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**AN EXPLORATION OF TOLKIEN'S
CHANGING VISIONS OF FAËRIE
THROUGH HIS
NON-MIDDLE-EARTH POETRY**

**by Penelope Anne Holdaway
MA, MBChB**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of PhD**

**School of Critical Studies
College of Arts
University of Glasgow
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Abstract

Faërie, being the realm or state in which fairies have their being (*OFS*: 32), was a central element to Tolkien's fantasy literature, artwork, even his academic teaching, yet little attention has been paid to how his vision of this concept changed over his lifetime. This might stem from the fact that much of the academic work on Tolkien has focussed on Middle-earth, a world which by necessity is constrained, for a successful imaginary world requires keen and clear reasons for its form and function and overall consistency (*OFS*: 5). Although often neglected by scholars, Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry serves as an important resource to rectify this deficit in scholarship for: i) it falls outside his legendarium thus allowing Tolkien to give full reign to his imagination; ii) Tolkien continued to write poems throughout his lifetime allowing scholars to examine different phases of his exploration of Faërie; and iii) he often revised or rewrote poems at different stages in his life and the subtle changes in imagery and language point to changes in his vision of Faërie. This thesis analyses the themes, language, and folklore of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, arguing that it is possible to see three sometimes overlapping phases in Tolkien's changing vision of Faërie: an initial phase when he explored who and what the fairies were, a second divergent phase where Tolkien at once studied the worlds and poetic styles of the medieval works he taught at Oxford yet also used his Faërie poems to protest the excesses of modern living, and a third phase where he increasingly merged his Christian beliefs with his concept of Faërie. It concludes by demonstrating how Tolkien utilized the threads generated in his poems to form his final image of Faërie, *Smith of Wootton Major*, revealing how his non-Middle-earth poetry acted as a kind of sandbox for his construction of Faërie.

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Conventions and Abbreviations

Following *The J.R.R. Tolkien Chronology and Guide*, discrete works by Tolkien (including individual poems, paintings, etc.) are printed in italics. The abbreviations below follow those established by the journal *Tolkien Studies*.

Abbreviations

<i>Aotrou</i>	<i>The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun</i>
<i>ATB</i>	<i>The Adventures of Tom Bombadil</i>
<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Beowulf: A Translation and Commentary</i>
<i>Bio</i>	<i>J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography.</i>
<i>C&G</i>	<i>The J.R.R. Tolkien Chronology and Guide.</i>
<i>FA</i>	<i>The Fall of Arthur.</i>
<i>FG</i>	<i>Farmer Giles of Ham.</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring.</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>The Annotated Hobbit.</i>
<i>H facs.</i>	<i>The Hobbit: Facsimile Gift Set.</i>
<i>Kullervo</i>	<i>The Story of Kullervo.</i>
<i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien.</i>
<i>Lost Road</i>	<i>The Lost Road and Other Tales.</i>
<i>LT I</i>	<i>The Book of Lost Tales I.</i>
<i>LT II</i>	<i>The Book of Lost Tales II.</i>
<i>MC</i>	<i>The Monster and the Critics and Other Essays.</i>
<i>OFS</i>	<i>Tolkien On Fairy-stories.</i>
<i>RK</i>	<i>The Return of the King.</i>
<i>Roverandom</i>	<i>Roverandom.</i>
<i>S</i>	<i>The Silmarillion.</i>
<i>Sauron</i>	<i>Sauron Defeated.</i>
<i>S&G</i>	<i>The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún.</i>
<i>Smith</i>	<i>Smith of Wootton Major.</i>
<i>T&L</i>	<i>Tree and Leaf.</i>
<i>Treason</i>	<i>The Treason of Isengard.</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>The Two Towers.</i>

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Introduction

I.1 Introduction

Although Tolkien is best known for his prose fantasy writing, he wrote many poems during his lifetime. Many of the poems were published in anthologies, in college and university magazines at the time, i.e. during his career as a student and as a professor of Medieval English language and literature. Some were published in a collection titled *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*, first published in November 1962 (*C&G*: 633), whilst others remain scattered among volumes such as *The History of Middle-earth*, Humphrey Carpenter's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography* (1977), and John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War* (2003). Though some of these poems were modified later and were incorporated into his Middle-earth legendarium, many remained independent literary works, giving Tolkien a space to explore ideas and themes that did not necessarily fit within the parameters of a coherent secondary world. Many of these poems were re-written several times during his lifetime with subtle changes in language or imagery which perceptibly change the concepts behind the poems, as demonstrated in my analysis of *Kortirion Among the Trees*, which can be found in the Appendix. It is the contention of this thesis that one of the central concerns or background premises of his non-Middle-earth poetry is the concept of Faërie¹. In Tolkien's understanding, Faërie is a "state" of enchantment where state is either a state of mind (be it imagination or glamoured), or state as a space or land which has the power to enchant. It was a prominent theme in many of the Anglo-Saxon and medieval works he studied and taught, including, *Beowulf* (2014), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Sir Orfeo* (1975). It is also pivotal to his prose works, both his legendarium and his short stories, such as *Roverandom* [1925] (2013) and *Farmer Giles of Ham* [1926/1949] (2014). He wrote essays on the concept of Faërie including *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics* (2006) and *On Fairy-stories*² [1939] (2008) and he spoke on it in public as in his 1938 children's lecture on dragons (*H facs.*, 2018). Given this background and, given that he began writing in the Edwardian period, a time when fairy literature was popular, it should come as little surprise that much

¹ Tolkien has a variety of spellings for Faërie over his works, including Fairy, Faery, and Faërie. In this thesis I am using Faërie, as this is the spelling he uses in his essay *On Fairy-stories*, an essay which is central to my argument.

² *On Fairy-stories* was delivered as the Andrew Lang Lecture in March 1939 and was first published in *Essays presented to Charles Williams* in December 1947. Revised versions were republished in May 1964 in *Tree and Leaf* and an extended version with notes by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas Anderson was published in 2008.

of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry concerns Faërie. He used it both as a means to explore his passion for British mythologies and folklore, and as a channel to express personal concerns and anxieties. Moreover, he continued to develop and shape his concepts of Faërie through his poetry over his lifetime, creating a body of work which might be used to illuminate unexplored aspects of his prose writing.

Poetry was one of the earliest forms of literature Tolkien worked on and experimented with and echoes of his poetic works are found throughout his legendarium, yet it remains largely a neglected element of his literary output (Drout, 2013: 5-7). This thesis offers an in-depth and systematic study of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, to delineate his changing understanding of Faërie throughout his lifetime. In his early life, Tolkien appeared to favour poetry over prose. His initial writing contains a wide variety of poems including descriptive poems in a romantic mode, love poetry to his fiancé/wife Edith, and whimsical depictions of fairy creatures. Over time, Tolkien changed from following the folklore interests of the era, utilising its traditions and concepts to develop a Faërie and creatures of his own. As he matured, he was better known for his prose work, but Tolkien continued to write poetry even during periods such as World War II when his literary output waned considerably (C&G: 246-316). Finally, in his late poetry, it is possible to gain insight into how Tolkien came to terms with two potentially conflicting passions in his life, his love of Faërie and his Christian faith. Thus, Tolkien's poems give us insight into his changing concept of Faërie over his lifetime.

The neglect of Tolkien's poetry might in part stem from difficulty accessing the works. Although Christopher Tolkien has published some of his father's early poems in *The History of Middle-earth*, including different versions written at different times, this does not constitute a full record of his non-Middle-earth poetry as other publications have revealed. I cannot claim that my thesis encompasses the whole of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, some of which remains unpublished, but I worked with as many sources as possible. The works covered include the non-Middle-earth poems contained in the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth* (1983-1996), *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book, extended edition* (2014) edited by Wayne Hammond and Christine Scull, which contains not only the published version of the poems but also previous versions, often written many years earlier, and the four longer poems that have been recently published: *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] (2009), *The Fall of Arthur* [1933] (2013), *The Story of Kullervo* [1914] (2015) (both poetry and prose and based on the Finnish *Kalevala*), and *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] (2016). I have

included poems which have been made available in other scholarly works on Tolkien like *The Annotated Hobbit* edited by Douglas Anderson (2002) and *The Road to Middle-earth* by Tom Shippey (2003), and several fragments of poems contained in Humphrey Carpenter's biography of J.R.R. Tolkien (1977). I have consulted materials held in the Bodleian Tolkien collection and those of the Marquette University library and the Marion Wade Centre at Wheaton College. I will include two prose works in my study of Tolkien's Faërie, Tolkien's famous essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] (2008), which gives insight into Tolkien's perception of Faërie, and *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965]. *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965] was the last thing that Tolkien wrote about Faërie and therefore is an important final vision of that land.

Previous studies of Tolkien's Middle-earth legendarium have shown a periodicity to his work with Tolkien working on specific areas of his evolving legendarium at various stages in his life (Whittingham, 2008: 6-7). Similarly, Tolkien might be seen to develop individual characters or Faërie creatures over time, as shown by Flieger's analysis of Tolkien's tree fairies from Old Man Willow, to Ents, to Huorns, to Treebeard in her essay "The Forest and the Trees: Sal and Ian in Faërie" (Flieger, 2017: 156). In Tolkien's development of his concept of Faërie, it is possible to see a similar progression through his poetry. In this thesis, I argue that Tolkien's poetry has three phases. The first, consisting of poems from 1910 to 1920, are visions or tableaux of Faërie, in which a human is observing or moving through a Faërie scene. The human and their actions are rarely described in any detail allowing the reader to become immersed in the rich elements of Faërie recorded in the poems. These poems are exploring who or what the fairies are and experimenting with a variety of Faërie landscapes, often using theories on the origin of fairies which were being proposed in the Victorian and Edwardian academic literature. These poems are primarily discussed in Chapters 1 and 3. The second Chapter examines Tolkien's monstrous beings which form a kind of bridge between the first and second phases of Tolkien's vision of Faërie. In these poems it is possible to see a broadening of Tolkien's vision of Faërie and a growing confidence in his own imagination as he moves away from British folklore to incorporate a diverse range of literature as inspiration for his Faërie. From the mid-1920s to the late 1930s Tolkien's poetry has two arms. Firstly, there is his reworking of some of the academic texts he taught at Oxford. These works constitute the recently published longer poems and are discussed in Chapter 4. A second arm of poetry is at once more light-hearted and more serious. These are the Bimble Bay poems. In these poems, Tolkien moves away from traditional folkloric representations of Faërie creatures to create more virtuous beings which are used to protest the ills of modern society. These

are discussed in the first part of Chapter 5, the part dealing with Tolkien's notions of evil and ecology. Finally, there are the darker poems written in Tolkien's later life. In these poems, the Christian overlay is much clearer and the images of Faërie are less traditional and more personal. Whilst the Faërie creatures themselves behave in a more conventional manner, the poems no longer focus on them. Instead, these poems are more about human "adventures" in Faërie, with a greater emphasis on the behaviour of humankind rather than the fairies. These poems are primarily discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.

I.2. Tolkien and Folklore

Richard Mathews, author of *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, notes that philology and folklore are the cornerstones of the modern fantasy genre (Mathews, 2011 [2002], p. 14), yet he also notes that Tolkien used a wide range of sources in his fiction, including "slapstick, folk, and oral aspects of classical literary traditions" (Mathews, 2011 [2002], p. 82). Folklore, as defined by the American Folklore Society includes "traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practice that is disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioural example." (American Folklore Society, 2022). Some folklorists broaden this definition to include oral and non-oral aspects of culture. (Dundes, 2007, p. 4349). In this broader definition, folklore according to Alan Dundes, includes:

the myths, epics, folktales, legends, riddles, proverbs, curses, charms, songs, dances, games, gestures, costumes, festivals, etc. of a group, provid[ing] a unique type of expressive material in which the group's cognitive categories and anxieties are unselfconsciously set forth. Typically, folklore proves a socially sanctioned framework within which members of the folk in question feel free to probe critical issues and problems. (Dundes, 2007, p. 4354)

However, such a definition might be moot for, as Jack Zipes points out, "cultural patterns" are so abundant and disparate that making a distinction between an oral wonder tale and a literary fairy tale is becoming nigh impossible (Zipes, 2012, p. 2). This view is in keeping with Tolkien's concept of a "cauldron of story" mentioned in his essay *On Fairy-stories*, where motifs combine or re-combine to form new tales by being associated with historical figures or events independent of the original tale:

Such stories have now a mythical or total (unanalysable) effect, an effect quite independent of the findings of comparative Folklore, and one which it cannot spoil or explain; they open a door on Other Time, and if we pass through, though only for a moment, we stand outside our own time, outside Time itself, maybe. (*OFS*: 48).

Where then does this leave us in terms of Tolkien's relationship to folklore in his Faërie poetry? Tolkien was a philologist, and his studies into some of the sources for his poems, particularly those based on his academic work (see Chapter 4), are likely to have their basis in oral tradition, but they were written, incorporating folklore motifs and tale-types into written literary compositions. As his essay *OFS* implies, Tolkien saw fairy-stories as tales evolving narratives, evolving to obtain more power and depth, reaching beyond the strict definition of folklore as based purely on orality. Tolkien, in his non-Middle-earth poems, explored legends, charms, tunes, kennings, protocols and nursery rhymes to name a few things, some of which are discussed in this thesis, and in doing so, I argue, he expressed an interest in folklore that goes beyond the oral tradition, but still encompassed the voice and knowledge of a people.

I.3 Criticism of Tolkien's Poetry

Tolkien, in a 1968 letter to his son Michael, bemoans the lack of admirers of his poetry, despite its importance in his legendarium:

My 'poetry' has received little praise – comment even by some admirers being as often as not contemptuous (I refer to reviews by self-styled literary blokes.) Perhaps largely because in the contemporary atmosphere – in which 'poetry' must often reflect one's personal agonies of mind or soul, and exterior things are only valued by one's own "reactions" – it seems hardly ever recognized that the verses in *The L.R.* are all dramatic: the do not express the poor old professor's soul-searchings, but are fitted in style and contents to the *characters* in the story that sing or recite them, and to the situations in it. (*Letters*: 396)

His daughter, Priscilla, said that his poetic works were frequently ignored by academics and critics alike. She wonders if part of the reason for this is the length of some of his poems, particularly the early ones, with detractors equating the length of the work to its importance to his overall writing (Scull, 2002: 13). Critics, such as Brian Rosebury, Charles Moseley and Randal Helms (Eilmann, 2017: 335), have pointed to the simple rhyme and rhythm of some of the poems. For example, there is the scathing criticism Tolkien's poetry was met with by Moseley who was otherwise admiring of Tolkien's work. Moseley writes in his biography of Tolkien:

Some say that Tolkien was more poetaster than a poet. Some of the early verse is certainly embarrassing, to our taste [...] Indeed, to make great claims on any terms for a lot of the poems that appear in *The Hobbit* and *LR* is difficult.... Sometimes

the diction is weak; and the rare imagery can be vapid, though the versification is sure-footed enough. (Mosley, 1997: 49-50)

Randel Helms writes of Tolkien's *Adventures of Tom Bombadil* that Tolkien avoids criticism for being a mediocre poet by becoming both "hidden poet and amused critic" at the same time (Helms, 1974: 128). For example, Helms, in a lecture at the Medieval and Renaissance Symposium at Arizona State University, argues that Tolkien's poem *The Stone Troll* is simply a bad poem, and Tolkien blaming its poor composition on the fact that it was supposedly composed by the hobbit Samwise Gamgee is not an excuse for an esteemed academic to write such an unsuitably simple poem. He describes the volume's first two poems about Tom Bombadil as "graceless doggerel", though admits there is some merit in his beast poems and the poem *Errantry* [before 1933] (Helms, 1974: 129-130). Brian Rosebury is even harsher in his criticism stating that:

The derivativeness even of the better poems, and their proneness to romantic cliché ('to thee my spirit dances oft in sleep') means that they can only be regarded as immature works, by a writer whose genuine but limited talent for verse was never reconciled with twentieth-century taste. (Rosebury, 1992: 84)

Although Julian Eilmann's two books *Tolkien's Poetry* and *J.R.R. Tolkien: Romanticist and Poet* have made some inroads into this neglected field, these poems remain an area which has not been adequately studied and there is still a wealth of information that might be gleaned from Tolkien's poetry on his changing vision of Faërie. Where there has been more serious critical attention paid to his poetry, the tendency has been to analyse technicalities such as verse form, rhythm, and language, rather than considering its themes. Versions of poems written at different times are treated as a single entity, and little, if any attempt is made to look more deeply into what the author is saying. This is particularly true of his shorter poems. For example, in Eilmann and Turner's book *Tolkien's Poetry*, Shippey (2013) analyses alliterative technique, Holmes (2013) examines the musicality of the tempo in Tolkien's poem *Errantry* [before 1933], and Martsch (2013) probes the linguistic origins of the words used in three poems in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*. The majority of the other studies in this book investigate poems from his legendarium apart from two, Bridgwater (2013) and Turner (2013), who both compare Tolkien's poems to the works of other writers (Yeats and Francis Thompson and William Morris respectively). Eilmann's (2017) own book, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Romanticist and Poet*, focusses his analysis on the Romanticistic imagery in Tolkien's work and compares it to that of the Romantics. Though it can provide some interesting insights into connections with other poets, the narrow scope of this work limits

the type and therefore the number of poems examined and the aspects of the works analysed. My hope is that my thesis will, at least partially, redress this deficit in Tolkien Studies.

I argue that neither the outright scorn for his simple or overwrought verses nor a purely technical approach to Tolkien's poetry is sufficient. On the one hand, a purely technical approach to Tolkien's poetry is of limited value. Tolkien is capable of quite complex rhythm and rhyming patterns, for example his poem *Errantry* [before 1933] with its complex almost syncopated rhythm and the sophistication of his alliterative poetry as found in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*. But, as Kreeft writes, to Tolkien song is the "highest expression of language" (cited in Coutras, 2016: 98) and many of Tolkien's poems have a simple four foot/three-foot rhythm because they were designed to be sung. Throughout this thesis there will be reference to poems which have their origin in the book *Songs of the Philologists* (emphasis added), for example, his poem *The Stone Troll* was designed to be sung to the tune *A Fox went out* (Fimi, 2019). So, before dismissing or critiquing the poems too harshly, those who evaluate the poems should take care to look at their emplacement. I argue the fact that *The Stone Troll* is both capable of being sung and uses a rhythm and language appropriate to an uneducated hobbit is the sign of a skilful poet rather than an incompetent one.

I concur with Moseley's observation that Tolkien's poetry, particularly his early works, are not in keeping with modern taste, but, as I shall discuss in Chapter 1, it is in keeping with the fairy works of his youth. He was writing this poetry as a young man, filled with ideals of chivalry, patriotism, and a romanticized view of his country, being sent off to the horrors of war, knowing full well that he may, in fact, very probably would die for his country. Yet Tolkien is doing more than this. In this thesis, in Chapter 1, I will demonstrate how he utilized these poems to explore who and what the fairies were, and to experiment with ideas and concepts, some of which he would later use in his legendarium. Nor did his poetry remain a series of romantic visions of Faërie. As Tolkien matured, the creatures in his non-Middle-earth poetry deviated more and more from the traditional folkloric norms, resulting in poems which were not only humorous, but which also gave the reader insight into Tolkien's increasingly distinctive personal views of Faërie and the modern world. Finally, towards the end of his life, Tolkien appeared to struggle with the conflict between his love of Faërie and his Christian faith, as well as his anguish as he faced his own mortality. Tolkien's late non-Middle-earth poems involve the very soul searching that Moseley accuses Tolkien of avoiding. Thus, I agree with Tolkien's own

view that his poems have been unjustly critiqued, for his critics appear to have failed to understand what Tolkien was attempting to do with his poetry.

I.4 Tolkien's Own View of Faërie

As I noted above, Faërie was a central component of Tolkien's world, both in his academic work, with his translations of *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Sir Orfeo*, and in his literary works. It is therefore important to define what Tolkien means by the term Faërie. To elucidate this, I am drawing on Tolkien's famous essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939], a paper which Tolkien wrote for the 1939 Andrew Lang lecture and later revised for publication. In this essay Tolkien attempts to analyse what Faërie is, and, although this essay was first written in the late 1930s when, as my thesis shall discuss, his vision of Faërie had already begun to change, this work gives us the clearest vision of what Tolkien understood by the term Faërie. To begin with: "Faërie [is] the realm or state in which fairies have their being" (*OFS*: 32). That is, Faërie is intimately linked to its inhabitants, the creatures of Faërie and humans are outsiders and might only enter "when they are enchanted" (*OFS*: 32). It is composed of the same things that the Primary World (our world) is composed of, for: "it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted" (*OFS*: 32). Yet somehow these things are combined to make something very different than the Primary World: "It is a land full of wonder but not information ... A rich strange land which tends to leave the traveller tongue-tied" (*OFS*: 27) – a curious effect for a land which is at once "composed of words" (*OFS*: 41), but which "refuses to be defined or described in these words" (*OFS*: 32). To explore this further, consider the following statements from *On Fairy-stories* [1939]:

Faërie is a perilous land ... [It] is wide and deep and high and filled with many things: all manner of beasts and birds are found there; shoreless seas and stars uncounted; beauty that is an enchantment, and an ever-present peril; both joy and sorrow as sharp as swords. (*OFS*: 27)

Faërie is at once a defined space but with "shoreless seas and stars uncounted". It transports the individual to a higher plane or plunges them into "dungeons" if they are "overbold" (*OFS*: 27). It at once enthralls and terrifies, delights and distresses individuals who enter its borders. Faërie is a land in flux, which makes it a land of possibility, even, according to Tolkien, a land where desires might be met, yet also, at least for humans, a

land of danger and uncertainty. Humans in Faërie are outsiders; they do not belong, and, at best, are transient visitors.

This enigma is possible because Faërie is a magical land, though magic of a “peculiar mood and power” (*OFS*: 32), for it is not trickery, illusion, or sleight of hand like a magician (*OFS*: 32-33) but a land of paradoxes. Its aim is not to dominate or delude the senses, rather it is to sharpen them. Tolkien says one of the purposes of Faërie and fairy-stories is recovery—the ability to see the Primary World anew, or to regain a clear view (*OFS*: 67), to experience the awe and wonder we once had as children. For at its heart, Faërie is a land of desire, and one of the deepest desires of humankind is to connect in a profound way with living things (*OFS*: 255, 36). There is nothing artificial about Faërie. Faërie is supernatural, that is, Faërie is excessively natural, and though it contains strange creatures such as “dwarfs, witches, ... giants... [and] dragons” (*OFS*: 32), Tolkien uses these creatures as the voices of Nature rather than something outside it (see Chapter 4). It is this flexibility, this changeability, which makes Faërie such a powerful instrument to express wide-ranging views of the Primary World.

1.5 Other Scholars and Tolkien’s Faërie

Until recently, there had been little critical evaluation of Tolkien’s vision of Faërie which was not linked to his Middle-earth legendarium. More recently this has been changing, both with the publication of Dimitra Fimi’s ground-breaking *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History* (2009) which looks at Tolkien’s early vision of fairies, and with the posthumous publication of a number of longer non-Middle-earth poems. The publications to date on the latter works have tended to focus on the origins of the tales and the sources that might have influenced Tolkien’s works and some examination of individual characters such as Guinever and the Corrigan. How these works relate to Tolkien’s developing idea of Faërie has not been studied; rectifying this lack is one of the objectives of my thesis.

Since Tom Shippey’s early exploration into Tolkien’s work, there has been a blossoming of Tolkien scholarship centred around his Middle-earth legendarium. This has led to a vast array of academic literature on the topic, some of which is relevant to my study of his non-Middle-earth poetry. It would be an impossible task to summarise all the literature on the topic, instead, I have done a short summary of the four major themes in Tolkien critical studies and have included a short piece on each mentioning the most relevant works and authors. Critical studies of his Middle-earth sources fall into four main

categories: the biographical/historical influences of his early life and the two world wars, the influence of his passion for Northern³ and Celtic mythologies, his Christian beliefs, and finally literary studies where scholars try to ascertain which authors were thought to have influenced him. In the following section I shall briefly summarize the scholarship on these influences where it has bearing on his non-Middle-earth poetry.

Tolkien had an unusually traumatic early life. Born in Bloemfontein South Africa, but returning to England because of ill-health, he lost his father to rheumatic fever aged 4. He lived with his mother and brother, Hilary, after his relatives rejected their family when his mother converted to Catholicism. His mother succumbed to diabetes mellitus when Tolkien was aged 12 and he was left in the care of his guardian, Father Francis Morgan. At King Edward's School in Birmingham, Tolkien became close friends with three other boys, who jointly became known as the Teacup and Barrovian Society (T.C.B.S.), only to lose two of these close friends in World War I. Tolkien saw action for a short period in the Battle of the Somme as a signals officer with the Lancashire Fusiliers but returned to England suffering from Trench Fever and never made it back to France (*Bio*: 81-98). Scholars such as John Garth, Janet Brennan Croft, and Joseph Loconte have written about this influence (Brennan Croft, 2004; Garth, 2003; Loconte, 2015). The aftermath of these events can be seen in the darkness of some of Tolkien's poetry, his preoccupation with death, as discussed later in this Introduction, and his wariness of modern technology and the increasingly secular nature of modern society, themes discussed in Chapter 5. Although Tolkien entered a more settled time in the 1920s and 30s where he was teaching at Leeds and then Oxford University, the outbreak of World War II heralds a clear shift in his poetry from a more light-hearted, humorous genre to darker poems with moral or religious overtones, as Tolkien struggles to come to terms with his own sons being involved in a world war. These poems are primarily discussed in Chapter 5. Whilst his non-Middle-earth poems lack some of the heroic zeal of his major fictional works, there are obvious influences of the war in his poems as seen in *The Song of Eriol* in Chapter 5 and in my analysis of *Kortirion among the Trees* in the Appendix. In these chapters the horror and the loss come more to the fore.

Although he was introduced to both Welsh and Northern influences in his childhood, it was during his university studies and World War I that Tolkien developed his enduring love of Northern and Welsh mythologies (*Bio*: 56, 65). These influences have

³ Northern in this thesis will refer to Scandinavian.

been widely studied by many authors including Marjorie Burns, Dimitra Fimi, and Carl Phelpstead with regard to the Welsh mythologies (Burns, 2005; Fimi, 2006; Phelpstead, 2011) and Burns, Tom Shippey, and Verlyn Flieger in regard to his Northern Mythologies (Shippey, 2003; Flieger, 2010; Burns, 2005; Shippey, 2000). Similar influences might be seen in his non-Middle-earth poetry. The woodlands, water crossings to reach Faërie, and the use of white animals, as in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] are all features drawn from the Celtic Faërie. This is despite Tolkien declaring a distaste for “Celtic” things in a letter to Stanley Unwin in 1937 (*Letters*: 26). In his letter he bemoans the unreason of Celtic mythology: “They have bright colour but are like a broken stained-glass window reassembled without design (*Letters*: 26).” Tolkien even wrote a version of the Arthurian legend as is discussed in Chapter 4, despite denouncing the Arthurian genre as being too Christian, too incoherent, and too repetitive (Flieger, 2012: 133-134). More recently there has been increasing recognition of the Irish strain in Tolkien’s work by scholars such as Fimi, Verlyn Flieger, and Kris Swank. Tolkien wrote that though he was not proficient in the Irish language, he was familiar with Irish mythology including versions in the original Irish language (Swank, 2018: 314). Later in his life, as he made more trips to Ireland, the Irish influence becomes more obvious with his work on his poems *Imram* [1945-46/1955] and *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Burns, Shippey and Flieger also recognized influences of the Northern European myths on Tolkien’s writing, including the *Prose and Poetic Eddas*, *The Kalevala* and, of course, his well-known work on the poem *Beowulf* (Shippey, 2003; Shippey, 2004; Flieger, 2010; Burns, 2005). Tolkien found his love of dragons and Northern tales in a child’s version of the *Volsung Sagas* in Andrew Lang’s *Red Fairy Book* (*Bio*: 22-23). Later on, the trolls and the dwarves of *The Hobbit* show clear links to his love of Norse mythology. This interest in Northern mythology and legends continued in his early years at University and contributed to his switching from Classical studies to Philology (*Bio*: 54, 63). Although dwarves are relatively scarce in his non-Middle-earth poetry, Tolkien wrote several non-Middle-earth poems about trolls and dragons, though not all follow the type found in classical Northern mythology (see Chapters 2 and 5). Equally, the dark, sometimes bleak landscapes as found in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] and his poem *The Hoard* [1962] are more in keeping with these Northern elements than a “Celtic⁴” landscape.

⁴ Note on Terminology: I acknowledge that the use of the term “Celtic” might be considered controversial for, as Flieger notes quoting Tolkien’s *The Monsters and the Critics*, “Celts” and “Teutons” are not defined by

An area that has been relatively ignored by scholars is the influence of British folklore on Tolkien's writing. In his book *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*, Shippey connects Goldberry to the water hags Peg Powler and Jenny Greenteeth (Shippey, 2000: 62). However, Shippey's main interest is Tolkien's use of language, and he does not take a systematic approach to his folklore references. Fimi examines some aspects of his early fairies in relation to his legendarium in her book *Tolkien, Race and Cultural History*, which, as its subtitle *From Fairies to Hobbits* indicates, is focussed on the progression of his fairy poetry into the creatures of his legendarium. Fimi has gone on to examine some folkloric elements such as the "Wildman of the Woods" (Fimi, 2013) in a later paper, but this is a single aspect of a much larger corpus. Significant areas such as the folklore of plants and animals that Tolkien uses have largely been ignored in scholarship to date. In this thesis I shall explore how knowledge of these traditions can radically alter the perception of a poem or uncover underlying themes. Tolkien admits this in a 1962 letter to Mrs Gasch when discussing the folklore in Tolkien's Tom Bombadil poems which is held in the Tolkien collection at the Marion Wade Centre:

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This statement is evidence that Tolkien did not just use Northern and "Celtic" mythologies in his writing, but British folklore as well. Exploration of these details might give rise to hidden meanings or uncover themes which may not be apparent on first reading the material as my thesis shall show.

Scholars reading either Humphrey Carpenter's authorized biography of Tolkien, or Tolkien's own letters can be in little doubt regarding the importance of Tolkien's Catholic faith in his life. Though Tolkien saw direct allegory as destructive to myth (*Letters*: 145), he felt that myths and fairy-stories should hold some ethical or Christian truth and this is central to his writing (*OFS*: 77). Tolkien admitted in a letter to Father Robert Murray in 1953 that *The Lord of the Rings*⁵ [1954-1955] was, at its core, "a fundamentally religious

race, blood, or language, nor are they a static cultures indigenous to their individual lands (2017: 74). However, it is a term which is commonly used in Tolkien Studies to denote folklore and traditions which are associated with the "Celtic" languages of Welsh, Breton, Cornish, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish Gaelic.

⁵ *The Lord of the Rings* was published in three volumes over the course of 1954 -1955 (C&G: 706).

and a Catholic work.” (*Letters*: 172). More recently scholars such as Bradley Birzer, Peter Kreeft, and Craig Bernthal have further elucidated themes such as courage, hope, and forgiveness as central Christian themes underlying Tolkien’s legendarium (Birzer, 2003; Brenthal, 2014; Kreeft, 2005). Little research has been done on the religious components of his non-Middle-earth poetry except for his poems *Imram* [1945-46/1955] and *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946]. Yet there is clear evidence of Christian themes in his early and late poems. In his early poetry, where he is exploring who or what the fairies were, some biblical elements are present in the folklore surrounding the origin of fairies as found in Wirt Sikes’ book *British Goblins* [1880]. The stories concern Cain, from the tale of Cain and Abel, Eve, or sometimes Adam’s first wife, Lilith, who escaped from the Garden of Eden, and the Nephilim, creatures who were half human and half angel and are mentioned in Tolkien’s translation of *Beowulf* (see Chapter 1). In the poetry of the 1920’s and 1930’s, the religious focus is much less apparent, unless one considers Tolkien’s abiding respect for nature as a manifestation of the creativity of the divine. However, the onset of World War II heralded the emergence of a series of poems which closely merge Tolkien’s concept of Faërie with medieval visions of Paradise. In his poems *Imram* [1945-46/1955] and *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], Tolkien created the triad of the cloud, the tree, and the star, a motif that is partially drawn from the medieval Saint Brendan poem, and which became a feature of Tolkien’s late depictions of Faërie (see Chapter 3).

