapter Three also relates to lapsarian qualities of light by analysing the prelapsarian light in postlapsarian artefacts along with Thomas Aquinas' influence on Tolkien as discussed by McIntosh. The main primary sources of this thesis are *The Silmarillion, The Lord of the Rings* and *The History of Middle-earth* series. I mostly focus on *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* as the central spines of the internal chronology and as a relatively stable version of the mythology: Christopher Tolkien's influence on and contribution to *The Silmarillion*'s publishing cannot be disregarded; however, compared to the comparative nature of the earlier drafts in *The History of Middle-earth,* this thesis still accepts *The Silmarillion* as a more consistent, coherent and complete account of the Elder Days of Arda. Although the constructed nature of *The Silmarillion* is the best place to trace ideas, I bring in alternative ideas from *The History of Middle-earth* when relevant to show how some of Tolkien's ideas on light persisted while others changed.

Based on this thesis outline, which introduces diegetic subcreation and the agency brought into Arda by light imagery, I argue that Tolkien assigns a diegetic task of world-building to light. The phrase 'diegetic subcreation' refers to subcreation within subcreation, and since Tolkien's subcreation is a literary project, I regard any subcreation taking place in Arda as diegetic. What would happen if we take light imagery out of the

[11] As discussed further in section 1.2.

narrative? How would we perceive the secondary world? This thesis asserts that without light imagery, Tolkien's secondary world would not even be established enough to provide readers with invention, completeness and consistency, and the secondary world infrastructures would not be formed properly to underpin these key properties. This thesis also explores how light triggers creative processes in the secondary world: from pondering on God's creation of the primary world to understanding his authorial ability to subcreate, Tolkien sees light as the manifestation of divine power in the primary world, as he explains to his son Christopher in his letter number 89 (2000: 99). Therefore, what he does in turn with his subcreation is to present artefacts that are the manifestations of Ilúvatar as their light brings life, good and hope into Arda. That is how his constructed world becomes a tool to understand the metaphysics of the primary world: this thesis analyses light imagery in Arda with the ultimate aim to highlight the significance of fantasy as a genre in providing new insights into the creation of our world.

My main argument about Tolkien's creative process pertains to subcreation within subcreation, which is not a new concept to fantasy literature. However, it requires the entirety of Tolkien's created world to be examined, which is still a rare practice in Tolkien scholarship. Previous discussions about diegetic subcreation focus only on characters in fictional worlds and their artistic capacity (Tolkien 2000; Lauro 2008; Wolf 2012; Tolkien 2014) whereas this thesis focuses on light as the image engaging with diegetic subcreation. Therefore, this thesis also addresses the unanswered question: what does Tolkien's thematization of light reveal regarding the subcreative[12] nature of the secondary world and thus the implications of God in the primary world? The fact that Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic is well known by all Tolkien scholars, and many of them explored how the main elements of Christianity are presented implicitly in the secondary world (Flieger 2002; McIntosh 2017; Beal 2018). By exploring the subcreative role of light in the secondary world, this thesis asserts that Tolkien's universe introduces readers to a new metaphysical insight regarding the nature of creation of the primary world: light can be the ultimate creative force also for our universe. This new insight also reveals how fantasy as a genre enables readers to explore, analyse and interpret the themes of creation and creativity, and how it underpins the significance of the human author's imagination in interpreting creative

[12] Not 'subcreated', which would present us with an authorial or readerly perspective. The word subcreative refers to the diegetic subcreation; I discuss the secondary world as it is, critically. For further explanation see section 1.2.

processes on multiple levels of reality (the primary and secondary world) within a metaphysical framework.

1.1 Original Contribution to Knowledge

Secondary worlds enable us to discover realms other than our world, whose physical characteristics like geological and geographical features, natural habitat and atmosphere we are familiar with. Every world-building experience, may it be actually narrating it, reading, watching, or sharing it via different channels of communication, opens the door to our independence from the realities of our world like how we perceive time linearly, how we perceive space in three dimensions and how we experience our lifetime as temporal. However, as long as whatever is built is still a *world*, it will inescapably introduce its spatiotemporal laws to establish and maintain its inner consistency. Arda is no exception: first, although its continents are ruled by completely different perceptions of time (the Undying Lands versus Middle-earth), time is still linear for the whole planet. Secondly, although 'the world was indeed made round' (*S*: 281) only after the Drowning of Númenor, maps point to a three dimensional reality starting from the Third Age, and the laws of nature in the primary world like gravitation and motion are also valid for every single being in Arda. For this secondary world, chronotope[13] is essential.

To present the significance of light imagery in this thesis' original contribution to the previous scholarship on Tolkien, it is essential to address the definitions of the primary and secondary world. In 'On Fairy-Stories', Tolkien discusses genres of fairy-stories and fantasy, and coins the terms *Sub-creation*, *Primary World*, and *Secondary World*. To define these terms, this thesis builds on Tolkien's discussions on them in relation to each other. The first time he mentions the word *primary* is when he discusses in what context Andrew Lang uses the word 'belief' in his introduction to the first of the *Fairy Books* series: 'It seems fairly clear that Lang was using *belief* in its ordinary sense: belief that a thing exists or can happen in the real (primary) world' (*OFS:* 52). Here Tolkien not only introduces the word 'primary' to his discussion on children's belief in the reality of fairy stories, but also underpins the metaphysics of both our world and an imaginary one: both exist in their own ways, on their own levels, but an imagined world has to depend on the real world, which is the *primary* one.

[13] Building on Mikhail Bakhtin, I use the term chronotope to refer to the way in which the matters of space and time are presented in the legendarium.

The word ‘primary’ thus points to an imaginary world’s secondariness to and dependence on our world. A secondary world has its laws like ours, and we are connected to it through literary belief: an enchanted state which lets our imagination be immersed in the secondary reality of the subcreated world. According to Tolkien, when literary belief is lost or turns into a weak suspension of disbelief, we find ourselves back in the primary world. Despite addressing the same practice of human creativity, the term subcreation emphasises an aspect different from a secondary world. Tolkien regards *Sub-creation* as a successful story-maker’s *Art* which has an inner consistency of reality different from mere power of *Imagination:* ‘The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) “the inner consistency of reality” is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation’ (*OFS:* 59). Through his addition of the prefix ‘sub-’, Tolkien’s invention of the term subcreation also highlights how humankind’s creativity has to be dependent on *ex nihilo* creation of God. Therefore, Tolkien uses subcreation to discuss the making of imaginary worlds as analogical to and derivative of God's creation of our world.

Tolkien reflects on his understanding of the relationship between the primary and secondary world through light imagery: how he literally and metaphorically uses light in his letters, *Mythopoeia* and ‘On Fairy-Stories’ reverberates in the secondary world, thus becoming a binding force between these two worlds. Obvious though it may seem, no previous scholarship addresses the role of light imagery on its own for the entire timeline of Arda. Verlyn Flieger, for instance, ends up with a similar argument to what this thesis asserts; however, she starts her discussion in *Splintered Light* with a focus on words: according to her, Tolkien’s subcreation is built on stories. However, what are his stories built on? As Tolkien scholars, should we simply appreciate that his main tool is word, and question no further, or should we explore his narrative further to analyse different imageries (in the case of this thesis, light imagery) as main tools in his world-building process? As for the vast potential of secondary worlds to be explored beyond the narratives that depend on them, Wolf differentiates between stories and the worlds that they reveal:

> Worlds often exist to support the stories set in them, and they can even have stories embedded in them [...] Yet, while the telling of a story inevitably also tells us about the world in which the story takes place, storytelling and world-building are different processes that can sometimes come into conflict. World-building [...] often results in

> data, exposition, and digressions that provide information about a world, slowing down narrative or even bringing it to a halt temporarily [...]
>
> A world can have multiple stories set in it, and need not be dependent on any particular story for its existence. However, story and world usually work together, enriching each other, and if an author has been careful in the construction of a story, the world will appear to exist beyond the immediate events, locations, and characters covered in the story. (*Imaginary Worlds:* 20-21)

Building on Wolf, I argue that the secondary world initially depends on the compilation of stories about Arda: everything related to Tolkien's subcreation started with one of his early poems[14] rather than a map, drawing, sketch, appendix or any form of external narrative that directly points to a world-building process different from story-telling. After Tolkien's lifelong work on his secondary world, his son Christopher Tolkien enabled *The Silmarillion,* the final version of his cosmogonic stories, to be published. In each of these stories, light imagery is always the central motif, implicitly or explicitly. This fact that light imagery consciously functions across all the cosmogonic stories results with light being the diegetic world-builder at the background of the entire secondary world narrative, which is the main argument of this thesis.

Within the framework of formalism,[15] this thesis applies close reading of the legendarium narrative by focusing on light imagery, and this approach initially comes across as presenting stories as the main focus. However, the more the legendarium narrative adds up to chains of light as discussed further in Chapter Three, the more this thesis reveals the bigger picture about the secondary world that its existence depends on the journey of light: the vision of Arda as a light imagery in the Void, beyond the universe; the Flame Imperishable set at Arda's heart; thousands of years of struggle between good and evil, centering around the Silmarils as light imageries. Tolkien had indeed been careful in constructing his stories for many years of his lifetime, and the posthumously published stories have revealed that his subcreated world is now raised on the pillars of light. It exists beyond the immediate narrative; both in the paratexts (genealogies of the Elves, index of names, appendix to *The Silmarillion*) and in the imagination of all its readers as a realm shared across many different communities in the primary world. In his book, Wolf's approach to world-building focuses on

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[14] Tolkien defines *The Voyage of Éarendel the Evening Star* as the 'first poem' of his mythology called Valinor (*LT II:* 271).
[15] As discussed further in section 1.2.

what happens at the background of stories, pointing particularly to maps, glossaries and appendices provided by the author. This thesis claims that in Tolkien's constructed world, there is a unique condition: however hidden it may be in the stories, the diegetic world-building by light imagery is in plain sight, supported by its continuous presence in all the significant events throughout the timeline of Arda and in the external chronology.

As well as the secondary world's key properties and main infrastructures, its relatability to readers is also underpinned by light imagery. In one of his articles, Wolf defines relatability as a secondary world's analogous structures and experiences being relatable to the primary world. He formulates in words what relatability should mean for a secondary world:

> We might refer to these basic requirements for such analogies as *space, time,* and *character;* in other words, *someone* who is *somewhere* doing *something.* Or, more particularly, *beings* living in an *environment* using *resources,* from which some kind of narrative goal or conflict can develop. ('Sub in Subcreation': 6)

As per Wolf's aim in his article, this formula is primarily very general; it can be applied to any narrative about a secondary world. However, for Tolkien's legendarium, this formula would somehow have to include light imagery. '*Someone'* has to be a form of light, or they have to be in a place existing thanks to light, or they have to do '*something'* related to light. As explicitly stated in *The Silmarillion:* 'the Valar took to themselves shape and hue [...] Moreover their shape comes of their knowledge of the visible World, rather than the World itself; and they need it not' (*S:* 21). This implies that before they willingly gain their physical form and become the Valar, the Ainur are simply spiritual beings. They have no physical appearance, and there are no descriptions of how they look. The only way they are described is via light: Ilúvatar kindles them with the Flame Imperishable (*S:* 15). They become the Valar when they descend to Arda, which exists thanks to Ilúvatar setting the Flame Imperishable at its heart. The Valar later on illuminate Middle-earth and bring it to life via the Lamps they make. When the Lamps are destroyed, they migrate to Aman and hallow it, again, with the Two Trees full of light. The Valar define spatiotemporal rules via light. They are *beings of light, living in an environment existing thanks to light, using the Flame Imperishable.*

In her book, before analysing the significance of light imagery in Tolkien's works in general, Flieger starts her discussions with interpreting words as the basis and constituents of stories, and regards words as the main tools of Tolkien's myth-making. It is certainly the case

that as she moves on to analyse *Mythopoeia* after Tolkien's linguistic essays, her ideas also take a different direction:

> This last shift from the prose passage is the most crucial, for it alters the medium of creation from word to light. The sub-creative process is now the splintering or dividing and recombining of light to create the 'living shapes that move from mind to mind,' [...] The change from word to light appears to be a shift from the literal to the metaphoric [...] Something instinctive in the use of language reaches for metaphors of light to convey mental as well as physical perception [...] For him the Word is Light, enlightenment. (*SL:* 43-44)

If the medium of word instinctively guides us towards light imagery in the secondary world, why can't we explore this concept in its entirety, without its implications for Tolkien's words or story-telling? Light imagery is in its strongest purpose and form within the framework of world-building rather than story-telling, and I claim that Flieger's description of the power of stories also outlines the power of light imagery in Tolkien's world-building:

> It is more effective to show light than to try and explain it, easier to imagine darkness than to analyse it, simpler and more direct to illustrate through character and event than to expatiate on the relative natures of hope and despair […] it was easiest of all for one who loved and lived in words to picture light and dark as actualities and allow them to embody their own values. (*SL:* 10)

Here Flieger explores the potential of stories for Tolkien to reveal imageries: his light imagery is unique, powerful and symbolic as it embodies its own value via readers visualising it. Building on Flieger, I argue that 'to show light', 'to imagine darkness', 'to illustrate' polarities, and 'to picture light', that is, to write stories inducing *secondary belief*, Tolkien focuses on the metaphysics of light as well as the medium of word. As a Tolkien scholar, I look beyond *how* light imagery exists within the narrative to be able to answer the question *why* it does so. In fact, all these verbs that Flieger mentions are *words on paper,* but they all point to a formation of imageries in readers' minds in its most independent form, considering they all relate to world-building, thus fantasy as a genre. Flieger refers to Tolkien's strength in bringing light and dark imageries to life via words: like any other piece of written literature, Tolkien's literary project is created by words, but its existence goes beyond words after creating imageries in readers' minds, which no longer depend solely on his narratives to visualise the secondary world. And since his narratives reveal a secondary

world, it also has the opportunity to show the true potential of light imagery in diegetic world-building. Independent Tolkien scholar Simon J. Cook's argument that Tolkien's words inescapably lead to fantasy images, which I refer to as artefacts throughout this thesis, may be considered as similar to Flieger's discussion of stories revealing imageries:

> In Middle-earth the magic of human words was wrought in material form. The idea of such a magical art arose in J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy in the wake of his 1939 lecture on fairy stories. In the lecture, human fantasy had been identified as the product of a particular kind of linguistic operation. Now Tolkien began to describe a fantastic form of art, analogous to mortal fantasy but freed from human limitations and so no longer bound to linguistic practice. The earlier account of what the human sub-creator does with thought and uttered sound now became a model for what magical beings in Arda may do with spirit and matter. Sauron's forging of the One Ring was conceived, as Fëanor's making of the Silmarils was re-conceived, as a fantasy image of the operations of human fantasy. (2016: 1)

Cook regards the One Ring and Silmarils as 'fantasy images of the operations of human fantasy', and thus underlines the multi-layered nature of artistic creation: what Tolkien does via words is reiterated in his constructed world, where Arda's artists make artefacts 'with spirit and matter'. I take Cook's idea further; to exist in imaginary realms in readers' minds, the secondary world needs dynamic interplay between light and other secondary world infrastructures as much as it needs Tolkien's words. His stories provide readers with a coherent, consistent and complete (as per Wolf's definition as discussed at the beginning of this chapter) secondary world thanks to light imagery. His legendarium narrative is held together and brought to life by the impact of light imagery on Arda's spatiotemporality. Without the complex invention and elaborate contextual representation of light, his words would not be able to point to a meaningful story, let alone a secondary world. His legendarium narrative also points to transmission of light, which is inescapable for artists like Varda, Aulë, Manwë and Fëanor while they make new artefacts like stars, the Sun, Moon and Silmarils. There is a separate capability in artefacts allowing them to demonstrate agency via light. It is not artists but light of artefacts forming chains and engaging with diegetic world-building by bringing life, good and hope into Arda: the Valar cannot illuminate Middle-earth without making the Lamps, Yavanna cannot find joy until the Two Trees grow, shine and introduce time perception, Fëanor is not content until he makes the Silmarils, of which inner fire is their *life*.

The original contribution of this thesis directly relates to Flieger and Wolf's understanding of the use of subcreation. Flieger ponders on the function of a secondary world:

> Sub-creation thus has a purpose beyond itself. The making of a Secondary World is not simply the production of enchantment as its end result. The Secondary World can and should redirect our attention to the Primary World and through that World to its Maker. It should enable us to regain, to recollect what we have always known but have forgotten to see. Through imitation of God, man has the opportunity to recover His works. (*SL:* 25)

According to Flieger, Tolkien's subcreation points to something 'beyond itself', something related to the nature of divine creation in the primary world. At the end of *Building Imaginary Worlds,* Wolf reiterates Flieger's idea of subcreation as a way of rediscovering *ex nihilo* creation of God:

> Subcreation is not just a desire, but a need and a right; it renews our vision and gives us new perspective and insight into ontological questions that might otherwise escape our notice within the default assumptions we make about reality. Subcreated worlds also direct our attention beyond themselves, moving us beyond the quotidian and the material, increasing our awareness of how we conceptualize, understand, and imagine the Primary World. And the more aware we are of it, the better we can appreciate the Divine design of Creation itself and our place in it. (*Imaginary Worlds:* 287)

Building on Flieger and Wolf, this thesis argues that Tolkien's secondary world acts like a mirror. Therefore, whatever Tolkien must have felt about and thought of in relation to light imagery in this world, he reflects this in his subcreation, which in turn reveals a new insight regarding the metaphysics of our world; how it exists and what it needs to do so. Tolkien's authorial world-building thus becomes only a stepping stone for readers to start seeing the big picture: regarding the creation of the primary world and Tolkien's secondary world, the blueprint is composed of light.

By analysing the nature of diegetic world-building for light in Arda, this thesis eventually sheds light on Tolkien's understanding of the existence of the primary world in relation to light imagery. For instance, as the godhead of the secondary world, Ilúvatar has no physical presence in Arda and even when some of the Ainur decide to descend to Arda, he

remains beyond the universe with the rest: ‘Thus it came to pass that of the Ainur some abode still with Ilúvatar beyond the confines of the World’ (*S:* 20). In her article, Flieger takes the argument a step further and discusses Ilúvatar’s absence in Arda by questioning his power of *ex nihilo* creation:

> It is the Ainur, not Eru, who actually create Tolkien’s world. They sing its plan in the Great Music which they make from the themes Eru propounds to them, and from that plan fabricate the material world. The rest of Tolkien’s vast mythology is enacted without Eru, involving chiefly the Ainur and the Children of llúvatar. Father of All he may be, but he has no further role in the action [...] He remains throughout the Unknown God, unknowable and unreachable in his oneness, perceivable and approachable only to the extent by which the part can represent the whole. (1986: 132)

Despite agreeing with Flieger’s idea of a godhead with no visible action for the rest of the world, I argue that it is neither the Ainur nor Ilúvatar who creates the secondary world. Flieger’s discussion of Ilúvatar’s absence is within a practical framework; pointing to how the Ainur sing the Great Music, and then how they start their endless efforts to shape Arda when they descend and become the Valar. Reading Ilúvatar’s absence through the same practical lens, I claim that from the very beginning, that is, even before the cosmogony, it is Ilúvatar’s light that represents him by being omnipotent and omnipresent. The Ainur cannot sing without being kindled with the Flame Imperishable. *Eru’s plan* for the material world cannot be materialised without its vision appearing as a form of light. And the rest of stories are underpinned by light imagery: artefacts with light become his only manifestations for Arda’s denizens. This argument inescapably originates in the primary world, where there is no God that Tolkien can physically see: his letter number 89 shows that in one of his visits to the Catholic church St Gregory’s, as a devout Roman Catholic he has an epiphany of belief in God by witnessing light imagery instead. And what he does with his belief is to put it in practice through world-building, which he claims as a natural and inescapable method in ‘On Fairy-stories’: ‘Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker’ (*OFS:* 66). And his world-building includes light as the diegetic world-builder in turn.

Although the relationship between creation and subcreation has been discussed by the previous scholarship as I have mentioned on the previous pages, Tolkien scholars have focused on his authorial experience of subcreation in relation to his understanding of God's creation of the primary world. Their discussions do not engage in diegetic world-building as the main topic, which this thesis argues as a critical process to understand the relationship between creation and subcreation. I argue that light makes Arda, the Earth of the secondary world, both literally and metaphorically: it is at the core of Arda as the Flame Imperishable, it brings places to light and life, it provides historically significant events (like the beginning of days, awakening of the Elves and Men, unrest of the Noldor, battles between Melkor's armies and those of the Elves and Men) with a rational and consistent framework throughout Arda's timeline by directly and deeply engaging with these. Light imagery thus reveals the secondary world's journey from potentiality to actuality.

So how can artefacts' light, which already belongs to Arda, interactively build the world that it is a part of? Despite being a fantasy world, Arda is of diegetically physical matter and it is subject to spatiotemporal rules like our planet Earth does, it thus needs time perception for both readers and Arda's denizens to process and understand physical space narrated by Tolkien. As Wolf also pointed out:

> Once an imaginary world's initial differences from the actual world are established, they will often act as constraints on further invention, suggesting or even requiring other laws or limitations that will define a world further as the author figures out all the consequences of the laws as they are put into effect. (*Imaginary Worlds:* 17)

Tolkien's constructed world is no exception. When the Valar have to migrate to Aman, they call this continent *the Undying Lands*. However, this is just to highlight the difference between Aman and Middle-earth: the Valar do not reside in Middle-earth any more, and as immortal beings, they choose Aman as home. This does not have to mean that Aman is immortal itself; its decay is much slower than that of Middle-earth, but it is still a part of Arda. As the messengers of the Valar once tell the Númenoreans, it is the type of people, that is, the Valar, who bless Aman, after all: 'For it is not the land of Manwë that makes its people deathless, but the Deathless that dwell therein have hallowed the land' (*S:* 264). Aman thus will perish when the world comes to an end, so it is bound with Arda's spatiotemporality. That is why the Two Trees grow in Aman, to bring along the Years of Trees underpinning

Aman's existence within Arda's spatiotemporality. Later in Arda's timeline, the making of the Sun would mark the next age called the Years of the Sun, pointing to Arda's mortal nature more than any other spatiotemporal invention of Tolkien related to the secondary world.

However, both the Two Trees and Sun contain Ilúvatar's light: backtracking in Arda's timeline, the light of the Sun comes from the single fruit of gold belonging to the long destroyed Laurelin, one of the Two Trees (*S:* 99). Laurelin was grown upon Yavanna's song (*S:* 38), which highlights Ilúvatar's influence on Arda via artefacts as the making of the Two Trees intertwines music and light. In the cosmogony, the first thing the godhead Ilúvatar did was to gift the Ainur with the power of *ex nihilo* creation via song as well as kindling them with the Flame Imperishable: 'He spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music [...] "Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music [...] I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable"' (*S:* 15). By growing the Two Trees, in addition to putting her gift of singing into practice, Yavanna also evokes the Flame Imperishable, which proves that Ilúvatar is the original source of light for Telperion and Laurelin exactly like he is the original source of light for the Ainur. Since Ilúvatar's light is the ultimate symbol of perfection with its spaceless, timeless abstractness, it underpins the critical ability of artefacts in relation to space and time: by containing Ilúvatar's light, they can challenge spatiotemporal rules even when they are still parts of it. For instance, the Two Trees are killed, which is a direct outcome of Arda's spatiotemporal rules that point to mortality and finiteness. However, their light still lives in the Sun and Moon, which introduce a new type of time perception. Two of the Silmarils are lost but one is set in skies till the end of Arda: 'Morgoth himself the Valar thrust through the Door of Night beyond the Walls of the World, into the Timeless Void; and a guard is set for ever on those walls, and Eärendil keeps watch upon the ramparts of the sky' (*S:* 254-255). In this subcreated world which cannot escape from its own spatiotemporal rules, light imagery serves as the main medium to either define or challenge Arda's ontological foundations.

1.2 Method and Theory

This thesis engages in two main literary theories: the formalist criticism as reanalysed by Caroline Levine (2017), and critical world-building introduced by Ekman and Taylor (2016) based on Wolf's analysis of imaginary worlds (2012). Formalism solely focuses on the text as the subject of study, disregarding any cultural, social or authorial influence on the text.

It defends the text as the self-contained object that should be analysed on its own, along with its literary devices and overall structure, to reveal its true quality. The formalist theory provides this thesis with a close reading method: scanning of the keyword *light* to prove that light is the diegetic world-builder of the secondary world. To analyse light's function in the entirety of the secondary world, I need to study light imagery in both its literal meaning and metaphors, meaning the main argument of this thesis is primarily based on the *form of light*.

The problematic nature of the concept of form surprisingly enables this thesis to explore the unnoticed potential of formalism as a theory that can be applied to analyse the role of a single imagery within the genre of fantasy. For instance, in her comprehensive analysis, Levine provides this vast potential of formalism via a comprehensive explanation and definition of form:

> Over many centuries, *form* has gestured to a series of conflicting, sometimes even paradoxical meanings [...] Even within literary studies, the vocabulary of formalism has always been a surprising kind of hodge-podge, put together from rhetoric, prosody, genre theory, structural anthropology, philology, linguistics, folklore, narratology, and semiotics.
>
> All of the historical uses of the term, despite their richness and variety, do share a common definition: "form" always indicates *an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping.* (*Forms:* 2-3)

Building on Levine, this thesis accepts that forms are complex by nature. Therefore, the method that I use in this thesis to analyse the complexity of the form of light is a challenge to the present analytical models related to formalism in literary analysis. This thesis analyses the form of light in the secondary world, and as discussed further in Chapter Three, light imagery in Arda 'indicates an arrangement': in artefacts, it mainly comes in *twos, threes, and forms chains.* These aspects reveal an order and pattern of light imagery in building the secondary world. The formalist methodology applied by this thesis also reveals how influential a single imagery (light) can be in understanding a secondary world in relation to its infrastructures.

By analysing light as a form, this thesis also contributes to filling the gap between the application of formalism in politics and in literary analysis. Levine advocates this mission by underlining the significance of her new approach to the concept of form:

> Broadening our definition of form to include social arrangements has, as we will see, immediate methodological consequences. The traditionally troubling gap between the form of the literary text and its content and context dissolves. Formalist analysis turns out to be as valuable to understanding sociopolitical institutions as it is to reading literature. Forms are at work everywhere. (*Forms:* 2)

One of Levine's suggestions based on her combined analysis of formalism and historicism is to discuss forms in a narrative along with the social aspects surrounding them *within the narrative*. This is a 'commonplace practice', but since it 'is currently scattered across schools of thought and approaches' (*Forms:* 3), what she aims to do is to gather varied aspects and insights of literary studies to reveal the overall significance and complexity of forms in literary analysis. This lens underpins how light imagery can physically and symbolically build Arda, the world of which light itself becomes a part. In addition, chains of light reveal how light imagery points to Arda's spatiotemporal rules, cultural and social changes taking place throughout its timeline. Levine looks at how influential forms can be in understanding politics rather than applying her new approach to form also to literature. However, by building on recent literary theorists like Wai-Chee Dimock, Frances Ferguson and Franco Moretti, who all claim that forms can travel,[16] she narrows down her focus and explains the role of forms in politics mainly as 'imposing order on space' and 'organising time' (*Forms:* 3). These acts of form are the most relevant aspects of Levine's argument to this thesis, as they are reiterated in Arda in the form of light imagery, which is responsible for introducing spatiotemporality to Arda.

Building on Levine's claim that 'a specific form can be put to use in unexpected ways that expand our general sense of that form's abundances' (*Forms:* 6), this thesis focuses on the form of light with the potentiality of being the diegetic world-builder. This argument aims to open a new window into the significance of how Tolkien engages in world-building to understand how he ponders on God in the primary world. However, this ultimate reflection

[16] Meaning forms 'can survive across cultures and time periods, sometimes enduring through vast distances of time and space' (*Forms:* 5).

on our real world is only inevitable, and the main focus of this thesis is by no means any biographical circumstances of Tolkien: as Levine analyses the capacity of forms rather than their users (authors, artists etc.), this thesis analyses light imagery as an inherent literary device of the secondary world narratives to discuss its function in Tolkien's world-building process. That is why I read the legendarium narrative through the lens of formalism. Although this thesis builds on Levine's lens of formalism as a challenge to the classic literary theories, this approach still does not directly address world-building in literature. As Wolf also points out: 'the criteria used in more traditional literary criticism are not world-centred and constitute a different focus, one that leaves out much that is important to an analysis of world-building' (*Imaginary Worlds:* 9). There is a non-negligible lack of scholarship addressing the act of world-building and applying different schools of literary theory to analyse world-building processes. This problematic position of traditional literary theories in analysing subcreated worlds has made me search for more relevant previous scholarship. Therefore, I also read Tolkien's legendarium through the critical world-building lens, by taking the dynamic interplay approach introduced by Ekman and Taylor.

Despite being pioneers, Ekman and Taylor are not the only scholars who suggest a critical reading of world-building. Jeff Vance Martin and Gretchen Sneegas build on Ekman and Taylor's theoretical framework to critically analyse secondary worlds in their political and social relationship with the primary world (2020). However, I still build on Ekman and Taylor's approach since they analyse secondary worlds as self-referential products, which goes in parallel with the formalist lens through which I read Tolkien's legendarium. Although Wolf analyses imaginary worlds in his scholarship, according to Ekman and Taylor, while discussing the subcreation theory, Wolf 'largely leaves out the role of the critic in favour of authors and (fan) audiences' ('Critical Wb': 8). Wolf's deliberate focus on the experiences and thoughts of authors and fans has led Ekman and Taylor to focus on the disregarded position of the critic by questioning how world-building is understood in the context of literary criticism, from the eyes of a critic. They thus advocate the method critics use to approach a secondary world: a more systematic and comprehensive way than authors or readers choose because critics analyse 'a world through a combination of their sequential presentation, as complete world, and with critical interpretation and theoretical filters in place, applying all three perspectives simultaneously' ('Critical Wb': 7).[17] Critical

[17] Regarding the first perspective, the sequential presentation of the narratives building a world for its entirety, I find this particularly problematic for Tolkien's universe because of the richness and variety of the stories

world-building is important to my project for three reasons: it enables an analysis of Tolkien's universe in its totality, which reveals the consistent and coherent diegetic world-building, it focuses on the text itself (which goes in parallel with the formalist lens), and it provides the theoretical framework to build on the previous scholarship of world-building.

Ekman and Taylor claim that authorial world-building is problematic to analyse simply because we have no direct access to the author's mind. Readerly world-building depends on readers' personal interpretations of the text in an order determined either by the author of a non-ergodic literary work, or by readers if it is a piece of ergodic literature. Even when these interpretations could be shared across communities, Ekman and Taylor agree on the fact that readerly world-building is solely hermeneutical based on Norman Holland's idea of world-building in readers' minds as a cognitive process (2009). Critical world-building, on the other hand, does not only deal with the text itself like authorial and readerly world-building do. It has to consider both authorial and readerly world-building; however, it also needs to analyse the text both sequentially and holistically in the way it reveals a secondary world. It is applied by *critics,* who should also be considered as *readers,* but *criticism,* what critics have to do with the text, is much more objective, systematic and methodological compared to authorial and readerly world-building. Building on Ekman and Taylor, I argue that authorial world-building focuses on strengthening consistency and completeness of a secondary world whereas readerly world-building cannot go beyond giving some insight into individual imagination and solely subjective interpretation of the secondary world. However, I aim to reveal diegetic world-building through prelapsarian imagery of light in artefacts to assert that Tolkien sees light as the manifestation of God in the primary world and he reflects this idea in the secondary world. This aim requires the dynamic interplay approach within the frameworks of critical world-building and formalism as I draw from close reading of the legendarium narrative to analyse the role of light imagery in relation to secondary world infrastructures while it engages with diegetic world-building.

Dynamic interplay 'takes into account the entirety of the world constructed, including the interplay between all its elements and the possible interpretations available to the critic who analyses it' ('Critical Wb': 14). The main focus of this thesis is light imagery as the

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published in his lifetime and posthumously. However, Ekman and Taylor imply that a critic should aim to analyse a secondary world with a certain sense of chronology such that the world in question could be discussed as a whole.

element that is responsible for Arda's construction. Ekman and Taylor's definition of dynamic interplay reiterates Wolf's analysis of the previous scholarship dealing with imaginary worlds:

> Imaginary worlds are occasionally considered tangentially, either from the point of view of a particular story set in them, or a particular medium in which they appear, but in either case the focus is too narrow for the world to be examined as a whole. Often when a world is noticed at all, it is only considered as a background for stories set in it, rather than a subject of study in itself. At the same time, a world is more difficult to encapsulate in a description or analysis than a particular story, character, or situation, making it easier to overlook. (*Imaginary Worlds:* 3)

This thesis accepts the challenge of analysing the entirety of Tolkien's subcreated world based on a single imagery as the diegetic world-builder, which is light. Ekman and Taylor's assessment of dynamic interplay within Wolf's concept of *secondary world infrastructures* lays the groundwork for this thesis to evaluate the entirety of the previous scholarship that is directly relevant to the role of imageries in world-building. Wolf claims that secondary world infrastructures are needed when a fictional world is created to the extent that *story*, which is at the heart of every narrative, is not sufficient on its own to support a fictional world any more: if there is so much background information regarding a fictional world, some infrastructures need to be in place for the author and readers to organise, process, evaluate and understand that world. Therefore, he introduces secondary world infrastructures, which originate from the necessity of basic spatiotemporal rules and human-specific elements (like the necessity of a character in a story). These infrastructures include philosophy, maps, timelines, genealogies, culture, language, nature and mythology (*Imaginary Worlds:* 107). I argue that secondary world infrastructures are essential to make a narrative understandable for readers by underpinning a secondary world's metaphysics, that is, how it exists and how different its existence is compared to that of the primary world.

Ekman and Taylor discuss Wolf's secondary world infrastructures as *building-blocks*, and argue that interconnectedness of building-blocks suggests 'a web of explicit, implied, and interpreted information about the world' ('Critical Wb': 7). This thesis analyses dynamic interplay between light imagery and both secondary world infrastructures and key properties to build Arda. The relationship between light imagery and these elements is dynamic as we

see artefacts being made continuously via transmission of light throughout Arda's timeline. And the nature of this relationship is interplay: light is captured in various forms, all of which have unique significance as I discuss throughout this thesis.

Considering dynamic interplay between light imagery and other elements in the secondary world, the previous scholarship has mainly focused on the opposition between light and dark and its implications in Tolkien's universe. This focus leads light imagery to be defined and discussed only in relation to dark, and leaves out potential meanings and functions of light on its own. For Flieger, 'the contrast and interplay of light and dark are essential elements of his fiction' (*SL:* 4) as this interplay represents all thematic oppositions (like good and evil, hope and despair, joy and grief, belief and doubt, free will and fate) on which Tolkien's work is built. Light and dark thus become Flieger's building-blocks for Tolkien's work. However, interplay does not necessarily occur between polarities in Tolkien's universe, particularly when light is more central to Arda than dark: as I discuss further in Chapter Three, the vision is made of Ilúvatar's light, therefore, despite being only conceptually familiar to the Ainur, darkness is practically nonexistent until light is introduced to the Ainur and then taken away from them:

> While the Ainur were yet gazing upon this vision, it was taken away and hidden from their sight; and it seemed to them that in that moment they perceived a new thing, Darkness, which they had not known before except in thought. (*S:* 19)

By applying dynamic interplay, I point to interplay between light imagery and the secondary world, and discuss how artefacts' agency and prelapsarian quality, which originate from their light, have an essential part in diegetic world-building. This approach suggests that the entirety of the secondary world is my object of study; I analyse light imagery throughout Arda's internal and external chronologies to explore how Tolkien's universe comes into being and how Tolkien's ideas on light have changed in time. By reading a text through the lens of critical world-building, fields of fantasy and literary criticism would discover more about our existence and how we perceive and reflect this in our works, and this would highlight the importance of fantasy as a genre in our lives more than ever.

1.3 Scope of the Thesis

The Silmarillion outlines the cosmogony of the secondary world through many stories, the origins of which lie in the Music of the Ainur. With the completion of this music, Arda is envisioned and physically started by the godhead Ilúvatar when he sends the Flame Imperishable at Arda's heart. In the legendarium, the Lamps and Two Trees are destroyed, and the Silmarils are forged and lost. By the end of the stories, only one remaining Silmaril sheds light to the outcome of the fates of the Noldor and Beleriand by defying time. From a broad perspective, *The Silmarillion* is all about putting into words how Arda is made and its three ages are unfolded via light imagery. First, Arda is envisioned as a form of light but marred even before it is created. Its perfect version can still be glimpsed ever and anon through artefacts. They are the only tools to define time, bring life and hope into Arda. Artefacts are made via transmission of light, though in a declining process. As I discuss further in Chapter Three, the decline in artefacts' light is an essential part of their survival strategy against the changing nature of the passing time: as things get smaller and swifter, and life in Arda gets shorter, artefacts adapt to their changing environment, and every following artefact contains light from the previous one in a declining manner. Their embodiment of perfection is thus declining; it becomes more temporary and partial. However, their light still enables them to engage in diegetic world-building as its divine power originates in Ilúvatar. It thus brings along life, good and hope into Arda by embracing the prelapsarian quality of the divine.

The Lord of the Rings is the follow-up story of light as the diegetic world-builder, which as a role has started with the creation of Arda via the Flame Imperishable in *The Silmarillion.* In the trilogy, the Third Age in Arda reveals the last artefacts in the chains of light, the first artefacts of which have emerged in *The Silmarillion.* This time, the stories revolving around light imagery and its existence, protection, transmission and survival are more down to earth as the focus is on the race of Men, and the decline in artefacts' light is even more emphasised via the Phial of Galadriel, the last artefact to conclude the second chain as I discuss further in Chapter Three. However, the significance of light in its engagement with diegetic world-building is still present and repeated. The prelapsarian aspect of light imagery is highlighted from the viewpoint of Men in their encounters with the immortal, otherworldly Elves. The metaphysical significance of light imagery in building smaller realms within the secondary world is revealed through the timeless existence of Lothlórien.

The History of Middle-earth includes 12 volumes, among which 2 of them are particularly important for this thesis. In the first volume, *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I,* the first tale of *The Cottage of Lost Play* is marked by the idea of children searching for a realm of joy and yarning. Here are the beginnings of diegetic world building: children's boundless power of imagination, the natural human right to *Escape* to a realm of *Fantasy*, the path of which is opened by the fairies, and children narrating tales that reveal a fantasy world, which will be called *Arda* in the finalised drafts. Although the earlier drafts and majority of the finalised drafts are written by Tolkien before his famous essay 'On Fairy-stories', theoretically the tale serves as a transition text from the essay to the first drafts of "The Silmarillion". What Tolkien theorises and naturalises regarding the concept of fantasy in 'On Fairy-stories' takes shape and is exemplified in the first tale: in his essay, Tolkien justifies escaping to a fantasy realm as long as humankind is able to use his imagination, and in the tale, children in the Cottage of Lost Play use their right to escape to a fantasy realm by narrating tales that would become the earliest drafts of *The Silmarillion.* In the tale, the Cottage is named *Lost Play* but it has the Hall of *Play Regained*. Many implications of the word *play* are associated with *Escape, Fantasy* and *Imagination*. Inventing a secondary world is a play in its meaning as a game based on what Tolkien says in 'On Fairy-stories': 'Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home?' (*OFS:* 60). Here is a bored state of mind leading *Imagination* to *play;* to *Escape* and discover or build something new. The other meaning of *play* as a form of literature is the first implication that a complete new secondary world will be made out of this form. And at the heart of this diegetic world-building, there is the concept of hope. *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I* reveals the relationship between hope and world-building: hope triggers children's imagination, but it can only endure through their active use of imagination. With hope children tell tales, but tales should continue to be told and shared, and play should be regained to protect hope. In *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I,* Tolkien reveals these early ideas of world-building centred around the concept of hope. However, this thesis asserts that hope is embodied in light imagery to practically engage in diegetic world-building in the finalised drafts.

I consider the fourth volume, *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* as one of the most significant ones in the series regarding how light marks Arda's existence, timeline and its end. Different than the other texts, the earliest "Silmarillion" shows us what is to come when *the world is much older*:

> In those days the Silmarils shall be recovered from sea and earth and air, and Maidros shall break them and Belaruin with their fire rekindle the Two Trees, and the great light shall come forth again […] and Gods and Elves and Men (*and Men* struck out later on) shall grow young again, and all their dead awake. (*Shaping:* 40-41)

Arda gains its metaphysical depth when the Years of the Trees start a longer time perception than the Years of the Sun that would follow, and all the following events are the reasons or results of the existence of the Two Trees and Silmarils. *The Shaping of Middle-earth* suggests that the end of Arda will witness the return of the Silmarils, rekindling of the Two Trees, and their 'great light'. Therefore, the earlier drafts in this book reveal that the light of these artefacts will mark the end of the world whereas Tolkien sadly did not include this section in the finalised drafts. I claim that the reason is he could have never been able to *complete* his constructed world on a satisfactory level to accept the publishing of neither the earlier nor the finalised drafts. Christopher Tolkien explains how his father reached an impasse regarding the legendarium narrative: 'As the years passed the changes and variants, both in details and in larger perspectives, became so complex, so pervasive, and so many-layered that a final and definitive version seemed unattainable' (*Shaping:* vii). Under these circumstances, it is highly likely that Tolkien did not go ahead with a detailed version of Arda's end, particularly when he used to struggle even with the drafts marking the cosmogony and the first two ages of Arda.