The final subset of influences on Tolkien’s non-Middle-earth poetry are a variety of literary works including some that he translated from their original language such as *Beowulf*, *Pearl*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Sir Orfeo*. Tolkien studied these works both as an undergraduate and, during his tenure at Leeds University, he worked on both *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with his friend and colleague, E.V. Gordon in the 1920’s (Fimi, 2007: 52). Beal noted in particular, the close connection between the poem *Pearl* and the appearance of the lady in *Princess Mee* [1915/1961] (2017: 6-7). Maria Kuteeva notes that Tolkien’s poem, *The Song of Ælfwine* [1937/1945] was inspired by his 1924 reading of the poem *Pearl* in preparation for examinations on the subject (1999: 27). Cohen observes that the gold and silver appearances of certain trees in Tolkien’s Faërie harks back to the trees of the *Pearl* (Cohen, 2009: 103). Further influences can be seen in his early descriptions of Faërie (see Chapter 3). Burns relates the gloomy forests of some of Tolkien’s Faërie landscapes to the dark forest described in *Sir Orfeo* (Burns, 2005: 25), whilst Ryan notes the connection between encounters with supernatural powers and forested landscapes in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Ryan, 2013: 24-25). The Green Chapel in *Sir Gawain* also hints at the association between Faërie and burial mounds, a

theme that Tolkien incorporates into his Faërie, particularly in his poems *Bridge over Tavrobel* [1917] and *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s]. Shippey relates the madness of both Looney in Tolkien's poem, *Looney* [1932-1933] to the madness of Sir Orfeo when he is left alone in the forest (Shippey, 2003: 282). More recently, a book on Tolkien's work on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (Bowers, 2019) shows that Tolkien continued to engage with these tales as an academic, including *The Wife of Bath's Tale* with its fading of Faërie, a theme which is woven into many of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poems.

McIlwaine in her book *Tolkien, Maker of Middle-earth* observes that Tolkien studied sixteenth and seventeenth century drama whilst at Oxford University, and I will make a connection between the literature of this period. Thomas Honegger notes that Tolkien's *The Man in the Moon came down too soon* [1915] draws on a traditional Somersetshire song that was, in 1660, incorporated into a ballad titled *Le Prince d'Amour* (Honegger, 2005: 15). It is possible that this fascination with the Man in the Moon, which, from the amount of writing about it in the early twentieth century around the Oxford area, was not uncommon, might have been fed by the medieval manuscript, *The Man in the Moon* (Regiomontanus, 1476) History of Science Museum Evans 43, one of the earliest astrological studies available and contained in the History of Science Museum in Oxford (see Chapter 2). In both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] Tolkien displays an interest in astronomy, spending many hours trying to correlate the phases of the moon with the action in the book. I propose that the influence of these rhymes goes beyond Tolkien's man in the moon poems to provide a possible source for his enigmatic character Tom Bombadil, particularly when connected with a poem by the Catholic poet, Francis Thompson. Tolkien wrote an essay on Thompson which he gave to the Essay Club in March 1914, and, according to Garth, considered him a writer encompassing both rationalism and romanticism, creating imaginary worlds utilizing the tools found in such sciences as geology and astronomy. And, possibly even more importantly, Thompson gave a Catholic perspective to these imaginings (Garth, 2003: 36). Thompson might have had a greater influence on Tolkien's writing than originally thought.

As well as Thompson, scholars have identified other writers, such as William Morris and George MacDonald served as an inspiration for Tolkien's vision of Faërie. According to Garth, William Morris might have influenced Tolkien not only through his tale *The Well at the World's End* (Garth, 2003: 215), but also his fascination with and incorporation of Northern mythology in his tales. This transformation is hinted at in *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] but not as fully explored as it is in *The Lord of the Rings*

[1954-1955]. Morris also valued craftsmanship and well-made, handcrafted objects (Atherton, 2012: 68), a concept that underlies Tolkien's Bimble Bay poems [late 1920s-early 1930s] and is mentioned in *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965]. Tolkien mentions George MacDonald in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] (ibid.: 75) and, at one stage, was going to write an introduction for MacDonald's book *The Golden Key*, however, Tolkien's enthusiasm for this project cooled as he, in his later years, developed a distaste for MacDonald's work (Tolkien, 2008: 250). Garth notes that Francis Thompson, along with other Romantic poets such as Coleridge, might have influenced Tolkien's early non-Middle-earth poetry, such as the poem Tolkien published in the *Stapeldon Magazine* in December 1913:

From the many-willow'd margin of the immemorial Thames,
Standing in a vale outcarven in a world-forgotten day,
There is dimly seen uprising through the greenly veiled stems,
Many-mansion'd tower-crowned in its dreamy robe of grey,
All the city by the fording: aged in the lives of men,
Proudly wrapt in mystic mem'ry overpassing human ken.
(Garth, 2003: 35)

I:6 Method

The aim of this thesis is to analyse Tolkien's changing vision of Faërie over his lifetime, with a particular emphasis on the folkloric aspects of his non-Middle-earth poetry. In this study I have taken two main approaches. Firstly, I have compared Tolkien's use of fairy elements in his poetry with academic themes contained within the folkloric studies of the day to see how Tolkien draws on and adapts this folklore in his writing. In doing so, I have researched authors such as W.Y. Evans-Wentz, and Wirt Sikes, who were writing about fairy folklore in the Victorian period, and Katharine Briggs who was a contemporary of Tolkien's (Briggs, 1959; Briggs, 1967; Briggs, 2002; Evans-Wentz, 2010; Sikes, 1880 (2007)). I have also included more modern authors' scholarship in fairy belief, particularly the folklore around the Victorian and Edwardian period, to contextualize the fairy traditions and how they interlink with the culture and academic writing of the day. These include scholars such as Bown, Henderson, and Purkiss (Bown, 2001; Purkiss, 2000; Henderson and Cowan, 2001). For items such as the language of flowers, I have drawn on multiple sources many of which would have been available when Tolkien was alive. As the reader will note, there is some variation between individual books regarding the meaning of various flowers and plants, but where possible, I have tried to adhere to the most popular

definitions. Where I am using literary works, I have been careful to ensure that, though I do not have absolute evidence that Tolkien read some of these, as a minimum requirement for inclusion in this thesis, I have determined that all books and periodicals would have been available to Tolkien prior to his composing the poems. Added to this, I have determined that either we know that Tolkien had read the author, either from his own writing or from Tolkien scholarship, or there is a clear indication by the poem's contents that this is a likely influence on his writing.

My analysis of the poems occurs at three levels: firstly, an overarching review of the themes and imagery of the poem, secondly, a review of some of the individual elements of that imagery and whether they have a symbolic meaning that changes the subject or mood of the poem, and finally, a line-by-line comparison of other versions of the poem if they exist to see the subtle changes in imagery or language that Tolkien uses to indicate a changing view of Faërie. For example, the changing the flora and fauna in both the later versions of *Kortirion among the Trees* and in *The Sea-bell* are associated with death and dying, enhancing in the former poem, the fading of the land and the elves, and in the latter the Voyagers increasing alienation from Faërie. This method can reveal quite startling changes in the understanding of the poem and its Faërie elements. As an overview of my method, and a case study of what can be gleaned from examining Tolkien's poetry in this way, I have offered in an Appendix to this thesis an examination of Tolkien's poem *Kortirion among the Trees*. According to Christopher Tolkien, this poem was revised multiple times during Tolkien's lifetime, and in *The Book of Lost Tales I*, three of these versions have been published. The first version was written in November 1915, when Tolkien was stationed at a military training camp in Warwick. This coincides with the first phase⁶ of Tolkien's development of Faërie in my thesis and is an example of his exploration of the origin of fairies; the fairies in this case being the dryads. The second published version was written in 1937, when Tolkien was a Professor at Oxford University. This is a time when Tolkien was mainly writing two types of poems, those based on the academic works he taught mimicking the poetic form and story line of these works, and a second arm where he used his poetry to protest the ills of modernity including pollution, consumerism, and the neglect of nature. Although this poem does not

⁶ I have divided Tolkien's poems into three groups or phases in his life; an initial phase where he was exploring who or what the fairies were, a second phase with two branches containing those poems based on the works he taught at Oxford i.e. an academic arm, and a second protest arm where he uses his poetry to protest the ills of the modern world, and a final arm where he tries to merge his love of Faërie with his Christian faith. However, such divisions are arbitrary and are purely a device to give some structure to this thesis and there are some poems which fall outside this pattern, for example *The Man in the Moon came down too soon* [1915] and *The Story of Kullervo* [1914].

fall into either the protest nor the academic branch of Tolkien's Faërie, it does show a softening and a deepening of Faërie, as he matures. In addition this highlights that my division of Tolkien's development of Faërie into three phases is arbitrary to assist the reader in understanding my thesis. In fact, there is a certain amount of ebb and flow across the different phases and I have tried to fit the poems into the category that best defines them. For example, *The Story of Kullervo*, a combined prose and verse account in which Tolkien retells his version of an incident in the *Kalevala* was written quite a lot earlier than his other academic poems (see Chapter 4), however, I have included it in the academic arm of the second phase of Tolkien's Faërie, because this fits the style and content of the piece. The final published version of *Kortirion* was written in 1962 when an aging Tolkien had retired. Because the initial version of this poem was written long before Tolkien began to incorporate motifs like the cloud, tree, and star into his Faërie (see Chapter 3), this signation of Tolkien's late Faërie is absent, but the darkness and grieving that marks his later Faërie poetry is certainly present, so much so that the fairies appear to shift from being dryads to the dead at the end of his poem. The poem describes the changing seasons in a wood overlooked by an ancient castle. There are elves who inhabit the wood who seem so intimately linked to the forest that their physical natures are altered by the seasonal state of the wood. The scene is consistent with the city of Warwick and the ancient Forest of Arden as Tolkien was stationed there with his military unit at the time he initially wrote the poem.

Chapter 1: Who are the Fairies?

Of all the distinguishing features of Faërie, it is not the landscape but its inhabitants that most separates this realm from the Primary World. Tolkien, in his 1939 essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939], gives the definition of Faërie as “the realm or state in which fairies have their being” (*OFS*: 32). Despite their centrality to this land, his published essay tells us relatively little about the creatures themselves. The essay gives us a lexicographer’s definition of fairies from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that they are: “supernatural beings of diminutive size, in popular belief supposed to possess magical powers and to have great influence for good or evil over the affairs of man” (*OFS*: 28). Tolkien finds this a very unsatisfactory definition. He disputes their diminutive size as a product of “literary fancy”, suggesting such a depiction of fairies is one drawn from modern use, reflecting both an attenuation of the power of the fairies and a subsequent misinterpretation of the features of a fairy. According to Tolkien, authors such as Drayton and Shakespeare began this misrepresentation of fairies through their depiction of frivolous, often small fairies. Tolkien argues that England’s love of fine, delicate things (Fimi, 2009: 28-29), has been misinterpreted as smallness, the magical glamour of Faërie as mere finesse, and the fairies’ invisibility, as fragility (*OFS*: 29). The perceived shallowness of fairies is reinforced by the replacement of the old word *elf* with the French word *fairy* in Tudor times, describing a set of beings who are apt to change their form often reflecting the “pride and beauty” that humans desire for themselves (*OFS*: 30-31). This pandering to the desires of humans is part of what gives fairies their power over humans (*OFS*: 31), but at the same time suggests the chief interest of the fairies is the temptation and manipulation of human beings. As we shall see in this chapter, Tolkien came to see fairies as much more concerned with Nature than humans. However, the form that these fairies took, and connection they had to nature, varies particularly in this early period.

According to Tolkien, fairies are “supernatural”, that is they are excessively natural, far more natural than humans (*OFS*: 28). In a draft of that essay labelled *Manuscript B*, Tolkien gives a much more detailed description of fairies:

If Fairies exist they are bound by the Moral Law as is all the created Universe; but their duties and functions are not ours. They are not spirits of the dead, nor a branch of the human race, nor devils in fair shapes whose chief object is our deception and ruin. These are either human ideas out of which the Elf-idea has been separated, or if Elves really exist mere human hypothesis (or confusions). They are a quite separate creation living in another mode. They appear to us in human form (with hands, faces, voices, and language similar to our own): this may be their real form

and their difference reside in something other than form, or it may be (probably is) only in the way that their presence affects us. Rabbits and eagles maybe aware of them quite otherwise. For lack of a better word they may be called spirits, daemons inherent powers of the created world, deriving more directly and ‘earlier’ (in terrestrial history) from the creating will of God, but nonetheless created, subject in Moral Law, capable of good and evil, and possibly (in this fallen world) actually sometimes evil. They are in fact non-incarnate minds (or souls) of a stature and even nature more near to that of Man (in some cases possibly less, in many maybe greater) than any other rational creatures, known or guessed at by us. They can take any form at will, or they could do so: they have or had a choice.

Thus a tree fairy (or a dryad) is, or was, a minor spirit in the process of creation, who aided as ‘agent’ in the making effective of the divine Tree-idea or some part of it, or of even of some one particular example: some tree. (*OFS*: 254-255)

Fairies, as described here, are the spiritual essence of Nature, though their appearance and minds are in keeping with humans. That is fairies are physical manifestations of the vitality or energy contained in the natural world, stemming from an age which had no knowledge of photosynthesis or biochemistry. They are not human either living or dead, nor, as some Christians believe, incarnations of the Devil. Rather they are a separate branch of God’s creation, fashioned earlier than humans in the timeline of Creation, and therefore are subject to the same moral laws as humans. It appears that by the late 1930’s Tolkien has developed a clear picture of who or what the fairies were. But how did he come to this conclusion? This definition is certainly at odds with many of the fairies described in his early and late non-Middle-earth poetry, including the deathly elves of the 1960’s version of *Kortirion* or the playful sprites of *Wood Sunshine* [1910], as I shall discuss in this chapter. This divergence reflects the central tenets of my thesis that:

1. Tolkien developed and changed his vision of Faërie over his lifetime
2. That Tolkien used his non-Middle-earth poetry to explore and develop his ideas around Faërie, some of which he would go on to use in his other writing, and
3. That this development of Faërie falls broadly into three phases (with occasional exceptions); an exploration of who and what the fairies were, the use of Faërie as a medium for protest and education, and finally a merging of Tolkien’s ideas of Paradise and Faërie.

This chapter will primarily deal with the first phase, Tolkien’s exploration of who or what the fairies were and how he begins to come to this 1939 definition of fairy. This exploration takes place against the backdrop of an increase in writing about fairies and fairy-lore during the Victorian and Edwardian period, and Tolkien’s own burgeoning

interest in Faërie, fuelled by his love of languages and Northern and Celtic folklore (Garth, 2003: 38). In this chapter there is a progression from light, bright, and diminutive fairies dancing in a wood, to more sophisticated, darker, and often mournful fairies as he moves from a young man in love to one traumatized by the horror and losses of World War I. At the end of this chapter, we shall see how close he has come to his 1939 definition of fairies.

1.1 Tiny Fairies

It is a frustrating fact that we only have a fragment of Tolkien's earliest Faërie poem, *Wood Sunshine*⁷, which is contained in Humphrey Carpenter's biography on Tolkien. Written in 1910, the poem describes a group of sprites or "light fairy things" dancing or "tripping so gay" in a wood (*Bio*: 47, Line 1). The young man observing them pleads for them to come to him, dance and sing for him before they fade. They are the antithesis of the shadowy, lamenting elves in *Kortirion*, for they are "reflections of joy/ All fashion'd of radiance, careless of grief" (*Bio*: 47, Line 3). There are several things to note about the earliest of Tolkien's fairies. Firstly, their general size and demeanour. These fairies are light, bright, and, as suggested by Tolkien's use of words such as "tripping", probably small. However, it is not their size that makes these sprites appear frivolous, both Shakespeare and Gervase of Tilbury allude to small but powerful fairies (Buccola, 2006:31), rather, it is their joyful ignorance of grief that gives them a rather childlike vibe. It is that the Elizabethans, and particularly the fairies of the Victorian era onwards, with their depiction of the sweet and childlike flower fairies drawn by Cecily Mary Barker (Trenter, 2004), made the fairies not only smaller, but nice, more human, and less powerful (Fimi, 2009: 57-58). The niceness of the fairies is reinforced in the by the young cry "O! come to me! Dance for me! Sprites of the wood, / O! come to me! Sing to me once ere ye fade!" (*Bio*: 47 lines 5-6). This is not the plea of a man facing the fairies found in the medieval tales of *Sir Orfeo* or *Sir Launfal*. With these medieval fairies there was a real threat of enslavement or death, and even so-called good fairies were approached with a great deal of reticence (Kerven, 2013: 122-127). This is a cry of a man desiring to reconnect with the simplicity and wonder of magic, innocence, and nature represented in the essence of these creatures before they are all swallowed forever by the practicality, rationality and pollution of the modern age.

⁷ *Wood Sunshine* was written in 1910 although does not appear to have been published until a segment was included in Humphrey Carpenters *Biography of J.R.R. Tolkien* (C&G:59, Bio: 47).

The fading of the fairies is one of the traditional motifs associated with fairies Tolkien is using in this poem (Fimi, 2009: 15). It is a theme that flows through much of Tolkien's work from its earliest beginnings as in his brother Hilary's book *Black and White Ogre Country*⁸, which, Gardner argues, J.R.R. Tolkien also had a hand in writing (Tolkien, H., 2009: iv), to his 1962 version of *Kortirion among the Trees*. Fading is an old theme in fairy lore, dating back to at least the time of Chaucer, who, somewhat satirically, laments the loss of the fairies in *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (Chaucer, 2008, lines 857-863). The fading of fairies connects to the sense of nostalgia linked to the land of Faërie and times gone by and, at that time, was thought to be the result of the rise of the Christian faith in the land. Some said it was the sound of the church bells ringing across the countryside that sent the fairies fleeing (Briggs, 1959: 11), whilst others said it was the sheer holiness of the friars that caused the fairies to leave (although there is a degree of sarcasm in the Wife of Bath's relevant comment) (Purkiss, 2000: 73). Cleland, a Catholic poet and commander of the Cameronian Regiment, claimed the fading was due to the decline of Catholicism (Fimi, 2009: 42; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 25), and in some ways he might have been right as Catholicism tended to embrace the pagan practices of the peasantry (Fimi, 2009: 43; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 25), utilizing them to encourage various church based practices such as early baptism of babies and the churching of mothers after the birth of their child (Silver, 1999: 65; James, 2014: 1475). Protestant traditions, on the other hand, tended to see all fairies as devils and forbade its followers to engage in such superstitions. With the coming of the twentieth century, literacy, science, rationalism, industrialisation, and urbanisation, took a further toll on the fragile fairy beliefs, disrupting communities and their traditions through a demystification of the world and increased migration away from their ancestral homes (Briggs, 1959: 11; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 27). As Briggs comments:

the fairies, who descended perhaps from gods older than those the Druids worshipped, who were so long lamented as lost and so slow to go, have gone, now and forever. They may not have cared for church bells, but they liked factory horns and the street lights even less; so now the most curious of studies is that of our native tales. (Briggs, 1959: 11)

Ironically, the attempts by the Victorians and later folklorists to study and document the fast-vanishing fairy lore was the final nail in the coffin for fairy belief. Silver observes that such studies had the effect of idealizing the fairies, destroying all traces of

⁸ *Black and White Ogre Country*, published in 2009, contains notes and stories written by Hilary Tolkien, Tolkien's younger brother, from when he was five through to the years after World War II (Tolkien, H.: iv).

true fairy tradition (Silver, 1999: 186). In his poem, Tolkien does not give a reason for the fading of the fairies, though later he relates it directly to the activities of humankind (*LT I*: 17; see also Chapter 5). Tolkien will come to agree with Briggs and Silver, that it is rationality and greed rather than spirituality that is the true cause of the fading of Faërie (see Chapter 5). But, for now, this poem leaves the reader with a sense that somehow, somewhere, innocence and simple joy are leaving this world.

A final note is that Tolkien, in this poem, is drawing on more traditional motifs in his depiction of the fairies than the mere belief in their fading. He represents his fairies in the classical liminal space of the forest (White-Latham, 1930: 92-94), an area which has multiple layers of ambiguity (see Chapter 3). The peculiar radiance and lightness of the fairies and their ability to fade away and become invisible is another (Narváez, 1991: 172, 465). They are often associated with the colour green in keeping with the background vegetation (Cavallaro, 2011: 442), and they were noted for their passion for music, especially singing and dancing (White-Latham, 1930: 92-94). Tolkien might be following Victorian and Edwardian custom by making his fairies pretty and nice, but he still employs quite a range of fairy traditions in his depiction of these fairies. It appears that even at this early-stage Tolkien is beginning to explore fairy lore in his poetry.

In his next poem *Goblin Feet*⁹, Tolkien continues his survey of small fairies. Written in April 1915 and published in the *Oxford Poetry* 1915 (C&G: 83, Cole, 1915)), the poem depicts a human walking down a country lane which has been enchanted by the presence of fairies. The existence of the fairies is known by the sound of their feet and their music and the manifestation of a glamour that changes the ordinary environment of the country lane into one of wondrous beauty. At the time Tolkien wrote this poem, he was about to graduate with a First-Class degree in English, before enlisting as an officer in the Lancashire Fusiliers (Garth, 2003: 83, 88). It was one of several fairy poems written about this time including *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], *Tinfang Warble* [1915], and *Kor: In the City Lost and Dead* [1915], all of which shall be discussed later in this chapter.

The title of the poem suggests that these fairies are goblins though the actual poem does not name or describe the creatures present. Goblins in folklore are amongst the most diverse fairies (Edwards, 1974: 123). They range from being helpful fairies who, like the

⁹ *Goblin Feet* was written in April 1915 and first published in *Oxford Poetry* in 1915 (C&G 71, 457).

Brownies, aid in household tasks to wild fays who frighten passing travellers. They tend to be ugly and Edwards suggests there might be a connection between the name Goblin and the Italian word “*gobbo*” meaning hunch-backed but she admits that she could find no etymological justification for this (Edwards, 1974: 125). There might be a kind of word play connecting fairies and insects: the Scottish word *bogle* means bug and relates to the “*bogy*” which might be described as an undefined creature which induces terror or alarm in humans. Similar words occur in Welsh (*Bwgwl*) and German (*bogge* or *boggemann*) which again are associated with terror or objects of fear which both bugs and fairies might be to some people (Edwards, 1974: 92-93).

The goblins of the poem are certainly bug-like. Apart from their minute size, the sound of their wings is like insect wings.

The air is full of wings
Of the blundering beetle-things
That go droning by a-whirring and a-humming.
(*Bio*: 75 lines 7-9)

As I have mentioned earlier, Tolkien believed fairies are able to change their form, and there have been a variety of tales dating back to the Middle Ages in which fairies take on a variety of animal forms from seals, swans, to tiny wrens (Briggs, 1967: 95; Briggs, 1978: 40). However, it was the Victorians who made the connection between winged fairies and insect life. The exact origin of winged fairies is unknown though Briggs wonders if it might have begun around the time that angels changed from being mainly male to mainly female and some were thought to be spirits of the departed rather than purely a separate class of spiritual beings (Briggs, 1959: 9-10). Angels, because of their ethereal nature and spiritual power, did not need wings to fly, however flight itself places the being in a position between humans and their gods (Young, 2018: 100), and the presence of feathered wings became a symbol of their ability to move between Heaven and Earth (Bown, 2001: 47). Just as feathered wings became linked with angels, the wings of bats became associated with vampires (Bown, 2001: 125), thus, when at the end of the eighteenth-century fairies began to acquire wings, the choice of winged creatures was limited and insects and butterflies were the obvious choice. Shakespeare and Drayton in their works *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Nymphidia* respectively, had already begun to create this link with insects, with Shakespeare's fairies' song being full of insects and things that crawl (Shakespeare, 1988: 163, Act II, Scene II) and Drayton's fairy buildings being made of spider parts with the fairies themselves riding gnats (Drayton, 1627, lines 41, 133). Like

angels in the nineteenth century, the fairies did not appear to use their wings to fly; their spirit-like nature was light enough not to require assisted flight (Briggs, 1967: 160). Rather, the winged fairies began to fulfil a vital role as intermediaries between humans and the natural world. Tolkien will slightly vary this concept in his later poems, using fairies or fairy creatures as barometers of the relationship between humans and the natural world, though he no longer gives them wings (see Chapters 2 and 5).

In a time where there were new ideas about the world and its origins, and a burgeoning conflict between religious beliefs and the findings of science, fairies, with their newly acquired wings, could form a connection between God and science (Keene, 2015: 138; Silver, 1999: 51-56). Belief in fairies particularly in the form of elementals was a direct protest against the barrenness and cold logic of the scientific narrative. The fairies were a manifestation of the animism and consciousness of the whole universe (Silver, 1999: 40), maintaining the spiritual connection of humans with the natural world around them. According to Charles W. Leadbetter, a Victorian occultist, fairies evolved in a separate arm of evolution to humans, developing from things as diverse as grasses, cereals, birds, and reptiles (Silver, 1999: 52-54). Their influence gave the flora and fauna their different appearances. Edward Gardiner, the secretary of the Theosophical Society, believed that the mystical forces of fairies explained why the combination of water, soil, and sunlight caused plants to grow (Silver, 1999: 52-55). These ideas echo Tolkien's own concept of fairies (see opening of this Chapter) where dryads were the spiritual essences of trees, linking the concept tree, or even individual trees to the creative force of God.

The debate over the actual existence of fairies or elfin peoples which began with the Brothers Grimm in the 1830s and rapidly spread to England, the historic, philological, empirical, and religious studies moved fairy lore out into the open where it became an object of research for the upper and middle classes. These scholars believed it was a remnant of a long-lost religion, and a mechanism for secret learning and knowledge for the lower classes (Silver, 1999: 31). This search for hidden knowledge led to the Victorians and Edwardians studying fairy lore and the elfin people with a seriousness akin to other scientific studies as various theories about the existence and origin of fairies waxed and waned from the 1850's through to World War I (Silver, 1999: 41-43). As I shall discuss in Chapter 3, there is a strong thread of patriotism or Englishness that runs through much of Tolkien's *Faërie*, especially his early poems. In an ironic twist, the study of fairies began to be made in the language of science (see Keene, 2015). Tolkien might not have used fairies as the language of science, but as Chapter 3 will show, there is a definite thread of

patriotism running through his Faërie and the suggestion in his 1939 discussion of fairies that they possibly might exist in some form or other. This means that, though Tolkien is incorporating many traditional motifs in his Faërie, his Faërie is also a reflection of the concerns and ideas of the society in which he lived. This will be discussed more in Chapter 5.

The result of this interface between science and fairies is seen in Tolkien's poem *Goblin Feet* [1915]. Because of their intermediary role, the fairies transform nature into an insect-sized rural idyll in which these newly anthropomorphized insects could live. Tolkien's poem echoes this in the lines:

O! I hear the tiny horns
Of enchanted leprechauns
And the padding feet of many gnomes a-coming.

O! the lights! O! the gleams: O! the little tinkling sounds:
O! the rustle of their noiseless little robes:
O! the echo of their feet, of their little happy feet:
O! their swinging lamps in little star-lit globes.

(*H*: 113, lines 10-16)

These creatures wear clothes, play instruments, and carry lamps, so they are clearly more than insects, yet at the same time the protagonist reports to hear "wings", "blundering beetle things" and insect like "whirring" and "humming" (*Bio*: 75, lines 7-9). Tolkien is still echoing the Victorian/Edwardian tradition of cute fairies. The joy of the creatures, seen in *Wood Sunshine* [1910] remains, but this time they are more powerful, creating a glamour on their surroundings much greater than themselves. If anything, this poem is drawing the fairies closer to nature than *Wood Sunshine* [1910], despite its horns and robes. Yet still their aura and the reader's awe are still somehow diminished by the sound of their "happy little feet". As the connection between insects and fairies became established, the fairies began to shrink in size to match their insect counterparts, their voices became more insect like, and their longevity was diminished from undying to that of a mayfly (Bown, 2001: 127; Keene, 2015: 55-56). This poem is short, consisting of a description of a scene rather than any details on the longevity, appearance, or function of these beings, but it is clear for once, and only once, that Tolkien's fairies have wings. Tolkien, later in his life, clearly rejected the concept of fairies having wings (Fimi, 2009: 13). In appendix F of *Return of the King*, Tolkien wrote:

*Elves*¹⁰... This old word was indeed the only one available and was once fitted to apply to such memories of this people as Men preserved, or to the makings of Men's minds not wholly dissimilar. But it has been diminished, and to many it may now suggest fancies either pretty or silly, as the Quendi [elves] of old as are butterflies to the falcon- not that any of the Quendi ever possessed wings of the body, as unnatural to them as to Men. (RK: 1137)

Tolkien obviously later agreed with Bown's and Keene's view that the addition of wings diminished the elves. Why he chose to do so in this poem is unclear, but it might reflect Tolkien's desire to draw the fairies closer to nature by linking them to insects and therefore the natural world.

The next poem I shall examine does not entirely belong in this section, though I have included it here for the sake of completeness as it is the only other poem where fairies and insects meet. The date of initial composition of *Errantry*¹¹ is not known but it was published in the *Oxford Magazine* in 1933. It was then revised and republished in Tolkien's poetry collection, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*, in the 1960's. According to John Rateliff, it is based on Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* in *The Canterbury Tales*, a tale in which the brave knight fights a giant (Rateliff, 1982: 348; ATB: 166). Rateliff notes that the armour of Sir Thopas and the armour of the knight from *Errantry* [before 1933] resemble each other, though Tolkien, in his poem, exaggerates the absurdity of the quest (Rateliff, 1982: 348). This possible inspiration in a work Tolkien is likely to have taught at Oxford, along with its rather light-hearted humorous tone, is in keeping with the types of poems he wrote in the late 1920s -1930s. But as Chaucer is neither Celtic nor Scandinavian, this poem does not fit in with the discussion of Tolkien's academic-inspired poetry in Chapter 4. The poem itself is an anti-fairy-story, that it is a story that goes against most of the conventions of fairy-stories. A brave, but very tiny knight, is sent on a quest to deliver a message to Faërie. During his journey he meets and falls in love with a butterfly, who scorns him and rejects him though he woos her with fine pavilions made from gossamer and offers her gems and rich garments. He tries to compete with other knights in daring, but, being out-shone in bravery, he turns to battling a dragon-fly and various bees, finally winning a pot of golden honey. Unfortunately, the events of his journey and the glamour of the land is such that he leaves the land without delivering his message and has to begin his quest again. Once again, Tolkien appears to be drawing some of his imagery from Drayton's *Nymphidia* and Shakespeare's Queen Mab, building

¹⁰ Although we would now make a distinction between elves and fairies, the two words were interchangeable at the time Tolkien was writing (Fimi, 2008:13-14)

¹¹ It is not known when *Errantry* was written but it was first published in *Oxford Magazine* in 1933 (C&G: 357).

his pavilion out of spider webs, and flowers, but in *On Fairy-stories* [1939] he declares his dislike of such works (*OFS*: 29-30). But he does so with an air of sympathetic derision for this is not a typical fairy-tale knight. He is not the bravest, he fails to win his maiden, the only treasure he receives is a golden pot of honey and then he forgets about his quest altogether and must start all over again. In other words, he fails in every aspect that most fairy-tale protagonists succeed. This poem allows us to see the contrast between the first and second phases of Tolkien's development of Faërie. In *Goblin Feet* [1915] and *Wood Sunshine* [1910], Tolkien is following fairy lore when imaging his fairies, in *Errantry* [before 1933] he is deliberately being satirical. This narrative poem is complex, creative, and funny, and deliberately lampoons the slightly insipid romanticism found in both Victorian Faërie and Tolkien's own very early Faërie.

Besides the size of the protagonist, there are several unusual features of this Faërie that I should mention. The mariner appears rather exotic for an Englishman. He voyages in a gondola, a long flat-bottomed boat known to sail the canals of Venice, although, as Hammond and Scull point out, it does have a lesser-known meaning of being a small warship (*ATB*: 164). Whilst porridge, lavender, and marjoram are available in England, cardamom and oranges are definite imports. As I shall discuss in Chapter 3, Tolkien's Faërie tended to be a very English Faërie. He sometimes referred to the land of Faërie as Tol Eresséa, the Lonely Isle, and in his poem *The Lonely Isle* [1916], he is clearly equating England with Faërie. Nor do the names he uses in *Errantry* [before 1933] have any hidden meaning. For Tolkien, words were important, and many of even his non-Middle-earth poems contain fragments of his Elvish languages. For example *Alaminórë* in his poem *Kortirion among the Trees* means the Land of the Elms (Tolkien, 2004: 5). However, in this case, the names of the lands, *Derrilyn*, *Shadowland*, *Belmarie*, *Thellamie*, *Fangasie*, and *Aerie*, appear to have no consistent meaning although they have the style of Elven names. They are not themselves composed of Elven words (Holmes, 2013: 39; *ATB*: 64-165). Nor do they refer to actual places. My own view is in agreement with John Holmes, whose paper examines the complex dactylic rhythm of the poem, and who suggests that Tolkien generated the names purely to complement the meter of the poem (Holmes, 2013: 30, 39). This poem does not contain a thread of protest against modern ills as many of his humorous poems do at this time (see Chapter 5), rather it appears to be an exercise in fun; utilizing his skills to create a poem with a "rollicking" rhythm akin to Gilbert and Sullivan's "Major General" song, whilst telling a very silly tale (Holmes, 2013: 32-33).