1.4 Definitions of the Main Themes

1.4.1 Fantasy

The main aim of this thesis, which is the analysis and discussion of light imagery as the diegetic world-builder, requires a redefinition of fantasy for three reasons: Tolkien discusses this word as fundamental while building a world different than the primary one, he refers to light imagery whilst doing it, and the origins of the word *fantasy* point to light imagery. First, in 'On Fairy-stories', Tolkien defends a usage of the word fantasy as an umbrella term to define the imaginative process of creating things that are not to be found in the primary world. For him, fantasy 'combines with its older and higher use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of "unreality" (that is, of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed "fact", in short of the fantastic'. He

adds: ‘I am thus not only aware but glad of the etymological and semantic connections of *fantasy* with *fantastic:* with images of things that are not only “not actually present”, but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there’ (*OFS:* 60). I argue that the way Tolkien defines *fantasy* enables this thesis to analyse the journey of light imagery from the primary to the secondary world by answering the questions how, as ‘such a primeval symbol in the nature of the Universe’ (*Letters:* 148), the light imagery in Arda is *unlike* the one in our world, and what Tolkien does with light imagery to make this *unlikeness* possible while still depending on the primary world.

While determining and defending a contextual framework for the word fantasy, Tolkien also engages in the words *fancy* and *imagination.* These words have already been discussed and defined by George MacDonald in his famous essay “The Fantastic Imagination” while he ponders on imagining a world other than ours:

> The natural world has its laws, and no man must interfere with them in the way of presentment any more than in the way of use: but they themselves may suggest laws of other kinds, and man may, if he pleases, invent a little world of his own, with its own laws; for there is that in him which delights in calling up new forms — which is the nearest, perhaps, he can come to creation. When such forms are new embodiments of old truths, we can call them products of the Imagination; when they are mere inventions, however lovely, I should call them the work of the Fancy: in either case, Law has been diligently at work. (1975: 27-28)

Tolkien himself explicitly mentions MacDonald twice and associates his name with fairy-stories’ relation to Scotland in draft paragraphs for ‘On Fairy-stories’ that he later rejects for the purpose of refining his essay.[18] Flieger and Anderson’s commentaries underline MacDonald’s influence on how Tolkien shapes his ideas in ‘On Fairy-stories’: ‘MacDonald’s two important essays, forerunners of and influences on Tolkien’s essay “On Fairy-stories”, are “The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture” [...] and “The Fantastic Imagination”’ (*OFS:* 98). In the quotation above are the origins of Tolkien’s thoughts on fantasy as a genre in relation to the primary and secondary world. To make, or even glimpse a world other than ours, that is, to achieve *Imagination*, the inventor has the inescapable burden of achieving coherence and consistency for his secondary world. MacDonald argues that this is only

[18] MacDonald’s influence on Tolkien has also been highlighted by many scholars before: Paul H. Kocher (1981), Jason Fisher (2006), Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson (2014), Paul E. Michelson (2014), Alikay Wood (2018) and Laura Măcineau (2019).

possible through engaging with *Law*. I interpret this concept as a rule showing that we can only invent a secondary world via altering the spatiotemporal rules, physical and geographical features of our world. The significant role that *Law* plays in inventing a new world also enables MacDonald to highlight the difference between *Imagination* and *Fancy*: if *Law* does not take its critical part in artistic creativity, inventions will remain as *Fancy*. For them to be considered as parts of *Imagination*, basing one's creativity on nature (that is, the primary world) is essential. This discussion on the notions of *Fancy* and *Imagination* plays a significant part in Tolkien's definition of fantasy; however, he redefines *Imagination* by simplifying it and claims that without *Art, Imagination* would not mean achieving any inner consistency of reality:

> The mental power of image-making is one thing, or aspect; and it should appropriately be called Imagination [...] The achievement of the expression, which gives (or seems to give) 'the inner consistency of reality', is indeed another thing, or aspect, needing another name: Art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation. (*OFS:* 59)

There are two different formulas in these authors' discussions. MacDonald defends *Fancy* + *Law* = *Imagination* whereas Tolkien's redefinition suggests *Imagination* + *Art* = *Subcreation*. Therefore, while building on MacDonald, Tolkien corrects the meaning of *Fancy* as 'a reduced and depreciatory form of the older word Fantasy' (*OFS:* 59), thus leaves it behind, renames MacDonald's *Law* as *Art* by expanding on its scope, and introduces *Fantasy* to readers. According to Tolkien, in this specific context, *Art* means the next step for authors to elevate their imaginative process above MacDonald's description of *Imagination:* it is an artistic merit to be able to subcreate with the natural ability to imagine.

Secondly, Tolkien refers to his poem *Mythopoeia* while defending the legitimacy of engaging in fantasy. The exact quotation he gives is an extended version of what this chapter has already discussed on page 6, including light imagery:

> To many, Fantasy, this sub-creative art which plays strange tricks with the world and all that is in it, combining nouns and redistributing adjectives, has seemed suspect, if not illegitimate [...] As for its legitimacy I will say no more than to quote a brief passage [...]
>
> > 'Dear Sir,' I said — 'Although now long estranged,

> Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
>
> Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned,
>
> and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned:
>
> Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light
>
> through whom is splintered from a single White
>
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
>
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind
>
> […]
>
> Fantasy is a natural human activity. (*OFS:* 64-65)

Here Tolkien not only discusses fantasy as the only activity that humankind can engage in to give meaning to their existence after the Fall, but also portrays fantasy as the splintering of light from the origin (implying God) 'to many hues' through 'Man' as 'the refracted Light'. Based on both my main argument and the meaning of fantasy for Tolkien, I argue that light imagery in Arda is at the heart of *Fantasy*: light defines and challenges Arda's spatiotemporal rules although it also becomes bound up with these rules later on. Regarding artefacts, since they are the embodiments of Ilúvatar's light, they echo perfection, which belongs to Ilúvatar's realm beyond the universe.

1.4.2 Light

Throughout this thesis, while asserting that light is the diegetic world-builder, I discuss this imagery both literally, as a physical spectrum and visible feature to be observed in artefacts, and metaphorically, as the embodiment of perfection that brings life, good and hope into Arda. This makes light imagery in the secondary world literal, metaphorical, and symbolical, all at once. This idea of a comprehensive nature of light imagery is built on Flieger's observation about light in Tolkien's legendarium: 'Major, seemingly unassociated, aspects of Tolkien's life—his swings between hope and despair, his scholarly absorption in the word, his imaginative capacity—come together in his fiction to show light at once literal,

metaphoric, and symbolic. And real' (*SL:* 10). While engaging with diegetic world-building, light is involved in every aspect of the secondary world by being physical, transcendental and symbolical. It is physical because it visibly illuminates places to bring life, it is transcendental as each artefact containing Ilúvatar's light serves the purpose of bringing good into Arda by fighting against evil and echoing his perfection. It is symbolical by being the representation of hope.

This variety of meanings in light imagery originates in Tolkien's observations on light in the primary world: as this chapter has briefly mentioned at the very beginning, in one of his letters to his son Christopher, Tolkien discusses humankind's relationship with God via light imagery in immense detail. In his discussion, light imagery stands for illumination, life, good and hope:

> Your reference to the care of your guardian angel [...] reminded me of a sudden vision (or perhaps apperception which at once turned itself into pictorial form in my mind) I had not long ago when spending half an hour in St Gregory's before the Blessed Sacrament when the Quarant' Ore was being held there. I perceived and thought of the Light of God and in it suspended one small mote (or millions of motes to only one of which was my small mind directed), glittering white because of the individual ray from the Light which both held and lit it. And the ray was the Guardian Angel of the mote: not a thing interposed between God and the creature, but God's very attention itself, personalised [...] the whole thing was very immediate, and not recapturable in clumsy language, certainly not the great sense of joy that accompanied it and the realization that the shining poised mote was myself (or any other human person that I might think of with love) [...] As the love of the Father and Son (who are infinite and equal) is a Person, so the love and attention of the Light to the Mote is a person (that is both with us and in Heaven): finite but divine: i.e. angelic. (*Letters:* 99)

By mentioning 'the Light of God', Tolkien uses light both literally and metaphorically: its mote glitters white but its ray also symbolises 'the Guardian Angel'. He defines his encounter with the light imagery in the church as rather *real* than imaginary along with the words 'vision' and 'apperception', implying that he must have seen the light imagery first before pondering further on it. As soon as he witnesses a physical light form, his mind works on the symbolism of this particular light imagery related to where and how he encounters it,

including its analogies of God, the Guardian Angel and humankind based on the varying natures of the light imagery: God's love towards humankind as the whole light imagery in general, the Guardian Angel's protection over humankind as the 'ray', and humankind's sense of belonging and existence in relation to God and the Guardian Angel as the 'mote'.

Despite Tolkien's detailed analysis of light imagery in his letter, his overall understanding of this encounter is limited by his human-specific reality: while identifying the 'mote', he regards his mind as 'small', he defines the encounter as 'very immediate, and not recapturable in clumsy language' (*Letters:* 99). This limited access to comprehending light also reverberates in the legendarium: Ilúvatar's light is visible for the Ainur (still valid after they become the Valar) and understandable for the Elves who have seen the light of the Two Trees, but it remains unidentifiable for those who have not witnessed or discerned his existence.

Therefore, Tolkien also uses light imagery in the secondary world to show Arda's imperfect nature and the difference between Arda's denizens regarding an understanding of light imagery. While discussing the symbolism of light in this letter, Flieger underlines the pessimistic side of Tolkien:

> His world is shadowed by its past as well as by his own past, lighted intermittently by the vision of the white Light that holds the mote. That vision of the Light remains just that—a vision, a Grail to be sought but never grasped by fallen humanity in a fallen world. (*SL:* 4)

Flieger's interpretation of light symbolism in Tolkien's life points to light imagery as something that is not fully accessible with the implication that it is not granted to humans within a Christological framework, yet something that always gives hope, particularly to live. This thesis argues that the same metaphor of light is valid for the secondary world: although light can only be temporarily and partially grasped in Arda as it is a fallen realm, it still gives hope as the only remainder and reminder of Ilúvatar.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The main focus of this literature review is a critical analysis of light in J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium. This chapter will discuss light imagery beyond Tolkien studies to provide a background for the secondary literature review about light in Tolkien, then it will analyse light and the issues[19] raised by it, and situate the main argument of this thesis within the existing knowledge. This chapter will thus show in what aspects light imagery has widely been discussed in the Western canon, and then in Tolkien, revealing the original contribution of this thesis although it builds on the previous scholarship that has dealt with light imagery in depth. There are various traditions of how light is viewed in the Western canon, but Tolkien's work introduces us to a realm where light imagery engages in a diegetic and participatory world-building. This chapter will demonstrate that although the previous scholarship has discussed light imagery in Tolkien, all the discussions analyse light in three limited ways: light can only be defined in relation to its opposite, dark (Grant 1973; Goselin 1979; Flieger 2002; Bergen 2017); light can only be explored via specific characters in Arda (Flieger 1987; Lauro 2008; Beal 2018; Loughlin 2019); and light imagery in Arda is only meaningful within a framework of theological aesthetics (Coutras 2016). Therefore, the question about the holistic role light plays in diegetic world-building remains unanswered. This distinction is important because it assigns the role of world-builder to a simple imagery (light), prompting new discussions into analysing imageries, themes, motifs and symbols as world-builders or even as secondary world infrastructures in fantasy as a genre.

2.1 Light Imagery beyond Tolkien Studies

In this section, I will analyse light in the Western canon within Platonic, Neoplatonic, Thomistic and Romantic frameworks, respectively. The main reasons for this specific selection of frameworks are as follows: as per the allegory of the cave, the way the Platonic imagery of light addresses the ultimate truth of the universe relates to the godhead Ilúvatar as

[19] Namely, light as the manifestation of Ilúvatar, opposition between light and dark, Neoplatonic nature of light, centrality of light, material and ethereal aspects of light and prelapsarian nature of light as discussed respectively in section 2.2.

the original source of light for Arda. The light imagery in the secondary world shows parallelism with this since it is the bearer of life and existence as discussed further in Chapters One and Three. Neoplatonic ideas of light (particularly the idea of emanationism) relate to the concept of *chains of light* whereas Romantic light imageries reveal thematic resemblances to how I discuss light in Tolkien. Meanwhile, the Thomistic framework, which Chapter Three uses to analyse different aspects of light imagery and its implications as the diegetic world-builder, underpins how I discuss the prelapsarian qualities of light imagery in Tolkien.

While questioning the philosopher's true nature, Plato uses light imagery in his allegory of the cave in Book VII of the *Republic.* The allegory regards the majority of humankind chained in a cave by a fire, they cannot go out to see the Sun and its light. In the allegory, sunlight symbolises the idea of good whereas fire in the cave represents visibility in our world. Ultimate reality is with sunlight, and rarely the philosopher may have a chance to witness it. According to Alex Hunt and Martin Jacobsen, 'Plato's sun represents "the good", a concept that stands for an ideal pattern for an object and/or an absolute truth [...] which our perceptual ability only glimpses', and the allegory 'expresses the concept of absolute reality' in the material world, where the philosopher has 'the fundamental need for illumination beyond human perception' (2008: 155-156). Building on Hunt and Jacobsen, I claim that Plato uses sunlight as the principle of existence and knowledge by comparing firelight in the cave to the sunlight outside: the key here is to analyse the thought process of the philosopher whilst questioning reality based on what he can actually *see*. The philosopher who is released from his chains first witnesses the firelight: 'and the glare from the light made him unable to see the objects that cast the shadows he once beheld' (2016:4). Then comes the most explicit implication of sunlight representing the ultimate truth when Socrates associates sunlight with what is beyond *real:*

> Now, let's say that he is forcibly dragged up the steep climb out of the cavern, and firmly held until finally he stands in the light of the sun. Don't you think that he would be agitated and even begin to complain? Under that light, would his eyes not be nearly blinded, unable to discern any of those things that we ourselves call real? (2016: 5)

Besides presenting sunlight as the physical source of life on Earth, Plato allegorises it as the ultimate reality; witnessing firelight and sunlight respectively makes the philosopher comprehend different levels of reality, redefine what is *real* and be thus assured that there is no reality else beyond what sunlight symbolises.

However, what Hunt and Jacobsen fail to consider in their argument is the Platonic influence on the Western canon regarding the overall meaning of light imagery following the publishing of the *Republic.* This thesis analyses light imagery in artefacts, *including* the Sun of the secondary world, as the symbol of good and Ilúvatar's perfection. For this thesis, *Tolkien's sun* is not only a representation of 'the good' but also a beacon of Ilúvatar, who is the godhead holding the ultimate truth about the secondary world. One of Tolkien's letters explicitly states that 'the Sun is not a divine symbol, but a second-best thing' compared to the Two Trees; however, this thesis opposes this description of the Sun in Arda as the same letter also adds on the same page that 'the Light of Sun is derived from the Trees', which contain the unsullied light of Ilúvatar (*Letters:* 148). Therefore, the *secondariness* of the Sun is discussed as *decline* and *adaptation* in Chapter Three rather than a lack of divine power. In addition, as Hunt and Jacobsen discuss Plato's sun as something that humankind can 'only glimpse', this thesis asserts that artefacts present Arda's denizens with Ilúvatar's light partially and temporarily, as they can *only glimpse* his perfection via the fraction of his light in artefacts.

First Neoplatonic ideas of light are built on Plato's allegory. In his first Ennead, Plotinus refers to the difference between the philosopher witnessing the idea of good and those remaining in the cave by saying that the philosopher does not experience grief 'under the same light as to the common man'. Throughout his Enneads, Plotinus develops a metaphysics of light which has been discussed by many scholars of Neoplatonism for over a thousand years. According to Plotinus, light should not only be regarded as a physical concept: along with his description of three fundamental principles, the One, the Intellect and the Soul, he defines the metaphysical aspects of light imagery for Neoplatonism. Immaterial light emanates from the One, so does the Intellect symbolised by this light. It is the Intellect who illuminates both the world soul and human souls, thus making human life possible via bringing along meaning and knowledge (Schültzinger 2002). Chronologically, Riccardo Chiaradonna and Franco Trabattoni (2009), James Wilberding and Cristoph Horn (2012), and Pauliina Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin (2014) have published and/or edited works

contributing to a summary of how the theory of emanation is regarded by Neoplatonism. While dealing with the concept of emanation, Christian Wildberg (2016) discussed what kind of problematic aspects this word (emanation) brings along by claiming that nothing actually emanates from the One as Neoplatonists have failed to explicitly assert a demiurgic power at the centre of their discussions.

To analyse properly how Tolkien works with light imagery in his world-building, it is necessary to address the influence of Neoplatonic interpretations of emanation beyond the Western canon: Natalie Roklina argues that 'fragmented reflections of light [...] represent the interaction of light and material objects' not only in the poetry but also in the Impressionistic paintings of Maksimilian Voloshin (1992: 32). Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's light metaphysics 'contained imagery that inspired builders of French cathedrals' (2010: 51). Neoplatonic imagery of light leads to different artistic practices; however, it represents only one aspect of light imagery. Tolkien thematizes light more comprehensively: without emanation, light cannot exist in Arda, and without being prelapsarian, light could give no hope or represent no perfect vision as a draft for artists. However, Tolkien's thematization of light is unique; he interweaves light and secondary world infrastructures such that light underpins all these infrastructures: the metaphysics of the legendarium is based on light imagery (the cosmogony as discussed in Chapter One), timelines are shaped by the major events caused by it (the whole storyline of *The Silmarillion* as addressed on pages 21 and 22), genealogies are formed around it (different clans of Elves as discussed on page 47), nature is brought to life by it (the Lamps as discussed in Chapter One), mythology is founded on it (as underpinned by the very name of the cosmogonic stories being *The Silmarillion,* meaning 'Of the Silmarils'[20] and pointing to light imagery), language is influenced by it (Calaquendi versus Moriquendi as discussed on page 47) and the varying cultures of different denizens build up on it (the difference brought by the making of the Sun as discussed in *2.2.1* and *2.2.6*). The previous scholarship has not discussed this interconnectedness although it serves as a critical method to understand how Tolkien's world-building works. Plato's philosopher needs to experience a spiritual journey to engage light with the idea of good whereas the doctrine of the Fall implies that though fallen, mankind appreciates emanated light on Earth as a sign of *agape.*[21] Arda's denizens, however, make artefacts by using the Flame

[20] For more information on the etymology of the word Silmarillion, 'Appendix' (*S:* 361, 364).
[21] Refers to the Christian concept of agape love, meaning the highest form of mutual love between God and mankind: 'Christian love, as distinct from erotic love or simple affection.', 'Agape.', *OED Online.*

Imperishable.[22] As a fraction of Ilúvatar's light, the Flame Imperishable is Arda's *anima mundi*,[23] and using it in artefacts[24] introduces a unique philosophy where light imagery becomes the way to maintain a diegetic world-building, providing us with invention, consistency and completeness through chains of light. Characters may die or light may be extinguished temporarily, but the light in artefacts continues to exist to build Arda.

Light imagery in Thomism has been influenced by both Neoplatonism and Scholasticism as the preceding schools of philosophy. David L. Whidden's book *Christ the Light: The Theology of Light and Illumination in Thomas Aquinas* (2014) is the most influential and specific work in the relevant secondary literature based on the reviews of Thomas Crean (2016) and Aaron Canty (2017). According to Canty, the book explores light imagery and the concept of illumination as pervasive elements in the theology of Aquinas. Canty's review also reveals that Whidden uses a light analogy to ponder on God and the concept of truth, reverberating Plato's analogy of the sun where he discusses human-specific limitations on comprehending the concept of reality. As Whidden's book suggests, light imagery in Thomism is indeed complex because it offers three main areas to explore: the light of nature, the light of faith and the light of glory. Following the general structure of *Summa Theologica,* the book builds on Aquinas' *principium*[25] called *Rigans montes* to prove that Augustine's light language was as influential as Dionysian language on Aquinas (Canty 2017). According to Canty, the three different types of light proposed by Whidden counterbalance darkness as the representation of sin. Therefore, Thomism approaches light imagery mainly within a Christological framework, which Tolkien carefully avoids in his discussions of the secondary world. However, light versus dark as the representations of good versus evil is omnipresent in his created world, making Whidden's focus on light and its three Thomistic types relevant to my analysis of Tolkien's use of light. The second chapter of Whidden's book uses an explicitly radical lens compared to the rest: according to Canty, it reveals how Thomism also deals with the physics of light, pointing to the literal meaning of light imagery. Whidden shows readers how Aquinas pondered on the nature of seeing and the human eye via light imagery.

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[22] The creative power that is set at Arda's heart without any good or evil motives. I define it as the earthly version of Ilúvatar's light. See the Introduction of this thesis for a more thorough definition.
[23] Meaning the world soul, this principle suggests a binding force between all living things in the world.
[24] As I discuss in chapter three.
[25] A conditional sermon to become a 'Regent Master in Theology at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century' (Roszak and Vijgen 2018).

Light is also central beyond Platonic, Neoplatonic and Thomistic dialogues. In Old English poetry, light has 'a world-affirming significance' (2007: 181) whereas Romantic poets portray light stronger than darkness, or attribute mediation to it in balancing the needs of body and soul. According to Mark Sandy, in Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley's poetry, light 'transforms the universe for the better' (2016: 261). Chris Murray claims that 'In "Dejection: An Ode", the Indian idea of light[26] allows Coleridge to imagine the resolution of his love for Sara Hutchinson' (2016: 269). However, these aspects are not sufficient to read light's centrality and agency in Tolkien through a Romantic lens: this framework lacks the depth of addressing the metaphysics of light while mainly focusing on light imagery's aesthetical aspects, which commonly aim to evoke emotions in readers rather than contextualising light as an imagery that has agency. Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" may be an exception to this: in the poem, the speaker reveals light's Neoplatonic qualities while growing old. Light is transcendent and emanating, and is described via vision and fall, which Sandy calls 'the Ode's Neo-platonic terms' (2016: 260). The poem begins with 'every common sight [...] Apparelled in celestial light' to mark infancy. Under celestial light, an infant perceives the world like a glorious dream where light is like a 'visionary gleam'. As he grows up to be a *Boy* and then a *Man*, he perceives that celestial light fades 'into the light of common day'. Sandy claims: 'This fall from "celestial" grace [...] is registered as a temporal fall from infancy into adulthood, as well as a fall from transcendent vision into ordinary sight' (2016: 260). While handling the fall theme, the poem uses different light imageries changing from a divine gleam to daylight. Tolkien uses a similar change in light, but it is a physical decline of magnitude and a noetic divergence from Ilúvatar's perfection, not the allegory of getting old:

> There was Light. There was the Light of Valinor made visible in the Two Trees of Silver and Gold. These were slain by the Enemy out of malice, and Valinor was darkened, though from them, ere they died utterly, were derived the lights of Sun and Moon. (A marked difference here between these legends and most others is that the Sun is not a divine symbol, but a second-best thing, and 'the light of the Sun' (the world under the sun) become terms for a fallen world, and a dislocated imperfect vision. (*Letters:* 148)

[26] Murray points to the Hinduist idea of light as the mediator between the contrary demands of body and soul. See the *Bhagavad Gita* for the theorisation of a light-based cosmology.

However, the issue here is the significance of the change in light imagery, which remains the same for both the poem and the secondary world. In both, the decline in light symbolises three things: a fall from transcendental to earthly existence, changing times, and unfolding of a lifetime. Although this is by no means a direct line of influence from Wordsworth to Tolkien, particularly the decline of light as a fall from transcendental to earthly existence points to a shared lens of understanding the metaphysics of light in both men of letters. For the main argument of this thesis, in this section I have only addressed the most relevant frameworks (Platonic, Neoplatonic, Thomistic and Romantic) in the Western canon as for light imagery before moving on to discuss the previous scholarship on Tolkien as part of the overall literature review in this chapter (Chapter Two).

2.2 Secondary Literature on Light in Tolkien

2.2.1 Light: the Manifestation of Ilúvatar

This thesis addresses Aquinas' discussions on light and God as one of the main influences on Tolkien's narratives about the relationship between light and Ilúvatar. Light is one of the main concepts in Aquinas' most famous work, *Summa Theologica,* which consists of three main parts. This literature review specifically focuses on the first part where he elucidates the main teachings of the Catholic Church: 'God is the main subject in "Summa Theologiae: First Part", a massive work of Catholic Christian theology.[27] According to Aquinas, light has an omnipotent quality in the world, but it also plays an active role in change: 'the power of light extends to all corporeal things; inasmuch as it is an active quality of the first body that causes change, i.e. the heavens' (61). Here Aquinas points to a divine aspect of light by assigning to it the power to reach everything in the physical realm as well as to be the sole element that activates change. In Arda, light's omnipotent quality is clear in its defining and challenging time and determining the fate of many races while it also leads to change in the perception of time after the making of the Sun.

[27] Fergus Kerr discusses this in the abstract of his book, *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* accessed on Oxford Academic. [https://academic.oup.com/book/837/chapter-abstract/135451990?redirectedFrom=fulltext]

Figuratively speaking, Aquinas claims that light is the shared element between God and humans in helping them see God:

> To see the essence of God, there is required some similitude in the visual faculty, namely, the light of glory strengthening the intellect to see God, which is spoken of in the Ps. 35:10, "In Thy light we shall see light." (118)

To underpin Aquinas' discussion of light imagery as a metaphorical entity, Jonathan McIntosh's analysis on Aquinas' ideas about the preceding works related to light imagery reveals that for Aquinas, seeing stands for *knowing.* This metaphor originates in St. Augustine's famous theory of *divine illumination,* which states that all human knowledge is only possible by our human minds being *illumined* by God. While building on Augustine, Aquinas states that 'the human mind is divinely illumined by a natural *light* [...] God is always the cause of the soul's natural *light*—not different lights but one and the same*'* (2011). This quotation brings along *four issues* that also reverberate in the secondary world. First, Augustine's theory of divine illumination and Aquinas' light as knowledge underpin light imagery as the metaphor of consciousness, which is explicitly the case for the secondary world: as addressed further at the beginning of Chapter One, in one of his letters, Tolkien conducts an in-depth analysis of light imagery in the secondary world and explicitly defines the light of the Two Trees as 'the light of art undivorced from reason, that *sees* things' (*Letters:* 148). His approach to light in the Trees makes it clear that the light of artefacts creates semantic syllepsis: the physical light illuminating Arda, but also standing for Ilúvatar's partial and temporary presence in Arda. The Thomistic influence on this syllepsis is clear: McIntosh argues that for Aquinas, the light of faith and light of reason all come from the same divine source and establish (or illuminate) human intellect, therefore they are inseparable and intertwined (*Flame:* 36). Tolkien's description of the light of the Two Trees is a perfect example combining the light of art with light of reason within the same light imagery 'that sees things both scientifically and imaginatively' (*Letters:* 148). Here the scientific aspect refers to the light of reason with its human-specific limitations, and imaginative (or as Tolkien adds, subcreative) aspect points to the light of faith as Tolkien always discusses imagination and subcreation along with *ex nihilo* creation of God in 'On Fairy-Stories'.

The second issue is that in *Summa,* Aquinas argues that light serves as a tool to see God because it is the only common concept in God and his creations; it is both divine and earthly by existing on different metaphysical levels of the divine essence and the world. This multi-layered nature of light reverberates in Tolkien's world-building: as discussed further on pages 62 and 63, Ilúvatar's light is his only quality that manifests in Arda by being captured in the Lamps, Two Trees, Sun, Moon and Silmarils. These artefacts do not just illuminate places around them, they become the pillars of knowledge, and the symbols of good and hope in Arda. The third issue points to Aquinas' implication that seeing God is possible only partially, as God cannot be fully grasped by any of his creations. In the secondary world, artefacts can also never fully contain Ilúvatar's light in its entirety but only enable Arda's denizens to catch a glimpse of it, like Aquinas points to God's light as only *strengthening the intellect to see* him, but not the whole divine essence *as it really is*. The fourth issue relates to Aquinas' argument that every different human soul is lit by the same light originating in God. This argument underlines the concept of immutableness in Arda that I discuss in section 3.6. Ilúvatar is the origin of light for all artefacts although they are completely different from one another. Furthering his argument that light is God's manifestation, regarding whether the essence of God is seen by the created intellect through an image, Aquinas argues in *Summa* that this image would be 'participation of the light of glory' (Aquinas 118), implying that light is the only metaphysical concept in the world that helps us ponder on the nature of God. This thesis asserts that light as the only manifestation of the divine essence is true for Arda, as whenever Ilúvatar is felt, remembered or understood, the secondary world provides readers with a light narrative.

What is all the more interesting is that according to Aquinas, while being a manifestation of God, light also gives humans the privilege to be 'blessed' if they encounter it:

> Increase of the intellectual powers is called the illumination of the intellect, as we also call the intelligible object itself by the name of light of illumination. And this is the light spoken of in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 21:23): "The glory of God hath enlightened it"---viz. the society of the blessed who see God. By this light the blessed are made "deiform"---i.e. like to God. (123)

This trait of being blessed by the light of God and thus becoming 'deiform' reverberates in the sundering, grouping and naming of Elves in *The Silmarillion:* the Elves who witness the light of the Two Trees are called Calaquendi, meaning Elves of the Light, whereas the others who remain in Middle-earth are named Moriquendi, meaning Elves of the Darkness. This is not a simple opposition between names, but also a differentiating factor between the wisdom level of Elves. The most specific character to exemplify this differentiation is Thingol, an Elven king who forgets his purpose to migrate to Aman but is always classified as one of Calaquendi, 'with the Elves of the Light, mighty upon Middle-earth' (*S:* 56) because he has witnessed the light of the Two Trees before.

2.2.2 Opposition between Light and Dark

Opposition between light and dark as both a visual description and metaphor of good and evil has been widely discussed by Tolkien scholars. This thematic strand has mainly been analysed within a Jungian framework by Tolkien scholars as Carl Jung's concepts of enantiodromia and anima explicitly inquire into the opposite sides of human psyche. In his discussion of Jungian archetypes in Tolkien, Patrick Grant asserts that like good and evil, light and dark become blurred for characters in *The Lord of the Rings*:

> Good may be produced by evil, and possibly lead to it. This process, which Jung calls "enantiodromia," is also of central importance in the art of Tolkien: a broad opposition of light and dark, and of good and evil, becomes confused in the trilogy as we enter the minds of individuals in process of finding their way on the quest. Though Gollum hates light and loves shade, Frodo's relation to Gollum is extremely complex, and throughout the trilogy the minds of the men in particular are continually ambivalent. (1973: 366)

Therefore, the opposition between light and dark and its representations in Arda become complex on an individual level in the Third Age: in the trilogy narrative, the focus is on individuals, their reactions to their fate, and the change in their personalities throughout the plot. However, considering his examples from the trilogy, Grant deals with the Jungian

principle enantiodromia[28] 'in the art of Tolkien' without paying attention to the bigger picture revealed in *The Silmarillion* . Even when good leads to evil and vice versa, this does not blur the difference between light and dark in Arda's First Age, which is marked by chains of light. The most specific example for this is Eärendil's Star: its light comes from one of the Silmarils, all of which cause the biggest battles and deepest griefs. Yet no denizen of Arda thinks of destroying the Silmarils to end the immense pain they cause. Instead, with its light in Eärendil's Star, the remaining Silmaril becomes a symbol of hope and good against Melkor's darkness. The lack of hostility towards the Simarils from both sides, that is, good and evil, is an unnoticed part of the storyline in *The Silmarillion,* and it is important to address as it reveals the goodness that is intrinsically foundational for light imagery in the secondary world.

Another Tolkien scholar who takes a Jungian approach in discussing the opposition between light and dark in parallel with good and evil is Peter Damien Goselin. He compares Galadriel and Shelob to understand opposite sides of the anima that Jung discusses in his *Archetypes of the Unconscious.* Goselin reclaims light in its opposition to dark by underlining how Frodo and Sam use the phial to defeat Shelob: 'for Tolkien the power of the bright anima surpasses that of the dark one' (1979: 4). Although a Jungian approach could draw parallels between good and light and evil and dark in Tolkien, like Grant, Goselin has the same fundamental flaw; his tendency is to infer conclusions on light and dark only from a part of Frodo's journey. This is a problem because the overall function and representation of light imagery, which is one of the most complex and fundamental motifs in the secondary world, is left unexplained, the bigger picture about light is thus lost within a framework limited to a single character and narrative by this approach. I argue that the opposition between light and dark in Arda goes beyond Frodo's encounter with Shelob, and light's centrality and dominance over dark could be discussed more thoroughly through chains of light.

While addressing light imagery in the secondary world, Verlyn Flieger is another notable Tolkien scholar who focuses on the polarity of light and dark by using Owen Barfield's theory about the coexistence of language and myth. She questions how language makes these opposites 'define one another and the realities of Tolkien's world' (*SL:* xxii). She emphasises light in defining Arda's ontological realities; however, her discussions stem

[28] As a principle, this phenomenon suggests the emergence of the unconscious opposite in time.

from the binary opposition, where the polarities of light and dark are equally significant and interdependent in both Tolkien's world-building and life as the *antitheses* of Tolkien's own nature. Flieger draws on the general impression in the primary world when she says 'light cannot be known without darkness', and argues that this is valid for the secondary world: 'The polarities of light and dark generate the perception, the language, and thus the action of his legendarium' (*SL:* 5, 31). On the contrary, I argue that it is darkness that cannot be known and understood without light, as light gives meaning to *Darkness* in the *Ainulindalë*: as discussed further on page 29, the Ainur perceive *Darkness* as a new thing after the vision, which is a form of light (*S:* 25), disappears in the cosmogony. This gives light superiority and priority over dark both contextually and ontologically: everything may gain meaning through its opposite in readers' human mind, but in the legendarium narrative, it is solely light which generates action and physically creates Arda in the form of the Flame Imperishable, underpinning the argument that light is the diegetic world-builder.

Flieger also draws on Tolkien's famous poem *Mythopoeia* to underpin her argument that light and dark play an equally significant role in Tolkien's legendarium: 'Making still by that law in which we're made—the word—we have "dared to build/gods and their houses out of dark and light." This polarity adumbrates the theme of the Silmarillion' (*SL:* 43). The implication here is *ever-snow-white* Taniquetil, the Holy Mountain where Manwë and Varda reside, and Melkor's mighty fortress Utumno, where even the light of the Lamps do not reach. Accurate though it may be, these places or the polarity of light and dark *sides* in Arda do not change the fact that it is Melkor who craves for the light of the Silmarils, whereas the other Valar who reside in the Undying Lands have always despised his darkness. Dark in Tolkien's created world cannot outshine light and its implications.

Different from the preceding scholars working on the opposition between light and dark in the secondary world, Richard Angelo Bergen introduces a Manichean lens instead while discussing Tolkien's portrayals of evil, thus questions the binary opposition in a broader context by underpinning a philosophical background for Arda: 'the aesthetical elements of his story present a Manichean cosmos of light and dark, archetypes of the bright such as Galadriel's gift and Gandalf's staff, but all can be quenched, just as light sometimes overcomes darkness' (2017: 107-108). Although artefacts underline a Manichean quality by battling darkness and evil, they are also the representations of how transcendent light could be captured in Arda's materiality. I regard the cosmology as more Neoplatonic than

Manichean, which Reno Lauro defines as a clash between 'the spiritual world of light and the material world of darkness' (2008: 58). Since the cosmogony, the potential boundary between a spiritual world of light and a material world of darkness is simply non-existent: Ilúvatar's first act is to send his light into the Void to create Arda, the material world. Therefore, for the secondary world, the relationship between light and dark is Manichean, but the relationship between light and the material world is not: the Flame Imperishable is at the heart of Arda, meaning light brings materiality to life, and chains alone show how light becomes more material in time through the consistent making of artefacts capturing light which adapts to the changing times and places. Moreover, Bergen's 'archetypes of the bright' are the artefacts in this thesis, and if all of them are considered, it becomes obvious that 'the bright' refers to Ilúvatar as light's immutable source, meaning artefacts point to him as the prelapsarian ideal having perfection. If we examine the narratives separately, light can 'sometimes' overcome darkness as Bergen argues, but chains as revealed by the entirety of Tolkien's work show that light will defeat darkness throughout Arda's timeline.

2.2.3 The Neoplatonic Nature of Light

In her article, 'Naming the Unnameable: The Neoplatonic "One" in Tolkien's *Silmarillion*', Flieger discusses Ilúvatar as *the One*. Her purpose being to show a Neoplatonic aspect of the secondary world, she discusses Ilúvatar's characteristics to underline the Neoplatonic cosmogony by analysing what the different names of the godhead reveal. For Flieger, with the opening words of *The Silmarillion,* 'There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar' (*S:* 15), Tolkien states 'the limited human perception of his God-figure' (1986: 129). Flieger reads the godhead through a linguistic lens by differentiating between *Eru* and *Ilúvatar*; Eru being the One's unexplainable, essential nature whereas Ilúvatar is simply the name given to him to make him distinguished in the human mind. That is how Ilúvatar becomes Neoplatonic for Flieger; however, this claim's nature is external as it relates to readers. I argue that for most of Arda's denizens there is no perception of Eru or Ilúvatar, except the Ainur who have witnessed Ilúvatar himself before they descend to Arda and become the Valar. Even then, the Valar's relationship with Ilúvatar remains completely abstract, the main example being Manwë, 'who knows most of the mind of Ilúvatar' (*S:* 42) without having the privilege to see Ilúvatar ever again during his time in Arda. For the rest of

the beings in Arda, the artefacts containing Ilúvatar's light on their own terms serve as the most obvious Neoplatonic aspect of this godhead. Therefore, it is not Ilúvatar but only his light which is Neoplatonic by emanating in artefacts: there is no explicit presence of a godhead in Arda overall, and the ones who have previously witnessed Eru enough to be in need of calling his name (Ilúvatar) in Arda are limited, that is, only the Valar. However, there is a continual connection between his light, the Flame Imperishable and the light in artefacts, making his light the only consistent and omnipresent Neoplatonic aspect of the godhead.

With a more comparative approach, Gergely Nagy discusses common themes in Plato and Tolkien to suggest that light and vision propose Tolkien's thematic affinity to Plato on the basis of myth-making. About Plato's myth on *philosophical knowledge* and Tolkien's *theological myth* of creation, Nagy argues that light 'fulfills a crucial role, accommodating both a theological and an ontological aspect; this is why Tolkien's creation myth lends itself so readily to comparison with Neoplatonic theories of emanation' (2004: 93). Christopher Vaccaro uses the light of an artefact, the phial, to underline the Platonic aspect of Tolkien's work. According to Vaccaro, the phial is a 'Platonic imagery' as it underlines luminosity and purity, which he defines as the 'features of the Platonic sublime' (2017: 87, 96). Although the features of light in the phial may find their origins in the Platonic dialogues, it is problematic to identify the phial as Platonic rather than Neoplatonic: the phial's light is a fraction of Ilúvatar, who is beyond Arda, but it embodies purity on Earth.

2.2.4 Centrality of Light

Light has widely been discussed as a main theme in Tolkien's world-building by the previous scholarship. Flieger points to John Gardner's review of *The Silmarillion,* where he explicitly states that music is the central symbol in *The Silmarillion* and it is interchangeably used with light (1977). Building on Gardner, Flieger explores the theme of light in depth in *Splintered Light.* In this book, after attributing equal significance to light and dark as I have discussed in section 2.2.2, Flieger contradictorily defines light as 'the central image' of Tolkien's story (*SL:* 41) and 'the primary reality, controlling metaphor, and guiding symbol in Tolkien's cosmology' (*SL:* 362); and claims that polarities in Tolkien's life 'come together in his fiction to show light at once literal, metaphoric, and symbolic' (*SL:* 10). I discuss light's

centrality in Tolkien by building on Flieger. For her, three features of light change over time: *colour, intensity and meaning*. Chapter Three discusses the change in light as *decline*, a decrease in magnitude. This idea reiterates Flieger's observation that light in Arda changes its *colour and intensity* in time. However, it is paradoxical that Flieger implies a change in light's *meaning* after defining it as the primary reality. Light declines in time only as a survival strategy for its immutableness, and its primary meaning never changes: the prelapsarian power which brings life, good and hope originated from Ilúvatar's light.

Reno Lauro narrows Flieger's observation down to an individual level via Frodo. Lauro regards light as the central image in *The Lord of the Rings* in depicting action and hope in the heroism of the ordinary. According to Lauro, Tolkien started to develop his 'own aesthetic theory of light' (2008: 54) in his poem *Mythopoeia* by drawing on mediaeval aesthetics of light, which is an aesthetic sensibility based on the ancient relation of light to the things divine. I do not see this theorisation as a conscious act explicitly stated by Tolkien, but Tolkien's engagement with mediaeval aesthetics of light goes beyond *Mythopoeia.* In his world-building, Tolkien continues to present light imagery with Neoplatonic features which reached full expression through the mediaeval aesthetics of light. Lauro also sees it as the responsibility of Arda's denizens 'to refract the originary light in an endless battle against darkness' (2008: 55). Although he regards light's refraction as the main issue in the metaphor of good battling evil, he does not mention the critical role that artefacts, which are the physical manifestations of refracted light, play in this endless battle.

Joyce Lionarons explores the opposition between light and dark to discuss the relationship between Elves and spiders. This topic regards the first section; however, through Ungoliant, Lionarons implies that light defines Arda's ontological background: 'Ungoliant [...] craved and devoured light; in doing so she was able to undo the fabric of Tolkien's universe with her darkness' (2013: 6). So, consumption of light causes a decomposition in the foundations of Tolkien's work; what Flieger calls 'the primary reality' in the cosmology is 'the fabric' of the universe for Lionarons, both of which are light. Building on Flieger and Lionarons, I argue that light is the main subcreative tool: through artefacts, it becomes the original source of life and also the legendarium.