The second poem written in April 1915 was *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play*¹² (C&G: 71). Christopher Tolkien in his commentary on the poem notes that two lines in a Francis Thompson poem *Daisy* are echoed in Tolkien's poem: "Two children did we stray and talk, / Wise, idle, childish things" (LT I: 29). Tolkien was known to have brought a copy of *The Works of Francis Thompson* in 1913– 1914 (LT I: 29). Like many of Tolkien's poems, Tolkien rewrote versions of this poem at different times during his lifetime. Three versions have been published in *The Book of Lost Tales I*, an early version, a foot note including changes made in a second version, and the final edition of the poem titled *The House of Lost Play* [prior to 1962]. *The House of Lost Play* is a complete revision of the poem and might have been written as late as the 1960's for possible inclusion in Tolkien's poetry collection, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* (LT I: 27). The type of fairies/elves present and the distancing of the protagonist from Faërie is in keeping with this, as my thesis will show, but there is no documentation which allows an accurate dating of this version of the poem.

The first two versions are relatively similar: a boy and girl visit an idyllic garden in their dreams. There they talk and pursue childish activities, gardening, playing on the seashore, singing, dancing, and running through the woods. Despite the magic surrounding the access to the garden, at first glance, the garden itself is marked by an absence of fairy creatures. There is no doubt that it is Faërie, for the children "rollicked on fairy sands" on pearl laden beaches (LT I: 28, line 15) or "were dancing in fairy-rings" (LT I: 29, line 51) all veiled in a soft, dim light, which was neither daylight nor night (LT I: 28, lines 25-26). In version one, the grey hand of Tomorrow comes and leads the children away and they never find the path to that garden again (LT I: 30). In the second version, the children eventually mature and are no longer able to find the path back to the garden (LT I: 29). This poem was to be the original backdrop of Tolkien's first prose versions of his mythology, linked with the human explorer, Eriol, who comes to Tol Eressëa to learn from the elves dwelling there (LT I:27). Christopher Tolkien places the timing of Eriol's visit after the fall of Gondolin and the defeat of Melkor but before the 'Faring Forth' and the removal of Tol Eressëa to its new position on the map, that of the England (LT I: 27). The sea, the beach with pearls, and the soft light are all features found in many of Tolkien's descriptions of Faërie, particularly in his poetry (see Chapter 3). There are even fairy towns, but these seem to be populated by the children alone. This place has all the elements of Faërie, but where are the fairies? The clue is in the curious radiance to the place: the sea

¹² *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* was first written in April 1915 and published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* in 1983 (C&G: 703).

glitters, the Cottage of Lost Play itself shines, the bees are golden and the daisies pearly. In this poem, Tolkien might have been thinking of the sermon by Cardinal Newman entitled *The Powers of Nature* where Newman suggests that the fairies are elementals. That is “spiritual intelligences” that inhabit natural things (Newman, 2007). Newman might have been drawing on the work of Paracelsus, who argued that these elementals were divinely-created spirits associated with the four elements – water, fire, earth, and air (Von Hohnheim, 1941: 226). Though not visible to the naked eye, their presence places the landscape under a kind of glamour, as seen here in the curious radiance of the land, and they were capable of miraculous works (Von Hohnheim, 1941: 226; Ashliman, 2006: 21). These fairies, though invisible to humans, shared the medieval concept of Middle Earth (in the medieval sense of the term) with humans, inhabiting natural spaces such as woods, fields, and hedgerows, fairy rings of their own making, or stone circles made by humans (Briggs, 1978: 82). This idea is in keeping with the belief expressed in one of Tolkien’s drafts of *On Fairy-stories* [1939] quoted above, that fairies were daemons or spiritual essences, infusing the landscape with a kind of spiritual energy. Tolkien explores this concept of an animated, spiritual landscape further in his later visions of Faërie, particularly those of the traditional lays (see Chapters 3 and 4) and their essence might be seen in the peculiar atmospheres of both Rivendell and Lothlorien in Tolkien’s legendarium (*FR*: 2005). This idea is also present in the dryad-like elves of the early versions of the *Kortirion* [1915/1937] poems (see Appendix) and I will discuss it further in this chapter.

Although there are some tales of elementals being less than friendly to humans (Silver, 1999: 162-164), in general, they were said to be close to men in affections and they were said to delight in human company (Briggs, 1959: 174). The Elizabethans believed that such elementals had control over the weather and the seasons (Briggs, 1959: 45). The images in this poem are ones of summertime with “sparkling seas”, “warm and winding lanes”, and flowers in full bloom (*LT I*: 28, lines 20, 22). There is a graceful simplicity here, an environment where humans and fairies are existing harmoniously together in stark contrast to those more destructive humans, we will see in Chapter 5. In the Victorian era, fairies had changed from the enigmatic creatures of the Middle Ages who could help or harm with equal vigour, into beings who often exuded “natural innocence” and “juvenile charm” (Cavallaro, 2011: 2716). Just prior to this, Romantics such as Novalis (1772-1801) and Rousseau (1712-1778) created a new vision of childhood in which children were no longer born under the cloud of the original sin, but came into the world pure and innocent, fresh from their pre-existence in Heaven (Sky, 2002: 363). To Rousseau, children’s

closeness to heaven meant they were also close to nature, thus the pairing of elemental spirits and children would seem a natural one. The children in the poem are depicted not only living harmoniously together, but in harmony with their surroundings, displaying a compassion for both their fellow humans and nature itself. According to George MacDonald, this compassion was the pinnacle of human nature (Zipes, 1983: 110). Furthermore, the ability of children to escape into such fairy-laden fantasies despite the harshness of some aspects of Victorian society, was a manifestation of the child's spiritual superiority to adults (Sumpter, 2012: 154). Their reward is a kind of paradise, a world without "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, and death" (Rudd, 2011: 327); a Faërian Paradise, a theme that Tolkien will develop later in his vision of Faërie (see Chapter 3). This purity and innocence are seen in Tolkien's depiction of the two children in the first two versions of this poem, and its loss through the coming of adulthood means that access to the magical garden is denied to them.

In the first version of the poem, the shadowy figure of Tomorrow comes to lead them away from this garden of dreams forever. There is almost something deathly in Tolkien's depiction of Tomorrow with his grey hand:

And why it was Tomorrow came
 And with his grey hand led us back;
 And why we never found the same
 Old cottage, or the magic track
 That leads between a silver sea
 And those old shores and gardens fair
 Where all things are, that ever were-
 We know not, You and Me.
 (*LT I*: 29-30, lines 58-65)

This is particularly poignant as Tolkien is writing this not long before he will be sent to France to fight in World War I. The death rates among young officers, even signal men, was appalling, and he cannot have helped being aware that he may not return to the woman he loved. However, in his essay *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien sees the possibility of impending death as not an entirely bad thing, for it can be a transforming experience: "But it is the lesson (if one can call it such) of many fairy stories that on callow, lumpish, and selfish youth, sorrow, peril and that shadow of death bestow dignity and even sometimes justice, wisdom – and mercy" (*OFS*: 191). It seems later on that, despite the death and destruction of war, Tolkien still expresses hope; hope that some good may come out of the horror and devastation of the War, and that mankind will be improved as a result. But the price of this seems to be that the adult must relinquish their keys to the Faërie Paradise.

The second version holds out the hope that, though the path of dreams is closed for these growing children, other children may find their way to the garden:

Though long we looked, and high would climb,
Or gaze from many a seaward shore
To find the path between sea and sky
To those old gardens of delight;
And how it goes now in that land,
If there the house and garden stand,
Still filled with children clad in white-
We know not, You and I.
(*LT I*: 29, lines 58-65)

There is still hope here but hope of a different kind. Here the hope is not for his generation, many of whom have been lost, but rather for his children and their generation, that they might not lose their innocence in the way his peers did. As I shall discuss in Chapter 3, Tolkien had seen J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan*, on 11 April 1910, and this play left a lasting impression on the young Tolkien, possibly influencing this poem and his vision of Faërie in general (Fimi, 2009: 35). In the play, Wendy and her brothers decide to return to the Primary World and lose the path to Never-Never Land. The implication is that their growing maturity and loss of innocence, denies them access to the magical world. Tolkien later rejects this idea. In his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] Tolkien writes:

The process of growing up is not necessarily allied to growing wicked: though that is too often what happens. Children are meant to grow up and die, and not become Peter Pan (a dreadful fate). [But] not to lose innocence and wonder. (*OFS*: 190)

He appears to be implying that life is about spiritual growth, not about spiritual stagnation. Whilst wonder and innocence are desirable, ignorance and naivety are not. Rather it is appropriate that humans mature and grow in their understanding of spiritual life, taking the lessons learned in childhood to move on to seek the real Paradise. And the two children in the poem do continue to seek that paradise. They climb or go to the seashore to find "the path between sea and sky" or climb to high places to try to find their way to the garden. This confirms a possible link between Tolkien's magical garden and Paradise as Paradise was said to be a garden located in a high plain or on a hidden island like Hy Brasil (Byrne, 2016: 10; Kelly, 2009: 95; Siewers, 2005: 145). This a real sense of longing in this poem, a kind of nostalgia or desire to return home, even to a biblical home that they have never been to, which is part of the allure of Faërie (*OFS*: 282). Finally, the hidden path or lost road has biblical connotations, when at the second coming the crooked road will be made

straight and the rough places plain (James, 1611, Isaiah 40.4). Tolkien incorporates this concept implied here into his legendarium with the loss of the straight road to the Undying Lands after the uprising of Númenor (*S*: 281).

The final version of this poem is called *The Little House of Lost Play*¹³ [prior to 1962], and was published at some time prior to 1962, though the exact date of writing is lost. In this version it is possible to see some of the pessimism that dogged Tolkien's later works:

We wandered shyly hand in hand
small footprints in the golden sand,
and gathered pearls and shells in pails,

...

We dug for silver with our spades
and caught the sparkle of the seas,
then ran ashore to greenlit glades

(*LT I*: 30, lines 14-16, 19-21).

Yet:

... all the gardens full of folk
that their own little language spoke,
but not to You and Me.

For some had silver watering-cans
and watered all their gowns,
or sprayed each other;

(*LT I*: 31, lines 40-45)

Though the basic landscape of the garden remains the same, the atmosphere and the interaction of the children with that landscape is hugely different. For one thing, the fairies are now visible. Like the fairies of the early poems, these fairies are small, but, unlike the previous fairies they appear to be aristocratic. There is a "little, white-robed king" surrounded by his supplicants, fairies "dancing round the fairy-rings", fairies singing, or telling ancient tales (*LT I*: 31, lines 54, 51). Others garden, or clamber on the roof as the children did in earlier versions of the poems. These fairies are not elementals, rather their

¹³ *The Little House of Lost Play* is a revised version of Tolkien's poem *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play*. It was revised some time prior to 1962 possibly in preparation for its inclusion in Tolkien's poetry book *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*. It was first published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* in 1983.

courtly structure is in keeping with the tradition of trooping fairies. In England elite fairies occurring in courtly groups like this were linked to the Seelie Court and were always Elves: they only became fairies in Southern England where, after the Norman Conquest, Norman French became the dominant language of the upper classes (Young, 2018(b): 68). Either of these origins might explain why the fairies are conversing in a language that the children do not understand, or, as it might be one of Tolkien's invented languages that he, as a young child, had not yet invented. Trooping fairies were aristocrats, who spent their time pursuing courtly activities such as hunting, hawking, or riding (Briggs, 1978: 39). In the British Isles trooping fairies were said to be the same size as humans and were closely linked to fertility, bringing good luck to herds and children and tending flowers, as they do in Tolkien's garden (Briggs, 1978: 39). Yet this type of fairy may also cause death or sickness to any mortals they met and were known to steal unchurched wives and unbaptized babies (Briggs, 1978: 39). The lack of clarity around the dating of this poem is frustrating, but the change from elemental fairies to the trooping fairies does suggest a later date of writing, with the aristocratic nature of trooping fairies being more aligned with Tolkien's elves in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]. This is discussed more in Chapter 5, the chapter focusing on concepts of evil, but it is worth noting here that the that he has changed the fairies from ones which were relatively benign to a race which had more overt potential to harm humans.

There is almost a sense of despair or isolation in this version of the garden. In the previous versions of this poem, the children appeared to be in harmony with the landscape, their natural innocence and extension of that land. Now however, they wander in the land hand in hand but are totally ignored by the fairies who are intent on their own business. The children do not join the fairies in any of their activities, though what child would not love to participate in a water fight. The children and the fairies do not interact at all. The children are now alien creatures in this land; like tourists, they come and observe. They are clearly "other" here. The poem does not even end on a hopeful note. There is no hand leading them away, no hope of other children taking their place, rather they two children simply wake up far away from each other. This sense of disconnection between humans and Faërie is a feature of Tolkien's late vision of Faërie and is an example of Tolkien darkening his Faërie as he ages as I shall discuss in Chapter 5.

1.2 Pucks, Leprawns, and Forgotten Races

From now on the fairies will be increasing in stature. *Tinfang Warble*¹⁴ is the third of Tolkien's 1915 poems (*LTI*: 107-108). Like the others, it was rewritten several times, once in 1920-1923, and a final version in 1927 (*LT I*: 108). It tells of a solitary figure piping, singing, and dancing on a lawn in a garden. Although there is little physical description of Tinfang, there are clues to his identity. In the earliest version he was said to be a "leprawn", that is a leprechaun, though he is much larger than the tiny horn blowing creature of *Goblin Feet* [1915] (*LT I*: 108). Leprechauns¹⁵ are Irish folkloric figures said to be the offspring of the union between mortals and fairies and, being neither wholly fay or wholly human, they were rejected by both and forced to live alone (Curran, 2002: 82). Some were said to eat human flesh and in general they were said to be bad tempered and cruel. In some tales leprechauns forced their victims to dance till their feet bled and then returned them to the human world many years after they had left it; in others, they held mortals prisoner for the rest of their lives (Curran, 2002: 52, 64). Soulless, they had no shadow and it was said that they sought out human blood, so they could enter paradise (Curran, 2002: 147). Tolkien appears to both use and reject the fairy lore surrounding leprechauns: on the one hand he incorporates their dual nature into Tinfang Warble having Vairë tell Eriol that:

this quaint spirit is neither wholly of the Valar nor of the Eldar, but is a half fay of the woods and dells, one of the great companies of the children of Palúrien, and half a Gnome or a Shoreland Piper. Howso that be he is a wondrous creature,.... Now does he play about the gardens of the land; but Alaminórë he loves the best, and this garden best of all. (*LT I*: 94)

On the other hand, Tolkien does not include any of the more gruesome aspects of leprechauns like their blood lust or cruelty, rather he portrays him as a dancing figure who draws children out of their beds with the beauty of his playing (*LT I*: 94).

In later versions of the poem, Tolkien changes Tinfang from a leprechaun to the uniquely English fairy called Puck or Robin Goodfellow. Pucks have a rather complex pedigree. Although they were thought to be the English equivalent of a leprechaun (Curran, 2002: 168), they were also closely related to a hobgoblin; a term which might have been derived from the Welsh words *hob* – to hop, and *coblyn* – a goblin, giving the image of a hopping goblin (Edwards, 1974: 131). This would be in keeping with Tinfang's

¹⁴ *Tinfang Warble* was written in April 1915 and first published in the *Interuniversity Magazine* in May 1927 (C&G: 1926).

¹⁵ This is of particular interest as it is often said that Tolkien shunned Irish elements in the early and middle parts of his writing.

rather hopping dance. There is a suggestion that pucks were hairy, connecting with the Greek tradition of fauns (Nutt, 1900: 10), and it is possible that Tolkien is playing with this tradition when he uses the homophone fawn, when he says that Tinfang was “flitting like a fawn” (*LT I*: 108, line 6) instead of flitting like a faun. Puck is also known to have an unusual cry of “Ho, ho, ho” (Edwards, 1974: 137; Lamb, 2000: 296), a call which closely resembles Tinfang’s “What a hoot! What a hoot!” (*LT I*: 108, line 1). Pucks had a varied reputation. Some say they are pranksters, a kind of bumpkin of the fairy world (Brennan Croft, 2007: 11), whilst others thought him a kind of devil (White-Latham, 1930: 219). Certainly, in this poem, Tinfang appears more mischievous than devilish, with a kind of joie-de-vivre as he plays and sings for his own delight. Yet, in his prose description of Tinfang, there is a warning. Vairë says:

“‘Tinfang Warble has gone heart-breaking in the Great Lands, and many a one in those far regions will hear his piping in the dusk outside tonight.’ But on a sudden will his flute be heard again at an hour of gentle gloaming, or will he play beneath a goodly moon and the stars go bright blue.’

“Aye,” said Eriol, “and the hearts of those that hear him go beating with a quickened longing. Me seemed ‘twas my desire to open the window and leap forth, so sweet was the air that came to me from without, nor might I drink deep enough, but as I listened I wished to follow I know not whom, I know not wither, out into the magic of the world beneath the stars.” (*LT I*: 94-95)

For all his childish charm, Tinfang is enormously powerful and extremely dangerous. He can make the stars change colour and glow brighter. He can cause humans to leap from windows in the middle of the night, to chase after who knows who and to God knows where. Pucks might be labelled mischievous (Brennan Croft, 2007: 10), but such mischief might be fatal to the humans involved.

Pucks had an intimate connection with death and the dead (Purkiss, 2000: 173). Like their leprechaun kin, Pucks are shape-shifters whose favourite game was to lead travellers astray only to abandon them in a bog and disappear (Edwards, 1974: 149). Tolkien appears to be drawing on this tradition in his poem *Over Old Hills and Far Away*¹⁶ [1916] (*LT I*: 108-110), a poem written in 1916 (*C&G*: 83-84). In this poem, a man is lured from his house at twilight by the charm of Tinfang’s music. He pursues him, attempting to catch up with him, but each time the sound and figure disappears only to reappear some

¹⁶ *Over Old Hills and Far Away* was written in January/February 1916 when Tolkien was living in the Brocton Camp. It was first published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* in 1983 (*C&G*: 83-84, 911).

distance ahead. Like the world of the lane in *Goblin Feet* [1915] and the garden in *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] the ordinary world of garden, road, and valley has been transformed into something full of light and mystery by the presence of the fairy. It is beautiful, but the poem conjures a slight sense of unease. The person following says:

I leapt o'er the stream and I sped from the glade
For Tinfang Warble it was that played;
I *must* follow the hoot of his twilight flute...
(*LT I*: 109, lines 47-49, emphasis added)

This echoes Eriol's observation. The music is lovely, intoxicating, it appears those who hear Tinfang's music are not entirely in their right mind, the enchantment of his melody causing them to throw all caution to the wind. Fairies can enchant mortals with or without music (Cavallaro, 2011: 466). As I mentioned, Faërie is a land of great beauty, but as Tolkien says, it is also "a perilous realm" (*OFS*: 27), capable of maiming, blinding, enslaving, or giving humans as tithes to the Devil or returning them to the Mortal World long after they departed (Kerven, 2013: 177; Purkiss, 2000: 68-69; Briggs, 1967: 95, 142, *OFS*: 87). The poem does not indicate the fate of the man. We do not know if he ever reaches Faërie or what happens to him if he did. Although he does not explicitly state it here, Tolkien's poem is portraying a human in mortal danger. In this slightly later poem, Tolkien appears to be moving away from the cute pretty fairy and is beginning to incorporate some of the darker elements of Faërie, yet, in this poem, the move is not that obvious, unless one has knowledge of fairy lore or understands the warning in Eriol's words. This is still an early poem, and, although Tolkien is expanding his creativity by fashioning a tale within the poem, it maintains, at least superficially, the sense of joy and wonder associated with his early Faërie.

In *Over Old Hills and Far Away* [1916], Tolkien gives a much clearer description of Tinfang than in his poem *Tinfang Warble* [1915]. He is described as a small, slim, elderly man with white hair that shimmers in the moonlight. He has small feet that move swiftly yet silently over the ground. Tinfang, for all his white hair, seems younger than his appearance. He dances alone, playing on a reed-like pipe. Kipling's Puck in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, was the oldest thing in Britain (Kipling, 2011: 5) and was a forgotten deity of pagan England (Spense, 1946: 152-153; Briggs, 1967: 4). In this sense, Tinfang may have been a precursor to Tolkien's Tom Bombadil. Both characters dance, often alone, both exude a peculiar kind of joy, and both are intimately associated with the land. In the case of Tinfang, Tolkien mentions he is half Valar making him a kind of demigod. Fairies were

considered by some to be forgotten pagan deities. Tolkien rejects this proposal in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] (*OFS*: 254), but the story behind Tinfang Warble and his appearance and status suggest that Tolkien is exploring that possibility here. If this is so among the pagan gods of Britain there is one that stands out as a possible candidate for Tolkien's Tinfang Warble, the Lord of the Woods, Silvanus (Dorcey, 1992: 10). Silvanus was a Roman god mainly worshipped by humble folk such as soldiers, slaves, and freedmen (Dorcey, 1992: 3). In Britain, as in some other countries, his worship was fused with some of the local gods including Cocidius, the Celtic god of war and hunting; Vinotonus, the Celtic god of viticulture; and Callirius, the Celtic god of fields and woods (Dorcey, 1992: 81) turning this Silvanus into a uniquely British god. Silvanus bears some resemblance to Tolkien's Tinfang. He is said to be an old man who appears younger than his years. He is famous for his musical talent, in particular his skill on the fistula, a kind of reed pipe (Dorcey, 1992: 36). He was also the defender of home, family, and personal property; a fitting demigod for a man who had lost much of his family in childhood, and now was being sent to war to defend his home, property, and the woman he loved. These three factors, his Britishness, his appearance and attributes, and his role as defender of home and family in a time of war potentially make him an attractive god for an orphaned, fairy-loving Anglophile such as Tolkien.

The poem *Kor: In a City of Lost and Dead*¹⁷ is a short descriptive piece describing gleaming white temples which have been abandoned and are now only filled with silence and shadows. The azure sea and sky combined with the burning heat give this Faërie a Mediterranean feel rather than the cool, clear climes of England. In Tolkien's legendarium Kor or Kortirion was the city of the Elves in Valinor (*LT I*: 136). The elves eventually abandoned the city (*LT I*: 136), possibly echoing the idea of the fairies abandoning the Primary World already discussed earlier in this chapter. The original poem was written in April 1915 and given the title above but a revision in 1923 changed the title to *The City of the Gods*. The poem itself was unchanged apart from the penultimate line where "no bird sings" is changed to "no voice stirs" (*LT I*: 136). The change in name both draws the poem out of the legendarium and suggests that the shadows might be the abandoned gods who, unable to die, fade and diminish through lack of worship (Fimi, 2009: 55). The name Kor and the image of an abandoned city may be drawing on H. Rider Haggard's *She*, a book which Tolkien reported to in an interview with Henry Resnick to have enjoyed (Rateliff:

¹⁷ *Kor: In a City of Lost and Dead* was written in April 1915 and was first published in the Leeds University Magazine *Microcosm* in Spring 1923 under the title *The City of the Gods* (C&G: 241).

150-151). Tolkien goes on to comment that there are strong parallels between the opening of *She* and the first two chapters of *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], so it is clear that the work influenced his writing (Rateliff: 146). This is further evidence that Tolkien considered the idea of lost or forgotten deities as a source of creatures in Faërie. Like the fairies of *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], these fairies are insubstantial, but this time they are made of shadow rather than light. This trend away from fairies of light to fairies of shadow will continue over the next few poems as Tolkien moves his fairies away from the hope and joy of the flower fairies to solemn fairies with ever increasing gravitas.

Like *Kor* [1915], the Faërie in *A Song of Aryador*¹⁸ [1915] appears to take place in a space other than England which is at odds with the usual Englishness of Tolkien's Faërie. In this case the mountainous landscape covered in trees and surrounded by villages with their goat herds is more in keeping with Switzerland. The poem was written in September 1915 (C&G: 80), several years after Tolkien took his 1911 summer holiday in the Swiss Alps (Bio: 50-51). In the poem a woman is lost in the forest among shadowy figures who murmur and dance among the trees singing "Ancient songs of olden gods in Aryador" (*LT I*: 139, line 37) whilst the goats and villages of the Primary World might be heard and seen below. Tolkien writes that Aryador was men's name for the land the Noldor called Hisilómë, the Shadowed Land which contained those elves lost by Oromë on the way to Valinor (*LT I*: 138). In fairy lore there was often a belief that fairies were the spirits of long dead pagans or extinct races such as the Picts, spirits who were too sinful for Heaven, but having never heard of Christ, were not deemed evil enough to enter Hell (Silver, 1999: 36). Thus, their spirits were caught in between the two and became the creatures that we know as fairies. Other theories suggested that they were the ancient races themselves such as the Druids or early Irish invaders (Silver, 1999: 46). Primitive and less civilized, such tribes were both intimately linked to the countryside and relics of a bygone era in keeping with the supernatural but enigmatic nature of fairies. Gone is the charm of Tinfang. These fairies are much more ghostlike. They are shadowy and indistinct, more voice than substance, ringing their "ghostly bells" (*LT I*: 139, lines 30-32). They, like Tinfang, use their power to confuse and disorientate the young woman who finds herself in their realm. These fairies are darker, wilder, and apart from the world. Tolkien echoes these lost tribes in his story of the Sindar elves who become lost and wander and never come to the shores of Valinor. Though these elves develop a language and a culture of their own, they are seen

¹⁸ *A Song of Aryador* was written in September 1915 and published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* in 1983 (C&G: 80, 1243).

as rather inferior and more barbaric than the High elves who had visited the Blessed Isle (S: 55-56, 91-97).

1.3 Dryads and the Dead

The elves of *Kotirion among the Trees* [1915] may be said to be a merging of the concept of dryads, that is tree spirits, rather akin to the elementals of *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], and the concept of fairies or elves as the dead, particularly the spirits of dead pagans and unbaptised babies. The fairies or elves act like dryads, spirits of the trees whose nature is so intimately linked to the forest that their physical nature is altered by the seasonal state of the wood. In spring, when new life is coming to the wood, the elves are ethereal spirits, banished by a puff of wind. They “pass and vanish in a sudden breeze/ A wave of bowing grass-and we forget/ Their tender voices like wind-shaken bells/ Of flowers, their gleaming hair like golden asphodels” (*LT I*: 34, lines 50-53). However, in autumn, as the wood slowly sinks into its winter sleep, the elves appear more and more solid: “The Fairies know thy early crystal dusk/ And put in secret on their twilight hoods/ Of grey and filmy purple, and long bands/ Of frosted starlight sewn by silver hands” (*LT I*: 35, lines 93-96). The elves are at once time-bound yet timeless. Their physical nature is determined by the flow of the seasons, continually cycling from one form to another, yet their songs are “of things that were, and could yet be” (*LT I*: 34, line 49), making the fairies a bridge between the past and the future. (The concept of time in Faërie is a complex one and this shall be discussed further in Chapter 4).

As discussed in the Introduction, Tolkien rewrote this poem multiple times during his lifetime and the quotations above come from the first version of the poem written in 1915. In later versions, the nature of the fay people changes quite markedly. This is in keeping with Tolkien’s early poetry where he has not yet rejected the inclusion of fairies in his work, though there is quite a marked difference between these mournful fairies and the joyous dancing fay such as the sprites of *Wood Sunshine* [1910] or the dancing figure of *Tinfang Warble* [1915]. These 1915 fairies are much closer to the Elves of Middle-earth with their sombre attitudes and regret for time passing, yet they “Still, undespairing, ... sometimes slowly file/ along thy paths with plaintive harmonies: The holy fairies and immortal elves/ That dance among the trees and sing themselves/ a wistful song” (*LT I*: 34, lines 45-49). These fairies might not exude the carelessness of grief of their predecessors, but they are “wistful” rather than lamenting. They still greet Spring with joyful piping (*LT I*: 34, lines 53-57) and have a brightness that matches the verdant richness of Tolkien’s

original landscape (see the Introduction to this thesis). By the 1930's these creatures are no longer pensive fairies, rather they are: "The holy people of an elder day. Immortal Elves, that singing fair and fey/ Of vanished things that were, and could be yet" (*LT I*: 37, lines 46-48). These are Elves with a capital "E"! They are almost angelic in their power and their connection to the land appears more solid for they no longer sing of things that *may* yet be, but rather things that *could* be yet. They seem to have the authority to make things happen. The frippery of Tolkien's early fay is long gone, as has their joy, yet they still remember it (*LT I*: 37, lines 54-57). These elves have a kind of grave majesty akin to the elves of Rivendell or Lothlórien in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]. This is in harmony with the softening and maturing of the landscape found in the 1930's version compared to the 1915.

The elves of 1960's version of the poem change once again as shown in the following verse:

Alaminóre! Green heart of this Isle
Where linger yet the Faithful Companies!
Still undespairing here they slowly file
Down lonely paths with solemn harmonies:
The Fair, the first-born in the elder days,
Immortal Elves, who singing on their way
Of bliss of old and grief, though men forget,
Pass like a wind among the rustling trees,
A wave of bowing grass, and men forget
Their voices calling from a time we do not know,
Their hair gleaming like sunlight long ago.
(*LT I*: 41, lines 43-52)

In this verse we see the clearest connection between these elves and the elves of Middle-earth. Tolkien's reference to these elves as the "first born" of the "elder days" is a clear connection to his legendarium, and, in particular, the *Ainulindale* of *The Silmarillion* [1977] where the elves were the first to wake up in the new world of Middle-earth (*S*: 47-54). This is yet another example of the merging of the representation of fairies/elves found in these poems to those found in Tolkien's legendarium and it is one of the reasons that I argue that Tolkien is using these poems as a sandbox, to develop his ideas before incorporating some of them into his Middle-earth works.

Like the elves of Middle-earth, these elves are now firmly rooted in the past. There is no longer any reference to singing of things that may or could yet be, rather they are singing of the bliss in times long ago and their grief of things that have been lost. Even the

light on their hair seems to be in the past. In contrast, humans are like mayflies, with short lives and even shorter memories who do not know, let alone remember the things that the elves have seen. As I discussed in the Introduction, in this version of the poem, the imagery surrounding the elves in their wood becomes more and more connected with death. In the penultimate verse Tolkien writes:

Wherein their crews a while held feasting proud
In lordly ease, they now like windy *ghosts*
Are wafted by cold airs to unfriendly coasts,
And silent down the tide are borne.

...

The *funeral candles* of the *Silver Wain*
Now flare above the *fallen* year.
Winter is come. Beneath the *barren* sky
The Elves are *silent*. But they do not *die*!
Here waiting they endure the winter *fell*
And *silence*. Here I too will dwell;
Kortirion, I will meet the *winter* here.
(*LT I*: 43, lines 113-116, 120-126, emphasis added)

“Ghosts”, “funeral candles”, “fallen”, “barren”, “winter”, “fell”, “silence” are all words associated with death and dying. These elves are sounding more and more like the dead, for the dead do not die. Tolkien himself is an old man who is once again coming to terms with the death of ones he loved. His onetime great friend and colleague, C.S. Lewis, died in 1963 and Tolkien wrote to his daughter, Priscilla, soon afterwards: “So far I have felt the normal feelings of a man my age-like an old tree that is losing all its leaves one by one: this feels like an axe-blow near the roots” (*Bio*: 241). Tolkien recognises his own impending doom, and it is an indication of the changed status of the elves, from dryads to the dead, that Tolkien writes that he will meet his winter in Kortirion and dwell with the elves (see lines above). This is another example of Tolkien’s late Faërie being much darker than his early Faërie.

Though Tolkien rejects the idea that the elves were the dead in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] (*OFS*: 254-255), in this poem he appears to be returning to the idea that rose in prominence during the late Victorian to early Edwardian period. World War I caused a kind of turmoil that initially reinforced belief in fairies and spirits as demonstrated by the storm surrounding the Cottlingly fairies as described by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (2006 [1922]) and Johnson (2014). A belief in fairies has several advantages in wartime. Not only do they allow for the unexpected return of the apparently dead, a phenomenon which was

not unknown in the general chaos and confusion of the battlefield, but the concept of changelings could be used to explain apparent changes in personality associated with traumatized soldiers returning home. It also assisted in coming to terms with what became a huge societal shift in the British culture around death and dying. In the early Victorian period the focus was on what was termed a “good death”; a death in which spiritual purity and holiness of the person was paramount (Jupp, 2000: 232-235). Pain and suffering were not important and might have even been a good thing as it would reduce the torment the person would have to endure in Purgatory if they were a Catholic. As the rise of science and rationalism shed increasing doubt on Christianity, the emphasis began to be on a comfortable, peaceful death, rather than on its sanctity. But in both cases the funeral was vitally important and became a display of the deceased person’s social worth and wealth (Jupp, 2000: 242-245). But World War I brought this to a shuddering halt for several reasons. Firstly, the losses were on such a huge scale. One in eight men who enlisted were killed so that there was barely a family that was not affected in some way (Jupp, 2000: 251). It was felt that a nation dressed in “widow’s weeds” would demoralise the population. Secondly, many soldiers that were killed could not be repatriated, or in many cases even formally buried overseas, as they were lost, buried in mud, or simply blown to bits, and their body could no longer be recovered. Even if it was a civilian that died, and a body was available, many families felt uncomfortable creating the traditional display when so many deserving soldiers could have no such ceremony (Jupp, 2000: 251). Thus, much of the traditional ceremony and display around mourning and death could no longer occur.