2.2.5 Material and Ethereal Aspects of Light

To review the previous scholarship on the material and ethereal aspects of light imagery in the secondary world, first I have to discuss the ideas of Hans Urs von Balthasar. There are two main reasons for this. First, he was influenced by Aquinas' discussions on metaphysical light in his theological aesthetics (Lauro 2008), and Aquinas is widely claimed to have influenced Tolkien's metaphysical mindset (Kocher 1972; Nimmo 2001; Birzer & Dickerson 2007; McIntosh 2017). Secondly, Balthasar discusses natural theology within a Catholic framework, which directly relates to light imagery in the secondary world (Coutras 2016). Balthasar defines *beautiful* as the origin of his theological aesthetics by claiming that the Incarnation manifests beauty. His definition has two interesting aspects. First, he defines beauty along with light and form, which is the wholeness of the Incarnation: 'The beautiful is above all a form, and the light does not fall on this form from above and from outside, rather it breaks forth from the form's interior' (1982: 151). Here light is form and form is light, an argument based on the metaphysics of Aquinas. The second aspect brings along a more Neoplatonic approach via Balthasar's famous concept, the *light of being*, which suggests that material light becomes a messenger of transcendence through *being* as it consists of both physical existence and transcendental depth: 'The act of existing in itself testifies to an underlying transcendence' (2016: 52).[29] I read light through this binary lens: artefacts' light brings Arda to life, but it also has meaning beyond simple existence by symbolising good and hope through echoing Ilúvatar and the vision's perfection.

While discussing characteristics of natural theology intrinsic to Arda, Lisa Coutras claims that Balthasar's *light of being* had an influence on Tolkien because light is transcendent within Arda's material entity. Coutras uses light to show how the spiritual dimension of the created things goes in parallel with the nature of incarnate beings: 'transcendental light is the heart of this fictive cosmos, and the hidden yet radiant depths of living beings' (2016: 49). As the heart of the cosmos, transcendental light refers to the Flame Imperishable and it finds its way into many things in Arda. However, I argue that when captured in artefacts, it reaches the potential to shape Arda's foundations by bringing life, good and hope. Coutras makes a similar observation about the light of the Two Trees, but with a completely different aim and framework. She claims that contrary to how Marjorie

[29] For further reading, see *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* by Balthasar.

Burns regards Celtic myth as eerie or whimsical, Tolkien introduced the concept of Celtic beauty[30] into his work:

> They (the Two Trees) give light in measured time, yet also in beauty. The otherworldly beauty described in this scene is not "eerie" or "whimsical" but is a purposeful splendor which grounds the transcendent within the rational, for with this light, the record of time begins. (2016: 50)

Although Coutras explores light's binary nature, her framework is theological aesthetics, meaning even when she draws from the ontological aspects of light, her ultimate aim is to analyse the relationship between light imagery and the concept of beauty in Tolkien. She reveals light's spiritual and physical aspects as a presence of Celtic beauty, which misses the metaphysics of light as uniquely thematized in artefacts. As Susan Robbins also points out:

> Many scholars [...] do not specifically address Tolkien's use of light as a biblical symbol; neither do more recent authors who focus on the sacramental world of Middle-earth or the transcendent beauty found there, such as Craig Bernthal and Lisa Coutras [...] Coutras is even farther afield from this topic, even with an entire chapter devoted to a discussion of light, since she is concerned with theology—especially that of Balthasar—in relation to Tolkien's works. Her emphasis is on equating light with beauty, and it is in terms of beauty that she conducts her discussion. (2018: 173)

Although I do not discuss light necessarily as a biblical symbol, I find it problematic that Coutras aims to present light only as beauty, even when discussing light's role in the immortality and timelessness of Elven realms like Lothlórien and Rivendell. However, their light has explicit Neoplatonic and prelapsarian qualities as felt, observed and expressed by the Fellowship in *The Lord of the Rings.* I claim that light's binary nature in these places is a proof of its emanation from Ilúvatar's perfect realm, which brings along life, good and hope to diegetically build the secondary world.

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[30] According to Coutras, Celtic beauty conveys 'eternal truths inherent to creation; as such, the pagan elements of his writing aspire to a transcendental reality which blends the natural with the supernatural, expressing a creation upheld by the good, the true, and the beautiful' (50). However, the representations of light in Tolkien as I discuss in this thesis are life, good and hope in relation to diegetic subcreation in the secondary world narrative. This focus requires a dynamic interplay approach, and formalist and prelapsarian frameworks on light.

Another Tolkien scholar who addresses the binary nature of light imagery is Jane Beal, and her approach is unique in a way that she focuses on a single character, Frodo. While interpreting the light Gandalf sees in Frodo after he recovers from the Morgul-blade wound, Jane Beal claims: 'The light in Frodo also is related to the light in the Phial of Galadriel' (2018: 2). Beal adds that the phial's light comes from Eärendil's star, which is also called the Morning Star. According to her, since *Morning Star* refers to Jesus in the New Testament, the implication is that 'the light within Frodo may be interpreted, symbolically, as the Christ-light' (2018: 2). She also builds on Vaccaro, and claims that Tolkien may have paraphrased the light imagery in the poem while narrating how Gandalf observes Frodo's transparency prospectively. Beal discusses the light that Gandalf sees in Frodo as material with theological implications. Although she does not mention Balthasar's *light of being* , her interpretation of Frodo reverberates Balthasar's thematization of light as linked to Tolkien's world-building by Coutras. Although Beal's association of Frodo with Jesus does not go beyond an allegorical approach, it underlines light's binary nature. The material and ethereal aspects of light are so foundational that they can find their way into characters, but only now and then. The same binary nature of light in the phial; however, shows that there is a pattern (chains) revealing how light serves as a central subcreative element.

To elucidate her claim on the relationship between the light of the phial and the light in Frodo, Beal focuses on the phial further. She underlines the significance of the phial in both Frodo and Sam's personal battles against evil, implying that the phial does not only have visible light against the darkness of Mordor, but also it is a major symbol of good and hope in the most desperate moments of Frodo and Sam's journey with the One Ring. By studying the phial as the last artefact in the longest chain of light, this thesis also underlines its central role in diegetic world-building by bringing along light, good and hope from thousands of years ago. The phial does this in its own way, with a decline in the magnitude of light, smaller in size, by being adapted to the rapidly changing conditions of the mortal Middle-earth. This is light imagery in play, building on the properties of invention, completeness and consistency, which I discuss further in Chapter Three.

2.2.6 The Prelapsarian Nature of Light

In his letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien also wrote: 'the "light of the Sun" (the world under the sun) become terms for a fallen world, and a dislocated imperfect vision' (*Letters:* 148) as its light comes from Laurelin, which is attacked by incarnate evil. [31] For Tolkien, the Sun's light is different from the Two Trees and Silmarils' light; it is postlapsarian by symbolising loss of perfection. However, there is already a physical fall at the cosmogony as the Ainur descend to Arda. Although this fall's implications are different to the Christian myth since the Ainur do not commit sin related to their descent, they still feel a loss of perfection:

> But when the Valar[32] entered into Eä[33] they were at first astounded and at a loss, for it was as if naught was yet made which they had seen in vision, and all was but on point to begin and yet unshaped, and it was dark. (*S:* 20)

Lack of light and loss of perfect vision suggest that *all artefacts made in Arda are postlapsarian.* However, artefacts' light points to the cosmogonic vision and Ilúvatar, so light is *always prelapsarian.* This is important to note because it underpins the inherent and permanent roles of light in bringing life and hope to Arda and representing good, which all point to light imagery as the diegetic world-builder. Difference between the Sun and other artefacts' light is the chronologically decreasing degree of their prelapsarian quality as they are made later in Arda's timeline. Although light declines in artefacts, as discussed further in section 3.6, it does not underline a negative aspect, but only an inescapable change within Arda's spatiotemporal rules.

Marie Loughlin asserts that Dwarves make their artefacts with light 'born not just of the celestial objects of a fallen Eä (the sun and moon), but of Middle-earth's stars, the creations of the Vala Varda' to 'imitate the beauty of nature' (2019: 26). Here Loughlin differentiates between the Sun, Moon and stars. This differentiation would be more meaningful when we change our focus from heavenly bodies to the artefacts containing light from the same source: since they underline changing times, the Sun and Moon are different

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[31] Ungoliant, which is a primordial evil spirit incarnate in the form of a giant spider, attacks the Two Trees with the help of Melkor. Despite having been destroyed, the Golden Tree Laurelin gives one last golden fruit. The Sun is made out of this single fruit.
[32] The name of the Ainur who descend to Arda meaning *the Powers of the World*.
[33] The name of the whole universe.

from both stars and preceding artefacts like the Lamps, Two Trees and Silmarils. Although *their light is prelapsarian,* all these artefacts are made in a fallen world. According to Loughlin, Dwarves imitate the beauty of Arda's nature by using light imagery. She leaves it unclear whether there is literal light in Dwarves' artefacts or they bear resemblance to light imageries in nature, the differentiation of which would have a critical effect on light's agency. However, artefacts' prelapsarian light in their postlapsarian materiality shows that there is more connection between artefacts with light than Loughlin implies.

Chapter Three

Eä! Let These Things Be Light!

Mark J. P. Wolf discusses Arda as 'one of the most beloved and influential imaginary worlds of all time' (*Imaginary Worlds:* 224). He thus focuses on J.R.R. Tolkien's world-building in depth while adopting authorial, readerly, and fan fictional world-building approaches in *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. Building on Wolf, this chapter elaborates critical world-building as an alternative approach to analyse the role of the form of light in diegetic world-building. While demonstrating the processes of subcreation, Wolf evaluates how authors, artists and producers initiate and illustrate world-building, and defines the main elements of a secondary world as *secondary world infrastructures*. This chapter shows that light serves as a secondary world infrastructure in Tolkien's world-building: it defines the concept of time, follows and keeps track of genealogies, shapes nature and is shaped by it in return, makes myths and becomes part of the mythopoeia,[34] and introduces a unique philosophy which is underpinned by the prelapsarian quality of light imagery in artefacts with the purpose of representing life, good and hope in a postlapsarian setting.

3.1 The Philosophical Background of Chains

The unique philosophy that light introduces into Arda first relates to its resistance against time: by forming chains, light imagery achieves its purpose of representing life against death, good against evil and hope against desperation *throughout Arda's timeline*. These symbolisms point to how light imagery builds the secondary world; by providing the storyline with the consistency in life, good and hope via chains. This thesis asserts that to function as a prelapsarian builder of a postlapsarian world, light imagery intrinsically intertwines transcendental and earthly aspects. Jonathan McIntosh addresses light's resistance against time as the transmission of light from one thing to the other, and explores how this transmission reveals the secondary world's unique philosophy by light imagery having a unique synthesis. The philosophical background and the *secondariness* of this world depend on the journey of light with binary qualities:

[34] 'The creation of a myth or myths.', 'Mythopoeia.', *OED Online.*

> It was thus an authentic unity of artistic and mythic imagination (*mythos*) on the one hand and philosophical rationality (*logos*) on the other that Tolkien sought to achieve in his own mythology. Tolkien even went so far as to give symbolic representation to this synthesis of imagination and reason in one of the central images of his *legendarium*, the Light of the Two Trees of Valinor, from which the primary sources of light in Tolkien's fictional world—the sun, moon, stars, Silmaril jewels, and even the phial of Galadriel which Frodo takes with him into Mordor—would eventually take their origin. (*Flame*: 5)

I agree with McIntosh's argument that Tolkien's secondary world is built on a synthesis of imagination and reason because Tolkien himself identifies the light of the Two Trees as the light that sees things both imaginatively and scientifically in his letter number 131, as discussed further in Chapter One. Building on McIntosh, this thesis asserts that light is the sole imagery that brings reason and creativity together into the secondary world. No other theme, concept or imagery discussed by the previous scholarship has the persevering authority to provide a rational and mythical framework for the secondary world: geographical conditions do change in time, languages disappear, but light endures though in a declining manner. The journey of light that McIntosh outlines is deep, consistent and complete enough for light to show agency: I define agency as the capacity of control and action regarding invention, completeness and consistency in Arda, meaning the theme of light has enough influence on the default secondary world infrastructures as per Wolf's definition to be able to diegetically build the secondary world.

In Tolkien's world-building, light is the only concept which has agency to bring along invention, completeness and consistency, and light does this via chains. The idea of *chain* comes from the transmission of light through each artefact made from the remnants or pieces of its predecessor, like the Silmarils are created by Fëanor from the essence of the Two Trees, and the Sun and the Moon are created by the Valar from the last fruit and flower of the Trees. Chains provide the secondary world with a rational and philosophical background, and they also underline the concept of imagination via revealing things which are *even more fantastic* than the fantasy world they are in. This means that the secondary world is subject to its own spatiotemporal rules. It has physical limitations like those of the primary world although it should have expectably fewer boundaries regarding its foundations: it primarily and potentially has more independence from and control over the concept of spatiotemporality

because it is simply regarded and discussed as a *fantasy* realm. However, despite the inescapable spatiotemporal boundaries of Arda, light shows agency via artefacts it is contained in, and it challenges these boundaries by bringing invention, completeness and consistency into Arda while functioning within the limiting framework of space-time. This convergence of *logos* and *mythos* is essential for the inner consistency of Tolkien's legendarium, and is made possible only through the journey of light.

Chains of light suggest a nexus between perfection, good, and order in Tolkien's cosmology. These themes are Thomistic: in his book *The Flame Imperishable,* McIntosh highlights that Aquinas bases all the multiplicity and diversity of things on the good creation of God. McIntosh underlines the possibility that as a Medievalist and a Catholic, Tolkien must have known the ideas of Aquinas well. He explores Aquinas' possible influence on Tolkien within the area of metaphysics. He underlines how Thomism places the good and the One in the same context, which resonates with the character of Ilúvatar: 'both men (Aquinas and Tolkien) begin their metaphysical thinking in the same place, which is to say, in the beginning, when God began everything' (*Flame*: 17). Although McIntosh draws parallels between the origins of these two philosophers' metaphysical thinking, for the purpose of exploring the Thomistic reverberations in the secondary world's metaphysics, his main focus does not go beyond the cosmogony and thus the Flame Imperishable. This thesis takes his argument further by asserting that the Thomistic concept of God resonates in the existence of Ilúvatar, but more importantly, the remainder of the stories also show that the prelapsarian, perfect light originating in Ilúvatar brings the good and order into Arda. Ilúvatar's desire for everything to be good and in order marks the cosmogony which is manifested by the vision. And chains become the tools to understand how this vision serves as a draft to make artefacts that still manage to capture Ilúvatar's light: that is how chains echo perfection, represent the good, and bring order to Arda.

Order that chains bring into Arda is the most explicit example of how chains have Thomistic reverberations. In parallel with McIntosh's claim that 'Tolkien is in fact far more balanced, biblical, and Thomistic in his philosophies of God and creation than a one-sidedly Platonic and Neoplatonic interpretation' (*Flame:* 15-16), this thesis has addressed both the Platonic and Neoplatonic aspects of light imagery before moving on to its Thomistic reverberations in this chapter. Arda originates in the omnipotence Ilúvatar, and his light

becomes his manifestation within the planetary existence of Arda by bringing order to this physical realm. Although we see that the vision is something *unfolding* from the eyes of the Ainur, it is still in a *self-same condition* compared to the stories of Arda that unfold for ages to come. It is not apparent anymore, but Ilúvatar reveals it to the Ainur, takes it away and then hides it from their sight as he pleases, which makes the vision *everlasting* compared to Arda's finiteness. Ilúvatar leads the Ainur to descend to Arda, and order is what he desires from them to achieve—but for the Valar, order becomes a necessity. Therefore, order brought by chains is just a wish of the godhead whereas it is a mission for the Valar. The meaning and significance of order differ so much that they reveal the binary nature of chains' philosophical background. As addressed on page 11, one of the main claims of this thesis is that by capturing Ilúvatar's light, artefacts create chains to achieve three key properties of world-building: invention, consistency and completeness. As this chapter will discuss further, achievement of these concepts ensures that light initiates and conducts diegetic world-building through chains.

3.2 Definition and Scope of Chains

Artefacts containing light are the Lamps, the Two Trees, the stars, the Silmarils, the Sun and the Moon, the Star of Eärendil, the Phial of Galadriel, Narsil, Andúril and the Elfstone. While capturing light, the majority of these artefacts form four different chains: this is a term I use to describe the transmission of light from one artefact to the other in a gradually decreasing fashion. This happens either when the preceding artefact containing light still exists, or after it is destroyed. In any case, artefacts containing light echo perfection by revealing a meaningful pattern and interactive relation to each other through their transmission of light, thus sharing Ilúvatar's light as the same light source. In addition, the idea of chains demonstrates that artefacts forming the chains are enduring; they continue bringing light into Arda despite the passing time, they thus imitate the vision more thoroughly. And the chains show that light acts in deductive and inductive ways in the secondary world: the draft of light's journey in Arda originates in the vision while light is transmitted throughout chains to go back to the vision by imitating and trying to fully actualise this vision in Arda. The previous scholarship has underestimated the theme of light with this bidirectional scope revealed by the idea of chains.

Regarding Ilúvatar and the vision as the original sources of light for Arda is a must for the idea of chains. In the *Ainulindalë,* which is the cosmogony narrative of the secondary world, the godhead Ilúvatar exists beyond the universe and he has light. Then he makes the angelic beings called the Ainur out of his thoughts. The Ainur make a Great Music with the themes Ilúvatar presents to them. This music functions as a basis for Ilúvatar to show a vision for Arda. Although it is explicit in the *Ainulindalë* that this vision is mediated through the Music, it is made from Ilúvatar's light, it is thus the first visible thing in the cosmogony:

> And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where before was only hearing; and they saw a new World made visible before them [...] In this Music the World was begun; for Ilúvatar made visible the song of the Ainur, and they beheld it as a light in the darkness. And many among them became enamoured of its beauty, and of its history which they saw beginning and unfolding as in a vision. (*S:* 17, 25)

While unfolding what will come to happen in Arda in time, this vision becomes only a draft of Eä, the World that will soon come into being. When the Ainur witness the cosmogony of Eä, this world comes across as *light* like the vision:

> And suddenly the Ainur saw afar off a light, as it were a cloud with a living heart of flame; and they knew that this was no vision only, but that Ilúvatar had made a new thing: Eä, the World that Is. (*S:* 20)

When the Ainur descend to Arda and become the Valar, they start making things, some of which contain light. Ilúvatar has light before anything else comes into being, the Ainur come from his thought and are kindled with the Flame Imperishable, and both the vision of Arda and the universe it was born in initially appear as forms of light. Then Ilúvatar sends forth into the Void the Flame Imperishable and that is how the material universe comes into being. Therefore, the Flame Imperishable acts as the only explicit and reasonably identifiable and traceable source for the light of artefacts as their light is always natural. Starting with the Lamps and then the Two Trees, the light of artefacts comes from within with no visible external source. It says in *The Silmarillion* that 'Varda filled the lamps' (*S:* 35) with no mention of using a separate source of light other than her own power of creation. As for the Valar's overall creative power, Ilúvatar clearly identifies the Flame Imperishable as the source in the *Ainulindalë:* 'And since I have kindled you with the Flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers' (*S:* 15). Varda is also specifically associated with the light of Ilúvatar which 'lives still in her face' and gives 'her power and her joy' (*S:* 26). As for the

Two Trees, Yavanna only had to sing by a green mound called Ezellohar to grow them, and they came out of the soil (‘awoke’) in full light (*S:* 38). Ilúvatar is the source of everything that will come after him; however, his being the original source of light for Arda also underpins light’s perfect and prelapsarian aspects, which provide the chains with the concepts of perfection, the good and order, meaning light becomes a secondary world infrastructure in Arda by bringing along these concepts. Among artefacts that contain light, some even give rise to other artefacts which also contain light, and that is how chains are formed.

There are four major chains of light to be found in Arda:

1. Telperion (the elder of the Two Trees) → New and brighter stars (Carnil, Luinil, Nénar, Lumbar, Alcarinquë and Elemmírë are the names of some.)
2. Telperion & Laurelin (The latter is the younger of the Two Trees.) → The Silmarils (the famous gems) → The Star of Eärendil → The Phial of Galadriel
3. Telperion → The Moon // Laurelin → The Sun (Both chains are formed simultaneously as the Sun and the Moon are made at the same time.)
4. Telperion → Galathilion → Celeborn → Nimloth → The White Trees (There are a total number of four White Trees as far as the whole internal chronology goes until the beginning of the Fourth Age.)

The first chain starts with Yavanna, who is one of the Valar, as she grows the trees called Telperion and Laurelin. Later on, Varda uses the elder tree Telperion’s light to make new stars for the coming of Elves. In the second chain, Fëanor uses the light of both trees to make the Silmarils, his famous gems. Out of these three gems, only one survives, and it is set in the skies on Eärendil’s brow to be known as the Star of Eärendil. It shines on Middle-earth for ages to come, and that is how Galadriel fills her phial with the water from her fountain upon which this star shines, and gives this phial to Frodo to help him out in his journey with the Ring. In the third chain, the Two Trees manage to give two last motes of light after they are killed. The Valar make the Moon out of the last flower of Telperion and the Sun out of the last fruit of Laurelin. The last chain is not directly about the transmission of light, but how each white tree comes from the preceding one by creating a pattern purely based on colour: the chain of the White Trees starts with modelling Telperion, which is specifically described as *the White Tree* (*S:* 59). Since the Elves of Tirion in Aman love Telperion dearly, Yavanna makes the tree of Galathilion in the image of the elder tree for them: ‘And since of all things in Valinor they loved most *the White Tree*, Yavanna made for them a tree like to a lesser

image of Telperion, save that it did not give light of its own being' (*S:* 59). Then the Elves of Tol Eressëa get a scion of Galathilion and Celeborn is grown out of this. Later on, Elves give a sapling of Celeborn as a present to the Númenóreans, and Nimloth grows on the island of Númenor. Years later, Isildur saves a seedling of Nimloth before Númenor is destroyed, and plants it in Minas Tirith. That is how the White Trees come into being.

My argument that these artefacts contain light not only individually but also by forming chains in time brings along specific principles that I discuss in this thesis. Light in these artefacts gets dimmer with the making of each new vessel containing light. This change is a *survival strategy* for light because as time passes, the issue of mortality becomes more central, and death and decay of nature and creatures become more swift in Arda. In addition, each vessel containing light tends to symbolise the particular setting it was made into. Therefore, I assert that chains are based on three principles: decline, adaptation and representation, all of which I discuss in sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6. Therefore, the aims of this chapter are: 1) to describe the relationship between artefacts in each chain to show that their connection is based on Ilúvatar's light; 2) to describe what decline implies and how it occurs in relation to the chains; 3) to underline how artefacts forming chains adapt themselves to the spatiotemporal changes throughout Arda's timeline; 4) to discuss how each vessel in the chains represents a different race or age, but still plays the same role of world-building; 5) to demonstrate that there are order and immutableness in the cosmogony narrative and these come into play in the whole legendarium; 6) to study three other light-related categories which do not create chains but still refer to the prelapsarian light imagery; 7) to summarise the thesis by highlighting how the theme of light brings along the idea of chains for diegetic world-building.

3.3 Stories of the Four Major Chains

Following are my discussions on each chain: they are presented chronologically depending on when they were made in the timeline of Arda.

3.3.1 Telperion ⟶ New and Brighter Stars

Telperion is one of the Two Trees grown by Yavanna in Valinor. It is the elder tree which is also called 'the White Tree'. Regarding how it contains light, *The Silmarillion* describes Telperion thus: 'The one had leaves of dark green that beneath were as shining silver, and from each of his countless flowers a dew of silver light was ever falling' (*S*: 38). Therefore, Telperion's light comes from Arda's Mother Nature, which points to the Flame Imperishable. Later on, when it is ruled necessary by the Valar to illuminate Middle-earth for the coming of Elves, Varda makes new and brighter stars from the silver dews of Telperion as the ancient stars are not enough to bring light into the darkness of Middle-earth. The connection between Telperion and the new stars is elucidated thus:

> She (Varda) took the silver dews from the vats of Telperion, and therewith she made new stars and brighter against the coming of the Firstborn; wherefore she whose name out of the deeps of time and the labours of Eä was Tintallë, the Kindler, was called after by the Elves Elentári, Queen of the Stars. (*S:* 48)

That is how chronologically the first major chain of light is formed, to give Elves a chance to *live* and find *hope,* which are the two major symbolisms of light imagery in Arda.

3.3.2 Telperion & Laurelin ⟶ The Silmarils ⟶ The Star of Eärendil ⟶ The Phial of Galadriel

After the making of new, bright stars for the awakening of Elves and their summoning to the Undying Lands, the majority of them [35] accept the summoning and migrate to Aman. Fëanor was born in this continent, and he is described thus: 'Fëanor was made the mightiest in all parts of body and mind, in valour, in endurance, in beauty, in understanding, in skill, in strength and in subtlety alike, of all the Children of Ilúvatar' (*S:* 98). It comes as no surprise that as an Elf having that much ability and potential, Fëanor ponders 'how the light of the Trees, the glory of the Blessed Realm, might be preserved imperishable' (*S:* 67) and makes the gems called the Silmarils from the light of Telperion and Laurelin. The transmission of light from the Two Trees to the Silmarils is described thus: 'And the inner fire of the Silmarils Fëanor made of the blended light of the Trees of Valinor, which lives in them yet, though the Trees have long withered and shine no more' (*S:* 67). There was *bliss* in the light

[35] The Three Kindreds of the Vanyar, the Noldor and some of the Teleri.

of the Two Trees, and since the Silmarils are the only vessels that contain the light from both trees before they are killed, these gems still manage to reflect this bliss. In one of his letters, Tolkien describes the name *Silmarilli* as 'radiance of pure light', and adds: 'the Silmarilli were more than just beautiful things as such. There was Light' (*Letters:* 148).

As can be understood from its name, all the stories in *Quenta Silmarillion* (*The History of the Silmarils*)[36] are centred on the existence, significance, symbolism and influence of the Silmarils. Just before these stories come to an end along with the First Age of Arda*,* one of the Silmarils becomes the source of light for the Star of Eärendil. This star is nothing more than Eärendil sailing his ship Vingilot while wearing the Silmaril on his brow: 'Now fair and marvellous was that vessel made, and it was filled with a wavering flame, pure and bright; and Eärendil the Mariner sat at the helm, glistening with dust of elven-gems, and the Silmaril was bound upon his brow' (*S:* 250). Although the Silmaril continues to exist by preserving its original form, I still elucidate the Star as a new vessel as it is not merely made up of the Silmaril and it has different attributions than the Silmarils alone. However, its light still comes from the Silmaril, and since these gems are 'more than just beautiful things as such', the light of the Silmaril makes the Star of Eärendil the brightest one in the skies.

The last vessel in this chain is introduced in *The Lord of the Rings,* almost two ages after one Silmaril is set in the skies. When Galadriel gives Frodo her phial as a gift to help him out in his long and dark journey with the One Ring, she describes the origins of this vessel thus:

> In this phial [...] is caught the light of Eärendil's star, set amid the waters of my fountain. It will shine brighter when night is about you. May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out. (*FR:* 376-77)

The phial glitters with *rays of white light*, and the source of these rays is nothing but the Star of Eärendil, whose own source of light could be traced back to the Two Trees. Sometimes the way these chains are formed is appreciated by the characters—it is not only readers who can observe these formations, but also Arda's denizens are aware that the transmission of light is persistent. After travelling with the phial for quite some time, it just strikes Sam that they are only small parts of the one long story that this chain has ever been making:

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[36] The longest part of *The Silmarillion.*

> 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 is a long tale, of course, and goes on past the 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? (*TT:* 714)

These tales seem to be never-ending by their nature, and it is in their nature to be bound up with the major chains of light which spread throughout the whole inner narrative. Light has the agency to influence many different characters through the ages of Arda and to interweave them with the stories of different chains of light.

As discussed further in section 2.2.6, every single artefact is a postlapsarian vessel with prelapsarian light in them, and the phial is no exception. In his thesis, researcher Jyrki Korpua challenges this argument while discussing light imagery as both Christian and Platonic. He uses Frodo's voyage to the Undying Lands as an example and makes a very specific remark about the phial: 'The glass of light of Galadriel, which Frodo has earlier received as a present in the story, disappears when moving to the Undying Lands, because it belongs to mortal Middle-earth, and not to the immortal lands' (2015: 92). The original lines read thus: 'slowly the ship slipped away down the long grey firth; and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost' (*RK:* 1030). So it is not the phial itself but its light which disappears in the end. I agree that the phial belongs to Middle-earth and is used by Frodo and Sam in the narrative: every single artefact forming chains belongs to a different time and place, they thus create their own story. However, they all use the Two Trees as the same source of light.

I also oppose taking the word 'lost' literally regarding light in the secondary world. I claim light as the persistent symbol of perfection and good in Arda, and even if it *disappears*, this should be interpreted as transience: chains of light forming throughout the internal chronology prove that Ilúvatar's light will be manifested again in some other form.[37] This makes light a rather universal theme for Arda and enables artefacts to form chains although each of them may belong to a different place. Although the Two Trees represent the

[37] The Star of Eärendil is still illuminating the skies of Arda, and Andúril still shines with the light of the sun at the beginning of the Fourth Age. These things promise new ones to come through the transmission of light.

Undying Lands, their light still reaches Middle-earth through the Silmarils, one of which turns into the Star of Eärendil and shines upon the water in Galadriel's fountain. That is how the light of the phial belongs to the Undying Lands although the phial's small and portable features may be representative of Middle-earth. So the phial seems to *disappear* as Frodo sets on his journey, but what actually happens is its light turns back to the Undying Lands, where it originally belongs.

There is another layer of narrative peculiar to this chain and it shows how chains of light take part in the constant struggle between light and dark. This narrative starts with Telperion and Laurelin being attacked and killed by Melkor and Ungoliant. However, this destruction takes place after the Silmarils are made, so the light of the Two Trees continues living in the Silmarils although the Trees do not live anymore. As I have discussed above, the light of one of the Silmarils illuminates the Star of Eärendil, which in turn shines upon the water with which the phial is filled. And ages after Ungoliant's assault on the Trees, when Frodo and Sam are in dismay while facing the evil spider Shelob in Mordor, they use this phial against her. Shelob is none other than a descendant of Ungoliant as described in *The Lord of the Rings* : 'Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant' (*TT:* 725). So there is the clashing coexistence of light and dark which starts with the Trees and Ungoliant, evolves into a chain of events by including many battles for the sake of possessing, claiming for and using the Silmarils, and ends up with a story that is very similar to the one that started it. Ungoliant attacks the light of the Two Trees with her darkness, and their light, which is transmitted to a series of artefacts to end up in the Phial, attacks Ungoliant's descendant in turn.

3.3.3 Telperion → The Moon & Laurelin → The Sun

To prevent Melkor from doing any more harm to Arda and to illuminate Middle-earth more for the coming of Men, the Valar make the Sun and the Moon from the remnants of the Two Trees. Although Telperion and Laurelin are killed and the Silmarils are usurped by Melkor, there is still hope through the making of new artefacts containing light. The way this chain is formed is described thus:

> Telperion bore at last upon a leafless bough one great flower of silver, and Laurelin a single fruit of gold. These Yavanna took; and […] gave to Aulë, and Manwë hallowed

> them, and Aulë and his people made vessels to hold them and preserve their radiance […] These vessels the Valar gave to Varda, that they might become lamps of heaven, outshining the ancient stars […] Isil the Sheen the Vanyar of old named the Moon, flower of Telperion in Valinor; and Anar the Fire-golden, fruit of Laurelin, they named the Sun. (*S:* 99)

3.3.4 Telperion → Galathilion → Celeborn → Nimloth → The White Trees

Although this last chain does not contain light throughout, it still originates in Telperion and the subsequent trees echo its light with the imagery of the colour white: this chain does not bring light into Arda, but it is one of the most consistent chains to represent hope in the face of evil. First Yavanna makes Galathilion in the Elvish city of Tirion in Aman. This tree is made in the image of Telperion for the Elves of Túna as they love Telperion more than anything:

> And since of all things in Valinor they loved most the White Tree, Yavanna made for them a tree like to a lesser image of Telperion, save that it did not give light of its own being; Galathilion it was named in the Sindarin tongue. (*S:* 59)

Then, from the seedling of Galathilion, Celeborn grows in Tol Eressëa, the Lonely Isle off the eastern coast of Aman. There are many seedlings of Galathilion in Eldamar, and one of them 'was afterwards planted in Tol Eressëa, and it prospered there, and was named Celeborn' (*S:* 59).

The Elves of Tol Eressëa give a sapling of Celeborn as a gift to the Men of Númenor. The chain is already long so far, and it is described thus: 'Nimloth was in its turn descended from the Tree of Tirion, that was an image of the Eldest of Trees, White Telperion which Yavanna caused to grow in the land of the Valar' (*S:* 291). The chain does not end here—just before Nimloth is chopped and burned, and Númenor is destroyed, Isildur saves a sapling of Nimloth and together with his father Elendil, they go to sea and head for Middle-earth. This sapling is to be planted in Minas Ithil to become the first White Tree in Gondor, which is one of the major kingdoms of Men in Middle-earth.

Later on, Sauron attacks Minas Ithil and destroys the White Tree but Isildur manages to escape with a sapling again. This sapling is planted in Minas Anor, which is another city in

Gondor, and the second White Tree grows. This tree dies later on during the Great Plague, but still, a third sapling is planted by King Tarondor of Gondor. About 1200 years later, this tree also dies but this time no sapling seems to be left behind as no fruit is produced by the tree: 'When Belecthor II, the twenty-first Steward, died, the White Tree died also in Minas Tirith; but it was left standing "until the King returns", for no seedling could be found' (*RK:* 1054). However, when Aragorn becomes the king, he and Gandalf discover a sapling in a hollow at the White Mountains, 'only approachable by the King, where he had anciently offered thanks and praise on behalf of his people' (*Letters:* 206). This detail symbolises a blessing for this chain of the trees. Aragorn plants the sapling, which is to become the fourth White Tree. From the Undying Lands of Aman to Tol Eressëa and to Númenor, and from these islands to Middle-earth, this chain comprises the whole written internal chronology of Arda throughout four ages: the First Age of the Two Trees, and the First, Second and Third Age based on the Years of the Sun after the death of the Trees.

Besides, specifically the smaller chain of the White Trees[38] coincides with the "King's Sword" while this sword[39] changes hands in time. Here the lineage of the kings of Men follows the heritage of the trees. It is Isildur who saves the sapling of Nimloth and brings it to Middle-earth. The first two White Trees survive thanks to him, and cutting the One Ring off from Sauron's finger with Narsil is a milestone in his fate. And it is Aragorn who finds the sapling of the White Tree, thus enabling the fourth White Tree to grow—and he wields Andúril, which is forged from the shards of Narsil. The chain of the White Trees is thus like a line, symbolising the line of these two swords. The kings of Middle-earth are represented by not only the White Trees but also the swords, and both the White Trees and swords point to how the genealogy of the kings of Men functions in Arda.

3.4 Chains and Invention

As discussed further in Chapter One, light imagery in the secondary world underpins Wolf's categorisation of invention under four realms (nominal, cultural, natural and ontological). However, Wolf categorises objects and artefacts specifically under cultural invention: 'The most changes to be found are in [...] the *cultural* realm, which consists of all things made by humans (or other creatures), and in which new objects, artifacts, technologies, customs, institutions, ideas, and so forth appear' (*Imaginary Worlds:* 2012). Although artistic

[38] Considering the whole chain of the trees, now I focus merely on the four White Trees.
[39] Although it changes its name and becomes another sword when reforged.

creation is naturally and decidedly a central part of culture in the secondary world, the objects and artefacts are unique in the way they surpass invention on a cultural level: not only do they determine the way other things are invented in the cultural realm, like Melkor's invention of the winged Dragons to defeat all the races in Beleriand to eventually continue possessing all the Silmarils, but also they influence invention in the natural and ontological realms by shaping nature (the Silmarils leading to all the battles which result in Beleriand sinking beneath the ocean), bringing nature to life (the Lamps), and defining spatiotemporal rules (the Two Trees and Sun).

To elucidate it further, I would like to discuss Wolf's definition of invention in the natural realm: 'Beyond the cultural realm, invention in the natural realm changes nature itself, and includes new land masses, planets, plants and animals, entire ecosystems, and other aspects of the natural world itself which are changed or invented by an author' ('Sub in Subcreation': 3). Artefacts containing light are inventions 'beyond the cultural realm': the Lamps illuminate the whole continent of Middle-earth, and the Two Trees define the concept of time, which rules physical existence by introducing natural laws for the secondary world. After the Lamps are broken and Two Trees are killed, the Sun is made to illuminate Middle-earth as well as to introduce another time perception that is swifter than the Years of the Trees. And the Silmarils lead to five main battles, the last of which changes the geographical features of Middle-earth.

I discuss the idea of artefacts that define and control the spatiotemporal rules of Arda based on the finalised drafts in *The Silmarillion* since the earlier drafts present a completely different relationship between artefacts containing light and perception of time. In *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I,* in "The Hiding of Valinor", upon the making of the Sun and Moon, time is introduced by Danuin, Ranuin and Fanuin, the Ainur who represent different periods of time:

> Fanuin said: 'Now doth this mightiest cable hold both the Moon and Sun in tow; and […] mayest thou coordinate their motions and interweave their fates; for the rope of Fanuin is the Rope of Years […] so shall all the world and the dwellers within it, both Gods and Elves and Men, and all the creatures that go and the things that have roots thereon, be bound about in the bonds of Time. (*LT I:* 219)

Different from the final drafts, where time is introduced via the making of the Two Trees, here time is discussed only after the making of the Sun and Moon. Without the difference the

Two Trees and the Sun and Moon bring to Arda's spatiotemporal rules, the earlier drafts are left with no sense of acceleration in the linear time. More importantly, in these drafts the Sun and Moon do not define time but are rather controlled by it: there is no introduction of "time" depending on the Trees but characters of time controlling the movements of the Sun and Moon. A minor but similar detail regarding the highlighted significance of the Sun and a possible introduction to its relation with an accelerated linear time could be found in *The Lays of Beleriand,* in the canto "The Gest of Beren and Lúthien": 'There songs were made and things of gold,/and silver cups and jewels untold,/and the endless years of Faëry land/rolled over far Beleriand,/until a day beneath the sun,/when many marvels were begun' (*Lays:* 156-57). The "day" under the "sun" marks the beginning of not only the quest for the Silmaril but also the race of the Half-elven. Time will pass swiftly and the centrality of mortality will be repeated, both of which are marked by the symbol of the sun.

However, on *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I,* time is given a detailed persona: 'But Fanuin said: "Nay, it is but the Music of the Ainur: for behold, who are we, Danuin, Ranuin, and Fanuin, Day and Month and Year, but the children of Aluin, of Time, who is the oldest of the Ainur, and is beyond, and subject to Ilúvatar"' (*LT I:* 219). Considering *Time* as an Ainu changes the perspective completely as for the finiteness of the secondary world. Even as the oldest Ainu and controller of the most essential artefacts, if time is accepted as a character in the secondary world, it somehow simplifies the matters of death and mortality and weakens the philosophical depth of the concept of time in spite of giving it a power over the Sun and Moon. After all, as a character, Time can be deceived, prevented from controlling Arda, or even chained and imprisoned like Melkor. Not surprisingly, following narratives highlight that it is not *Time* but the dispute of artefacts that will bring Arda to an end:

> For 'tis said that ere the Great End come Melko shall in some wise contrive a quarrel between Moon and Sun […] and when they are gone the Gates of both East and West will be destroyed […] So shall it be that […] son of Manwë […] shall in the end be Melko's bane, and shall destroy the world to destroy his foe, and so shall all things then be rolled away. (*LT I:* 219)

The emphasis regarding the end of Arda here is not on the accelerated fashion of linear time but on a simple quarrel between the Gods, which makes the Sun and Moon's control over time rather unnecessary in the earlier drafts.

In *The Silmarillion,* time's acceleration along with the creation of the Sun and Moon is completely controlled by the Valar and the changing times come as no surprise to them. The earlier drafts, on the other hand, present us with a different perspective: 'were all the Gods afraid, seeing what was come, and knowing that hereafter even they should in counted time be subject to slow eld and their bright days to waning, until Ilúvatar at the Great End calls them back' (*LT I*: 219). Like in the previous chapters of the early drafts, where the Valar are defined as the Gods with limited power who have difficulty in achieving Manwë's design about the creation of the Sun, here the Gods are subject to the secondary world to the extent that they welcome the concept of elapse with fear. This is a very radical difference, making the idea of the long-lost perfection more powerful but also raising many questions along with significant paradoxes as Christopher Tolkien suggests:

> But the very notion of a history, a consecutive story, self-evidently implies time and change; how then can Valinor be said only now to come under the necessity of change, with the ordering of the motions of the Sun and Moon, when it has undergone vast changes in the course of the story of the *Lost Tales*? […] they do not "age" […] Why then do the Gods know that "hereafter" they will be "subject to slow eld"? (*LT I:* 228)

In *The Silmarillion,* with the introduction of the Years of the Trees, this belated notion of passing time is fixed in terms of inner consistency of the secondary world.