The funerals might have changed and the belief in Christianity waned (the clergy were unable to explain God’s purpose in an increasingly horrifying war), but the belief in an afterlife and the hope for reunion beyond this world was still a fertile topic for study in Edwardian Britain (Ariés, 1977: 460). Spiritualism became a kind of secular offshoot of Christianity, what Ariés calls “a religion of survival” (Ariés, 1977: 459) in a nation that was grieving on a massive scale. The number of Spiritualist societies doubled in the six years after 1914, despite the press’ publicity about fraudulent mediums (Jupp, 2000: 251). A survey conducted among widows after the war found 12% died within a year of hearing of the death of a loved one, 14% reported seeing a ghost, and 39% had felt a dead husband’s presence at some time (De Groot, 1998: 224). Even soldiers, including the poet Robert Graves, reported seeing or perceiving ghosts (Graves, 1998: 277). A combination of factors such as the invention of the telephone with its ability to connect one to seemingly disembodied voices (Bown, 2001: 1), the photographs of the Cottingly fairies in 1917 as evidence of the actual existence of fairies (Gardener, 1951), and the older tradition

of fairies being connected with premature, often violent death (Silver, 1999: 20) made the early twentieth century ripe for the rise of spiritualism and fairies.

Given this background, it should not be surprising that the 1960's version of *Kortirion* [1962] is not the first of Tolkien's poems to feature ghosts. In Tolkien's poem *The Grey Bridge over Tavrobel*¹⁹ [1917] (Garth, 2003: 208), was written between August and September 1917 (*C&G*: 109). In the poem it is dusk and a man approaches his lover who has been waiting for him on the bridge for a long time. But her news is not good. In Tavrobel her garden does not thrive and she is left to dream of her man who is beyond the rivers. At the time of writing, Tolkien had returned to England from the Somme suffering from Trench Fever, and Garth dates the poem to the point when Tolkien met up with Edith after his discharge from hospital (Garth, 2003: 207). In the poem, the whole scene is shrouded in mist and the approaching man appears grey and ill-defined. Is this a man simply shrouded in mist, or is he a ghost, or is the grey the peculiar colour of a dead man? The woman is equally shadowed and vague. The poem evokes the same eeriness as the winter trees in *Kortirion* and the sense of otherworldliness or deathliness is reinforced in the third verse which says:

In Tavrobel things go but ill,
And my little garden withers
In Tavrobel beneath the hill,
While you're beyond the rivers
(Garth, 2003: 208, lines 9-12)

Here we see that things are not going well in Tavrobel. The woman's garden is dying, the fertility of the land seems to be lost. It is possible that this loss of fertility is due to the loss of her dead partner whose ghost is now visiting her (see Chapter 4). Or it might be that the garden is infertile because it is beneath the hill, that is not at the bottom of the hill, but inside a hill or barrow? Faërie had been associated with a variety of subterranean places including caves and ancient tombs. One such tale tells of two green coloured children found wandering and mute. When the girl was eventually taught to talk, she spoke of a strange subterranean land, where green coloured plants and creatures lived and which was not lit by the sun (Briggs, 1971: 263). The British Folklorist Lewis Spence wrote that in Jutland it was believed that some of the fallen angels who were cast out of Heaven after the rebellion of Lucifer, were sent to dwell in barrows (Spence, 1946: 167) and the Irish

¹⁹ *The Grey Bridge Over Tavrobel* was written in August/September 1917 and was first published in the *Interuniversity Magazine* in May 1927 (*C&G*: 108, 472).

believed that the Tuatha Dé Danann lived in hills or grave mounds (Swank, 2018: 6). Faërie itself was traditionally a meeting point for the living and the dead (Spense, 1946: 65). In using the image of a bridge over a river, Tolkien might be drawing on Greek mythology in which the souls of the dead cross the river Styx to the realm of Hades (Britannica, 2018; Britannica, 2020) or medieval literature as in *Pearl*, a medieval dream vision in which a grieving father dreams of his dead daughter, now grown and living in paradise. He is able to view her purity and the beauty of Paradise but is unable to reach her being separated from her by a river. He wakes before he can cross the river (Tolkien, 1975). Scholars believe it was written by the same author as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Putter, 2014, p. 96). The figures and the landscape are ambiguous. It is not clear if both are alive, or one is alive and one dead, or whether both are dead, and it is two ghosts that find each other in the mist. Tolkien is utilizing language and his knowledge of fairy lore to cloud rather than clarify what is happening in this poem. The ambiguity is enhanced by the lively meter of the poem which is at odds with its subject matter. The effect is to create a poem which is unsettling, almost discordant, giving a very different vision of Faërie than the poetry he wrote before he had experienced war first-hand. Yet, like his early visions of Faërie, this vision is in tune with the culture of the time.

As I have mentioned, Tolkien clearly states in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939], that fairies are not the dead, however, much as his own understanding of death and dying would change over his lifetime, Tolkien's decision about whether his elves should be connected to death and dying seems to fluctuate during his changing vision of Faërie. *The Grey Bridge of Tavrobel* [1917] and *Kortirion* [1962] both have clear references which may be interpreted as relating to death and dying, so do fay creatures such as the Corrigan (see Chapters 2 and 4), yet in other poems such as *Goblin Feet* [1915] and *Wood Sunshine* [1910], the fairies seem to exude a natural vitality. It is possible in the *Kortirion* [1962] and *Grey Bridge* [1917] poems, that Tolkien considers Faërie a kind of middle ground, or interface between the world of the living and the world of the dead. He might be partly drawing on the tale of *Thomas of Erccledounne* or *Thomas the Rhymer*, a tale he mentions in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] (OFS: 87). The tale tells of Thomas who is seduced by the Faërie Queen and is drawn into Faërie itself for seven years. On his way to Faërie he comes to a junction where there are three roads, one to Heaven, one to Hell, and one that leads to Faërie (Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 36). In this tale, Faërie is a place where the living and the dead can interact, Thomas actually seeing dead friends among the people populating Faërie (Scott, 1806: 181). This was one of the ideas that made Faërie so appealing during World War I.

1.4 Biblical Fairies

Tolkien takes this idea of Faërie being an intermediate place a step further in his poem *Habbanan Beneath the Stars*²⁰ [1916] (*LT I*: 91-92). It was written in June 1916 (*C&G*: 88). In this case the poem describes “men” singing under the stars in a place “where one draws nigh to the places that are not of Men. There is the air very sweet and the sky very great by reason of the broadness of the Earth” (*LT I*: 91). According to Christopher Tolkien, this place, sometimes called *Eruman*, is the place where souls are ferried to after death (*LT I*: 92) and is a kind of Purgatory where souls, not evil enough to be conducted to Hell or good enough to go straight to Valinor, are sent “to wander in the dark and wait with great patience until the Great End” (*LT I*: 92). As Christopher Tolkien states, this poem is a rare instance in which there is a clear and early connection between Faërie and Tolkien’s Catholic faith. This theme will be developed more in his late Faërie (see Chapters 3 and 5).

The idea of a connection between the Christian faith and Faërie was not uncommon in Edwardian British folklore. I have already mentioned above, the idea that fairies were fallen angels. The Bible contains several potential examples of human-born offspring that became separated from the rest of humanity. Fairies have been called the descendants of Cain (Ashliman, 2006: 137; *Beowulf*: 162), the offspring of Adam’s first wife, Lilith (Rousseau, 2005: 95; McDermott, 2008: 88), or the hidden offspring of Adam’s second wife, Eve (Edwards, 1974: 35; Briggs, 1978: 30-31; Ashliman, 2006: 138), though the scene here does not suggest demonic beings as the former two sources would produce. But the poem might imply a different type of being might be present in *Habbanan*. The final verse of the poem is:

There on a sudden did my heart perceive
That they who sang about the eve,
Who answered the bright-shining stars
With gleaming music of their strange guitars,
These were *His* wandering happy sons
Encamped upon the aëry leas
Where God’s unsullied garment runs
In glory down *His* mighty knees.
(*LT I*: 92, lines 20-28, emphasis added)

²⁰ *Habbanan beneath the Stars* was written in June 1916 and first published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* in 1983 (*C&G*: 88, 474).

A capital H in the word “His” would imply that the “His” means God which makes these wandering happy sons God’s sons. Although one can argue that all men are the sons of God, there is a particular reference to a race of people known as the sons of God in *Genesis* 6:1-6 (Fockner, 2008: 435) and in *The First Book of Enoch*, a work dating from the second century BCE (Newman, 1984). Tolkien mentions them in his *Beowulf* essay (Tolkien, 2014: 305-307). Also known as Nephilim, these beings were said to be the offspring of a union between people/creatures who were spiritually pure and people/creatures that were spiritually fallen. The Nephilim were said to be unusually tall and powerful (Fockner, 2008: 452-453). One theory says they are human descendants of Cain (impure) who have intermarried with the descendants of Seth (pure) (Parente, 1973: 21). Another theory is that they were produced from a union of fallen angels and human women producing potentially immortal offspring (Chaffey, 2011: 14). *Job* 38:7 connects the “sons of God” with the stars saying: “the “sons of God” who shouted for joy when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth are the same as “the morning stars who sang together” (Chaffey, 2011: 86). Chaffey goes on to note that angels were often personified as stars (ibid.). In this poem the fay seem to be communing even communicating with the stars through their music. In his other depiction of Purgatory, *Leaf by Niggle* (*T&L*: 93-118) written between 1938 and 1939 (*C&G*: 659), Tolkien has creatures pleading the case for Niggle’s prosecution and his defence, suggesting that Tolkien’s Purgatory is populated by creatures other than human souls. Fairies, in the form of Nephilim, particularly if they were the result of a union between human and angels, would make good advocates for both sides as they would understand the requirements of Heaven, but also what it is like to be human and to have human fallibility. If the fairies or elves were Nephilim, this would explain their moral ambiguity but superior longevity and power. Tolkien’s legendarium has several instances of lesser creatures forming unions with higher creatures: there is the union between the mortal Beren and the half-elf, half-Maiar, Lúthien (*S*: 162-187), the union between the elf Thingol and the Maiar Melian (*S*: 55-56), and the human Aragorn and the elf Arwen (*RK*: 1057-1063), thus the concept of Nephilim might have influenced Tolkien’s legendarium.

The final poem to examine when focusing on Tolkien’s depiction of fairies is Tolkien’s 1924 poem *An Evening in Tavrobel*²¹ [1916/1924] (*C&G*: 134). The poem is thought to be a revision of a pair of poems called *Two Eves in Tavrobel* which in turn became a single poem *A Dream of Coming Home* which was written in July 1916 (*C&G*:

²¹ *An Evening in Tavrobel* was first written in July 1916 and first published in *Leeds University Verse* 1914-1924 (*C&G*: 134).

366). Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain copies of these earlier works. This final version of the poem was published in the Leeds University Verse 1914-1924 on page 56. The poem describes fairies dancing in a wood under a full moon. In this poem, we have almost come full circle with a return to dancing fay in the wood as in *Wood Sunshine* [1910]. The poem contains classical fairy motifs including moonlight/starlight, hawthorn bushes (which were natural meeting places for fairies (Hatfield, 2007: 167)), and dancing. The fairies have returned to being tiny. However, unlike their predecessors, they do not fade, but continue their joyous revelling. In this case I think the appearance of the fairies reflects the poem's earlier origin. Prior to this poem, the fairies had become elves, and had grown in stature and in stateliness. Nor, as my various examples in this section show, does he abandon this idea for his elves, however I think this poem reflects where Tolkien's exploration of fairies leads him, for, ignoring stature, these musical and joyful elves are very close to the elves of Rivendell in *The Hobbit* [1937].

1.5 Conclusion

One of the premises of this thesis (as outlined in the Introduction) is that Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry is an opportunity for the author to flex his creative muscles, allowing an exploration of ideas freed from any requirements imposed by the creation of a Secondary World. I argue that in Tolkien's creation of Faërie that this occurs in three phases, an exploration of who or what the fairies are: a divergent phase where Tolkien explores Faërie via texts he engaged with in his academic career and uses Faërie as a form of protest; and a merging again when he attempts to integrate his passion for Faërie and his Catholic beliefs. This chapter has looked at the first of these phases and shows how Tolkien is exploring various folkloric ideas about fairies. These include ideas on the origins or nature of fairies, their habitat, their behaviour, and their appearance. In this chapter there is a clear progression in Tolkien's changing vision of the fairies. He moves from joyous, light, and tiny fairies, in keeping with the flower fairy tradition popular at the time he began to write, to more dangerous pucks and forgotten gods, to the stately and mournful elves of his later poems. There may be at least two reasons for this. Firstly, it appears that Tolkien is becoming more serious in his study of the origin of fairies as time progresses, moving away from light-hearted frippery to engage more with the folklore of the time. Furthermore, as Atherton notes, Tolkien notes that his liking for Faërie as a boy was "kindled into flame by his experiences in the war" (Atherton, 2012, p. 154). The influence of his experiences in World War I are most striking in the *Grey Bridge Over Tavrobel*, where the discordancy between the poem's ghostly theme and its upbeat rhythm

creates a kind of happy grief. It is also possible to see the emergence of some themes and ideas which Tolkien will go on to use in his legendarium. There are the joyous, musical elves of *The Hobbit*, the lost tribes like the Sindar, the Nephilims or union of higher and lower creatures, and the sombre, reminiscing elves of *Kortirion*. We see concepts such as the power of these supernatural creatures and their perilous ability to enthrall humans. Yet we also see their vulnerability as they fade before the rising domination by humanity.

In this series of poems, I argue that Tolkien is exploring the origin and nature of fairies and, at the end of this cycle, there are several conclusions that may be drawn about Tolkien's vision of fairies. Some are nature spirits or elementals, many have human form, though some have wings, and many, if not all, are capable of acts which might be deemed good or evil by humans. From the 1916 poem *An Evening in Tavrobel* [1916/1924], fairies "are not spirits of the dead, a branch of the human race, nor devils in fair shapes" (*OFS*: 254). They do appear to be a separate race from humankind and live in places and in ways that our paths might cross theirs, but their world and our world are apart in some way. Yet these fairies are still, for the most part, joyful, beautiful, and in some cases cute. This is quite different from their role as "minor spirits in the process of creation" (*OFS*: 254). Clearly his ideas are still in transition. In these poems we have the foundations of his thoughts on Faërie; ideas that Tolkien will now develop further as he starts to move away from an exploration of folklore to a phase where his innovative creativity comes to the fore.

Chapter 2: Tolkien's Monsters and Other Creatures

In his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] Tolkien states: “*Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons...” (*OFS*: p.32). To date in this thesis, I have only discussed fairies and elves, but not Tolkien's creatures that belong to the realm of *Faërie*. I have classified them as monsters, which tends to imply a threatening or evil thing, after all, the word monster is drawn from the Latin word *monere* meaning to warn or show (Burke, 2008: 27), yet, as will be shown below, some of Tolkien's “monsters” will prove to be kinder and more civilized than the humans they meet. Other monsters might be labelled as evil, though this often depends on one's viewpoint, but each of these creatures might be defined as a monster for each of them in some way fulfil the definition of a monster using Cohen's seven theses of monsters (outlined below). We are moving forward in time in Tolkien's vision of *Faërie* and here we will see a divergent pattern in Tolkien's *Faërie*, one branch based on the academic texts Tolkien studied and taught at Leeds and Oxford Universities from 1920-1959 (*Bio*: 265-266), and the other acting as a voice of protest against the ills of modernity. His source materials are no longer almost exclusively Victorian and Edwardian fairy lore, and we will see a greater use of Tolkien's own creativity.

If monsters are not defined as evil creatures, how do we delineate the concept of a monster? According to Sir John Mandeville, a monster is “a thing deformed against kind, both of man or beast or anything else...” (Oswald, 2010: 2). In other words, monsters are somehow “other”, that is, they are creatures apart from the norm. In monsters this otherness is commonly manifested physically. Humanoid monsters, for instance, “remind us of what it means to be human” (Oswald, 2010: 3), for both physically and physiologically they are distinct in one of three ways: they are more than human, they are less than human, or they have some other element or part that is not intrinsic to a human's body (Oswald, 2010: 6). This physical irregularity is critical to their otherness, for, as Oswald points out, monsters cannot “ungrow a tail”, whereas monstrous actions, though they might be terrible, are neither restricted to monsters, nor permanent in nature, and are therefore open to change or reformation (Oswald: 29). At a social level, Cohen (1996), in his essay “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)” argues that monsters serve several important functions and have several fundamental characteristics that define their nature. To summarise his essay, these are:

- 1 “The monster’s body is a cultural body” (Cohen, 1996: 4). Monsters are products of a specific moment in a culture, mirroring the time, feeling, and place associated with that moment and reflecting the community’s fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies.
- 2 “The monster always escapes” (ibid.). The monster never dies just once. The monster always manages to escape, only to return, though sometimes in another place or form.
3. “The monster is a harbinger of category crisis” (ibid.: 6). The monster cannot be classified into any of the culture’s systems, and, as a body which falls between these traditional roles or classifications, it is a threat to the social structure and knowledge base of the community.
4. “The monster dwells at the gates of difference. The monster is difference made flesh” (ibid.: 7); a corporeal manifestation of that which lies beyond the boundaries and therefore the control of the community. By viewing monsters as immoral, their destruction might be viewed as a common good, and the perpetrator of this act a hero.
5. “The monster polices the borders of the possible” (ibid.: 12). Monsters are hybrids, combinations of things that already exist in the community’s world, especially if they belong to marginalised or politically or socially disadvantaged groups. The monster controls the boundaries of the dominant culture in a community, helping to establish the rules and regulating the bonds between the leaders of the society.
6. “Fear of the monster is really a kind of desire” (ibid.: 16). The monster is linked to that which is forbidden and thus acts both as an object of fear but also, through its freedom to give into its cravings, as an object of desire (ibid.: 3-25).
7. “The monster stands at the threshold... of becoming “(ibid.: 20). Monsters are representatives of our community and individual ids, the dark recesses of our inner minds. They cause us to challenge the assumptions about the world and those that we have labelled “other” in that world. “They ask us why we have created them” (ibid.: 20)?

Fairies and elves might themselves be considered monsters using these criteria for they are reflections of the cultural milieu of the time they manifest in, however in this section I will focus on some of Tolkien’s other monsters, both traditional and invented, to see how he constructs and utilizes his monsters in his changing vision of Faërie. Tolkien is moving away from Victorian/Edwardian fairy sources to incorporate a much broader range of

sources from a variety of cultures and eras. He is also appears to be gaining more confidence in his own creativity, inventing more creatures of his own, as the following section shows.

2.1 Glip and Mewlips

*Glip*²² [1928] (*H*: 119), circa 1928 (*C&G*: 153), is one of the poems in Tolkien's Bimble Bay series. *Songs and Tales of Bimble Bay* are a set of six poems (only four of which have been published), written about an English sea-side town popular with tourists. Tolkien finds within its surrounds all the evils of modernity including greed, pollution, industrialisation, rampant consumerism, and a total disregard and lack of appreciation of Nature and their surroundings; a topic I will discuss more fully in Chapter 5. The poem describes a small, slimy creature that dwells alone in the caves under the cliffs of Bimble Bay. His appearance is Gollum-like:

Glip is his name, as blind as a mole
In his two round eyes
While daylight lasts; but when night falls
With a pale gleam they shine
Like green jelly, and out he crawls
All long and wet with slime
(*H*: 119, lines 11-16)

compared with:

Deep down here by the dark water lived an old Gollum, a small slimy creature. ...
He was Gollum- as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face. (*H*: 118-119)

This description is also close to the slimy, amphibian-like appearance of the Mewlips. The Mewlips are described in two poems by Tolkien: *The Mewlips*²³ [1962], was based on an earlier poem, *Knocking at the Door*, written in 1927 (*ATB*: 210, 212). These creatures might look similar to Glip, but live-in colonies in cellars, lit only by a single candle. Unlike Glip, they are hunters, who actively seek and kill humans as their prey as suggested by the lines "And when they've finished, in a sack/ *Your* bones they take to keep [my emphasis]

²² *Glip* was written in 1928 and first published in *The Annotated Hobbit Second Edition* in 2002 (*C&G*: 153, 454).

²³ *Mewlips* was a poem based on and earlier poem *Knocking at the Door: Lines Induced by Sensations When Waiting for an Answer at the Door of an Exalted Academic Person* thought to be written in 1927 and published by "Oxymore" in *Oxford Magazine*, 18 February 1937. The poem itself was first published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (*C&G*: 782-783).

(*ATB*: 86, lines 27-28). Although Tolkien did not officially pair these two poems, I have always been struck by the remarkable similarities between these two creatures, both in their physical appearance, their desire for human flesh, and their choice of habitat. Comparison of the two creatures, I argue, reinforces the environmental message contained in the Bimble Bay series, that modernity has a distorting effect not only on the natural environment (see Chapter 5 also) but on the supernatural themselves.

The Mewlips live in a much more remote area than Glip, widely separated from the industrialisation and pollution of the human world. The whole environment seems suited to their nature; it is cloudy, boggy, with weather and tidal conditions which are optimal for their well-being:

Over the Medlock Mountains a long and weary way,
In a mouldy valley where the trees are grey,
By a dark pool's borders without wind or tide,
(*ATB*: 86, lines 13-16)

This seems vastly superior to Glip's:

Under the cliffs of Bimble Bay
Is a little cave of stone
With wet walls of shining grey

...

He lives far underneath,
Under the floor, down a long hole
Where the sea gurgles and sighs.

(*H*: 119, lines 1-3, 8-10)

Both environments are suitable for amphibious creatures but Glip's appears more precarious. Unlike the unchanging sunless and moonless environment of the Mewlip's realm which allows them freedom of movement, Glip is caught between the sea and the sun, clinging rather insecurely to life in a small habitat between two violent natural forces. His poverty and uncertainty are reinforced when compared to the wealth and aggression of the Mewlips.

The cellars where the Mewlips sit
Are deep and dank and cold
With single sickly candle lit;
And there they count their *gold*.

...

Their feet upon the floor

Go softly with a squish-flap-flip,
As they *sidle* to the door.

They peep out *slyly*; through a crack
Their feeling fingers *creep*,
And when they've finished, in a sack
Your bones they take to keep.

(ATB: 86, lines 17-20, 22-28, emphasis added)

compared to:

And on the floor a bone,
A white bone that is gnawed quite clean
With sharp white teeth.

...

He *slinks* through weeds at highwater mark

...

And Glip listens, and quietly *slips*
And lies in shadows by.
It is there that Glip *steals* his bones.
He is a slimy little thing
Sneaking and crawling under fishy stones,
And *slinking* home to sing.

(H: 119, lines 4-6, 16, 22-27, emphasis added)

To “sidle” suggests a confidence even a cockiness in one’s abilities whilst being “sly” and “creeping” are the actions of a predator stalking their prey with cunning precision. Glip’s movements are much more furtive and thief-like. He “slinks”, “slips” sneaks, and crawls his way to steal a meal. This is no dignified hunter, this is a scavenger, a carrion eater, living off the leavings of others. The contrasts in all these elements are striking. This is reinforced by the fact that in Glip’s cave there is a single bone and no gold, whilst the Mewlips have sacks of bones and piles of gold. They can afford candles, so they have sufficient light to see. The Mewlips show a colony of beings thriving in an environment to which they are perfectly adapted, whereas Glip is a being on the verge of extinction.

Glip is a representative of what happens when the modern Primary World meets Faërie. Glip is a monster that defies his classification as a monster for he no longer possesses the viciousness and will to dominate seen amongst his country cousins, the Mewlips. Because of this Faërie itself is distorted and diminished. Yet, in some ways, this is what makes him monstrous. Cohen says that monsters are specific to a certain culture and time, expressing particular fears in a society, and reflect things that are already in that society, particularly among marginalized groups (Cohen, 1996: 4, 12-16). As I shall discuss in Chapter 5, *Glip* [1928] was written at a time where there was a challenge to the concept that progress was a positive thing, and an increase in the concerns surrounding the role of the machine as a force for good in society. This was particularly prevalent among the relatively marginalized group of returned World War I veterans, whose witnessing of the wholesale destructiveness of machines on Nature, historical monuments, and on human beings themselves, had left an indelible impression, bringing into question the unrestrained industrialisation of society. Tolkien, a World War I veteran and tree lover, uses Faërie to give voice to his own concerns as seen in this poem and others in the Bimble Bay series. The Mewlips, on the other hand, are representations of the threat of “otherness” and the desire to be individualistic in our approach to the world. In other words, they are manifestations of Cohen’s fourth and sixth theses. On the one hand, carnivorous, and threatening, they are expressions of the untamed forces that exist in nature. Yet at the same time, there is something tempting, even desirable to be totally self-centred in one’s actions, to keep all the gold for oneself or one’s kindred, to eat whatever one desires, no matter the cost and to be freed from the social constraints which limit such behaviours. The Mewlips represent both the cruelty and the freedom of Nature.

This use of Faërie as a form of protest against the modern world is the first branch of the divergent forms of Faërie which are found in the second phase of Tolkien’s development of Faërie. As seen here, it is a phase where Tolkien is becoming more creative; in this case, generating creatures out of his own imagination. The narrative lines in these poems are getting stronger. The poems are no longer a mere tableau of beautiful images; these poems are nastier, the creatures more rounded and complete giving the reader a much better sense of their lifestyle and personalities. Tolkien’s Faërie is beginning to represent the world as it is, rather than the world as society wishes to characterize it. Tolkien’s Faërie has become more real.

2.2 Dragons

Another creature which has two very different forms in his non-Middle-earth poetry is Tolkien's dragons. Tolkien considered dragons the ultimate monster and each of these creations is magnificent in its own way. In his 1937 lecture given to children at the University of Oxford Museum, Tolkien gives a clear description of a dragon:

I think the fabulous dragon, the old worm or great drake was of this sort. A serpent creature but with four legs and claws; his neck varied in length but had a hideous head with long jaws and teeth or snake tongue. He was usually heavily armoured especially on his head and back and flanks. Nonetheless he was pretty bendable (up and down or sideways) could even tie himself in knots on occasion, and had a long and powerful tail – which in Norse had a special name *sponxðr* which was only shared by fishes and serpents.... The swish of the dragon's tail was dangerous. Some had wings – the legendary kind of wings that go together with front legs (instead of being front legs gone queer). (*H facs.*: 47)

A true adult dragon- when *fully* grown, which took a long time.... Measuring in ells or fathoms I should say anything from 6 ells to 4 fathoms long to the complete circle of the Atlantic Ocean or longer. But a respectable dragon should be 20 ft or more. (*H facs.*: 47-48)

He illustrated his lecture with images of dinosaurs obtained from the Natural History Museum, meaning these dragons, along with his many literary dragons, were large reptilian creatures frequently possessing wings. Though their appearance is bestial, Tolkien's dragons possess many human traits, being intelligent with an awareness beyond the here and now, a trait that animals do not possess according to David Williams in his book *Deformed Discourse* (1996: 206). Many have the ability to speak, again suggesting that they are more than animals. Tolkien wrote two poems about dragons; the first, *The Hoard*²⁴ [1962], shows a much more typical bestial dragon who guards a cursed treasure which corrupts every creature it encounters. The second, *The Dragon's Visit*²⁵ [1928], forms part of the Bimble Bay series, and presents a rather humorous, whimsical tale of a dragon who visits the modern world.

Tolkien's poem *The Hoard* follows the changing ownership of a treasure trove from its creation by the elves to its eventual interment in the ruins of a castle. The treasure is stolen by a dwarf, who is, in turn, slain by a marauding dragon. The dragon growing aged and sleepy on its hoard is killed by a young warrior. The young warrior becomes a

²⁴ *The Hoard* was derived from an earlier poem *Iúmonna Gold Galdre Bewunden* probably written around 1922 which was first published in *The Gryphon* in January 1923.) *The Hoard* itself was first published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962. (C&G: 508-509).

²⁵ *The Dragon's Visit* was first published in *Oxford Magazine* 4 February 1937. A revised and expanded version was published in *Winters Tales for Children (1)* in 1965 and both versions were republished in *The Annotated Hobbit revised and expanded edition* in 2002. (C&G:305)

king but is so obsessed by the gold that he ignores his obligations and commitments till his retainers leave him and his people wither. Now alone and decrepit, he is unable to defend himself when an invading army attacks his hall and sets fire to it. The treasure is lost and forgotten and lies buried under the ruins of the castle awaiting the return of the elves. The poem exists in three forms. The original poem titled *Iumonna Gold Galdre Bewunden* was written in 1922 (C&G 508-509). The title means “the gold of men of former time wound round with spell” which is line 3052 of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* (Shippey, 2007: 342). This version was published in a magazine called *The Gryphon*. The poem was revised in 1937 and published in *The Oxford Magazine* of that year. A final revision of the poem was made in the 1960’s prior to it being republished in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*(ATB: 240).

At the heart of the poem is the concept of dragon sickness. Dragon sickness is a desire for gold or treasure to the exclusion of all other things, including those things that would be needed to maintain life. For example, here is what the poem says about the fate of the dragon from when he slays the dwarven possessor of the treasure to just before he himself is slain:

... the earth quaked,
when the young dragon his thirst slaked,
and the steam smoked at his [the dwarf’s] dark door,
The flames hissed on the dank floor,

...

There was an old dragon under grey stone;
his red eyes blinked as he lay alone.
His fire was dead and his youth spent,
he was knobbed and wrinkled, and his limbs bent
in the long years to his gold chained;
in his heart’s furnace the fire waned.

...

Of thieves he thought on his hard bed,
and dreamed that on their flesh he fed,
their bones crushed, and their blood drank:
his ears drooped and his breath sank.

(ATB: 99-101, lines 27-36, 43-46)

Before contact with the treasure, the dragon is young, fiery, and full of life and ambition. But after procuring the treasure, the dragon is living a half-life; only dreaming of bold exploits as his treasure moulders in his mound. His enormous greed is almost matched by his pride. In this state the procurement and the possession of the gold becomes the central focus of the afflicted being, to the detriment of everything else. Yet, at the same time there is a curious emptiness or lack in the sufferer's relationship with the gold. There is no joy in its possession, there is no appreciation of its beauty. The subject becomes increasingly paranoid about losing the gold so no longer allows others to view it. Every being who encounters the gold becomes frail, withered, and isolated, to become an easy target for the next creature who desires to possess the gold. In this poem, as in *The Hobbit*, this excessive pride and greed becomes so dominant in the individual's life that, rather than the dragon being raised up to that of a human by its ability to think beyond the here and now, the individual is drawn down into a bestial state where they are unable to think beyond their possession of the treasure. Thus, in this case, the dragon fulfils Cohen's first and second theses (Cohen, 1996: 4-6). Firstly, he is the embodiment of greed and consumerism, forces that are continually distorting the modern age. And secondly the monster does not die: that is, the horror of the dragon-sickness is that it is reincarnated again and again as the all-consuming desire for the treasure takes hold of each of its successive possessors.

Other scholars have viewed the concept of dragon sickness in different ways. Joseph Pearce equates it as a modern phenomenon, a manifestation of the modern world's bourgeois need to consume (Pearce, 2012). However, I will argue the opposite stance in Chapter 5, that consumerism is the antithesis of dragon sickness, though they are both mutually destructive. Arvidsson focusses his discussion on greed in Tolkien's work through the lens of prospecting and exploitation; specifically, he discusses the radical opposition between the concept of love and the notions of ownership and possession (Arvidsson, 2010). This theme is extended to a lack of love for the earth in Kristine Larsen's paper on mining in Tolkien's legendarium in which the destructive elements of not only mining the ore but the resources needed to smelt in result in a kind of symbolic rape of Nature (Larsen, 2021). Although Brackmann argues that Tolkien's dwarves with their lust for precious metals might be perceived as antisemitic (Brackmann, 2010), Larsen argues that it is Saruman with his "mind of metal" that is more purely greedy than the loving strokes of a dwarven pick (Larsen, 2021). Larsen's view may be closer to the truth, for, if Tolkien's writing is taken into account, it is not just dwarves who are susceptible to

the lure of gems and the power they bring, but elves are equally susceptible with the associated destruction of nature and civilization.

The Hoard's dragon would also be recognisable to Norse storytellers as kin to the dragon found in the tale of *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] (see Chapter 4). This greedy, hate-filled, hoard-keeping dragon is, at least according to Tolkien's Christmas dragon lecture, an archetypal dragon (*H facs.*). In the lecture, he quotes the Anglo-Saxon poem *Maxims II* (Anon., 2010) noting that “*draca sceal on hlæwe ...*” meaning the right place to look for a dragon is a burial mound” where there are “jewels and gold and treasure, wrought long before by the skill of vanished men. Of such things the dragon made his bed” (*H facs.*: 49). “They loved to possess beautiful things” ... “They hoarded them” and “Greed and hatred inspired them.” (ibid.) It appears that greed is an age old problem. From the point of view of Faërie, this is an example of Tolkien's academic-inspired Faërie as this dragon has its origins in the medieval literature that Tolkien taught. Here, he is starting to draw on older traditions than the Victorian and Edwardian research on Faërie. Thus, though this dragon is following a very traditional form, it actually represents a broadening of Tolkien's concept of Faërie.

The dragon in *The Dragon's Visit* [1928] could not be more different than that of *The Hoard* [1962]. In many ways, he is a very undragonish dragon. *The Dragon's Visit* [1928] is the second of the Bimble Bay poems and was written in 1928, published in *The Oxford Magazine* in February 1937 and revised for publication in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* [1962] in the last months of 1961 (*C&G*: 153; *H*: 309-312). It tells of a lonely dragon who decides to visit Mr Higgins' cherry orchard to entertain its owner by his singing. But, unfortunately for the dragon, Mr Higgins objects strongly to the presence of the dragon in his orchard, and, after failing to scare him away with his garden hose, calls the local fire brigade to give him a good dousing. The dragon is enraged by the attentions of the fire brigade which he compares to

the bad old days
when warriors unfeeling
Used to hunt dragons in their dens,
their bright gold stealing.
(*H*: 310, lines 29-32)

There are two endings to the poem. In the first version, after several warnings, the enraged dragon lays waste to Bimble Town, killing and eating several of its people, including Mr Higgins. The poem concludes with the dragon's rather sad observation that:

They [the townspeople] have not got the wit to admire
a dragon's song or colour,
Nor heart to kill him brave and quick
the world is getting duller!
(*H*: 111, lines 73-76)

In the 1961 version, the dragon lays waste to the town, but as he starts to fly away, he is stabbed in the chest by a little old lady, Miss Biggins, who at least has the sensitivity to apologise to the dragon saying:

"I regret this very much," she said
"You are a splendid creature,
And your voice is quite remarkable
for one who had no teacher;
But wanton damage I will not have
I really had to end it."

To which the dying dragon sighs:

"At least she called me splendid."
(*H*: 312, lines 9-16)

According to Cohen, this dragon is a monster not just because his physical form is different from those around him. This dragon is monstrous because he directly challenges the structure of society in several ways. Firstly, by breaking the social rules by entering a property without consent of the owner, but more importantly, he defies classification, for, as a kind and friendly monster/creature, he falls between the acceptable and non-acceptable categories in human society (Cohen theses five and three) (Cohen, 1996: 16-20, 6-7). Secondly, he crosses the boundaries of society by trying to form a relationship between Faërie creatures and humans, a taboo that the people of Bimble Bay seem to find particularly threatening (see also *The Bumpus* [1928] in this chapter's section on trolls). Finally, by being a representative of the perceived threat of chaos, destructiveness, and the rule of the Natural world against the ordered structure and progress of the "civilized world", the dragon represents dangerous forces that lie outside the control of the community. An analysis of the two versions of the poem at once shows that Miss Biggin's protestations against wanton damage and disorder are quite ironic, for in the 1928 version where the dragon wins, he buries the remains of the townsfolk "On a cliff above a *long white shore*" (*H*: 310 line 63, emphasis added), whilst in the 1961 version, when the humans are left in charge, Bimble Bay becomes a polluted cesspit, full of petrol fumes, roaring engines, and discarded trash (see also my discussion of *Progress in Bimble Town* [1928/1931], Chapter 5). It is humans, not dragons, that are the creators of chaos. So, not

only does the dragon represent a dangerous level of hedonism, daring to do an activity which threatens to give him and those around him pleasure (Cohen's thesis 6), he also threatens the dominant culture in the community by demonstrating that it is humans rather than Faërie creatures who are the uncivilized ones (Cohen's thesis 5) (Cohen, 1996: 16-20).

Like Tolkien's poem *Errantry* [before 1933], Tolkien is deliberately flouting fairy-lore in this poem. The dragon is contacting humans not to steal their gold or to eat them, but instead to entertain them. He only consumes the townsfolk after they had attacked him on several occasions. I particularly love the fact that the dragon chooses a cherry orchard in which to sing. Cherry orchards, particularly in France, were sacred to the dragon-slaying hero, St George, and his statue is carried through the orchards at blossom time to try and ensure a good crop (Varner, 2006: 124-125). Tolkien might be satirising the saint further by naming the captain of the fire brigade "Captain George". In his 1937 lecture on dragons, Tolkien describes the typical dragon slayers such as Sigurd and Beowulf (*H facs.*: 51-55). The archetypal story here is one of a super-human hero who faces the terrible beast and slays him with a sword, often at the cost of his own life, and is rewarded by a bountiful, but cursed, treasure. These heroes are strong in body, brave in spirit, and yet gentle and courteous to ordinary mortals who cross their paths. An alternative dragon slayer in medieval times was the dragon-slaying saints such as St. Michael or St. Martha (Gould, 2002: 198). These holy dragon-slayers would subdue the beast using a girdle or handkerchief and their extreme holiness to make the dragon as docile as a lamb. But Tolkien, in the 1961 version of the poem, uses neither of these. The dragon is slain by the most unlikely of dragon-slayers, an elderly spinster, Miss Biggins, whilst she dispenses appropriate regret and musical criticism. As in *Glip* [1928], it appears that in the modern world the fairy traditions are confused and distorted, and nothing is as it should be. In this poem, human "civilization" has become a force for chaos and destruction, whilst the forces of Nature and Faërie create order and connection. Possibly the most tragic result of this is the humans' loss of awe and wonder for they do not appreciate the incredible sight of a singing dragon in a cherry tree. It appears modernity damages the human soul as much as it damages Nature.

2.3 Trolls

The Norse word 'troll' is used to denote many things, including "giants, troublesome people, [and] even troublesome animals..." (Lindow, 2014: 12). According

to Scandinavian tradition, trolls were grotesque earth spirits who dwelt underground because they exploded or turn to stone on exposure to sunlight (Ashliman, 2006: 43-45). In German tradition, they could also be forest spirits (Ashliman, 2006: 45). In his non-Middle-earth poems, Tolkien does not give a clear description of a troll. One early version of *The Stone Troll* mentions that: “That race/ Hath a stonier seat than its stony face;” (ATB: 195, lines 29-30), but otherwise their appearance is left to the reader’s imagination. Trolls are variable in appearance but general agreement points to large ugly creatures. For example, James says trolls are “ten times as large as normal men” with a face as huge and round as the moon, eyes like tin plates, a nose like an enormous chopping knife, a mouth like a wash bucket, and hair and a beard like straw (James, 2014: 63). Lindow notes that some descriptions of their form closely mimicked the appearance of the body after death (Lindow, 2014: 27). Despite being large and violent, their one redeeming feature is that they lack the intelligence which frequently caused their raids on humans to fail, hence tales about trolls often have a humorous bent (Ashliman, 2006: 43-44). In a letter to Mr Hastings in 1954, Tolkien discusses trolls, specifically the trolls of *The Hobbit*, although some of what he says is applicable here:

I am not sure about Trolls. I think they are mere ‘counterfeits’, and hence ... they return to mere stone images when not in the dark. But there are other sorts of trolls besides these rather ridiculous, if brutal, Stone-trolls, for which other origins are suggested. ... when you make Trolls *speak* you are giving them a power, which in our world (probably) connotes the possession of a soul. But I do not agree (if you admit that fairy-story element) that my trolls show any sign of ‘good’ strictly and unsentimentally viewed. ... Pity must restrain one from doing something that is immediately desirable and seemingly advantageous. There is no more pity here than in a beast of prey yawning or lazily patting a creature it could eat, but does not want to, since it is not hungry. Or indeed that there is in many of men’s actions, whose real roots are in satiety, sloth, or a purely non-moral natural softness, though they may dignify it by ‘pity’s’ name. (*Letters*: 191)

Tolkien says several things about trolls here. Trolls are animated stone occurring in multiple forms or types. Brutal in nature, they might be outside the direct control of God, but the power of speech suggests they have a soul. They are natural predators, who, much like the cat, are not above playing with their prey before they consume it, particularly if they are not hungry. This should not be construed however, as a desire to show mercy towards their victims or any reluctance to kill and consume their quarry. (There is also the suggestion here that humans are themselves wicked creatures, a concept that I will explore more in Chapter 5). Tolkien’s depiction of trolls in his writing echoes this diversity. It includes such disparate creatures as the lonely baker from *The Bumpus* [1928], the hard-

hided stone troll from *The Stone Troll* [1926], the Cockney carnivores in *The Hobbit* [1937], and the increasingly agile and cunning trolls of *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] (Burns, 2014: 188). Yet most of these appear at the higher end of troll evolution, all but the cave troll in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] possessing both the production and understanding of language. Tolkien in Appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] notes that: “In their beginning ...[trolls] were creatures of dull and lumpish nature and had not more language than beasts” (RK [1955], Appendix F: 1132). In his legendarium he has Sauron upgrading the trolls into creatures who could not only talk but became “a race, strong, agile, fierce and cunning, but harder than stone” (RK [1955], Appendix F: 1132). This late description of trolls suggests much darker and nastier creatures than found in his non-Middle-earth poetry, again showing the shift to a darker, more perilous Faërie in his later years. Like the dragons, Tolkien’s non-Middle-earth poetry contains two poems about trolls; the first, *The Stone Troll* [1926], follows a more traditional concept of trolls, whilst the second *The Bumpus* [1928], is the third poem in the Bimble Bay series, and follows this collections rather comical and unconventional depiction of Faërie creatures.

Tolkien’s poem *The Stone Troll* [1926] (ATB: 75-77) tells of a confrontation between Tom and a troll who has stolen a leg bone from Tom’s uncle’s grave. After a debate on the morality of theft (for both the troll and Tom’s uncle are thieves), Tom settles the argument by kicking the troll in the rear. Unfortunately for Tom he has forgotten that trolls are formed from stone, and he manages to do more damage to himself than the troll – at least this is so in the early versions of the poem. The poem exists in several forms with variations in the names of the human protagonist and his uncle. For simplicity, I shall use the names in Tolkien’s 1962 version of the poem: Tom for the human male and Tim for his uncle. The earliest draft of the poem- entitled Bottom and Boot or in its Latin title *Përo and Podex*; was written in 1926 (C&G: 143), when Tolkien had left Leeds University to start his tenure as the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University (Bio: 111-113). It was rewritten under the English title *The Root of the Boot* and published in *Songs of the Philologists* in 1936 (C&G: 193) and reprinted in both *The Annotated Hobbit* (H[1937]: 74-75), and a version that Tolkien corrected and revised in *The Return of the Shadow* (Shadow: 142-144). A version called *The Troll Song* was sung by Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* Book 1, Chapter 12 (FR [1954]: 206-208, C&G: 246). A variant of *The Troll Song* [1939-1942] was published in *The Treason of Isengard* [1989] (59-61) which removes the Christian elements of “churchyard” and “wearing black on Sundays”. In this version and the final version published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* (1962) (C&G: 761), the Troll is less

tolerant and tries to grab Tom and eat him, however, Tom is too quick and slips behind the troll and tries to kick his bottom. In the 1939 version, the Troll falls and hits his head, turning to stone as the daylight strikes him, but in all other versions, Tom's attack is unsuccessful, the Troll's seat remains unharmed, whilst Tom's foot is permanently maimed (*Treason* [1989]: 59-61).

Trolls lived in the liminal spaces between civilization and wilderness, at once isolated from the community of the village, yet not so distant as to make their presence have negligible impact. This makes them fulfil Cohen's third and fourth rule of monsters, that they form a threat to the social structure of the community as they represent what lies beyond the boundaries of the village and thus are beyond the control of the community (Cohen, 1996: 6-12). In the case of the Stone Troll, he lives in a cave, apart from the village, but close enough to be able to sneak down and steal a bone from its graveyard. Therefore, he poses a significant threat to the village, as he is strong, individualistic, and a cannibal, all of which threaten the stability and unity of the village's social structure. Nor can he be easily brought under the control of the community by the creation of a monster-destroying hero. Unlike dragons, trolls were rarely depicted as being attacked by human heroes for their own glory and the protection of the community unless they possess some supernatural means of overcoming the troll's power (James, 2014: 109). Even Tolkien's depiction of a "hero" kicking the seat of the troll is an unusual motif. It is possible that the difficulty of penetrating the troll's stony hide is the reason for this, as Tolkien's protagonist learns to his cost. In the 1939 version, in which he does manage to kill the troll, it is by pure dumb luck rather than any skill or cunning by the hero. After Tom's encounter with the Troll, "Tom's leg is game, since home he came, / and his bootless foot is lasting lame;" (*ATB*: 77, lines 50-51). Tom has been changed from a fully functioning member of society, to one who is crippled and unlikely to be as productive as he was before the encounter. Thus, the Troll's mere presence is harmful, though he has not deliberately harmed anyone.

Yet despite his carnivorous nature, and his home being invaded by a stranger who first insults him, then assaults him, the Troll is surprisingly tolerant. He might well have been hungry, only having a dry bone to gnaw for some time, and fresh meat has just invaded his home, yet in the early versions of the poem he does not try to catch Tom. Rather he participates in a semi-serious, semi-light-hearted banter about the ownership of Tom's uncle's shin bone and the probable location of his uncle's soul. In the last versions, the Troll admits that:

‘For a couple o’ pins,’ says Troll, and grins,
 ‘I’ll eat thee too, and gnaw thy shins.
 A bit o’ fresh meat will go down sweet!
 I’ll try my teeth on thee now.
 Hee now! See now!
 I’m tired o’ gnawing old bones and skins;
 I’ve a mind to dine on thee now.’
 (ATB: 76, lines 29-35)

It is only in these later versions that the troll becomes a serious threat to the living rather than a scavenger of the dead. Despite the size and viciousness of the Troll, the Troll is a tolerant, affable cannibal, who, in all but the 1939 version, does more damage to the hero passively than the hero does to him. This is hardly standard fairy-tale fare and along with its verse/chorus type structure and sing-song rhythm, gives the poem a comic feel.

Although the Troll is closer to traditional trolls, his leniency towards Tom is well outside the norm, showing that Tolkien is again beginning to move away from strictly traditional fairy motifs in his depiction of fairy creatures though this poem is neither protest nor academic in nature. This makes the poem lean towards the protest branch of Tolkien’s Faërie as it highlights the affability of Faërie creatures compared to humanity, though it is possible that Tolkien is being subversive in his depiction of Faërie creatures to parody standard fairy-stories. It is another example of how these poems are moving away from his more traditional early fairy-poems into themes that are more creative and experimental.

*The Bumpus*²⁶ written in 1928 as part of the Bimble Bay series, was retitled and republished as *Perry-the-Winkle* in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (ATB: 78-84). It tells the story of a lonely troll, who visits Bimble Bay to fulfil his desire to make a friend. His reception at the town is less than hospitable, with humans and animals screaming and fleeing or trying to attack him despite his courteous behaviour. At last, a small child, William Winkle, sees beyond the troll’s frightful appearance and befriends him. William’s reward is many a sumptuous tea, and being taught the art of baking, for, as it turns out, the Bumpus is a very skilful pastry chef. The townspeople, on discovering that they are missing out, immediately seek out the troll and demand he cooks for them. Unfortunately for them, William Winkle’s thirst and appetite rivals Thor, and all the food and drink are gone. Nor are they ever invited to join William and the troll after this, for the troll has a friend in William and that is all he needs.

²⁶ *The Bumpus* was written in 1928 and first published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book*, the expanded edition in 2014 (C&G: 153, 981).

In *Perry-the-Winkle*²⁷ [1962], William is changed from a young boy to a hobbit named *Perry-the Winkle* [1962], and the Bumpus changes from a lizard-like creature to a troll (ATB: 206-207). Apart from the inclusion of some names from Middle-earth, the story itself is essentially unchanged. There is a third version of the poem titled *William and the Bumpus* in which Tolkien includes a few lines about the Bumpus teaching William to bake, but I have not seen a copy of this version as it has not been published nor is it in any of the manuscripts I have seen (ATB: 206-207).

This is another of Tolkien's protest poems, but I shall discuss the behaviour of the people of Bimble Bay further in Chapter 5, the chapter on evil. Here I will focus on the troll itself and how Tolkien utilizes this Faërie motif. Suffice it to say, that the townsfolk might be forgiven for their fear of trolls for trolls may be considered the personification of destructiveness (Eldevik, 2005: 90). As in his other Bimble Bay poems, Tolkien is deliberately subverting the tradition surrounding trolls in this verse. In Northern mythologies, trolls were occasionally helpful to humans who strayed into their territory and though intimacy might occur between a human and a troll, these were definitely not creatures who would ever be admitted to human society (Eldevik, 2005: 90). As this intimacy suggests, they were more humanoid than many monsters, but they were considered so depraved, that they were even rejected by the church as they were thought to consume not only the body of their victims but in some cases their soul as well (Lindow, 2014: 43-45). For trolls, as descendants of Cain (Ashliman, 2006: 137, *Beowulf*: 161-162), were said to be twice cursed; once by the fall of Adam and Eve, and once by the sin of Cain murdering his brother, Abel. Because of this, like the fairies, they were said to flee from church bells (James, 2014: 72). So a benign, courteous troll, who loves to bake and really only wants to befriend humans or hobbits, flies in the face of fairy tradition. The one thing in the tale that is consistent with fairy lore, is the acquisition of a skill by the human/hobbit after contact with a fairy creature (Briggs, 1967: 120), though, admittedly, this is not normally from a troll. Baking itself is more commonly associated with fairies (Rhys, 1901: 197), and was one of the less common skills to acquire. More commonly, smithing, healing, or some more moral gift was given: a smith from Crossbrig returned after a year with the fairies as a skilled smith (Briggs, 1959: 215-216) and "Thomas of Ercledoune/Ercildoun", was given an apple by the fairy queen at the end of his visit to Faërie, this apple gave him a "tongue that can never lie" (Child, 2020, lines 37C 17-18). Thus, Tolkien is following and not following tradition with trolls. The humour in this tale,

²⁷ *Perry the Winkle* is the 1962 version of the poem *The Bumpus* and was published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (C&G: 981).

and the troll's disruptive influence is traditional, their tolerance, desire for friendship, and baking skill is not. This is a sign of Tolkien's increasing experimentation and creativity around his Faërie at this time.

2.4 Moon Men

Tolkien's works are full of allusions to the moon and the night sky. Catherine McIlwaine notes that Tolkien had an amateur interest in astronomy, basing the phases of the moon in the chapter "The Breaking of the Fellowship" in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] on the actual phases of the moon in 1941-1942 (2018: 352). This makes me wonder if his interest in the man in the moon might have been kindled by the Man in the Moon manuscript; one of the treasures of the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford is the manuscript colloquially called 'The Man in the Moon'. It is one of the oldest books in the Museum's collection and documents the astrological calendar of 1476 (Regiomontanus, 1476, Oxford History of Science Museum MS Evans: 43) and might have been one of the reasons this character seems to be popular around Oxford, as the following section will show. The first of Tolkien's poems, *The Man in the Moon Came Down too soon*, was written on the 10-11th March 1915, but was not published until 1923 in *A Northern Venture: Verses by Members of the Leeds University English School Association* (ATB: 186). Originally the poem had the subtitle "An East-Anglian Fantasy" but subsequently this was dropped and a foretitle, *A Faërie* was added along with an Anglo-Saxon title *Se Mōncyning* (The Moonking) (ATB: 186).

Tolkien's poem tells the tale of the man in the moon who, having grown bored and lonely in the pristine whiteness of his lunar paradise, decides to descend to earth to enjoy friendship, laughter, and good food and drink. Unfortunately, things do not go well from the beginning. Slipping on the stairs during his descent, the man in the moon lands in the sea rather than on dry land, and, after unceremoniously being hauled out of the sea by fishermen, he comes to the town of Norwich where he finds everyone asleep. There are no friendly faces, no hot food, and snores rather than song and laughter. Eventually he manages to rouse a cook who extorts great sums of money and jewels out of him for a broken pot of cold, two-day old porridge. This makes it one of the early protest poems, as once again the Faërie creature is behaving better than the humans.

Scull and Hammond discuss how Tolkien based his poem on a well-known English Nursery rhyme:

The man in the moon,
Came down too soon,
And asked the way to Norwich;
He went by the south,
And burnt his mouth
With supping cold plum porridge.
(ATB: 185)

Tolkien's poem was republished in *The Book of Lost Tales I*, in which the city of Norwich and other Norfolk localities are mentioned (LT I: 204-206). As Thomas Honegger notes, Tolkien might also have been inspired by another poem penned by an anonymous student at Worcester College Oxford in 1839-1840 (ATB: 187-188):

The man in the moon! Why he came down
From his peaceful realm on high;
Where sorrowful moan is all unknown,
And nothing is born to die?
The man in the moon was tired, it seems,
Of living so long in the land of dreams;
'Twas a beautiful sphere, but nevertheless
Its lunar life was passionless;

...

In short, as we world-people say
The man in the moon was ennuyé

(Harley, 1885)

This poem shares Tolkien's vision of a man in the moon bored of his beautiful lunar paradise, descending to earth to search for adventure.

He was lonely too with nothing to do
but stare at the world of gold
And he heark to the hum that would distantly come
as gaily round it rolled
(ATB: 70, lines 21-24)

The Man in the Moon was also the subject for the Newdigate Prize, a poetry prize for students at Oxford University, in 1937. It was won by Margaret Stanley-Wrench whose own Man in the Moon is condemned to be alone, watching from afar the beauty of the world.

The theme of a bored and lonely man in the moon might have its source in one of the traditional tales about the man in the moon. It is an adaptation of an Old Testament tale (Numbers 15.32-36) where a man was stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath by gathering sticks (Carpenter and Prichard, 1984: 336; Cashford, 2003: 176). In a later version of this tale, the man was not stoned to death, but was sent to the moon with his sticks, to stand there forever bearing his burden. Several other versions of the tale exist, including the man strewing brambles over the path to the church on the Sabbath, whilst others have men stealing wood, cabbages, willow-boughs, or sheep. There is even a woman in the moon who sinned by churning butter on the Sabbath (Slaughter, 1925: 305). A final version of this thieving man in the moon was recorded in the manuscript London, British Library, Harley 2253 (dated in the first half of the 14th century) now called the *Man in the Moon*. The manuscript contains a short piece of poetry in which a villager calls to the man in the moon asking him why he does not come down. He concludes that the man has been caught stealing thorns to mend his hedge and is now so stiff from carrying the thorns home that he cannot move. (An old image of the Moon's markings is of a man with a lamp, a dog, and a thornbush (Shippey, 2003: 37-38)) The villager cries to the man in the moon: "Never mind if the Hayward has caught you pinching thorns, we'll deal with that. We'll ask him home." (Shippey, 2003: 37-38). Then they will:

'Drynke to hym deorly of fol god bous,
Ant oure dame douse shal sitten hym by.
When that he is dronke ase a dreynt mous,
Thenne we schule borewe the wed ate bayly.'

[Shippey's translation]:

'We'll drink to him like friends in excellent booze,
and our sweet lady will sit right next to him.
When 'he's as drunk as a drowned mouse,' we'll go to the bailiff and redeem your pled'e.']'

(Shippey, 2003: 37-38)

The fact that the man in the moon originally came from Earth might explain his desire to return. Furthermore, the last version of the tale begins to point at the association of the man

in the moon and the excessive consumption of alcohol; a thing that Tolkien's poem hints at, though the man in the moon's desires are thwarted by his arriving too soon.

The Man in the Moon might be described as a creature rather than a monster in the conventional sense, but he does fulfil the first of Cohen's theses by being an emblem of the concerns and anxieties of the day (Cohen, 1996: 3). An increasing focus on production and industrialization over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in a wholesale destruction of many rural communities. Cities with huge, shifting populations, and emphasis on wealth and the individual rather than community, results in an increasing sense of alienation among its populace. The man in the moon could be said to be a symbol of that alienation and loneliness within a crowd, making it into one of Tolkien's protest poems. (This will be discussed further in Chapter 5).

Tolkien's second moon poem, *The Man in the Moon Stayed up too Late*²⁸, was written between 1919 and 1920 and was published in an untitled form in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954] where it was sung by Frodo (C&G: 772). The poem was revised and published under the title *Nursery Rhymes Undone* in 'Yorkshire Poetry' in the October-November 1923 edition (ATB: 173). It was not called *The Man in the Moon Stayed Up too Late* until its publication in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962. Other versions were published in *The Return of the Shadow*, Volume Six of *The History of Middle Earth* in 1988 and the extended version of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 2014 under the title *The Cat and the Fiddle: A Nursery-Rhyme Undone and Its Scandalous Secret Revealed*. The poem tells of how the man in the moon visits a pub and gets so inebriated that he falls asleep and nearly fails to return to the sky before the sun has risen. It is loosely based on the English Nursery rhyme, "Hey Diddle Diddle" (ATB: 177). Unlike the previous poem, the Man in the Moon descends to Earth, not by a staircase, but by a horse-drawn chariot which is made of the moon itself. The concept of the Moon travelling in a chariot is not unique to Tolkien. The Ancient Greeks believed the lunar goddess Selene travelled through the sky on a chariot drawn by two horses with the moon on her head (Cooper, 1992: 256). In Norse mythology, the children of Mundilfari, the female sun and the male moon, drive around the heavens in horse drawn chariots (Sturluson, 2001: 24, Glyfaginning verse XI). Shippey wonders if Tolkien was influenced by the Ancient Greek tale of Phaethon who scorched

²⁸ *The Man in the Moon Stayed Up Too Late* is a revised version of the poem *Nursery Rhymes Undone* which Tolkien wrote sometime between 1919-1920 (C&G:131). The latter version of the poem was first published in *Yorkshire Poetry* Oct-Nov 1923, but *The Man in the Moon Stayed Up Too Late* was not published until 1954 in *The Lord of the Rings* (C&G: 772).

his chariot by driving too close to the sun, when describing the Man in the Moon's own narrow escape in his chariot from the heat of the rising sun (Shippey, 2003: 37). The cat and dog and cow mentioned in the poem are related to the moon in Norse and Greek mythologies. (Cashford, 2003: 105,113-114). Here Tolkien appears to be expanding the sources he is drawing from to include ancient mythologies, medieval manuscripts, student poetry, and nursery rhymes into his inspirations. The character of the man in the moon, his mode of transport, and his associated animals are traditional, and therefore are familiar to the reader, yet Tolkien is using these traditions in a much more imaginative way to enhance the humour of the tale. This poem is neither purely academic, nor purely protest in nature but fits with Tolkien's exploration of fairy creatures found in his early poems. These poems are harbingers of things to come for, they are not only drawing on a wide variety of influences, Tolkien's poem is in sympathy with the common theme of a bored Man in the Moon which seems popular in Oxford from the Victorian times through to at least the 1930s.

In this poem, the reception of the Man in the Moon is far more friendly, and the pub's patrons, which include a cat, a dog, and a cow, as well as various household utensils mentioned in the original nursery rhyme carouse with the Man in the Moon with such vigour and abandonment that it borders on lunacy:

The cat then suddenly changed the tune,
the dog began to roar,
The horses stood upon their heads;
The guests all bounded from their beds
And danced upon the floor.

The cat broke all his fiddle-strings,
the cow jumped over the Moon,
And the little dog laughed to see such fun,
In the middle the Saturday dish did run
away with the Sunday spoon.

(ATB: 176, lines 46-55)

Mark Atherton notes that the nursery rhyme on which this poem appears to be based, beginning with "High diddle", was first published in *Mother Goose's Melody* around 1765 (Atherton, 2012: 220). The folklorist James Orchard Halliwell published a version in the nineteenth century with the better known "Hey! Diddle," (Ibid.: 221). George MacDonald, an author known to have influenced Tolkien's work, wrote a poem about a Man in the Moon coming to earth making it possible for the cow to jump over it in his children's book

At the Back of the North Wind, published in 1870, and it is likely that this poem also served as an inspiration for Tolkien's work (Atherton 2012: 221-222). A connection between madness and the moon has been contained in the languages of Western Europe for over two thousand years (Cashford, 2003: 282). Until recently it was thought to be a myth by medical professionals, though a recent paper by Barata et al. suggests that there might be a link between acute mania and the phases of the moon, but this link is seasonal, being more obvious in autumn and winter when the nights are longer (Barata et al, 2015: 563). Although the degree of madness is not as obvious in *The Man in the Moon Came Down too Soon* [1915], Tolkien, refers to madness twice in the poem:

And merry was he at last to be free
on a *mad* adventure bent
(*ATB*: 69, lines 11-12, emphasis added)

and

An unwary guest on a *lunatic* quest
from the Mountains of the Moon.
(*ATB*: 74, lines 97-98, emphasis added)

In this case, it is the Man in the Moon who is mad to seek such a foolishly ill-planned and dangerous adventure. As a mad man, the Man in the Moon is both a part of a socially disadvantaged group who exists on the periphery of society and could be easily recognised as "other" by the community by his odd behaviour. His position in any society is therefore precarious, a thing that would be feared by many people, yet it also allows him a great deal of freedom in his behaviour, for, the community will make allowances for any taboos he does breach, because of his insanity.

Nursery rhymes not only link the man in the moon with pubs, but also with the drinking of alcohol often to an immoderate degree. *The Man in the Moon Stayed up too Late* [1919/1954] portrays a link between the moon and drunkenness. By the seventeenth century the connection between the man in the moon and alcohol was part of everyday folklore and several drinking establishments including two in London were named after the Man in the Moon (Lindsay, 1927: 90). The Man in the Moon pub in Cheapside was particularly notorious for the drunkenness and noise of its lower-class patrons *London's Ordinarie* noting "The Drunkards by noon to the Man in the Moone" (ibid.). Such pubs were made famous by the Broadside Ballads, one of which echoes Tolkien's poem *The Man in the Moon Stayed up too Late* [1919/1954]:

Our Moon man and his Powder beef mad crew
thus caper through the liquor sweet turnep drew
Round about over tables and joynd stools,
let's dance with naked Rapiers.
Cut the fiddle strings and then like fools,
kick out the sum sum scrapers.

...

Our man in the Moon drinks Claret,
With Powder beef turnep and Carret,
If he doth so why should not you
Drink wine until the Sky looks blew,

(Anon., 1658-1664, lines 37-42, 56-59)

I am not denying the obvious connection between this poem and the Nursery Rhyme “Hey Diddle Diddle”, but this poem equally shows the Man in the Moon drunkenly carousing until, as in Tolkien’s poem, the sky turned blue. Catherine McIlwaine, the Tolkien archivist at the Bodleian Library, notes that Tolkien studied sixteenth and seventeenth century drama along with Chaucer, Old Norse, and Old and Middle English while a student at Oxford (McIlwaine, 2018: 14). I wonder if he might have discovered some of these ballads during his studies. Nick Groom notes that Tolkien was familiar with Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* which has snippets of seventeenth century “nonsense verse” (Groom, 2014: 291-293), giving a further possible source for Tolkien’s knowledge of these rhymes.

As one explores the various drinking ballads associated with the Man in the Moon, another figure begins to emerge, a character by the name of Tom of Bedlam. For example, there is a seventeenth century ballad in London called “A new mad tom of Bedlam, or, the man in the moon drinks claret, with powder-beef and caret” circa 1680’s (Opie and Opie, 1997: 347). The poem begins with the sad Tom imprisoned in his cell:

Forth from my sad and darksome Cell,
Or from the deep Abiss of Hell,
Mad *Tom* is come to view the world again,
To see if he can ease his distempered Brain:
Fear and care doth pierce his Soul,
Hark how the angry Furies howl;
(Anon., 1681-1684, lines 1-6)

But the poem ends with the Man in the Moon:

Poor naked *Tom* is very dry,
A little drink for Charity;

...

The man in the Moon Drinks Clarret,
With Powder beef Turney and Carret,
A Cup of Old *Mallago* Sack,
Will fire the Bush at his back.