My answer for Christopher Tolkien's last question is that the Gods become subject to time not in terms of getting older to die in the end: *slow eld* points to the spatiotemporal rules which are essential for Arda's existence as a physical realm. This inescapability of spatiotemporality is also present in *The Silmarillion,* but in the earlier drafts it is more emphasised as the Ainur already have limited power over many things in Arda. It is also significant to note that in *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* the Two Trees date 'the beginning of their (the Valar) reign in Valinor' (*Shaping:* 80). This implies that the Two Trees not only introduce time perception but also highlight the reign of the Valar, which goes in parallel with the stars symbolising the Elves and the making of the Sun and Moon foreshadowing the upcoming age of Men. Therefore, I find it useful to explain the main changes between the earlier and finalised drafts regarding artefacts and perception of time:

The Book of Lost Tales, Part I	***The Silmarillion***
• Light and time are presented as separate concepts.	• The Two Trees create time with their illumination cycle.
• Time controls artefacts.	• Artefacts control time.
• There is no acceleration in time perception. The concept is fixed with the characters of time.	• There is an accelerated linear time perception along with the shift from the Years of the Trees to the Years of the Sun.
• Time is a shallow concept and light has rather more depth.	• Time has as much philosophical meaning as light and they are interrelated.
• Time is a more explicit concept via its representation as a character (Aluin, *LT I:* 219) but it lacks philosophical depth.	• Time is not presented as a separate character, but as a concept, it has gained more significance for the storyline.
• The quality and agency of light do not have to define or challenge time because time is not a metaphysical issue in relation to the inner consistency of the secondary world.	• Light imagery defines and challenges time because time is of metaphysical and philosophical significance.
• The relationship between light, time and the Valar does not go beyond a single story on the hiding of Valinor.	• There is rather a unified, historical, thus more coherent relationship between light, time and the Valar's approach to these concepts.

Table 1 Comparison between the earlier and finalised drafts of the legendarium regarding the relationship between light imagery and time perception.

In *The Silmarillion,* light is related not only to defining time, but also to foreshadowing what is to come. A new timeline begins with the Sun and Moon, and this one is more inclined to depletion, swift life, decay and mortality. In contrast to the calm and long years of the Trees, the pleasure of which is experienced mainly by the Valar in Aman, the Years of the Sun have the same duration as years in the primary world. This is a sign that the mortal race of Men is to be introduced soon into Middle-earth. Apart from the comparison of years, stars are made for the coming of Elves and the Sun and Moon mark the coming of Men. And light imagery is powerful enough to create its own ontological exceptions within the new infrastructure it introduces; even the mortality of Men is at stake when associated with the agency of light that is decisive and powerful in the fate of Arda in general: 'None have ever come back from the

mansions of the dead, save only Beren son of Barahir, whose hand had touched a Silmaril; but he never spoke afterward to mortal Men' (*S:* 104-105).

3.5 Chains and Consistency

While transmitting light in a declining manner, each artefact in their chain is made more efficient than its predecessor in adapting to both the linear time perception and the narrative which shifts its focus from the Undying Lands to Middle-earth throughout the timeline of Arda. This adaptation is essential for the inner consistency of the secondary world because it is a fact that Arda will move to its end in an accelerated manner: swifter times and places affected more by mortality.

The first chain begins with the growing of the Two Trees. Verlyn Flieger underlines the idea of adaptation introduced by these trees:

> The concept is extraordinarily beautiful, but the beauty has a function and serves the theme. The alternating cycles of light mark the beginning of days, a rhythm that suggests measured time. There is still no night, no absolute dark, but there is a hesitation and pulsation, as if the light must now be tempered to the life of the world […] However dimmer, this is the light of the world. (*SL:* 63)

As new artefacts endure the linear time perception, they reach more denizens and lead to more artistic creations. Adaptation not only brings along inner consistency into the secondary world to contribute to its foundations, but also points to the divine quality of light imagery as it is omnipresent throughout the timeline of Arda.

Regarding the first chain, although Aman is full of blessed light thanks to the Two Trees, Yavanna asks: 'Shall they walk in darkness while we have light?' on behalf of Elves (*S:* 48). That is why Varda makes new and brighter stars of which light can reach Middle-earth. The second chain is formed thanks to Fëanor's making of the Silmarils. Unlike the stars of Varda, which are needed for the coming of Elves, there is no explicit necessity for the Silmarils in practice. However, Fëanor is not an ordinary artist: 'it may be that some shadow of foreknowledge came to him of the doom that drew near' (*S:* 67). Perhaps that is why Fëanor makes portable and enshrouded Silmarils which will preserve the light of the Trees in a secure way. After all the chaos and battles caused by these gems in Arda, one of

the Silmarils is set in the skies at the bidding of the Valar: it is beyond reach to be owned and becomes *the Star of High Hope* rather than a subject of doom.

Later on, we see that the focus of the narrative shifts from immortality to mortality by the coming of Men, which itself is represented by the making of the Sun: 'for the Sun was set as a sign for the awakening of Men and the waning of the Elves' (*S:* 99). And the Elves who are now 'waning' also call the Sun 'the Heart of Fire, that awakens and consumes' (*S:* 99). This is about the Elves becoming a less dominant race in Arda, particularly in Middle-earth. And the verb 'consumes' is particularly noteworthy: with the age of the mortal Men comes consumption, which has implications related to an ending and using up materials found on Earth. And a full description of this concept of consumption comes after the making of the Sun; now the characteristics of time perception are also changing:

> From this time forth were reckoned the Years of the Sun. Swifter and briefer are they than the long Years of the Trees in Valinor. In that time the air of Middle-earth became heavy with the breath of growth and mortality, and the changing and ageing of all things was hastened exceedingly; life teemed upon the soil and in the waters in the Second Spring of Arda. (*S:* 103)

Until Arda ends, the Valar and Elves all make new artefacts containing light or Men save the previously made ones and adapt the next artefact better to the changing times and/or spaces. Regarding the last major chain, the Valar make the Sun and Moon due to the similar reasons with the stars of Varda: 'For they remembered the Avari that remained by the waters of their awakening, and they did not utterly forsake the Noldor in exile; and Manwë knew also that the hour of the coming of Men was drawn nigh' (*S:* 99). And Middle-earth needs light again, so that Melkor could be hindered from gathering his strength in the darkness: these could not be achieved with the light of the Trees even if they were alive.

And this strategy is successful: the Two Trees die as the initiators of all the chains and two of the Silmarils disappear later on, but we see that more artefacts survive towards the end of the chains. The chain of the trees is a good example of how different peoples in Arda adapt tree and light imageries to the ontological concepts of space and time within the changing nature of the narrative. It starts with Telperion in the Undying Lands. Although we are talking about an immortal land where death and decay have no meaning, the Undying Lands are still a part of Arda, and the Two Trees introduce the concept of time but slowly. The green mound

of Ezellohar, where the Two Trees grow up, is hallowed by Yavanna, and it becomes a sacred place with the growth of the Trees. Yavanna makes Galathilion, which is the next tree in the chain, in the imagery of Telperion. It is adapted for the Elves of Tirion: if the Two Trees start to shine primarily for the Valar themselves, Galathilion is very beautiful but simply just *white* for the Elves of the Vanyar and the Noldor to cherish their version of Telperion. The next tree in the chain is Celeborn, which grows in Tol Eressëa for the Elves of the Teleri. Later on, the Elves of Tol Eressëa give a sapling of Celeborn to the Númenorians. This sapling grows to be Nimloth, the White Tree of Númenor. As Númenor is a large island of Men in the middle of the Western Sea, the gradual movement of the chain of the trees from west to east, from the Undying Lands to Middle-earth, becomes apparent. Now we are talking about the introduction of mortality to Arda, by Nimloth belonging to the mortal race of Men. Although the Númenóreans used to live longer than the Men of Middle-earth, there is already a shift taking place from the Valar to Elves, and from Elves to Men, only highlighted by this chain of the trees which provides the secondary world with inner consistency throughout Arda's timeline.

3.6 Chains and Completeness

As the chains get longer by the addition of each new artefact, the idea of decline becomes apparent: from the beginning of each chain till its end, there is a decline in both the magnitude of light and proximity to Ilúvatar as the main source of light. Although decline means failure of the strength of light, it still enables artefacts to survive the elapsing time and continue transmitting light. Like the idea of chains being central to question invention and consistency brought along by light imagery, decline is a sine qua non for the nature of chains: artefacts cannot form a chain by preserving the same strength of and distance to light. As a result, all artefacts containing light and forming chains outline a decline in time. This decline points to the adaptive quality of artefacts, which underpins the completeness of the secondary world: via the decline of light, artefacts are able to endure the passing time, form chains, and thus contribute to the background details, character formations and main infrastructures of the secondary world as per Wolf's definition, which has previously been discussed on page 10. The narratives related to light in *The Silmarillion* are mainly deductive with the *Ainulindalë* highlighting Ilúvatar as the origin of perfection and light, and *Quenta Silmarillion* revealing stories about artefacts capturing a ray of this light to echo perfection. This viewpoint also underlines a narrative of decline in the legendarium since any artistic attempt to reach

Ilúvatar's light always achieves only a lesser form of light in an already marred world. Although this concept of decline is not central in *The Lord of the Rings,* we still see that it is much smaller artefacts containing much lesser forms of light that highlight the journey of the Fellowship: its members are guided by the goodwill of the Three Rings of Power[40] and at the end of the journey, through Aragorn's kingship, Andúril reaches its full potential and belongs to a *king* like its predecessor Narsil used to do.

The fact that each artefact in the chains is tied with a different race contributes to the completeness of the secondary world, and as there is a decline in light throughout the chains, both the magnitude of light in artefacts and their structural characteristics become distinctive and special to that race. The relationship between light and characters in the narratives starts in the *Ainulindalë* by showing that different beings witness different types of light. The Ainur have already seen Ilúvatar's light before they descend to Arda and become the Valar, and the first artefacts they make are the Lamps and Two Trees. I claim that these are the only artefacts with light that represent the Valar. Later on, Varda makes new stars for the coming of Elves. When Elves awaken from their sleep, the first thing they see is these stars made from the silver dews of Telperion: so theoretically what Elves first encounter in Arda is light imagery. They become quite fond of these stars which are closer to their heart than any other thing that contains light: 'Even among the radiant flowers of the Tree-lit gardens of Valinor they longed still at times to see the stars' (*S:* 59). In the narratives, Elves are always associated with the stars, and this symbolism becomes even more central in *The Lord of the Rings.* Aeons after the awakening of Elves, when the four Hobbits hear the High Elves almost at the beginning of their journey, they happen to sing a song about Varda, who is the Queen of the Stars for Elves. The Hobbits encounter these Elves for the first time, and their first impression is all about the stars and Moon:

> […] the hobbits could see the starlight glimmering on their hair and in their eyes. They bore no lights, yet as they walked a shimmer, like the light of the moon above the rim of the hills before it rises, seemed to fall about their feet. (*FR:* 80)

When Frodo and Sam feel hopeless in their long journey, they talk about the stars and Moon, but these are still associated with Elves: '"How beautiful the stars are, and the Moon!" "They do cheer the heart, don't they?" said Sam looking up. "Elvish they are, somehow"' (*TT:* 613).

[40] Narya, Vilya and Nenya.

Regarding the other artefacts containing light and their representations; after their awakening, not all Elves accept their summoning to the Undying Lands, but the Noldor are among the ones who see the bliss of the light of the Two Trees. Fëanor manages to make the Silmarils thanks to this. Therefore I regard the Silmarils as the representation of the Noldor. Men in Middle-earth, however, witness only the light of the Sun as a source of light in their lives, and later on, some of them become the keepers of the White Trees, which do not have a light of their own but descend from the imagery of Telperion. It may be stating the obvious, but comparatively, stars and the Moon serve as the symbols of Elves while the Sun is the exemplar of Men: 'the Sun was set as a sign for the awakening of Men and the waning of the Elves, but the Moon cherishes their memory' (*S:* 99).

It is not just different beings that each artefact represents; they also point to the changing times and moving to new spaces, which I have discussed as *adaptation* in section 3.5. The Two Trees grow in Valinor as symbols of the Valar embracing Aman as their new homeland after Melkor's destruction of the Lamps in Middle-earth. By starting *the Count of Time*, the Trees represent the Valar's renewed hope towards protecting life and good in an isolated part of Arda (Aman). Later on, the new and brighter stars made by Varda (*S:* 48) point to the coming of Elves: times are changing. Now our focus shifts from Aman to Cuiviénen. After Elves are summoned to Aman, the focus is back on the Undying Lands, and after Fëanor makes the Silmarils there, these gems become representations of three elements of Arda's nature: 'the airs of heaven', 'the fires of the heart of the world', and 'the deep waters' (*S:* 254). When the Sun and Moon are set in the skies, time starts to pass in a fast manner, and the focus shifts back from Aman to Middle-earth. From Undying Lands to Middle-earth, from immortality to mortality, from *The Silmarillion* to *The Lord of the Rings,* from the beginning to the end, Arda is teleological.

As I have discussed in section 3.5, the adaptation of artefacts containing light implies an ever-changing state of features. It thus seems in contrast with the idea of immutableness. However, Tolkien's subcreation is a gathering of many polarities: good and evil, light and dark, deduction from Ilúvatar's light and induction to his perfection. Changeability and immutableness are thus another polarity that I question in relation to chains' role in completeness. Adaptation is inevitable to rationalise Arda's inner consistency whereas the concept of immutableness is just a difference in perceiving Arda, serving to its completeness. Arda is naturally ever-changing for its denizens; however, its existence is perceived as omnipresent immutableness by Ilúvatar as he has already revealed the vision and he has both

the beginning and the end of everything. In addition, the idea of chains suggests that artefacts have specific relations to each other, which leads all of them to point to the perfection of Ilúvatar and the vision to diegetically build the secondary world. However, it is not my main aim to explore that light is the unifying force for artefacts: chains of light are only the most obvious patterns to explore the nature of light imagery in Arda. Light is unifying on a deeper level: its binary nature that unifies material and ethereal qualities via artefacts enables the secondary world to have a rational framework whilst protecting its subcreative quality. According to McIntosh, this unification of light is Thomistic, as it points to Aquinas' idea that light of faith and light of reason come from the same divine source (*Flame:* 41-43).

Therefore, along with the chains comes the law of immutableness for Eä's cosmology: as artefacts containing light follow one another, they become the establishments of the same artistic practice by each capturing Ilúvatar's light in their own manner. In the earliest drafts of "Silmarillion", the difference between the second and third major chains—those starting with the Two Trees and followed by the Silmarils, and then the Sun and Moon—is not even that clear yet, contributing to another aspect of immutableness. Particularly in *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* the descriptions for the end of Arda are all about rekindling the magic sun and moon of the Two Trees with the recovery of the Silmarils. This recurrence points to immutableness in a different way than I have previously discussed: this time it is not a transcendental idea of immutableness underlining the self-same condition of Arda from the viewpoint of Ilúvatar, but an earthly one; rationalised for all beings in Arda by showing that everything changes, nothing remains the same, but in the end everything goes back to the beginning. As for all the detailed versions of the end of Arda, this thesis outlines four different suggestions throughout the drafts of the legendarium:

The Silmarillion	*The Book of Lost Tales, I*	*The Book of Lost Tales, II*	*The Shaping of Middle-earth*
'Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all (the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar) shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased' (*S:* 15-16). **Not obvious but hopeful**	'[...]it is of the unalterable Music of the Ainur that the world come in the end for a great while under the sway of Men; yet whether it shall be for happiness or sorrow Ilúvatar has not revealed' (*LT I:* 150) & 'For 'tis said that ere the Great End come Melko shall in some wise contrive a quarrel between Moon and Sun […] and when they are gone the Gates of both East and West will be destroyed […] So shall it be that […] son of Manwë […] shall in the end be Melko's bane, and shall destroy the world to destroy his foe, and so shall all things then be rolled away' (*LT I:* 219). **Both Men and Fionwë Úrion (Manwë's son) bring an end**	'Melko is thus now out of the world – but one day he will find a way back, and the last great uproars will begin before the Great End. Melko can now work hurt and damage and evil in the world only through Men, and he has more power and subtlety with Men than Manwë or any of the Gods, because of his long sojourn in the world and among Men […] Laurelin and Silpion will be rekindled […] the Sun and Moon will be recalled' (*LT II:* 282, 285). **Men's apocalypse, the beginnings of hope for artefacts containing light**	'The Gods and Elves look forward to a future time when the "magic sun and moon" of the Trees may be rekindled […] In those days the Silmarils shall be recovered from sea and earth and air, and Maidros shall break them and Belaruin with their fire rekindle the Two Trees, and the great light shall come forth again […] and Gods and Elves and Men shall grow young again, and all their dead awake' (*Shaping:* 20, 40-41). **Explicit and obvious hope thanks to artefacts with light** **Later on:** 'Thereafter shall the Silmarils be recovered out of sea and earth and air; for Eärendel shall descend and yield up that flame that he hath had in keeping. Then Fëanor shall bear the Three and yield them unto Yavanna Palúrien; and she will break them and with their fire rekindle the Two Trees, and a great light shall come forth; and the Mountains of Valinor shall be levelled, so that the light goes out over all the world. In that light the Gods will again grow young, and the Elves awake and all their dead arise, and the purpose of Ilúvatar be fulfilled concerning them. But of Men in that day the prophecy speaks not, save of Túrin only, and him it names among the Gods' (*Shaping:* 165). **It is really sad to see all these amazing ideas are left out in the final version. Artefacts are in their strongest form, specific and explicit roles of Eärendel, Fëanor and Túrin make it obvious that the creators and bearers of artefacts with light and how they stand within the concepts of fate and free will (strange feeling of repentance included with the introduction of Fëanor's role) are as significant as light in shaping, leading and imagining the ends of Arda. All the main motifs of this thesis gather here: the true light manifesting itself through making of artefacts, the role of the makers and bearers, the echo of perfection by recovering the ultimate form of light. Light will end time.**

Table 2 Comparison between 3 earlier drafts and the finalised draft of the legendarium regarding the relationship between light imagery and the end of the secondary world.

Tolkien has never returned to the alternative ending in *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* and my suggestion is that with all the variety of the main contrasts in the legendarium, like good and evil, fate and free will, war and peace, hope and despair, it is highly likely that the narrative does not let light to be expanded on in its entirety and with reason. It is such a condensed and complex theme that if elaborated properly based on the ideas in *The Shaping of Middle-earth,* it would have needed its own narrative, with an additional compilation of drafts revealing many other stories to provide a conceptual framework for only light imagery itself. Tolkien has not explicitly built his diegetic world on a single story of light; light imagery is rather pervasive at the background of the whole storyline. Although *The Silmarillion* is more abrupt and brief than the earlier drafts in its revelation of light imagery and its significance, the idea of chains has endured in the finalised drafts, and this thesis asserts that it provides enough framework to explore light as one of the main themes in the secondary world, and the only imagery to diegetically build Arda.

3.7 Other Categories of Artefacts, Characters and Places Related to Light

In addition to the major chains, there are also three other topics that I find appropriate to address in this chapter. Although they do not specifically relate to a chain, their association with Ilúvatar's light, embodiment of good against evil in Arda, and the way they engage with invention, consistency and completeness give new meaning to their role in diegetic world-building. These three topics are detailed below:

• Artefacts independently containing and/or reflecting light: Illuin and Ormal, Valacirca, Narsil → Andúril, the Elfstone, Nenya
• Lúthien's relation to light imagery
• Light in places: the Gate of Moria, Lothlórien, Fangorn Forest, the Thousand Caves

3.7.1 Artefacts Independently Containing and/or Reflecting Light

After the Ainur become the Valar by descending to Arda, they present light for the first time by making the Lamps, Illuin and Ormal. Although these artefacts precede all the others that contain light, their role in addressing light as the diegetic world-builder is rather secondary because by being attacked and destroyed by Melkor much earlier in the timeline, they do not form or become a part of any chain. However, these lamps still contain Ilúvatar's

light because it is Varda, in whose face ‘the light of Ilúvatar lives still’ (*S:* 26), who filled the lamps. As an idea which does not survive until the finalised drafts, in *The Book of Lost Tales, Part I*, there is an explicit relation between the Lamps and Two Trees, almost to the point of creating another chain:

> The lamps to North and South flickered and fell […] straightway Aulë began to labour mightily. At last he says: ‘It is ill working in this gloom, and ‘twas an evil deed of Melko’s that brought to ruin those fair lamps.’ But Varda answering said: ‘Still is there much light remaining both in the airs and that which floweth spilled upon the earth’ […] all the light poured into two great cauldrons that Aulë fashioned […] and those are called Kulullin and Silindrin. Now in the midmost vale they digged two great pits […] Then came Palúrien (Yavanna) […] and she wore spells about those two places […] from Kulullin rose a slender shoot […] the Valar saw a shoot arise in that place whereto the pools of Silindrin had been poured. (*LT I:* 69-72)

This passage gives the impression that by preceding the rest of artefacts and serving as the sources of light for the Trees, Illuin and Ormal could be regarded as the primary artefacts with light from which all the chains originate. If it had survived to the final drafts, this idea could have changed the way this thesis interprets the Two Trees as the most central and blessed artefacts of all.