(Anon., 1681-1684, lines 49-50, lines 57-60)

This ballad not only names the man in the moon in connection to Tom O'Bedlam, but it also refers to the sin of stick gathering mentioned in the tale surrounding the origin of the man in the moon. According to Will Tosh, a Lecturer and Research Fellow at the Globe Theatre, the "Bedlam Beggar" was a stock figure of madness in seventeenth century literature (Tosh, 2016). Moone-men in the seventeenth century was another name for mad men, and in particular, Tom of Bedlam and his Abraham men. The order of the Abraham men officially began in 1635 and died out sometime in the early eighteenth century (Machen, 1930: 39). They were said to be men discharged from the Abraham ward of St Mary's of Bethany Hospital, otherwise known as Bedlam. Although they were insane, they were thought to be harmless enough not to pose a risk to the public. They travelled from place-to-place begging alms. Tom O'Bedlam rapidly became a well-known folklore figure with several ballads and drinking songs being connected to his name, for example the ballad "Loving Mad Tom", an Elizabethan folk song whose chorus reflects the lifestyle of the Abraham men:

While I do sing "Any food, any feedings,
Feeding, drink, or clothing?
Come, dame, or maid
Be not afraid
Poor Tom will injure nothing."
(Lindsay, 1927: 17-19)

He was well known enough that Shakespeare, in his play "King Lear", has the Earl of Gloucester's son attempt to pass himself off as the mad Tom O'Bedlam, only to be found by Lear living in squalor and eating vermin (Shakespeare, 1988: 837, Act III, Scene IV). I argue that Tolkien himself has used this tradition to create a moon-man named Tom in the form of Tom Bombadil.

The basis of my argument is two-fold: firstly, that Tolkien was likely to have had knowledge of Tom O’Bedlam and secondly there are some remarkable similarities between Tom Bombadil and Tom O’Bedlam on multiple levels. As previously mentioned, Tolkien had studied sixteenth and seventeenth century literature whilst he was at Oxford University. Mad Tom O’Bedlam appeared in literature before he was released from Bedlam. The earliest record of a ditty containing his name is recorded in a manuscript containing a variety of songs and verses called *Giles Earles his booke*, dating from 1615 (Lindsay, 1927: 63). The popularity of verses about Tom O’Bedlam or his wife Mad Maudeline rose in the mid seventeenth century with an increasing number and variety published in pamphlets such as *Wit and Drollery*. Nor did it end with the disbandment of the Abraham Men. Furthermore, Tom O’Bedlam’s notoriety as a folklore figure appears to have had a resurgence in the early twentieth century with several well-known authors including him in their works. Edgar Allan Poe, Rudyard Kipling, and Walter De la Mare²⁹ all used a section of the *Tom O’Bedlam Song* in their works (Graves, 1949: 202-203). Besides the book mentioned by Bishop Percy mentioned earlier, Tolkien obviously knew Shakespeare’s “King Lear”, quoting him in a book review in the *Philology: General Works* journal of 1924 and in his essay *On Fairy-stories* (Tolkien, 1924: 43; *OFS*: 39). Finally, Francis Thompson, who was, as previously mentioned in Chapter 1, one of Tolkien’s favourite poets, wrote a poem titled “Tom O’Bedlam’s Song”, drawing on a known Bedlamite poem “From the Hagg and Hungry Goblin” (Thompson, 1927: 28-30; Machen, 1930: 1-8). The poem begins:

From the hag and the hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
All the spirits that stand
By the naked man,
In the book of the moons, defend ye.
Beware of the black rider
Through blasted dreams borne nightly,
From Venus Queen
Sawed may you bin,
And the dead that die unrightly.
(Thompson, 1927: 28, lines 1-10)

This poem was published in *The Dome* volume 5 in 1898 but was deemed to be of insufficient literary merit to be included in his collected works. The Bodleian Library was able to confirm that the library had a copy of *The Dome* magazine, and, though the date of

²⁹ In *The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfaal*, Chapter 15 of *The Light that Failed*, and *Henry Brocken* respectively.

purchase is not known, it is bound with an issue dated 30th January 1900, so this volume was acquired in 1900 or later (personal communication). Tolkien gave a lecture to Exeter college on the poetry of Francis Thompson in 1914 (ATB: 173). The Bodleian Library also has a copy of *Loving Mad Tom* by Jack Lindsay which contained Francis Thompson's poem. This was acquired on the 26th June 1928 (Hartwell, 2019), therefore Tolkien would have had two possible sources for the Thompson's poem when writing his Tom Bombadil verses.

Tolkien's Tom comes in the form of Tom Bombadil who, in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], is a rather enigmatic character. Tolkien wrote two poems about Tom Bombadil, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* around 1931, which was published in the Oxford magazine on 15 February 1934 (ATB: 131-132, 123) and *Bombadil goes Boating*³⁰ [1962], with a very sparse, unpublished version written in the mid 1930's which was revised and an expanded version in 1962 published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in the same year (ATB: 138-139, C&G: 622). *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*³¹ [1931] tells how Tom wins the hand of Goldberry, the river-woman's daughter. In the poem not only does he escape Goldberry's attempt to lure him to a watery grave, but he faces off against the old man willow, he escapes a cete of badgers who threaten to imprison him underground, and he eludes the Barrow-wight who attempts to capture him by lurking behind his door. Instead, one day Tom manages to seize Goldberry around the waist and claim her as his bride. This seizing of a Faerie creature around the waist appears to be a common way of capturing fairies as shall be discussed in Chapter 5. In *Bombadil goes Boating* [1962], Tom desires to go and visit his friend, Farmer Maggot, for a night of drinking and conviviality (echoing both the Man in the Moon poems). However, his journey down the river in a cockle boat is impeded by a wren, a king fisher, an otter, a swan, and then a group of hobbits. The tone of each encounter is jolly, but underneath there are veiled threats on either side: on the one hand the animals threaten to tell one of Tom's enemies such as the Old Man Willow or a Barrow wight that Tom is abroad, on the other, Tom controls them by threatening them with capture by their enemies. All of this is interlaced with a strong folkloric context which I shall discuss shortly. It appears that all is forgiven, for, after his visit has finished, the birds and animals assist Tom to return home against the flow of the river. Thus, like the Man in the Moon,

³⁰ *Bombadil Goes Boating* was composed in 1962 for inclusion in Tolkien's collection: *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* published in 1962.

³¹ *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* probably started to be written around 1931 however was first published in *Oxford Magazine* 15 February 1934 and then rewritten and published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (C&G: 27-28).

Tom Bombadil, in *Bombadil goes Boating*, is lonely and seeks a night of drinking and socialising with his friends.

Apart from certain similarities in their names, Tom Bombadil and Tom of Bedlam resemble each other in several ways including their appearance, their habitat, their powers, their partners, and their behaviour and speech patterns. Tom Bombadil is described in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931] as:

a merry fellow;
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow,
green was his girdle and his breeches all of leather;
he wore in his tall hat a swan-wing feather.
(ATB: 35, lines 1-4)

Because their clothing was obtained by begging (or possibly theft) the Abraham Men were noted for their rather bright and mismatched garb which they often decorated with ribbons or the feathers of birds (Mason, 2014: 1257-1258). They were also noted for their rather strange habit of singing nonsensical songs and dancing or leaping when they moved (Mason, 2014: 1257). In *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] Tom is singing and leaping when he first appears: “There was another burst of song, and then suddenly, above the reeds an old, battered hat with a tall crown and a long blue feather stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed.” (FR: 119) Both of Tolkien’s poetry and prose Toms share a song style which is very close to that found in Bedlamite poetry. Tom Bombadil’s peculiar refrain “Hey Do Derry do, derry do my darling” is found in the poem *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931] and the similar refrain “Hey! Come merry doll! derry doll! My darling!” is found in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] (ATB: 43, line 132; FR: 119). The refrain seems linked to a refrain popular in the 17th century, “Derry down, down, hey derry down.” It appears in a nonsense poem which dates back at least to the sixteenth century called “King John and the Abbot of Canterbury” and was, like “Tom O’Bedlam” published in Bishop Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (Percy, 1775). The refrain is repeated in the Bedlamite poem *The Tinker of Turvey* published in *Wit and Drollery* in 1661.

There was a Jovial Pedlar.
And he cried Cony-skins
And on his back he bore a pack,
Wherein was points and pinns,
Lases and brazes and many pretty things.
Hay down, hey down,
Hay down, hey dery, dery, down.

This Pedler never lies,
But still he cries merrily, merrily,
Maudes have you any Cony-skins.
(Lindsay, 1927: 82, lines 15-23, emphasis added)

The word cockle is seen in both poetic Tom and Tom of Bedlam, but with quite different meanings. Tom Bombadil rides down in a cockle or shell-shaped boat, whilst Bedlam's own attempt at travelling down a river was less successful as he chose to travel on a millstone. Bedlam, in the 1615 version of his song, took a "cruse of cockle pottage" (Machen, 1930: 3, line 31). "Cruse" being an earthen ware pot and "cockle" being a plant with red and purple flowers which was said to grow in the cornfields. When its small black seeds were pressed into a fine white powder, they were said to have opiate-like properties (Lindsay, 1927: 86).

Whether in the case of Bedlam, it is the drugs or his madness, or whether, like Bombadil, it is an inherent part of his nature, both Toms have links to the natural and supernatural world. In Tolkien's two poems, Tom Bombadil not only controls Goldberry, but also badgers, a variety of birds, an otter, Old Man Willow, and a Barrow wight. Whilst in Francis Thompson's "Tom O'Bedlam's Song", Bedlam has more knowledge than a god, is serenaded by natural and supernatural creatures alike, and is able to call upon ghosts to fight for him:

I know more than Apollo:
For oft, where he lies sleeping
I behold the stars
At mortal wars
And the rounded welkin weeping
The moon's my constant mistress
And the lovely owl my morrow:
The flaming drake
And the mighty crow make
Me music, to my sorrow
With furious fancies
Whereof I am commander:
With a burning spear,
And a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander:
With a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney
Ten leagues beyond,
The wide world's end
Methinks it is no journey!
(Thompson, 1927: 28-29, lines 21-40)

Both Toms appear to be men that have a control over their environment not commonly seen in humankind. Yet both Toms are down to earth, one a beggar, the other living a simple existence in a cottage, hardly people one would envisage commanding wraiths or knowing more than the gods. Tolkien states that Tom Bombadil is intentionally an enigma (*Letters*: 174), and the same could be said of Tom O'Bedlam.

This connection between the natural and supernatural is also reflected in the environments which the two Toms inhabit. In his book Machen describes his vision of Tom O'Bedlam's habitat as he journeys through the country:

A man may go on a journey, and see cities of climbing spires and golden palaces, he may view rich unregards purple and gold in the sunshine, laughing harvests, towering mountains. But, if he comes to stray a little from the highroad, there are deep dark, and secret places. There are haggard rocks that grin and mouth at him as if the hag and hungry goblin have been changed to stone. There are hollows in a gloom of ash trees, places holy and enchanted upon which the traveller will gaze in silence, hardly daring to enter. There are paths that lead down lonely hills, and when the twilight falls, it is evident that they must end in fairyland. There is a valley that I know, not very far from the common road, narrow, surrounded by steep hills on every side; a place of marsh and strange reeds and ghastly flowers. All about it the wood hang on the hills, and down by the marsh many trees have perished, and still stand in that hollow place, where the wind is silent: stand white, phantasmal with white branches piercing out of the green leaf. (Machen, 1930: 45-46)

Machen's description of the small, gloomy, valley where the plants are somehow macabre, that lies just beyond the road in which he pictures Tom O'Bedlam sleeping could equally apply to Tolkien's Withywindle, the valley in which Tom Bombadil lives. The hobbits have descended into the valley through the dense trees of the Old Forest where a stream runs. As twilight falls and they approach Tom Bombadil's house Tolkien gives the following description of the valley:

Almost at once the sun seemed to sink into the trees behind them. ... Great shadows fell across them; trunks and branches of trees hung dark and threatening over their path. White mists began to rise and curl over the surfaces of the river and stray about the roots of the trees upon its borders. Out of the very ground at their feet a shadowy steam arose and mingled with the swiftly falling dusk.

It became difficult to follow the path, and they were very tired. ... Strange furtive noises among the bushes and reeds on either side of them; and if they looked up to the pale sky, they caught sight of queer and gnarled and knobbly faces that gloomed dark against the twilight and leered down at them from the high bank and the edges of the wood. They began to feel that all this country was unreal, and that they were stumbling through an ominous dream that led to no awakening. (*FR*: 121)

Here again we see a gloomy, marshy valley, wood edged, with the same eerie feel associated with Machen's description. The one thing that separates them, is that Bombadil has a house in this valley, unlike the wilder, more chaotic, Bedlam. Thus, Tom Bombadil serves to bring a little light and civilization in the ancient and perilous landscape of the Old Forest. Tom O'Bedlam has no such comfort and is at the mercy of the elements, natural and supernatural alike. This fits with the sense that Tom Bombadil is a bridge between worlds, the human and the natural world and the natural and the supernatural world.

Finally, both Toms find a girl. In Bombadil's case, as previously mentioned, he catches a supernatural wife in the form of Goldberry, the river-woman's daughter. In the case of Tom O'Bedlam, he is paired with Mad Maud, also known as Maudlin, or Maudes, depending on the poem. Like Goldberry, Mad Maud is said to be beautiful. Apart from Maud, Tom O'Bedlam is also paired with the moon herself, personified in the form of a woman with a fairy-like luminescence about her. A sketch by Lindsay depicts her in long flowing, river-like robes, with a moon over her head, creating the image of a moon woman to be paired with the moon man (see Figure 1). Tom O'Bedlam does not appear to capture the moon in the same way that Bombadil captures Goldberry, but both give a similar image of a rather strangely dressed, eccentric man accompanying a beautiful, elegant lady who has supernatural properties.



THE MOON'S MY CONSTANT MISTRESS

Figure 1: Mistress Moon (Lindsay, 1927). Copyright A.C. and H. Glad. Reproduced with Permission.

In summary Tom Bombadil and Tom O'Bedlam are similar in their dress, behaviour, speech, habitat, partners, and their connections to the natural and the supernatural world. Tolkien's study of sixteenth and seventeenth century literature, the rise of Tom O'Bedlam as a literary figure in the early twentieth century, and Tolkien's love of the poet Francis Thompson mean that Tolkien would have known of the figure Tom O'Bedlam. . In my opinion, he was more than familiar, and took Tom O'Bedlam as the inspiration for his character Tom Bombadil. Tom Bombadil is not particularly monstrous in the strictest sense, however his power over the natural and the supernatural and his very ambiguity makes him fall between roles in society, fulfilling Cohen's third thesis.

Although Tolkien did not teach seventeenth century literature at Oxford, he did study it as a student, thus Tolkien's Tom poems might be classified as part of his academic poetry.

It has long been recognised that Tom Bombadil is a rather enigmatic character and there have been multiple suggestions or theories on his nature. Tolkien himself describes Tom as "the spirit of the (vanishing) Oxford and Berkshire countryside (*Letters*: 26) and other scholars have suggested he is some kind of nature spirit such as Puck or Pan (Ruth Noel), a primal nature spirit (Edmund Fuller), or a personification of the Natural World (Matthew Dickerson, Jonathan Evans) (Jacobs, 2020, p. 79). Jacobs goes on to suggest Tom may be an anthropomorphised manifestation of the wind based on Aldhelm's *Enigmata* (Jacobs, 2020, p. 81). Others have suggested that Tom is a manifestation of the divine arguing he is a Valar (specifically Aulë), a Maia, even Eru himself (Beal, 2019). Beal notes that Tom could be a creature of Middle-earth including being an elf, a dwarf, the first man, a man with a dual nature such as Beorn, even a hobbit (Beal, 2019). Others propose that he is a character drawn from other mythologies, a pagan god from Norse myth, including Wayland the Smith, a Greco-Roman faun, Pan, or Vainamoinen from the *Kalevala* (Beal, 2019). For some he is the personification of a fearless joy, an emotion that will carry Sam and to a degree Frodo through their darkest hours (Inkpen, 2020). For some he is a poet, for others the voice of pure science (Inkpen, 2020; Beal, 2019). My proposal is that Tom Bombadil can also be read as a moon man based on his dress, his behaviour, his language, and his habitat. This however does not preclude him being some of these other things including a Maia, Valar, human, elf or dwarf, nor something with a dual nature. As a moon man he may well be a spirit of nature and have a demi-god-like or at least magical nature as Pan, Weyland Smith and Puck do. Nor does it change the fact that his nature is one of fearless joy, thus it does not remove his role of strengthening the resolve of Frodo or Sam. My argument does create a connection between Tom Bombadil, Tolkien's other writing at the time, his undergraduate studies, and the general cultural milieu of the time. Indeed, Tolkien's poems about Tom Bombadil draw on many other sources other than seventeenth century Bedlamite poetry. In *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931], Bombadil appears to be engaging with creatures who are somehow dangerous. The river woman is a character drawn from British folklore and is probably related to such fays as Peg Powler and Jenny Greenteeth (Shippey, 2000: 62). As Ronald Hutton notes, these supernatural ladies, found in the North of England, were better avoided or destroyed rather than befriended, as they had the unfortunate habit of drowning humans unless appropriately appeased with an animal sacrifice every seven years (Hutton, 2013: 379; Briggs, 1978: 68; Shippey, 2000: 62). I will discuss the nature of trees such as Old

Man Willow in the next chapter, but it is worth noting that, according to a Sommerset rhyme, willows had the nasty habit of attacking, even murdering, travellers who crossed their path in the evening (Hatfield, 2007: 119) (see Introduction). Tom Shippey suggests that Tolkien's concept of barrow wights is drawn from the Norse concept of *draugr*, being "a ghost or animated corpse that haunted the barrow in which it has been buried," particularly if the barrow contained treasure (Shippey, 2000: 194). In British folklore, badgers, because of their nocturnal habits, their hidden underground activity, and their piercing scream were associated with death and dying. Two rhymes popular in the last two hundred years point to this:

Should one hear a badger call,
And then an ullot cry,
Make thy peace with God, good soul,
For thou shall shortly die.
(Badgerland, 2018)

and

Should a badger cross the path
Which thou hast taken, then
Good luck is thine, so it be said
Beyond the luck of men.

But if it cross in front of thee,
Beyond where thou shalt tread,
And if by chance doth turn the mould,
Thou art numbered with the dead.

(Badgerland, 2018)

This relationship to death is in keeping with the other creatures Bombadil comes into contact with in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931]. For all the seeming jollity of the poem, this land is full of malign influences.

In *Bombadil goes Boating* [1962], Tolkien is focussing more on the folklore of birds. Bombadil is initially harangued by a wren, a sacred bird typically hunted at midwinter to encourage the return of spring (Wentersdorf, 1977: 193). Manx fishermen were said to take a dead wren with them to sea so, if they were attacked by a sea spirit who intended to bring upon them storms or disasters, the spirit could instead inhabit the body of the wren and fly away (Denham, 1892: 203; Loyd, 2006: 113). Similarly, the kingfisher, who Tom encounters next, is also related to calming storms. Kingfishers were said to lay

their eggs on the water, and therefore had the ability to prevent storms during the time of their incubation. This time of incubation was known as the halcyon days. Because of this, sailors would hang a dead kingfisher around their necks to ward off storms (Thiselton Dyer, 1883: 123; Loyd, 2006: 113). Swans, on the other hand, were thought in Hampshire to require a thunderstorm to hatch (Loyd, 2006: 178-179). These birds, like Bombadil, were linked to the “Otherworld” and not only sang at their own death but assisted souls to transmigrate to the Afterlife (Loyd, 2006: 177). In Scotland, swans were said to be “good prognosticators of weather, forewarning of harsh winters ahead” if they visited the Orkneys (Loyd, 2006: 180). I wonder if Tolkien is being slightly whimsical choosing birds that prevent drowning to interact with the boating Bombadil. Apart from the village hobbits, the other animal to cross Bombadil’s path in this poem is the otter. In this encounter, Tolkien makes clear reference to the Norse tale of “Andvari’s Gold”, a tale that Tolkien will retell in his work *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. When the otter threatens to tip over Bombadil’s boat, Tom replies:

‘I’ll give your otter-fell to Barrow-wights. They’ll taw you!
 Then smother you in gold rings! Your mother if she saw you,
 she’d never know her son, unless ‘twas by a whisker.
 Nay, don’t tease old Tom, until you be far brisker!’
 (ATB: 47, lines 59-62)

In the tale of “Andvari’s Gold”, Loki pays a wergild for the death of the king’s son Ótr who he has killed when Ótr took the form of an otter. The wergild involves covering the otter’s skin with gold. Loki almost has enough gold, but one whisker is left showing, so Loki takes the cursed ring of Andvari to cover this, causing the curse of the gold to fall on the king and his family (S&G: 66-71). The allusion in the lines above is obvious. Tolkien confirms the use of the folklore of the kingfisher and the story of the otter whisker in a letter to Mrs Gasch in August 1962 (Tolkien, 1962). He goes on to explain the rivalry between the swan and the kingfisher as stemming from the former’s links with royalty, and the kingfisher with its royal title.

In these moon men poems, Tolkien is moving away from pure folklore, into combinations of literary and traditional elements, mixing and recombining them in new and creative ways. He is drawing on multiple sources including Greek and Nordic mythologies, traditional ballads and nursery rhymes to create a more intricate Faërie, rich with back-tales, and symbolism. This leaves poems which are in one sense familiar, harking back to traditions and concepts that we are almost unconsciously aware of, yet, at the same time bringing to them a new zest and sense of fun. Like the earlier poems,

Tolkien has expanded the sophistication of the poems from mere tableaux into stories. This move away from the confines of a single tradition or concept is allowing Tolkien's imagination to blossom, and we can see this in his creation of the character Tom Bombadil, a character who has his roots in tradition but is well-rounded enough to be included in his legendarium. Yet like his early poems, Tolkien continues to display an awareness of fairy lore, sometimes following its convention, sometimes deliberately thwarting it.

2.5 Femmes Fatales

In his legendarium, the bulk of Tolkien's monsters are male, with the three exceptions of Ungoliant the giant spider, her daughter Shelob, and the potential monstrous nature of Galadriel if she had chosen to take the Ring. Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry takes a more active interest in the concept of evil females, and the unique role their sexuality plays in ensnaring their victims. Tolkien mentions mermaids in two poems, a brief mention in his poem *Glip* circa 1928 (C&G: 153, see also above) and in a poem written in Old English and set to the tune *The Mermaid* called *Across the Broad Ocean*³² [1920s], written between 1921-1926. This poem was first published in *Songs for the Philologists* in 1935, and then translated into English and published in Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth* (Shippey, 2003: 360-361). Tolkien treats the two mermaids in quite different ways. In *Glip* [1928], the mermaid is a creature who thrives in the liminal zone between sea and land:

He [Glip] slinks through weeds at highwater mark
To where the mermaid sings,
The wicked mermaid singing in the dark
And threading golden rings
On wet hair; for many ships
She draws to the rock to die.
(H: 119, lines 17-22)

The mermaid seduces sailors from their ships through her singing to devour them and Glip lives off her leftovers. In this instance her allure appears to be the promise of sexual gratification and riches. Her seductive singing appears to be inherited from the sirens of Ancient Greece, though this had become part of the mermaid folklore of Europe (Ashliman, 2006: 22; Silver, 1999: 156). Their wealth also appears to be traditional

³² *Across the Broad Ocean* was written in the 1920s after Tolkien had arrived at Leeds University in 1922. These works were collated and published in a small private form as *Songs of the Philologists* by a former Leeds student in 1936 but became more available when Tom Shippey included it in an appendix of *The Road to Middle-earth second edition* published in 1992 (C&G: 1244-1245).

(Ashliman, 2006: 73). In this poem, humans are merely prey and there is no particular interest in the mermaid/human interaction other than being a source of food for the mermaid and Glip. This mermaid is literally red in tooth and claw, breaking the taboo of eating human flesh. In his second mermaid poem *Across the Broad Ocean* [1920s], a sailor falls out of his ship and is captured by a merman. He is taken deep into the ocean to the land of the mermen where he meets a mermaid who offers him knowledge and to wed him. In return he must abandon his fellow sailors and give away all his worldly goods, as the implication is that he will never return home. This mermaid is not found in a liminal zone but in a palace deep in the ocean. Unlike her predecessor she offers knowledge and a road to power as inducements to attract the sailor:

‘Now welcome indeed, my lord, to the mermen’s land!’
Listen, I have discovered the power of the kings
of the people of the Spear-Danes in days gone by-
and also the bridal beneath the sea, in the merman’s
land!
(Shippey, 2003: 360, lines 13-18)

Traditionally, not all mermaids were carnivorous, and sailors could derive great benefit from an association with a mermaid. They could warn against storms or tragedies on board, open their nets and offer sailors the choicest of their catch, and even impart secret knowledge such as healing and herb lore (Ashliman, 2006: 111; Briggs, 1967: 207; Briggs, 1978: 71; Rhys, 1901: 121-123). Paradoxically then, mermaids could be bringers of life and death (Larrington, 2015: 176). Marriage between humans and mermaids was also not unknown though the mermaids were not always treated well if they came to land (Silver, 1999: 104). In Tolkien’s poem it is hard to define the power structure. The mermaid is calling the sailor “my lord”, but she is the one who tells him to abandon his crewmates and give up his chattels. She is also the one who tells him that she will marry him. The power in this relationship seems to reside with the mermaid. Tolkien might not have a broad range of female characters in his writing, but where he does have them, they tend to be both dominant and influential on the fates of the men around them as I shall discuss in Chapter 4. Mermaids combine lust, cannibalism, wealth, supernatural knowledge, and domination representing both things that may be desired but also things that are taboo making them fulfil numbers one and six of Cohen’s theses. The second of Tolkien’s femmes fatales is his Corrigan, seen in his longer poem *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] which I shall discuss in Chapter 4, and in a shorter poem titled *Corrigan II*³³

³³ *Corrigan II* was thought to be written some time between 1929-1930 and was first published in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* edited by Verlyn Flieger in 2016 (C&G: 271-272).

published in the same volume as the lay. The shorter poem was thought to have been written in the 1930s with the longer lay written around 1945 (C&G: 161, 647). The story tells of a childless lord and lady, Aotrou and Itroun, who long for children. Despairing, one day, the lord visits the Corrigan, an ancient fairy who dwells in the Broceliande Forest. She agrees to help him but does not disclose her price. It is only once twins are born that Aotrou discovers the price is that he become her consort or die. *Corrigan II* [1929-1930] only tells the second half of the story, beginning after the children are born. The Corrigan has much in common with Tolkien's mermaids. Though she is in the liminal zone of the forest, like the mermaids she is connected to water, though in this case it is a fountain rather than the sea. Like the mermaids, she manifests her power in singing, though in this case it is not to lure Aotrou to her, rather it is to bring about his demise. Her song haunts the dreams of Aotrou as he lies in a peasant's cottage dying, though he is too far away to hear her:

‘O! Corrigan, though strange thy power
In the old moon singing’

A! mother mine, if thou love me well,
Make my bed! My heart doth swell
And in my limbs is poison fell!
And in my ears a singing.

...

But a Corrigan hath cast on me a spell,
And I die on the third morning.’

(*Aotrou*: 51, lines 67-72, 75-76)

In these lines Tolkien is clearly contrasting the nurturing nature of the mother with the death-bringing power of the crone in the form of the Corrigan. The Corrigan is a shape changer, often changing herself into a snow-white deer and uses the excitement of the hunt to entice men to her lair. Like the mermaid she offers a heady combination of lust, riches, and, in the Corrigan's case, increased longevity of life if the man submits to her demands. All things which are desirable, yet all threaten the stability of society, particularly because she is an uncontrolled woman in a patriarchal society (see Chapter 4). Thus, the Corrigan, like the mermaid fulfil numbers one and six of Cohen's theses.

The song of the *Ides Ælfscýne*³⁴ [1920s] or Elf-fair lady echoes the traditional Faërie abduction stories. In this case, the boy meets the fairy by accident but quickly falls under her control. She binds him to her by embracing him, in the same way that Tom Bombadil captures Goldberry in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931] and the creature in *The Shadow Bride* [1933/1962] captures the woman (see Chapter 5 for further discussion). Now enthralled, he is taken to a land across the water with its white dogs³⁵, and dwarves under the mountains. The land is lit by a gem rather than the sun. Again, this follows the tradition, such as the tale of the green children in which abducted children lived with fairies in an underground land which glows with a strange greenish light (Purkiss, 2000: 62). Given these indications, the land the man is taken to is obviously Faërie. The fact that he is abducted rather than following the woman because of love is reinforced by the fact that, though the man repeatedly cries: “Alas! Elf-fair lady, and my friend, alas!”, the man grows tired of living in Faërie and prays to God for his release. But, as in many such tales, fifty years have passed in the Primary World by the time he returns home, and all those he knew and loved are dead and buried in a mound (Kerven, 2013: 119). He is left “poor and hurt” to “dwindle, grey and alone” (Shippey, 2003: 356-358, lines 36, 38). There is the sense here of an untamed, lustful female, using the man, then casting him aside once she has drained him.

Yet are these women truly evil, or more evil than say the dragon in *The Hoard* [1962]? From the point of view of a third party, the Corrigan is simply a good businesswoman, the Ælfscýne lady no more immoral than any woman who falls out of love with her man, and the mermaid of *Glip* [1928] no worse than a lion killing a gazelle. In fact, the Ælfscýne lady might be saving her human’s life as in *Thomas the Rhymer*, in which the Fairy Queen sends Thomas from Faërie to stop him being taken as part of the fairy tithe to the devil. The Corrigan gives Aotrou what he desires, while neither mermaid nor the elf maiden would have captured their men if the men had not been licentious or greedy. Or is it the fact that these lone, unsupervised women throw light onto the shallowness of the human psyche, thus fulfilling Cohen’s seventh thesis. Evil might be in the eye of the beholder. Yet overall, Tolkien’s female monsters are portrayed as more aggressive, and more likely to directly kill their victims than his male monsters in his non-

³⁴ *Ides Ælfscýne* is another poem written for *Songs of the Philologists* in the 1920s at Leeds University and was privately published by an alumnus of Leeds University in 1936. It was included in the appendix of Tom Shippey’s *The Road to Middle-earth second edition* published in 1992 (C&G:1244-1245)

³⁵ white dogs being associated with Faërie in Celtic mythology especially if they have red ears (Leach, 1961: 165) – in Welsh mythology specifically

Middle-earth poetry. Whether this is because they might be deemed to be more perverted than their male counterparts because they have strayed further from their traditional nurturing roles or for some other reason is unclear, but Tolkien's female monsters are powerful, dangerous, and have minds of their own. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

2.6 Soulless Monsters

The poem titled *The Corrigan*³⁶ [I] was written in 1930 (*Aotrou*: xviii). It tells of a mother, whose child has been abducted by the fairies, pleading with the Virgin Mary to help get her child back. Mary advises her to visit a hermit who tells her to perform certain odd tasks to confuse the changeling. This succeeds, and the changeling is chased from the house. There is then a joyous reunion with her child.

The origin of the changeling concept is lost in time, though the *Malleus Maleficarum* of 1486 said that the devil was able to alter children into wailing creatures who remained scrawny even if they were nursed by five women (Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 95). The word changeling appeared in the sixteenth century, though it was first used to mean turncoat, but by the time of Shakespeare it had become linked with child abduction by fairies (Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 96). Beautiful, peasant children, particularly unbaptized boys were most at risk, and in some areas, attempts were made to fool the fairies by dressing boys as girls till they were aged ten or eleven (Briggs, 1967: 9; McLaughlin, 2012: 165). In his poem, Tolkien follows this tradition by having a male child abducted. Tolkien has the baby's mother leaving her child, whilst she went to the well for water. Such an excursion might have been seen to be fool-hardy by some, as it was thought that unchurched women should not leave the house for the forty days between birth and the churching ceremony, nor should any unbaptized infant be left alone (Rhys, 1901: 110-111; James, 2014: 136). Wards such as bread and cheese, rowan branches, or a pair of his father's breeches might also be used to keep fairies from the baby (Green, 2016: 111-112; Kerven, 2013: 17; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 100). In Tolkien's poem there is no evidence that such precautions have been utilized and too late, the mother discovers the error of her ways.

³⁶ The date that *Corrigan I* was composed is uncertain but it was thought by Christopher Tolkien to be around the same time as *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* which would place it around 1930. It was published in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* edited by Verlyn Flieger in 2016 (C&G: 271).

Tolkien gives no reason why the human child was taken, though folkloric tradition has several theories. Some believed it was to bolster the fairy blood line, whilst others claimed that fairies were unable to bear healthy offspring of their own so stole babies to maintain their race (Buccola, 2006: 142). Still others said that the fairies themselves wanted contact with humans to acquire souls (Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 95).

Changeling babies were said to be:

... a substitute for an infant, child, or adult whom the fairies had abducted. Left in their stead, it was actually a starving imp, an aged, useless member of the elfin tribe, or even an animated log or stump of wood. If the changeling, as was most usual, took the form of a child, the child had an old, distorted face, a small or wizened body, and dark or sallow skin, and was often backward in learning to walk or speak. Some changed children were active though monstrous little beings; others were immobile, doll-like wooden creatures who soon lost all semblance of life, becoming “stocks”. But whether child or adult in form, the changeling was a creature noteworthy for tis gluttony and peevishness, its lack of heart or soul, and its strange, malicious, or ungovernable spirit. (Silver, 1999: 60)

Tolkien’s own description of the changeling follows this tradition:

In the cradle a strange cry I heard.
Dark was his face like a wrinkled toad;
With hands he clawed, he mouthed and mowed,
But made no word.