Although Varda is known to make and set many stars in the skies of Arda, the constellation Valacirca is symbolically more important than the others. In addition to chains, it is the only artefact that is set as a challenge against Melkor and as a *sign of doom*. Therefore, it repeats the function of artefacts with light, which is to diegetically build the secondary world by echoing Ilúvatar’s perfection and thus bringing light and hope against Melkor’s darkness and chaos.

Narsil is King Elendil’s sword, which is also used by his son Isildur to cut the One Ring from Sauron’s hand. Narsil has an implicit connection to the third major chain:

> Against Aeglos the spear of Gil-galad none could stand; and the sword of Elendil filled Orcs and Men with fear, for it shone with the light of the sun and of the moon, and it was named Narsil […] with the hilt-shard of Narsil Isildur cut the Ruling Ring from the hand of Sauron and took it for his own. (*S:* 294)

Although it does not contain light in the way the Sun and Moon can, Narsil still responds to these artefacts by reflecting their light.

Andúril is Aragorn's sword, which is forged from the shards of Narsil. I argue that these swords form no chain but they simply reveal a process of remaking, resulting with Narsil's reflection in the form of Andúril. The physical description of Andúril is thus: 'The Sword of Elendil was forged anew by Elvish smiths, and on its blade was traced a device of seven stars set between the crescent Moon and the rayed Sun' (*FR:* 277). Different from the descriptions of Narsil, the Moon is now 'crescent' on Andúril whereas the Sun is 'rayed', therefore the focus of the King's sword is on the upcoming reign of Men. Not only there are symbols of light to be found on Andúril, but also it reflects light like Narsil did: 'Very bright was that sword when it was made whole again; the light of the sun shone redly in it, and the light of the moon shone cold' (*FR:* 277). Also while giving a true depiction of Aragorn in his letter to Frodo, Gandalf uses the words light and blade to imply Narsil, which is to become Andúril: '*A light from the shadows shall spring; / Renewed shall be blade that was broken, / The crownless again shall be king*' (*FR:* 171). Here light stands for both the sword and the King himself, who symbolises a renewed hope against the darkness of Sauron in the Third Age.

The Elfstone is one of the many valuable presents that Galadriel gives the Fellowship before they depart from Lothlórien. It is a gem which 'flashed like the sun shining through the leaves of spring', and when Aragorn takes the stone; 'those who saw him wondered; for they had not marked before how tall and kingly he stood, and it seemed to them that many years of toil had fallen from his shoulders' (*FR:* 375). This stone also functions like the Three Rings in the way it removes 'many years of toil' from Aragorn's shoulders. Thus, Aragorn becomes the owner of this artefact besides Andúril, and both Andúril and the Elfstone symbolise his true line, duty, and upcoming kingship.

About the Three Rings of Power, *The Silmarillion* notes:

> Now these were the Three that had last been made, and they possessed the greatest powers. Narya, Nenya, and Vilya, they were named, the Rings of Fire, and of Water, and of Air, set with ruby and adamant and sapphire; and of all the Elven-rings Sauron most desired to possess them, for those who had them in their keeping could ward off the decays of time and postpone the weariness of the world. (*S:* 288)

Among these rings, Nenya is explicitly described as having radiance that matches the stars, and as I discuss in section 3.7.3, it gives Lothlórien its quality of belonging to a long-lost, other-worldly past. The way Frodo catches sight of this Ring is described thus: 'Its (the Star of Eärendil) rays glanced upon a ring about her finger; it glittered like polished gold overlaid with silver light, and a white stone in it twinkled as if the Even-star had come down to rest upon her hand' (*FR:* 365). All we know about the Rings of Power is that they are made by the smiths of Eregion with the hope of enjoying a similar 'bliss of those that had departed' (*S:* 287) to Aman. So, the overall nature of the Three Rings is not explicitly about capturing light, illuminating the darkness or fighting the evil. They are made to cherish the memory of the Undying Lands. This is not echoing perfection, but echoing a long lost ideal which itself echoes perfection. These rings are also bound up with the One Ring; they are 'subject wholly to it' and they will 'last only so long as it too should last' (*S:* 287). While almost all the artefacts that capture a ray of Ilúvatar's light create chains by transmitting light to the next artefact, the Three Rings are under the power of the One Ring and they inescapably share a similar fate with this Ring. This fact leaves them alone compared to the implicit unity of artefacts (chains) that echo perfection. For all these reasons, this thesis only discusses the overall quality of the Three Rings as being supportive of the good in the universal and eternal fight between good and evil in the legendarium as their makers still rebel against the One Ring's bond on them. Except for Nenya, these rings do not have a light of their own, but they still contribute to the diegetic world-building in their own way: by surpassing the physical boundaries set by time.

3.7.2 Lúthien's Relation to Light Imagery

Throughout the legendarium, some characters integrate with light imagery on a deep and comprehensive level, and I consider Lúthien as the main example for this. Lúthien is the daughter of Elu Thingol, the Elven King of Doriath, and Melian the Maia. My discussion of Lúthien in relation to light originates in *The Lord of the Rings* although it is chronologically the last novel about the secondary world. In opposition to the general, explicit and thematic connections in *The Silmarillion,* the association of Elves with the Moon and stars is present in almost all the small details in *The Lord of the Rings.* This makes me draw analogies between this customary relation of Middle-earth with Lúthien's representation: she is the only character to be described by using merely the Moon and star imageries.

This representation of Lúthien could not be found in so much depth in the stories of *The Silmarillion:* to discern how closely and deeply Lúthien is connected with the light of the Moon and stars, we have to look at *The Lays of Beleriand.* In these earlier drafts, Lúthien's depiction, her charm on Beren, and their whole relationship and journey are highlighted with the Moon and stars. Beren's first encounter with Lúthien is described in "Túrin's Fostering":

> And the early moon was glimmering.
> Tinúviel danced a-shimmering.
> Her dancing through the moonlit leaves
> He found her neath a misty moon,
> A silver wraith that danced afar,
> And the mists beneath her feet were strewn
> In moonlight palely quivering.
> One moment paused she glimmering.
> And Beren caught that elfin maid
> And kissed her trembling starlit eyes,
> Shall Beren by the elfin maid
> Dance in the starlight of her eyes. (*Lays:* 108-109)

Beren's encounter with Lúthien leads to the beginning of the Half-elven, who as a particular race also presents a unique relation to light and its role in diegetic world-building. Beren and Lúthien's granddaughter Elwing marries Eärendil, and together they become the first Half-elven to be granted the choice of their fates when they set foot in the Undying Lands with one of the Silmarils. After Melkor is thrust into the Void, Eärendil is set in the sky on his ship Vingilot with the Silmaril on his brow. The moment when Beren and Lúthien fall in love is also described through the light of stars and the Moon: 'As love there woke in sweet surprise/the starlight trembled in her eyes […] O starry diadem and white/pale hands beneath the pale moonlight!' (*Lays:* 167-168). Further in the narrative, Lúthien is described as having a light of her own. This kind of a description starts slowly, but surely becomes explicit. In Canto IV, when Beren looks at Lúthien, he sees 'within his darkened eyes/the light that for no darkness dies' (*Lays:* 183). Lúthien is *light*, and Beren responds to this: 'he groped as one gone sudden blind,/who seeks to grasp the hidden light/with faltering hands in more than night'. Later on, he 'looked in Lúthien's eyes/and saw a light of starry skies' (*Lays:* 184, 190). Lúthien is not dancing under the starlit skies any more, she *has* these skies in her eyes.

In Canto V, when Lúthien gets ready to escape from her treehouse to help Beren in his encounter with Melkor, she demands a loom from Dairon, and explains the reason thus: 'My idle fingers would spin and weave/a pattern of colours, of morn and eve,/of sun and moon and changing light/amid the beech-leaves waving bright' (*Lays:* 205). The cloak which Lúthien would like to make is also associated with the light of chains: it is going to have the colours of 'sun, moon and changing light', the last one being perhaps a reference to stars. Finally, Lúthien is described as 'a gleam of light,/like stars descended from the night' while saving the prisoners from Angband, and having 'flower-entwinéd brows so white […] slender hands in this new light' while saving Beren from his agony (*Lays:* 254-255). Therefore, the moonlight and starlight shining on Lúthien find a place of their own in her soul and body, and introduce her into light imagery, perhaps on a deeper level than with all the other characters in the end. The moon and stars radiate on her, and she carries a light on her own. All these changes in Lúthien's character are to be left out in *The Silmarillion,* with Tolkien's intention to add more emphasis to the Silmarils and their influence on Beleriand rather than focusing as much on Lúthien herself.

3.7.3 Light in Places

In *The Lord of the Rings,* there are specific places that the Fellowship visits or happens to see during their journey, these being the Gate of Moria, Lothlórien and Fangorn Forest in chronological order. I consider these locations as having an established relationship with light and thus discuss their relationship with light imagery in this section. At the end I also discuss one final place called the Thousand Caves: although it is based on *The Lay of Leithian*, thus the much earlier drafts about the First Age, this place still relates to light imagery in a noticeable way.

When the Fellowship is formed and even before they set out on their journey, it is no coincidence that Elrond gives his blessing thus: 'May the stars shine upon your faces!' (*FR:* 281). Here Elrond expresses his wish that stars may enlighten the quest of the Fellowship. And when the Fellowship is gathered around the Gate of Moria, the place is described thus:

> Below, though the threads were in places blurred or broken, the outline could be seen of an anvil and a hammer surmounted by a crown with seven stars. Beneath these

> again were two trees, each bearing crescent moons. More clearly than all else there shone forth in the middle of the door a single star with many rays. “There are the emblems of Durin!” cried Gimli. “And there is the Tree of the High Elves!” said Legolas. “And the Star of the House of Fëanor,” said Gandalf. (*FR:* 304, 306)

On a single gate are gathered four of the light imageries that are the focus of this thesis: Valacirca, trees made in the image of Telperion, and moon and star imageries. The density in the way light is engaged with this place turns the Gate of Moria into a threshold opening up hope and shelter for the Fellowship in the midst of darkness and various threats.

The Elven realm Lothlórien is carved out of wild nature by Galadriel with the help of Nenya. This forest not only contains a special kind of light, but also exists within a transcendental framework. Despite being in Middle-earth, it feels like it belongs to another world with its long lost spatiotemporality:

> The others cast themselves down upon the fragrant grass, but Frodo stood awhile still lost in wonder. It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured for ever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful. In winter here no heart could mourn for summer or for spring. No blemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. On the land of Lórien there was no stain. (*FR:* 350-51)

This description defies all the spatiotemporal rules to be found in Middle-earth; from Frodo’s viewpoint, the light of Lothlórien belongs to ‘a vanished world’, and this realm has an abstract existence apart from its physical location in Middle-earth. Here the vanished world explicitly refers to the Undying Lands, which is inaccessible to the denizens of Middle-earth despite being a continent in Arda. From a mortal being’s aspect in Middle-earth, a land of immortality and its influence could not even be elucidated through any language known by him. In addition to the light of Lothlórien representing an alternative spatiotemporality, the trees of Lothlórien are reminiscent of the Two Trees of Valinor: ‘In the dim light of the stars their stems were grey, and their quivering leaves a hint of fallow gold’ (*FR:* 358). The qualities of Lothlórien thus contribute to consistency and completeness in the secondary

world by reminding readers of the long-lost glory of Elves in the Third Age, and serving as a shelter for the Fellowship from the evil deeds of Sauron.

Lothlórien is not the only forest realm that the Fellowship visits. During their escape from the Orcs and Uruk Hai, Merry and Pippin find themselves in Fangorn Forest. This forest is made up of the Ents, who reflect some kind of light of their own, and this aspect is described through the imagery of tree sap that the hobbits are about to drink:

> Treebeard lifted two great vessels […] they seemed to be filled with water; but he held his hands over them, and immediately they began to glow, one with a golden and the other with a rich green light; and the blending of the two lights lit the bay […] Looking back, the hobbits saw that the trees in the court had also begun to glow, faintly at first, but steadily quickening, until every leaf was edged with light. (*TT:* 470-71)

Treebeard drinks the same liquid that he offers to Merry and Pippin in these vessels. After that, when he stands up, we can see how he shares the light in the liquid: 'the vessels of light trembled and sent up two jets of flame. There was a flicker like green fire in his eyes' (*TT:* 474). Tree sap comes from earth, its light pointing to the Flame Imperishable, which is set at the heart of Arda. The fact that tree sap has light of its own contributes to the properties of invention, completeness and consistency: it recalls the light of the Two Trees in a different age and place, thus with different properties, but still surviving. In addition, despite being the eldest, Treebeard is surely the most physically and mentally active Ent in the whole forest, and the way he shares the light of Fangorn, either by consuming the tree sap or mentally coalescing with the rest of the forest, underlines the role of light imagery in his upcoming role in the last march of the Ents against the evil of Saruman.

There is one more place suitable to be discussed in this section. Despite belonging to both another age and realm which does not even exist as part of Middle-earth anymore, the Thousand Caves is directly related to light imagery. The significance of this place does not come into the stories of *The Silmarillion,* I thus focus on the earlier drafts in the external chronology. In Canto IV of *The Lay of Leithian,* the description of the Thousand Caves of the Kingdom of Doriath is reminiscent of Valinor:

> There a light/like day immortal and like night/of stars unclouded, shone and gleamed […] a roof whose branches wound/in endless tracery of green/lit by some

> leaf-emprisoned sheen/of moon and sun, and wrought of gems,/and each leaf hung on golden stems. (*Lays:* 189)

The light of the caves is likened to an ‘immortal’ day, and a night full of ‘unclouded’ stars. Therefore, I claim that this place itself is a capture of the light belonging to the Undying Lands, and Galadriel is not the only one trying to recover a long lost realm by protecting a particular land. The same is valid for Melian, who is the Lady of the Kingdom of Doriath. The caves also reveal another aspect of light symbolising good in Arda; no matter whether light is to be found in a tree, person, heavenly body or place, it radiates similarly, sharing the same common qualities of the good. This light is found in stars, mother earth, the Sun and Moon, and gems. The depiction of the Thousand Caves above points to the Two Trees, Silmarils, Sun and Moon, all gathering to describe a realm protected from the evil of Melkor by the Girdle of Melian. This place thus echoes perfection by containing light that is never dimmed, a sky that is never clouded, leaves that always protect their sunny and moon-like sheen and gems that promise the endurance of light against time.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have shown that light is the diegetic world-builder of J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world. While doing this, I have taken a metaphysical and theological approach within a formalist framework and discussed the role of light imagery through the lens of dynamic interplay in critical world-building. I have shown that light builds the secondary world by providing Arda with mainly all of its fundamental secondary world infrastructures. To act as the diegetic world-builder, light imagery forms chains, which suggest transmission of light from one artefact to the other. While every single artefact acts differently in the way they contain and reflect light, via the chains they form, their light can all be traced back to Ilúvatar as the godhead who holds the Flame Imperishable as the original form of light, which is an argument discussed in depth specifically on pages 6, 7 and 62.

In addition to literally building the secondary world, light in artefacts also symbolises Ilúvatar himself and acts as the only explicit manifestation of the godhead in Arda by being able to bring along life, good and hope, all at once. This dual nature of light originates in Tolkien's famous poem *Mythopoeia* and one of his specific letters. In the poem, light is the shared quality between God and mankind, and in one of his letters to his son Christopher, physical light in St Gregory's Church becomes the ultimate tool to perceive God and his love towards humankind within a metaphorical framework. The secondary world narrative particularly in *The Silmarillion* is a further and more in-depth revelation of how Tolkien regards light imagery as the most significant, yet the most hidden messenger of the divine in plain sight.

4.1 The Journey of Light

In the legendarium, light in artefacts is initially magnificent: when the Lamps, Two Trees, Sun and even stars are considered, it is explicit that their light illuminates the entirety of continents, it is visible from faraway lands, and has the potential to prevent the darkness of Melkor from invading Arda. The stories of *Quenta Silmarillion* end on as much a high note as possible when one of the Silmarils is set in the skies as a star. So that is it: what starts as a

solid, stable and reassuring source of light in the form of trees ends with a far away, purple victory of a single star. Along with the Third Age in *The Lord of the Rings* , readers are left with some artefacts that can only reflect a ray of the preceding artefacts. Therefore, as revealed further in Chapter Three, the concept of decline becomes a central matter while discussing the artefacts containing light. Decline also originates in Tolkien's own life experiences, explicitly considering the same letter he wrote to Christopher. About his experience, Flieger suggests: 'That vision of the Light remains just that—a vision, a Grail to be sought but never grasped by fallen humanity in a fallen world' (*SL:* 4). It is certain that Tolkien attributed a divine characteristic to the light imagery in the primary world. I have argued that he reflected his thought about light on the secondary world: the cosmogonic vision is made of light, fallen artists in Arda the *marred* seek the prelapsarian light and make artefacts containing this light, and by being temporarily grasped, light brings along the traces of hope needed for the existence of the secondary world and so its denizens.

4.2 The Role of Light in Authorial World-building

In this thesis, I have discussed extensively the theme of subcreation and its multi-layered nature from the primary to secondary world. In 'On Fairy-Stories', Tolkien deems story-tellers as subcreators and story-telling as the art of subcreation. As a subcreator himself, he practises the art of world-building, and thus makes his secondary world. However, the secondary world also has its own artists who make their artefacts. This continuity creates a chain of subcreation throughout worlds: from the human author to his characters, and from his subcreation to diegetic subcreation, Arda becomes the manifestation of negentropy. And light imagery is at the heart of this multi-layered chain by functioning as the main common theme that endures multiple worlds, thus multiple realities. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed different roles and functions of artefacts in understanding the features of decline, adaptation, representation, order and immutableness in light imagery in the secondary world cosmology. Through the transmission of light, artefacts constitute chains of light to bring life, good and hope into the secondary world.

As discussed further in Chapter One, authorial world-building is problematic, as the creativity of the human author is limited by the physicality of pen and paper:

> Plotinus, Dionysius, and Tolkien, whatever their chosen mode of discourse, be it philosophy or fantasy, are forced to use words. They are confined to the separable and

> limited vocabulary of human language to talk about inseparable, unlimited being. They must express the inexpressible. (1986: 128-129)

As I have discussed in depth in Chapter One, however, Tolkien's use of light imagery in his secondary world narrative surpasses these limits by narrating the artefacts that show agency to build Arda via their light. And I have asserted in this thesis that critical world-building is the best approach to reveal this unique relation of light to subcreative boundaries and how to surpass them.

4.3 The Role of Light in This Thesis

In *Splintered Light,* Flieger discusses Tolkien's strong belief in the fall of man in 'On Fairy-Stories' and how he places the original sin at the heart of the motives of *Escape* and *Consolation* for someone who wants to practise *Fantasy*. For Tolkien, the fall is explicitly a central concept for subcreation in general. In his letter to Milton Waldman, he says:

> Anyway all this stuff (It is, I suppose, fundamentally concerned with the problem of the relation of Art (and Sub-creation) and Primary Reality) is mainly concerned with Fall, Mortality, and the Machine […] With Mortality, especially as it affects art and the creative (or as I should say, sub-creative) desire which seems to […] be apart from the satisfactions of plain ordinary biological life, with which, in our world, it is indeed usually at strife. (*Letters:* 145)

When I started writing the initial drafts for this thesis five years ago, I used to focus on how immortal Elves and mortal Men came to share the same planetary realm called Arda. I used to compare the artefacts of Elves to those made by Men to conclude that Elves are 'almost perfect' artists by whom Tolkien expresses *Consolation* for mortal human authors who do not have all the time in the world to make their subcreation perfect. Therefore, I started by using mortality as the main theme for my discussions, just to end up realising that immortality does not specifically have to mean perfection for Elves, and actually all the denizens of Arda are somehow fallen. Tolkien describes a specific type of fall for the artist of the primary world where 'the creative desire […] may become possessive, clinging to the things made as "its own"' (*Letters:* 145), but this situation is also valid for the secondary world where all the characters share a spatiotemporally mortal realm, all of them thus have tendencies and

potentials to become possessive over their artefacts. Therefore, my philosophical stand shifted from mortality to fall and the role of artefacts in a fallen world.

The more I have analysed the nature of specific artefacts (artefacts containing Ilúvatar's light) in the secondary world, the more I have come to the conclusion within years that light imagery serves as the key theme to understand the nature of various polarities spread across multiple worlds: mortality versus immortality, fall versus ascension, imperfection versus perfection, and spatiotemporality versus omnipresence. The more I have looked into each polarity, the more light imagery has revealed itself to me as the sole theme responsible for building a world by providing it with its main infrastructures and key qualities. And Tolkien's secondary world has presented itself as an amazing example to reveal this role of light, which starts with Tolkien's life as an author in the primary world, and is inescapably reflected on his subcreation where light becomes the diegetic world-builder.

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