And ever he cries and claws the breast:
Seven long years, and still no rest;
Unweaned he wails, though I have pressed
My weary breast.

(*Aotrou*: 33-35, lines 9-16)

Tolkien’s description echoes this all-consuming being who appears all mouth and claws, but cannot talk or walk, or contribute in any way to the family. He does not grow but cries constantly, exhausting his poor mother both physically and mentally, and has been doing so for seven years! Thus, it deprives the community of an active, contributing member of society. Nor is it likely that she herself can become pregnant with another child whilst she is breast-feeding. When a changeling is present, the community is made poorer in multiple ways. As Carol Silver notes, modern analysts suggest the changeling tradition stemmed from an attempt to explain congenital or acquired abnormalities such as infantile paralysis, psycho-social dwarfism, or the blond haired, blue eye infants who had phenylketonuria, a genetic metabolic disorder that causes failure to thrive (Silver, 1999: 75). These things

were both feared, and poorly understood, being perceived as beyond the control of the community, and as such, changelings fulfil the first and fourth of Cohen's theses.

In his poem, Tolkien has the human baby's mother praying to the Virgin Mary for the return of her infant, and then following the instructions of a hermit on how to get him back. There were many ways to try to get the fairies to return the abducted human child, frequently by abusing, often violently, the changeling they had left behind. Infants were thrown into cold water, thrashed with a switch, left exposed and unfed in a field (or in other accounts on a dung heap) or placed on a hot stove (Briggs, 1967: 138-140; McLaughlin, 2012: 82-97). Many of these extreme torments would have resulted in the death of the infant, but if the infant died, either from these tests or from its deformity, this was acceptable for the changeling was never meant to live and the real baby was alive and well elsewhere (Silver, 1999: 65). Tolkien avoids these violent means, possibly because he found the thought of torturing babies abhorrent and uses another common ploy to uncover changelings; that of confusing them by doing something very strange, outside the normal range of human activity. In this case:

'Bid them grind an acorn, bid them feign
In a shell to cook it for master and men
At midday hour. If he sees that then,
He will speak again.
(*Aotrou*: 35, lines 33-36)

The idea was to confuse the changeling into revealing that it is not the infant it appears to be by causing it to speak. In Tolkien's poem, the changeling, seeing the infant's mother trying to cook for many men in an eggshell cries:

'Mast in a shell for many men!
I saw the first egg before the white hen,
And the acorn before the oak in den³⁷-
There were strange things then.'
(*Aotrou*: 36, lines 49-52)

The creature is obviously a changeling for it is very old and its speech and knowledge are far more than even the most advanced infant would be capable of. Now the identity of the changeling had been confirmed, free rein was allowed in trying to expel it from the house. This alternative means of detecting a changeling is well documented in sources of traditional lore (McLaughlin, 2012: 114; Silver, 1999: 65). In Tolkien's tale the child is

³⁷ Den meaning glen or dell (*Aotrou*: 36)

returned, but not all tales ended so happily, and although the fairies were supposed to return the baby after the changeling was gone, or the child himself could return after 14 years in Faërie, babies were almost never returned (Silver, 1999: 71).

Flieger links the tale to “Ar Bugel Laec’hiet” a lay from Cornwall from Villémarque’s *Barzaz-Breiz* (Aotrou: xvi). Wirt Sikes [1880] in his book *The Realm of Faërie: Fairy Life and Legend in Britain* comments that Villémarque was surprised to hear nearly the same tale told in Glamorganshire as he heard in Brittany, with the rhyming triad that the startled changeling cries nearly the same in both tales. He concluded that the story predated the separation of the Britons of Wales and Armorica that occurred in the seventeenth century (Sikes, 2013 [1900]: 694). In this tale a mother whose child has been abducted is advised by the Virgin Mary to “prepare a meal for ten farm-servants in an egg-shell, which would make the changeling speak” (Sikes, 2013 [1900]: 684). In Villémarque’s version, the surprised changeling, after enquiring of his mother what she is doing, is heard to cry: “I have seen the acorn before I saw the oak: I have seen the egg before I saw the white hen: I have never seen the like of this.” (Sikes, 2013 [1900]: 694) This echoes the exclamation of the changeling in Tolkien’s poem. Like the Glamorgan tale, Tolkien then has his changeling chased from the house with a sword and the woman’s son returned. This is a slightly unusual motif as normally the changelings simply escape without returning the child by flying up the chimney, jumping out a window, or simply disappearing (Spense, 1946: 39-40; Rhys, 1901: 111; McLaughlin, 2012: 269; James, 2014: 85; Silver, 1999: 63). This poem is closely connected to Tolkien’s *Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], one of the poems related to his academic work (discussed in Chapter 4). It is possible that he became interested in Villémarque’s comparison between the Welsh and Breton tales, which induced him to write the poem. This is in keeping with what Tolkien is doing more and more in his depiction of his monsters, that is, combining multiple folkloric traditions from different parts of the world when creating his creatures.

*The Shadow Bride*³⁸ [1936/1962] can be read as a retelling of the Persephone myth (Gammarelli, 2012: 111). Written around 1936 (C&G: 193), the poem begins with a shadowless man sitting still and silent in the forest. He is so motionless that creatures of the forest mistake him for an inanimate object. A maiden comes dancing through the forest and suddenly the man comes to life and seizes her around the waist and wrapping her

³⁸ *The Shadow Bride* is a later version of Tolkien’s poem *The Shadow Man* which was published in 1936 in *The ‘Annual’ of Our Lady’s School, Abingdon*, no 12(1936) p. 9. *The Shadow Bride* was first published in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 and republished with *The Shadow Man* in the expanded edition of that book in 2014 (C&G: 1144-1145).

shadow around him, thus trapping her. They return to the same place at the same time each year to dance. . Rudd suggests that this poem is written about a pagan ritual which included dancing in the forest on Midsummer's Eve when the sun was at its zenith and the man's lack of shadow represents this time of year. Or, Rudd suggests, the man might be under an enchantment that causes him to lack a shadow. But then he says the man seems to lack a consciousness or substance of his own and only gains it from the woman who visits (Rudd, 2011: 31). The poem is short, and gives little detail, but the following lines are used to describe the man in the wood:

There was a man who dwelt alone,
as day and night went past
he sat as still as carven stone,
and yet no shadow cast.
The white owls perched upon his head
beneath the winter moon;
they wiped their beaks and thought him dead
under the stars of June.
(*ATB*: 96, lines 1-8)

This section shows several features common to Faërie creatures. He dwells in an isolated, liminal space, he is so immersed in nature that an owl perches on his head and wipes his beak on him, and most importantly he is stone like "yet no shadow cast" (*ATB* p. 96, line 4). The total lack of a shadow or reflection is associated with the lack of a soul (Lecouteux, 2003: 138). This is in keeping with the belief about fairies lacking a soul found in changeling folklore (Lindahl, 2002: 292-293). It also matches an earlier version of the poem called *The Shadow Man*, in which the man not only has no shadow, but he is mute, and, as we have seen earlier in Tolkien's 1954 letter to Mr Hastings, Tolkien correlates speech and language with the possession of a soul (*Letters*: 191). Therefore, the man is not a living human and dead humans, like fairies, are soulless, and in some versions of folklore the dead and fairies are one and the same. However, no such lack of a shadow is mentioned when Tolkien describes the woman:

\
There came a lady clad in grey
in the twilight shining:

...

He woke, as had he sprung of stone,
and broke the spell that bound him,
he clasped her fast, both flesh and bone,
and wrapped her shadow round him

(ATB: 96, lines 9-10, 13-16)

The woman is very fay-like. She shines in the twilight and the man's method of capturing her by clasping her fast is similar to Tom Bombadil's capture of the river-woman's daughter Goldberry. Yet she obviously has a shadow which goes against her being a soulless fairy at least according to traditional lore. The man might seize her in order to break "the spell that bound him", for companionship, or, if she was mortal, to gain a soul for himself or his offspring, either by being a human/fairy hybrid, or from her milk (Briggs, 1967: 142). This man fulfils Cohen's third and sixth theses for, as a shadowless, soulless man, the man falls defies classification as either wholly fairy or wholly human, yet to seize something or someone that is desired is a temptation for most humans, and thus he represents human's desire for that which is forbidden in society.

Jay Rudd (2011: 31) interprets the poem as suggesting that it is the woman who rises from the earth every Mid-Summer's eve to release the man from his enchantment. However, I agree with Gammarelli, it is the woman who is being held captive much like Persephone being captured by Hades in Greek mythology (2012: 111). The flowers in her hair echo Persephone's connection with fertility.

There never more she walks her ways
by sun or moon or stars;
she dwells below where neither days
nor any nights there are.
(ATB: 97, lines 17-20)

My interpretation is because Tolkien says "never more she walks her ways" he suggests that this is a new condition for her and, prior to being seized, she had more freedom to roam. Her shadow and therefore soul would make her a very tempting target for such a soulless creature. Here, Tolkien is reinterpreting Greek mythology and combining it with British fairy lore to form a British form of the Persephone myth. Whilst this does not constitute the much touted "Mythology for England" (*Letters*: 144), it is creating a British tale with a mythological flavour.

Tolkien has one more poem in which he explores the concept of shadow, reflection, and soul, *Princess Mee*³⁹ [1915/1961]. The poem was originally called *Princess Ni* and

³⁹ *Princess Mee* was written no later than 15 November 1961 for publication in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* published in 1962. It was based on the character *Princess Ni*, a poem which Tolkien first wrote in 1915 and might have revised in 1924 around the time it was first published in *Leeds University Verse 1914-24* p. 58. The two poems were subsequently published in the expanded edition of *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* in 2014 (C&G:1026-1027).

was written in 1915. It was revised for *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1961 (ATB: 169). The poem tells how a beautifully dressed elf-maiden dancing under the moon and stars by a lake becomes fascinated with her own reflection. In the poem, her reflection, called Princess Shee, takes on an existence of her own, being like and yet unlike Princess Mee, in keeping with the idea in Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] that the things of Faërie are the same as the things in the Primary World, albeit with some kind of strange or fantastic transformation (OFS: 32). According to Princess Mee, Princess Shee is:

She was as light
As Mee, and as bright;
But Shee was, strange to tell,
Hanging down
With starry crown
Into a bottomless well!
Her gleaming eyes
In great surprise
Looked up to the eyes of Mee:
A marvellous thing,
Head-down to swing
Above a starry sea!
(ATB: 63, lines 43-53)

Princess Shee has gone beyond an ordinary reflection; she is star crowned and dancing in a starry sea. The meeting point of the two worlds, like Faërie and the Primary World, is narrow and fixed: the two worlds can meet but not fully merge: Princess Mee and Princess Shee, as their names suggest, will always be apart. Tolkien's Faërie, for all its expansiveness and immortality, is bound to the world in such a way that if the Primary World does not exist, nor can it. This creates a kind of paradox around Princess Mee and Princess Shee. Lecouteux points out that both shadows and reflections were thought to be manifestations of a person's soul (Lecouteux, 2003: 138). A soul does not have a soul of its own, therefore Princess Shee is soulless, being an expression of Princess Mee's soul. Therefore, though Princess Mee, appears to inhabit a world which is more expansive, more mystical than Princess Shee, she is earthbound in way that a soul-containing creature is not. Neither Princess Mee or Princess Shee are monstrous in their behaviour, but Princess Shee could be classed as a monster in the she lacks a soul but is not demonic, and therefore fulfils the third of Cohen's theses, an entity that falls between classifications.

Although the first two of these poems are intricately connected to British fairy lore through the motif of fairy abductions, they still represent a shift from Tolkien's early fairy

poems, as darkness or threat associated with Faërie is much more to the fore. These fairies are not pretty, kind, or cute, nor do they make the world around them luminescent. These creatures are why Tolkien labels Faërie “a Perilous Realm” (*OFS*: 27). Curiously, though both monsters have the appearance of humans, they present as beasts, lacking souls, and for most of the time, language, things that, we have already seen in the description of dragons, distinguishes animals from humans. Two of these humanoid monsters, the changeling and the shadow man have the external façade of a human, but, by enslaving their victims, they prove their monstrosity by behaving in a manner that is below bestial, it is diabolical. *Princess Mee* [1915/1961] is the odd poem out here, though her counterpart is as mute and soulless as the shadow man and the changeling, it is the reflection that is the slave, albeit that she exists in a seemingly limitless space. If they share a theme, it appears to be a link between being soulless and the evil of domination.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter on monsters, we can see that Tolkien’s concept of Faërie is expanding in three ways. Firstly, his source material has moved from primarily being based in the British folklore of the Victorian and Edwardian eras to a much broader base. Here he is drawing on Ancient Greek mythology, Bedlamic ballads, nursery rhymes, medieval folklore, and Northern, Breton and Welsh folk tales. Secondly, Tolkien has progressed beyond single folkloric elements in his creations, frequently using more than one source in his poems combining elements from different traditions which gives his creations a sense of familiarity with and therefore authenticity, whilst at the same time giving them a unique twist or flavour. Finally, he has created some unique monsters of his own such as Mewlips, Glip, and Tom Bombadil not found in traditional folklore. Despite this, Tolkien’s Faërie maintains a strong British flavour and continues to be representative of the era in which he was living. In these poems, mainly written around 1918-1938, it is possible to see the disappearance of the pretty Victorian/Edwardian fairies, which faded rapidly after World War I (see Chapter 1), to be replaced by creatures who represent or protest the evil of the world (see Chapter 5). In part, this change might represent the impact of World War I on Tolkien and British society itself, both having witnessed the destructive ferocity of industrialized warfare, in part it might reflect Tolkien’s increasing maturity and a growing confidence in his creative ability. Tolkien is no longer a soldier and is once more immersed in the Northern and Celtic literature associated with his academic career, therefore it is not surprising that we see these elements coming out in his work, but he was well-read, and his influences extend well beyond these narrow influences. The result is a

darker, richer, and more interesting Faërie which is increasingly being woven into his legendarium.

These poems include a much wider range of creatures than his early works. Not all monsters are monstrous in the hideous, cruel, or revolting sense, though all in some way threaten the status quo in human society as demonstrated by their compliance with Cohen's theses of monstrosity. Several of his monsters, including the troll from *The Bumpus* [1928], the dragon from *The Dragon's Visit* [1928], and the Man in the Moon, behave better than their human counterparts, as I shall discuss in Chapter 5, the chapter on Evil. Even his femmes fatales could be said to be evil purely from a human standpoint. Maybe this is what distinguishes monsters from humans, that their world view is different from that of a human, and therefore, they can be considered "other" and somehow less "civilized" than their human counterparts, whether this is true or not. These themes will be developed further in his "academic poems" as discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 3: Faërie Landscapes

3.1 Features of Faërie

According to Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939]:

Faerie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (*OFS*: 32)

So far in this thesis I have focussed on the creatures of Faërie, but, as the quote above shows, this is only half the story, for Faërie is a place. This chapter will analyse Tolkien's early and late Faërie realms. The middle phase of his development of Faërie – the academic and protest branches, will be examined in the next two chapters. This is because in the academic branch (see Chapter 4), Tolkien is drawing from the works he taught when lecturing at Oxford, and his landscapes are restricted by the settings contained within the original works. In his protest branch (see Chapter 5), Tolkien is inserting Faërie creatures into the Primary World where they act as the voice of Nature and true morality, remonstrating against the deleterious effects of modernity on human beings and the mortal world, so his landscapes fall outside Faërie proper. In his early poems, Tolkien appeared to explore a range of settings for his Faërie, just as he experimented with a range of fairy beings before settling on his elves and I will discuss these in the first half of this chapter. However, in these earlier works, rather than settling on one manifestation of Faërie, he explored multiple spaces and he tended to carry several threads from these topographies into his later representations of Faërie. Motifs such as jewelled beaches, shadowy seas, forests and the triad of the cloud, tree, and star, are used again and again in his depictions of Faërie, though the former occur earlier in his writing than the latter. For, from the 1940's onwards, Tolkien began to use more and more images drawn from medieval representations of Paradise in his description of Faërie landscapes. This amalgamation of two of his passions, his love of Faërie and his Catholic faith, were hallmarks of his late depictions of Faërie and I will discuss this in the second half of this chapter.

Before I begin my analysis of individual settings, I will pause here to discuss some of the fundamental features that all of Tolkien's Faërie landscapes possess; to do this I will look briefly at one of Tolkien's early poems, *Goblin Feet* [1915]. The landscape of this Faërie is made up of the same objects as the Primary World, though Tolkien's actual

description of the land in this poem is sparse. There is a “road” or “a crooked fairy land” that is surrounded by “hedges and grasses” (*H*: 113, lines 1, 18, 6). But in this simple scene, when the fairies are present, things take on a vitality or animism not seen in the Primary World. Even the voices of the fay creatures have a luminescence to them.

Where the fairy lanterns glowed
And the little pretty flittermice are flying:
A slender band of grey
It runs creepily away

...

And where silvery they sing
In a moving moonlit ring
All a-twinkle with the jewels they have on.

(*H*: 113 lines 2-4, 20-22)

Compared to the light and beauty of Faërie, the Primary World is murky and dull. This is because fairies are supernatural as discussed in Chapter 1. Yet, like the riverbank in *The Last Ship* [1962] (see below), this change is transient and quickly ceases once the fairies themselves have moved on: “They are fading round the turn/Where the glow-worms palely burn/ And the echo of their padding feet is dying!” (*H*: 113, lines 23-25). Thus, “Faërie is the land of Wonder. There all things are either strange, or else seen in a strange light which reveals them (even when their shape is unchanged) as things ominous and significant” (*OFS*: 256-257). The beauty and the spectacle of the road fills the speaker with a yearning to connect with it in some deeper way, yet it always remains elusive. The combination of awe and unfulfilled desire it triggers is one of the aspects of Faërie that make it a perilous realm, creating a longing and desire that is not entirely fulfilled by the Primary World. Yet Faërie, according to Tolkien, could refresh and reinvigorate the reader by allowing them to see the world around them with a new wonder and appreciation or, in some rarer cases, to catch a glimpse of the *evangelium*, the miracle that awaits humans beyond this earthly realm (*OFS*: 66-75).

The Primary World is connected to Faërie and this conjunction occurs in liminal spaces, that is when one thing is transitioning into another. This liminality manifests itself in space or time. Spatially, it is seen where one type of landscape becomes another, for example forests or shorelines, or where civilization and wilderness intersect, as in gardens, or the country lane of this poem. Temporally, Faërie connects with the Primary World

when there is a turning point in time, for example at dawn or dusk or at the summer or winter solstice. Firiël meets the elves at dawn in Tolkien's poem *The Last Ship* [1962] (see later in this Chapter), whereas the woman was abducted at the summer solstice in *The Shadow Bride* [1936/1962] (see Chapter 2). This temporality in Faërie is at odds with the seemingly timeless nature of Faërie portrayed in *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915] (see Appendix). Finally, these landscapes often hold a symbolism that becomes manifest the more that the items in the landscape are analysed. This will become more apparent during my discussion of Tolkien's early Faërie starting with his forests.

3.2 The Forests of Blighty

Forests play an important role in Tolkien's legendarium symbolising many different things including Old Magic, the voice of Nature, and a Faërie within a Faërie. However, one of the most important functions of the forest in Tolkien's early poems was to establish the Englishness of Tolkien's Faërie. This connection between nature and fairies had a new significance in 1915 with the invention of the image of "Blighty", a fictional depiction of England as a pre-industrial, idyllic landscape (Garth, 2003: 124; Bown, 2001: 183-184). The propaganda of the time emphasised this motif as "a sturdy symbol of tradition" (De Groot, 1998: 11). The vision of well-tended fields, neatly trimmed hedgerows, and well-ordered, rustic villages was a treasured English myth. I argue this depiction of the landscape links into the Victorian and Edwardian tradition of "Anglo-Saxonism", which as Fimi describes, carries with it, the belief in a 'Golden Age' of Englishness before the Norman invasion when not only was the landscape pristine but institutions were just and democratic and the English were truly free (2009: 53-54). The image of Blighty became a kind of Faërie paradise, a never-never land where the young soldiers could not only escape the reality of Edwardian Britain but also the horror of the trenches and return to "their lost fairyland, their childhood" (Bown, 2001: 183-184). A central image of this mythic landscape is Estella Canziani's *The Piper of Dreams* which sold 250,000 copies in 1914 alone (Bown, 2001: 184). The picture echoes Tolkien's *Wood Sunshine* poem (see Chapter 1), depicting a small boy piping in a wood surrounded by primroses and faint wisps of transparent fairies (see Figure 2). The scene is an adult's vision of a desirable childhood and it draws its power from the soldier's yearning for it rather than from actual memory.



Figure 2: Piper of Dreams, by Estella Canziani, The Medici Society. Reproduced by permission.

The mass media and propagandists were quick to exploit Blighty and its fairy inhabitants. J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, which had premiered in 1904, became hugely popular during the first two decades of the twentieth century (though the line "to die would be an awfully big adventure" was removed from the 1915 version (Purkiss, 2000: 272)). Tolkien saw the play *Peter Pan* on 11 April 1910 at age eighteen (Fimi, 2009: 35). In his diary he wrote that the play was "Indescribable but shall never forget it as long as I live" and in the same year he wrote the first of his fairy poems (Fimi, 2009: 35). Such was the impact of the play on the British Public, to fight for the Never-Never Land of Blighty became a rallying point for the young men of the day (Bown, 2001: 186). Pan himself became a kind of hero of the empire (Purkiss, 2000: 271) and more fairy plays followed (Fimi, 2009: 29). Plays such as *Britain's Defenders* had fairies blatantly calling young men to war. To quote a description of the play by Diane Purkiss:

the nature fairies gather to defeat [the] invasion; Britannia points out that wind and wave successfully beat off the Armada. Will-o-the-Wisp helpfully offers to lead the German planes into marshes, while Thunder and Lightning fairies are at hand to

frighten the enemy, and Rain to help Mist veil the sun. Once assembled, the gallant band sing a song:

Fairy bells are ringing
'Forward to the fray!'
Fairy bands must' ring
Through night and day,
Fairy voices calling,
'Britain needs your aid'.
(Purkiss, 2000: 279)

If things as delicate and fragile as the fairies could rise up against the evil menace of Germany, how could strapping young men do less?

Even the politicians of the day couched their call to arms in terms of a kind of courtly, almost Arthurian language. To quote Lloyd George in September 1914: "the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the Great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger of Heaven" (De Groot, 1998: 9). The language here implies the courtly chivalric traditions of courage, sacrifice, and honour. Therefore, both Heaven and Nature (in the form of fairies) were on the side of Britain against Germany, the barbaric aggressor. It was a young man's duty to go to war all in the name of fairness (Reeves, 1999: 19). This fits in with the image of the perfect death from H.A Vachell's *The Hill* which was standard reading in schools at the turn of the century:

To die young, clean, ardent; to die swiftly, in perfect health; to die saving others from death, or worse – disgrace- to die scaling heights; to die and carry with you into the fuller ampler life beyond, untainted hopes and aspirations, unembittered memories, all the freshness and gladness of May – is not that a cause for joy rather than sorrow. (De Groot, 1998: 36)

Alas, all these images were very, very far from the terrifying and stinking reality of the trenches.

But there was a problem. In World War I philologically the two main factions, Germany and England, were cousins if not brothers, thus there was a close similarity not only in their language, but also in their mythology (Shippey, 2003: 14-15). This meant that whilst St. George, slayer of dragons and the Patron Saint of England, was calling troops to fight for Britain (Darracott, 1974: 71), he was also helping to raise funds for the Sixth Austrian War loan (Rickards, 1968: 26). An important element in war is to demonise the opposition. This is relatively easy when there are marked cultural differences as in the war on Japan in World War II, but much harder when the opposition is not only Christian but

has a folklore and mythology which is very similar to one's own. Attempts were made by some clergy in Britain to label World War I a holy war (Loconte, 2015: 29), but the mud, rats, and senseless death of the trenches were too far divorced from the world of the church for the average soldier to relate to Christianity in a meaningful way, particularly as the war dragged on. A story that circulated around France told of a clergyman saying to a soldier:

“So, you are going to fight God's war?” After getting no reply, he repeats the question. “Don't you believe in God's war?” A soldier looks at him wearily and replies: “Sir, hadn't you better keep your poor Friend out of this bloody mess?” (Loconte, 2015: 48)

Germany and Britain shared both Christian beliefs and many of the same folklore heroes, so how to create a difference? Faërie has the flexibility and reach to encompass both beauty and horror, honour, and immorality, and the good and evil of the battlefield. It could also be manipulated in such a way as to create a point of difference between Germany and Britain. True to their fairy roots, the propaganda battle lines were drawn up in the green wood.

To the Germans the primeval forests of Germany were places of self-assertion, the place of their victory over their Roman oppressors. Cornelius Tacitus describes these pagan Germans in his work *Germania* as a fierce, but primitive race with a distinctive appearance for whom woods or groves held special import:

For my own part, I agree with those who think that the tribes of Germany are free from all taint of inter-marriages with foreign nations, and that they appear as a distinct, unmixed race, like none but themselves. Hence, too, the same physical peculiarities throughout so vast a population. All have fierce blue eyes, red hair, huge frames, fit only for a sudden exertion. (Tacitus, 1942, Chapter IV)

The Germans, however, do not consider it consistent with the grandeur of celestial beings to confine the gods within walls, or to liken them to the form of any human countenance. They consecrate woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to the abstraction which they see only in spiritual worship. (Tacitus, 1942, Chapter IX)

Although Tacitus's speech seems a strange one to draw national pride from, the fact is these German barbarians defeated the sophisticated Romans, and these men and the woods that they inhabited became places and symbols of the nation's honour (Schama, 1996: 15; Arnds, 2002: 425). German rhetoric placed an emphasis on the purity of the forest, the sheer harshness of the environment resisting invasion by species that are alien to it (Schama, 1996: 107). The Germans recognised that woods were wild and perilous places,

but this danger ensured that those people strong enough to endure the isolation and trials of the dark, forbidding wood become a racially pure, biologically superior Aryan or Nordic race. This was a popular theme in the archaeological and prehistorical literature around the time of World War I (Schama, 1996: 118). These children of nature (Bernheimer, 1952: 3-4), these noble German savages were far superior to the land of insatiably greedy shopkeepers of Britain (Jelavich, 2002: 32). Tolkien would later embrace the concept of the wild-man in several of his characters including the woodwoses, Turin (Fimi, 2013: 49), and even his Wood Elves, but for now the Germans laid claim to the wild-men.

For the British, the forest was the place where the monarch displayed his power yet also redressed the injustices of his officials (Schama, 1996: 15). Even if one considers legendary heroes such as Robin Hood, there is a certain order and justice associated with the British forest. It is also the dwelling place of fairies; but, as has been discussed, Victorian and Edwardian fairies were delicate, beautiful, even minute, and most of all moral: very different beings from the German wild-man. The differing views of the green wood can be seen in the folklore of the British trenches. On the British side, ranks were bolstered by the ghostly bowmen of Agincourt who rose from their graves to assist their beleaguered countrymen, sometimes rallied by St George himself if the tale by Arthur Machen is to be believed (Machen, 2020: 7-27). Their arrows were said to slay Germans but leave no mark (Machen, 2020: 10). On the other hand, the German barbarians were not only accused of the usual rape, mutilation, and torture, but also crucifying a Canadian soldier and turning corpses into bully beef (Fussell, 1977: 246; Graves, 1998: 183-184). This British image of the German depicted the less savoury aspects of a medieval wild-man including appalling ugliness, cannibalism, and a frightful temper (Bernheimer, 1952: 44). Tolkien uses forests and woodlands extensively in his Faërie landscapes which might be both an expression of his love of trees and his patriotism; for the forest is one of the few places where there is a significant disparity in the folklores of England and Germany and thus can be used to form a point of difference to make England's enemy other. The theme of war and forests is at its most prominent in Tolkien's poem *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915] (see Appendix), but it is a recurrent theme in his Faërie, appearing in many different guises as we shall see below.

As Corrine Saunders notes in her book *The Forest of Medieval Romance* (1993), forests are ambiguous landscapes where the Primary World and the world of fantasy meet. Associated with this are recurrent themes of rape, idyll, hunt, otherworld, quest, and madness (Saunders, 1993: 132-133), several of which Tolkien will use in his non-Middle-

earth poetry. In *Wood Sunshine* [1910] (see Chapter 1), there is little description of the wood in which the sprites dance, apart from a “green and brown carpet” (*Bio*: 47, line 4). From the protagonist’s response, however, it is obviously an environment that he feels secure in, that he feels wonder in, that is somehow apart from the Primary World in which he lives. There is beauty and magic here that is not encountered in ordinary life, but this is impermanent, being threatened by the march of modern life. This is a tiny idyllic spot in an increasingly industrialised world. Unlike *Wood Sunshine* [1910], the landscape of the forest in *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915] (see Appendix) takes centre stage. This prominence of flora over fauna is true of many of Tolkien’s early poems as in *Goblin Feet* [1915], *Kor: In a City Lost and Dead* [1915], and *A Song of Aryador* [1915] (see Chapter 1), where the fairies, if present, are shadowy, indistinct, or invisible, whilst the surroundings evoke the atmosphere and emotion of the scene. The trees of *Kortirion* [1915] have an animism for they are galleons sailing across a timeless land or lordly warriors guarding the countryside, ever changing yet unchanging as they follow the recurring seasons over the centuries. Their agelessness is in stark contrast to the increasing decrepitude of the mortal realm. This is a good example of the paradox that occurs in Faërie time, where it is moving both fast and slow at the same time. Yet, as Tolkien ages himself, the vitality of the land fades, the brightness and richness of the land dwindles and the wintertime leaves the trees more tattered, ghostly, adrift; “windy ghosts/ Are wafted by cold airs to friendless coasts” (*LT I*: 42, lines 114-115). Initially an idyll, as Tolkien ages, the forest becomes more distant and remote, more otherworldly, though it is still close enough to him that he would choose to spend his last days within its boundaries.

The mood *Kortirion* [1915] evokes in its final version is regret, loss, and nostalgia, but this is quite different to the ghostly otherness found in *A Song of Aryador* [1915]. In *A Song of Aryador* [1915], Tolkien is imbuing the land with a similar animism found in *Kortirion*. The land’s voice is found in its plant life with “murmurous reeds” and “blue woods [that] moan” (*LT I*: 139, lines 4, 9) and the Sun “has gone alone/ To hunt the mountain-shadows in the pines” (*LT I*: 139, lines 10-11). It is hard to separate the fairies from the land itself, for the fairies are both indistinct and share the muted voices of the landscape: “shadow-folk that murmur in the fern” (*LT I*: 139, line 13). This shadowy, dark realm is in stark contrast with the goats and gleaming lights of the Primary World in the valley down below.

But the great woods on the height
 Watch the waning western light
 And whisper to the wind of things of yore,

When the valley was unknown,
And the waters roared alone,
And the shadow-folk danced downward all the night,
When the Sun had fared abroad
Through great forest unexplored
(*LT I*: 139, lines 18-24)

Ancient, isolated, “unknown”, and “unexplored”, this land is far more alien than the wood of *Kortirion* [1915], with a definite sense that the woman who is lost within its borders is in a subtle kind of danger. This is otherworld, maybe with a hint of rape and, though this was written in 1915, there is much about it that reminds me of Mirkwood in *The Hobbit* [1937]. In the forest of *The Shadow Bride* [1936/1962] (see Chapter 2), the possibility of abduction and/or rape is much more apparent, though in this case the forest is merely a portal to the otherworld rather than the otherworld itself. If *Wood Sunshine* [1910] represents an idyll, and *Kortirion Among the Trees* [1915] a kind of chivalry, these poems are drawing closer to the madness and lawlessness motifs of the medieval forest.

Finally, there is the wood in *The Sea-bell*⁴⁰ [1962], a wood in which the protagonist, who has tried to invade Faërie is sent (see Chapter 5). In this case the forest is represented as dead and mouldering, a thing of crawling insects and decay

I crept to a wood, silent it stood
in its dead leaves; bare were its boughs,

...

beetles were tapping in the rotten trees,
spiders were weaving, in the mould heaving
puffballs loomed about my knees.

(*ATB*: 106, lines 73-74, 78-80)

Whilst existing in that wood, the protagonist is drained of life, to become a mere shadow of what he was when he first entered Faërie. Faërie has become the land of the dead like the ghostly wintertime scenes in *Kortirion* [1915], but a land without the reprieve of the vibrant green world of the springtime. The wood of *The Sea-bell* [1962] feels more diseased, fouler, albeit that it is natural, echoing the sick mind of the Voyager with his hubris and greed (as we shall see in Chapter 5). This echoes the sentiment that Aragorn expresses when he indicates that often the evil found in Faërie realms such as Lothlorien is

⁴⁰ *The Sea-bell* is a revision of Tolkien's 1930s poem *Looney* and was written in the early 1960s for publication in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (*C&G*: 1135).

the evil that they themselves bring to the land (*FR*: 338). In the Voyager's case, his evil becomes evident as a catatonic state of insanity which becomes manifest when he enters the wood. Thus, this wood is a place of justice as well as madness. As Verlyn Flieger argues, Tolkien is playing with the connection between the Old English word for mad, *wód*, which became the Middle English word *wode* or *wood*, indicating an altered state of consciousness, and the modern word wood denoting a forest (Flieger, 2017: 131). Yet the Voyager's presence in the wood gives a depth or darkness to his insanity, not seen in the protagonist Looney, in Tolkien's earlier poem *Looney* [1932-33], whose madness connects him to the land. I shall discuss this further in Chapter 5.

Tolkien's forest landscapes are a diverse group, creating vastly different moods and having very different effects on the protagonists who enter them. They are places of innocence and wonder, Britishness, rape, idyll, hunt, otherworld, transition, quest, madness, and justice. They are frequently animated landscapes, with trees in particular seeming to have anthropomorphic properties such as speech, though not in a language that is intelligible to humans. Their clear boundaries, their enclosed insularity, and their liminality as sites where the wild and civilized meet, make forests prime locations where *aventures* in Faërie might occur. In general, there is a move away from the beauty and Britishness of his early forests into woods that are more alien and often more hostile to the humans who enter them creating landscapes in which humans are clearly not in control. This contrasts with the next Faërie landscape I shall discuss, gardens, which are wildernesses that humans themselves create.

3.3 The Garden and Faërie

The garden as Faërie is most prominent in Tolkien's early poetry. Poems such as *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], *Tinfang Warble* [1915], *Over Old Hills and Far Away* [1916], and *The Grey Bridge over Tavrobel* [1917] all include gardens. Gardens and gardening were part of the milieu of Edwardian society being associated with a kind of wholesomeness or "right thinking". To quote David Matless: "Land is a pretty good mirror of a man's state of mind... A countryside of weeds and broken hedges will point surely to demoralization of the community living upon it, just as well-ordered cultivations will show its self-confidence and power" (Matless, 1998: 173). In an interview in 1918, Winston Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, said to Siegfried Sassoon, soldier, author, and soldier's advocate, "War is the normal occupation of man... war and gardening" (Helphand, 2006: 1). As Helphand points out, in that statement lies the

dichotomy of man, the warrior and the pacifist, the destroyer and the creator, the chaotic and the tranquil. As we saw above, the propaganda of the war focussed on the rural idyll of the mythical Blighty, and by gardening it was possible to create miniature “Blighties” to remind the soldiers of what they were fighting for (Helphand, 2006). The army seemed to encourage this practice; sometimes running inter-platoon gardening competitions (Fussell, 1977: 254), though it is unknown if Tolkien took part in such contests.

Gardens, like Tolkien’s forests, could be an expression of Englishness, for English gardens have a rather unique design. The garden repeats the contained nature of the lane and hedgerow but here the plants are “artfully arranged to imitate nature”, a hallmark of English garden design and very different from the rigidity of Continental gardens (Elliott, 1986: 10, 56). This can be seen in Tolkien’s poem *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] in which the fairy-laden garden appears half-wild, half-cultivated creating an interconnected equilibrium between land and sea, wilderness and civilization, rationality and imagination. There is no spring to water the plants of this paradise, rather Tolkien includes the sea, for England is an island and its physical characteristics, and its people are shaped by their connection to the sea (Peters-Corbett, 2002: 123). The flowers of the garden might be seen in any Victorian cottage garden and the May tree is traditionally linked with fairies and therefore, at least in the eyes of the Victorians, with childish innocence. Tolkien’s garden is a very English kind of paradise; an island of the Blest, a place of innocent, peaceful perfection where time appears to stand still, and danger, horror, and death are unknown.

In Tolkien’s poem this garden is not only a place of peace, but also a place of plenty. It contains or represents all those things that are lost in wartime: beauty, peace, childhood, innocence, fruitfulness, trees, flowers, the feminine, and sadly, at the end of the war, a belief in fairies. In many ways it also echoes the losses Tolkien experienced during his childhood after the poverty induced by the death of his father, and the love and security after the death of his mother. If Faërie is the land of desire (*OFS*: 256), one only has to look at this garden to see the things that were very close to Tolkien’s heart. These themes are prominent in Tolkien’s early Faërie poetry but will fade out as he gradually rejects the cute childishness of the Edwardian fairies.

In a letter to Amy Ronald in 1969, Tolkien expressed a lifelong fascination with plant life and how he loved to read books about them:

All illustrated botany books (or better, contact direct with an unfamiliar flora) have for me a special fascination. Not so much the rare, unusual, or totally unrelated specimens, as in the variations and permutations of flowers that are the evident *kin* of those I know—but not the same. They rouse in me visions of kinship and descent through great ages, and also thoughts of the mystery of pattern/design as a thing other than its individual embodiment, and recognizable. (*Letters*: 402)

Though many of these books were scientific in nature, Tolkien says he loved illustrated botany books and I wonder if some included the meaning of the flowers in the Victorian language of flowers. When studying Tolkien's use of plants, I was struck by the connection of the flower asphodel with mourning and death in *Kortirion* [1915/1937] and the name Lobelia Sackville Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]; Lobelia means malevolence, a fitting name for the character (Greenaway, 2010 [1884]: 27, *FR*: 37, 66). I wondered if the flowers in *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] and *The Little House of Lost Play* [prior to 1962] had any meaning. To do this I have tried as much as possible to source books that would have been printed by 1915, though am often using reprints of these works, hence the later dates of publishing. It is intriguing to suggest that the meanings of the flowers in Tolkien's garden, at least in the first two versions of the poem, might be a message of love to his future wife Edith. The message reads True Love, I share your sentiments, forever, pure love, fruitfulness and ambition, (I forgive you?), with open heart (see Table 6).

Name of Flower	Folkard (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 185-188)	(Henry, 2016)	Pickles (Pickles, 1990)	Gray (Gray, 2011)	Pickston (Pickston, 1960)	Royal Horticultural Society (Trenter, 2004)	Greenaway (Greenaway, 2010) [1884]
For-get-me-not	Faithful, remembrance For-get-me-not	Forget me not, True love, faithfulness (1660)	True Love (36)	True Love Hope Memories (50)	True Love (11)	True Love (p.23)	True Love For-get-me-not (18)

Daisy (Red)	Innocence, I share your sentiments	Beauty without pride (1303)	Innocence (32)	Beauty, purity, loyal love, patience (78)	Unconscious (10)	I share your sentiment (15)	I share your sentiment (15)
Box	Firmness Stoicism	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	Stability (5)	Not recorded	Stoicism (10)
Phlox	Not recorded	Unanimity (3370)	Agreement (79)	Not recorded	Unanimity (21)	Not recorded	Unanimity (33)
Pinks	Pure ardent love	Fair, pleasing, love (3409)	Not recorded	Not recorded	Boldness (21)	Not recorded	Pure love Boldness (33)
Hollyhock	ambition	Ambition, desirous of praise (2056)	Female ambition (44)	Female ambition, fruitful, fertility, you stand out from the crowd (108)	Fecundity (14)	Not recorded	Ambition, fecundity (21)
Nemophile	Not recorded	Sincere, unpresuming love (3083)	Not recorded	Not recorded	I forgive you (?) ⁴¹ (19)	Not recorded	Not recorded

⁴¹ Tolkien specifically mentions blue nemophile. In the Victorian language of flowers, the colour of the flowers may alter their meaning. Unfortunately, I could only find one source that even mentioned nemophile and this did not refer to a colour, so the meaning is unclear. Tolkien removes nemophile in the final version of his poem. Other references give meanings of innocence or pure heart. Or Tolkien may be using the Greek meaning here “lover of woodlands”

Larkspur	Open heart.	Lightness levity (2389)	Not recorded	Not recorded	Lightness levity (16)	Not recorded	Lightness Levity (26)
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Table 1: The Flowers in You and Me and The Cottage of Lost Play and their Meanings in the Victorian Language of Flowers.

Tolkien wrote a last version of this poem called *The Little House of Lost Play* [prior to 1962] or *Mar Vanwa Tyaliéva*, probably in the 1960's at around the same time as the final version of *Kortirion among the Trees* [1962] (C&G: 620). In this poem, two children enter the garden, but this time only as observers, somehow detached from Faërie itself (see Chapter 1). The flowers too contain some differences. There are lupins in this garden, a flower connected with voraciousness and imagination (Greenaway, 2010 [1884]: 27), and the King's crown is made of marigolds, a complex flower, related to uneasiness, jealousy, cruelty, sacred affections and - most commonly but most poignantly - grief (Greenaway, 2010 [1884]: 28; Pickston, 1960: 18; Henry, 2016: 2744-2755). The language of this garden still tells a story of love but one of also creativity and imagination. Darker elements and the alienation between humans and Faërie seem have grown in prominence. This poem, like the last version of *Kortirion* [1962], seems to reflect Tolkien's growing alienation from Faërie, a point which is most strongly seen in his poem *The Sea-bell* [1962] as I shall discuss further in Chapter 5.

Tolkien mentions another garden in his poem *The Grey Bridge Over Tavrobel* [1917], but this garden is quite different from the lush vibrancy of *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] series. Here there is no sunlight or even starlight, rather the whole scene is shrouded in an eerie mist. The poem evokes the same uncanny feeling of the winter trees in *Kortirion among the Trees* [1937/1962]. This is reinforced by the third verse of the poem quoted earlier in Chapter 1 where the woman's "little garden withers/ In Tavrobel beneath the hill" (Garth, 2003: 208, lines 10-11). If Tolkien's gardens are symbolic of plenty, childlike innocence and peace, the fading of the garden in this poem might represent the loss of innocence, the loss of beauty, the loss of childhood, the loss of peace, even the loss of creativity that Tolkien might have feared as he returned from the trenches of the Somme (see Chapter 5). In this way, the garden is almost the antithesis of the garden in *You and Me and The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], as the imagery surrounding this garden is far

from the lushness of Tolkien's cottage garden. Rather it echoes the ambiguity surrounding the protagonists of the poem. Somehow both seem to be caught between life and death.

As a meeting point between nature and civilization the garden in *Tinfang Warble* [1915] and *Over Old Hills and Far Away* [1916] are liminal zones, a point at which the Primary World and Faërie intersect, enabling the protagonist to hear and follow the elusive Tinfang. Such liminal spaces are traditional in Faërie, though a garden is not normally one of them, possibly because in other countries the gardens are more "civilized" than in Britain. Unlike the flower fairies popular in Victorian times, Tinfang is a creature of the land, and, when given the opportunity, swiftly leads the human into more remote climes. So, in this case, the garden is more a gateway to Faërie than Faërie itself.

Gardens feature in Tolkien's early and late non-Middle-earth poetry and, like his forests, are liminal spaces often possessing unique characteristics. Tolkien used this image in more than one way⁴², and probably layers in different meanings through a combination of folklore and symbolism for those with the knowledge to see, making the landscape deeper and more complex than it appears, for the symbolism in the landscape can alter the mood or even the theme of the poem (see the discussion on *The Sea-bell* in chapter 5). In this case the gardens are associated with innocence, childhood, peace, creativity, and the feminine side of nature. They also, like the forest, have an Englishness in their nature, though in this case they are wilder rather than less wild than their European counterparts. This Englishness allows the garden to act as a liminal space, creating an entry point into Faërie itself. The poems discussed in this section are drawn from Tolkien's early poetry, but he revisited the theme of gardens in his later poems, though this time the garden took the specific form of Paradise, as discussed later in this chapter.

3.4 On the Shore

As previously mentioned, the shore, like the forest, is traditionally a liminal space and therefore is both a dwelling place of fairies and an entry point to Faërie itself. Beowulf enters the underworld of Grendel's mother's lair through a pool, and British and Irish fairy folklore continue to be filled with a variety of island Faërie realms (*Beowulf*: 56; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 19). Tolkien almost invariably chooses to have his

⁴² He also uses it as a kind of Paradise as discussed later in this chapter.

protagonists cross over the water to Faërie in a boat, the one exception being *The Grey Bridge of Tavrobel* [1917] where, as the title suggests, the river is crossed over by a bridge. Tolkien certainly seems to view crossing water as a kind of transition, though whether this is drawing from the Irish tradition of Imramma as Kris Swank (2015) suggests, or whether he is drawing on a broader British fairy tradition probably varies over time. The difference might be moot as Briggs comments the similarity between Irish and Welsh folklore which runs from the Middle Ages right through to the nineteenth century making some of the traditions merge (Briggs, 1959: 12). In the case of *The Grey Bridge Over Tavrobel* [1917], water was considered to be the threshold between life and death, echoing the role of the River Styx in Greek Mythology (Harris, 2009: 13). Although there is no bridge over the Styx, bridges were a common motif in early Christian tales about transitioning between life and death. In early Christian literature, a bridge passed between Purgatory and Paradise and was a place of testing; often narrow and spanning across flaming rivers of pitch or fiery monsters, these were places where souls might meet their past deeds (Zaleski, 1988: 62-65). Irish mythology has a bridge, seen in the “Vision of Adamnán” whose width depended upon the state of one’s soul, becoming narrower for the sinful, and wider for the saved (Zaleski, 1988: 68). The combination of a grey, indistinct landscape, the almost ghostly figure of the man, and the withering garden give a spectral atmosphere to the scene which is reinforced when the woman says that her love is “beyond the rivers” (Garth, 2003: 207-208, line 12). Here again, Tolkien is not only conjuring the underworld of Ancient Greece with its rivers, but also the medieval poem *Pearl*, where the father is separated from his now saintly daughter by a river. Water is clearly a barrier no matter in what way it is crossed.

Tolkien continues this theme of crossing water to the land of the dead in his *Kortirion* [1937/1962] poems, where, particularly in the 1960’s version, Tolkien’s poem has the most references to death and dying:

Through pallid mists seen rising tall and wan,
 Like vessels vague that slowly drift afar
 Out, out to empty seas beyond the bar
 Of cloudy ports forlorn;
 Leaving behind for ever havens loud,

... they now like windy ghosts
 Are wafted by cold airs to friendless coasts,
 And silent down the tide are borne.

(*LT I*: 42-43, lines 108-112, 114-116)

This landscape echoes the indistinctness and eeriness of *The Grey Bridge of Tavrobel* [1917], along with its motifs of death. This is again seen to a degree in the poem *The Nameless Land*⁴³ [1924], where Tolkien proclaims: “O! shore beyond the Shadowy Sea, O! land forlorn where lost things are,” (*Lost Road*: 111, lines 51-53). In the later versions of this poem, the land of the lost things becomes the land of the Edhil and the land becomes one of light rather than of “solemn surges on the bar” (*Lost Road*: 111, line 54). Whereas in the landscapes of forest and garden Faërie and the Primary World merge, water acts more as a conduit to Faërie, Paradise, or the land of the Dead in Tolkien’s poems.

The shoreline of Tolkien’s Faërie has two distinctive features. Firstly, water reacts differently to the presence of fairies than land in Tolkien’s view for it does not shine so much as move. *Firiel*⁴⁴ [1930s] and its later version *The Last Ship*⁴⁵ [1962], are poems where the last elves leaving the Primary World try to entice a mortal woman to go with them. In *Firiel*, though the woman is tempted by their offer, she recognizes that she is a mortal woman, and chooses to remain where she is. When she returns to her house, there is work, but also laughter, good simple food, and her own version of immortality in the form of her family. In this poem the water “quiver[s]” at the approach of the elven ship, whilst the land is filled with light (*ATB*: 110, line 20). In *The Sea-Bell* [1962] the ocean “simmers” on the shores of Faërie, while the jewel laden shore glitters and glimmers in the starlight (*ATB*: 104, line 21). Quivering and simmering, though not entirely abnormal movements of water, are not words that are usually associated with bodies of water in their natural state. It seems that the natural world somehow responds to the power of the elves without them having to perform magic overtly for in both *The Last Ship* [1962] and *Looney*⁴⁶/*The Seabell* [1932/1933/1962] any fairies/elves present are simply making music or dancing. Jewelled beaches, particularly at twilight are one of the early signatures of Tolkien’s Faërie. These are seen in *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], *Looney/The Sea-bell* [1932-1933/1962] and *The Death of Saint Brendan/Imram* [1945-1946/1955]. In the *Cottage* [1915] and *Looney* [1932-1933], the beaches are covered in pearls, however, in *The Sea-bell* [1962]: “Glittering sand slid through my hand/ dust of pearl and jewel-grist,/ trumpets of opal, roses of coral,/ flutes of green and amethyst” (*ATB*: 104, lines 25-28).

⁴³ *The Nameless Land* was written around 1924 when Tolkien was at Leeds and first published in *Realities: An Anthology of Verse* in 1937. It was revised into *The Song of Ælfwine* in 1937 and again in 1945 (*C&G*:826-827).

⁴⁴ *Firiel* was written in the 1930s and was first published in the *Chronicle of the Convents of the Sacred Heart* 4 in 1934.

⁴⁵ *The Last Ship* is the revised version of *Firiel* written in 1962 for *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* in 1962 (*C&G*: 641-642).

⁴⁶ *Looney* was written some time between 1932-1933 and was first published in the *Oxford Magazine* in 1933 (*C&G*:1135).

Faërie is a land of desire (*OFS*: 256), and although it is said to contain riches and jewels, I could not find any mention of jewelled or pearl encrusted beaches in the fairy lore that I have read for this thesis. However, in the medieval poem *Pearl*:

The adornments of that wondrous deep
Were beauteous banks of beryl bright:
Swirling sweetly its waters sweep,
(Tolkien, 1975: 92, lines 1-3)

The banks of the river are encrusted with beryl, multicoloured gemstones which range from clear to pinks, blues, and greens. Further on in the poem, the stream bed is awash with jewels: “For emerald, sapphire, or jewel bright/ Was every pebble in the pool there pent,” (Tolkien, 1975: 92, lines 9-10). Thus, Tolkien appears to be drawing some of his Faërie imagery from medieval representations of Paradise rather than Faërie itself. This might be the first indication that Tolkien is starting to merge the concept of Paradise and Faërie together. This started early in his Faërie writings as in *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* was written in 1915, but it does not really become a major theme until the 1940’s, in what I am calling the third phase of his vision of Faërie, where the Irish Imramma come to the fore, as discussed later in this chapter.

In Tolkien’s paired poems *Firiel* [1930s] written in the early 1930’s and *The Last Ship* [1962] written around 1962 (*C&G*: 181, 641-642)⁴⁷, the bank of the river is not covered in jewels as such, but like the garden in *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915], the presence of the elves turns the landscape of the garden and the riverbank as well as the woman herself into a place of wondrous, sparkling light. In some ways this is merely because of the sun on the fresh dew of morning, but there is something Cinderella-like in Tolkien’s description of the young woman emerging from her cottage into the dawn:

She watched the gleam at window grow,
till the long light was shimmering
on land and leaf; on grass below
grey dew was glimmering.
Over the floor her white feet crept,
down the stairs they twinkled,
through the grass they dancing stepped
all with dew besprinkled.

⁴⁷ Scull and Hammond are not clear on the dating of *The Last Ship*

Her gown had jewels upon its hem,
as she ran down to the river,

...

as she stood there gleaming
with free hair in the morning's flame
on her shoulder's streaming.

(*ATB*: 109-110, lines 9-16, 17-18, 25-28)

The woman, Firiël, has become a creature of light, almost elven in her own right. Her surroundings glitter as brightly as any throne room, but all from an entirely natural source. Yet it somehow feels otherworldly, so other, particularly when compared to the world that Firiël returns to, after rejecting the elves' proposal.

No jewels bright her gown bore,
as she walked back from the meadow
under roof and dark door,
under the house-shadow.

...

Soon the sunlight faded
(*ATB*: 113, lines 88-91, 95)

The former image is like a scene from a fairy-story, the latter view of the Primary World is stark in its darkness and ordinariness. There is no magic in the Primary World, the light the elves brought was merely a glamour or illusion, and now one is left with a feeling of impending doom. Yet in some ways there is also a kind of harmony. Firiël is "Earth's daughter" (*ATB*: 113, line 87). Just as the harsh light of day soon evaporates the illusion of a bejewelled landscape, so the removal of the elven glamour shows herself to be what she truly is, a mortal woman.

The liminality in this poem occurs at two levels, the physical and the temporal. In the physical sense, the elves are on the water, Firiël is on the land, and it is the merging of these two elements in the form of waterlogged clay which confirms her attachment to the Primary World, for, in Tolkien's poem *The Last Ship* [1962], as Firiël attempts to join the elves in their boat, her feet sink deep into the shallows making it impossible for her to move forward. Here it seems that though in liminal spaces, Faërie and the Primary World meet, there is still a clear separation between the two. Temporally, this poem is set at dawn, a liminal time when night becomes day. The beauty of the land shown here is dependent on that fact, and soon disappears under the harsh light of full day. Thus, this

riverbank has similar elements to Tolkien's seashores with jewelled borders, and half-light, but the reason for these constituents is quite different. This imagery reappears in his later poetry along with other motifs associated with the medieval descriptions of Paradise. In the water, the energy generated by the fairies is changed from light to movement displaying the elves ubiquitous influence on the natural world. The connection between Faërie and the Mortal World here is transient. This fading of Faërie engenders in the reader a much stronger emotion than is seen in *Wood Sunshine* [1910], for in this 1960's poem, Tolkien is combining the regret for the loss of Faërie, and the callous reality of the Primary World.

In summary, shorelines are a ubiquitous feature of Tolkien's Faërie. In the early phase of his writing, it was part of the Englishness of his Faërie, for Britain is an island and the sea is very much part of the national identity. In his later poems, Tolkien continued the theme expressed in his *Imramma*, frequently utilizing the crossing of water as a means of entering Faërie though the method of such a traverse might vary. The addition of jewelled beaches is a recurrent motif in both his early and later Faërie poetry but drops out of use in his middle phase. In part, this might be due to the nature of the protest poems whose Faërie is incorporated into the Primary World, in part, this might be due to the fact that his Northern poems are pagan in origin, making the inclusion of this motif drawn from Christian imagery incongruous. Tolkien treats water as a unique element, having it respond to the presence of elves/fairies with movement rather than light as seen in both the land and the sky though the reason for this is not consistent between the poems.

3.5 The Moon and Faërie

The shore is not the only landscape that is bejewelled in Tolkien's Faërie, his moonscapes are equally dazzling in their radiance and richness, if not a little monotonous in colour. The possibility of life on the moon had been written about as early as 50BC. Plutarch had believed that the dead went to dwell on the moon (Russell, 1983: 6). However, Tolkien's vision is closer to that of Francis Goodwin (1562-1633) who writes of a moonscape akin to Paradise in his book *The Man in the Moone* written in the late 1620's (Godwin, 2012). Godwin's moon is a beautiful temperate place, where there is no hunger or sickness or mortality, the necessities of life appear with minimal labour, there is no sin, and the inhabitants spend their time worshiping God. Everything is a peculiar colour that is unique to the moon and is indescribable on earth which makes imagining this landscape difficult. Tolkien appears to be echoing some of these ideas in his own moonscapes; his moon is beautiful, sparkling, rich with jewels and plenty as befits a Paradise/Faërie:

In diamonds white he had lost delight;
he was tired of his minaret
Of tall moonstone that towered alone
on a lunar mountain set.
(ATB: 69, lines 13-16)

The lunar landscape is stunning, but there is a monotony and isolation of the countryside which drives the Man in the Moon to Earth. In the poem *The Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon* [1915], the Man in the Moon: “would dare any peril for ruby and beryl to broider his pale attire” (ATB: 70, lines 17-22). Thus paradoxically, the Earth represents the Man in the Moon’s Faërie, for it is his land of desire, with colour, fire, a variety of food and drink, and most of all company being the things that he most longs for.

As demonstrated by the lines above, colour plays an important role in Tolkien’s poem *The Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon* [1915]. The world itself is described as gold. Gold may be interpreted in several ways. It may be merely Tolkien’s image of the sun reflecting off the earth – generated before the Apollo missions and thus before humankind had seen an earthrise. It might also reflect the comparative richness of the Earth in materials such as food, fire, and company – all the things that the Man in the Moon desires. This fits with the red-gold palate for the human side of Earth as the Man in the Moon has a strong desire for fire and human company whilst he uses a blue/green palate for the natural world, particularly that of the sea and forest.

for red was his desire,
For crimson and rose and ember glows,
for flame with burning tongue,
For the scarlet skies in a swift sunrise
when a stormy day is young.

He’d have seas of blues, and the living hues
of forest green and fen;
And he yearned for the mirth of the populous earth
and the sanguine blood of men.

(ATB: 70, lines 28-36)

It is interesting to note that the landscapes most associated with Faërie in his other works, the forest and water, are coloured blue and green, colours that Tolkien often associates with magic. The link is seen in Tolkien’s children’s story *Roverandom*⁴⁸ [1925]. The little

⁴⁸ *Roverandom* was written in 1925 and published by Harper Collins in 1998 (C&G: 1110-1111).

dog, Rover, encounters a rather irascible wizard, but fails to recognize him as a wizard, though as Tolkien says: “he might have noticed the blue feather stuck in the back of the green hat, and then he would have suspected that the man was a wizard, as any other sensible little dog would; ...” (*Roverandom*: 42). Tom Bombadil wears blue as well, as does Mielikki, the wife of the Forest spirit in *The Story of Kullervo* [1914]. This is in keeping with the power of Nature, a theme that underlies much of his non-Middle-earth poetry. Gold and Silver are common in Tolkien’s early depictions of Middle-earth (S: 35-36, 38) and might have something to do with the spirit of Ilúvatar which underpins creation in Middle-earth just as God’s spirit illuminates Paradise in medieval depictions of the same (see discussion in the Paradise section of this chapter). Finally, though the blood of men is red, the Man in the Moon finds that the Primary World is as monochromatic as his own for he arrived too soon, and the world that meets him is coloured black and grey:

Not a hearth was laid, not a breakfast made,
and dawn was cold and damp,
There were ashes of fire, and for grass the mire,
for the sun a smoking lamp
In a dim back-street.
(*ATB*: 73, lines 65-69)

Dull and dark in colour, the Earth is the antithesis of the Moon, and of the Man in the Moon’s vision of Earth. Worse still, he is as lonely as before, for the human world is still asleep apart from the surly cook who swindles him. If the Moon is a kind of Paradise, it appears the human world is a kind of hell. In his moonscapes, Tolkien uses colour in the place of light to depict otherness.

The Man in the Moon who stayed up too late found a more friendly “Earth”, though one might wonder if it was not the Mortal World but an alternate aspect of Faërie he entered, for the behaviour of the animals and the household goods is far from natural. The cow dances, the cat fiddles, and the dog laughs at jokes, not to mention the elopement of the Saturday spoon with the Sunday dish. The sun itself is mythological, sporting a “fiery head” and “ordering” all the revellers “back to bed” (*ATB*: 176, lines 58, 59). Thus, Faërie and the Mortal World might look superficially similar, but there is only one of them that is truly a land where desires are met. The landscape of Tolkien’s Faërie moon is constant between the two poems, and indeed in his other moon work *Roverandom* [1925], but the realms the Man in the Moon visits are not. In *The Man in the Moon Came Down too Soon* [1915] it is possible to see Tolkien begin to shift his focus away from the traditional Faërie landscapes seen in most of his early poems, to more experimental regions, in particular the

depiction of the Primary World as Faërie, a theme that is also seen in this Bimble Bay poems (see Chr 5).

3.6 Paradise and Faërie

As discussed earlier, Tolkien drew some of his Faërie imagery from medieval descriptions of Paradise like those contained in the poem *Pearl*. Tolkien was familiar with the poem *Pearl* which, like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, was written in his favourite West Midlands dialect (C&G: 15). He studied the poem while at Oxford (C&G: 46) and revisited the poem in 1924 when he read it in preparation for marking examination papers (C&G: 134). To date, the poems I have mentioned in connection with *Pearl* have cursory nods to the poem (see earlier in this chapter), but there is a triad of poems, *The Nameless Land*⁴⁹ [1924/1937/1945] series, which draws more heavily on *Pearl*'s description of the landscape of Paradise. This triad of poems consists of *The Nameless Land* written in 1924, a 1937 rewrite called *The Song of Ælfwine*⁵⁰, and a final version of *The Song of Ælfwine* written in 1945. As their titles suggest, these poems began with a poem which was outside the legendarium, but, like *Kortirion Among the Trees* [1915], it was gradually incorporated into the legendarium as Tolkien began to draw more and more of its imagery and language from his Middle-earth works. Like many of his early poems, these verses are primarily descriptive, depicting a landscape which is half wild, half garden inhabited by light ethereal elves (Shippey, 2000: 279). This melding of his Christian and Faërie beliefs becomes a feature of Tolkien's depiction of Faërie particularly from the 1940's onwards.

The elves themselves are like the elves of *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962], but they appear happier for, rather than grieving and singing solemn songs, in the first two versions of the poem they dance with "lissom limbs" (LR: 99, verse 4, line 6) and appear to be more creatures of light than the shadowy elves of *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962]. In the last version of the poem the elves':

... free unbraided hair
Is meshed with light of moon and sun,
And tangled [twined in the second version] with those tresses fair

⁴⁹ *The Nameless Land* was thought to be written in May 1924 whilst Tolkien was living in Leeds and was first published in *Realities: An Anthology of Verse* in 1927 (C&G:826-827).

⁵⁰ Tolkien rewrote his poem *The Nameless Land* in 1937 and again in 1945 and changed its name to *The Song of Ælfwine*. There are multiple versions of this text and two were published, along with *The Nameless Land* in *The Lost Road and Other Writings* in 1987 (C&G: 827).

A gold and silver sheen is spun.
(*Lost Road*: 99, verse 4, lines 1-4)

In the 1937 version, the hair shines in the shining air. As mentioned in Chapter 1, fairies are often associated with a kind of luminescence, a light which they extend to their surroundings. This is a manifestation of their power. Similarly, in *Pearl*, the man's daughter is in a "linen robe of glistening white" (Tolkien, 1975: 94, verse 17, line 5) and in some ways this is also a manifestation of her power, the power of her purity, for between her breasts, where her heart lies, is "a wondrous pearl unstained and bright" (Tolkien, 1975: 95, verse 19, line 5). The difference is that the elves' light is drawn from natural sources, from the sun and the moon, whilst the light in the *Pearl's* woman comes from the shining pearls in her garments, thus presumably from a divine source.

In the 1924 version, it is not clear exactly what land these Elves inhabit for it is a "land without a name" (*Lost Road*: 99, verse 3, line 3), that is it is neither Tir-nan-Óg nor Paradise, rather Tolkien writes:

O! shore beyond the Shadowy Sea
O! land forlorn where lost things are
O! mountains where no man be!

...

Beyond the world's edge

(*Lost Road*: 99-100, verse 5 lines 3-5,7)

The land is isolated, only being accessible by the crossing of water, both similar to the Paradise of *Pearl*, though in the case of *Pearl* it is a river rather than a Shadowy Sea. The image of shadowy seas is found in *Kortirion Among the Trees* [1915/1937/1962] and *The Sea-bell* [1962], but the landscape itself closely echoes the medieval poem, *Pearl*. The beaches are of pearl, there are glades of trees with silver fluttering leaves, sweet smelling flowers, and flowing fountains, all of which are found in the poem *Pearl*. In the 1937 version, *The Song of Ælfwine* [1937] [version 1], the land is West of West where the Edhil [Elves] are, linking to the mythical isle of Hy Brasil. The location is similar in the 1945 version; however, this time Tolkien names it Eressëa, the Lonely Isle, located near the undying lands of Valinor. Here Tolkien is not only drawing these poems into his legendarium, but he is also reinforcing the connection of this Faërie to Paradise by placing it in the traditional position of Paradise. And yet, in the two versions of *The Song of*

Ælfwine [1937/1945], Tolkien gives this land a sense of impermanence, that, like the fairies themselves, it will fade at the ending of the world:

There lingering lights still golden lie⁵¹
on grass more green than in gardens here,

...

While world endures they will not die,
nor fade nor fall their timeless year,

(*Lost Road*: 100, verse 1, lines 1-2, 5-6)

Here is a merging of folkloric and Christian worlds. There is the same sense of finite and infinite time, similar imagery of trees, starlight, and shadowy seas, and hidden choirs singing as in *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962] but in a landscape drawn from medieval images of Paradise. Furthermore, Tolkien retains the motif of the Wandering Fire (see discussion below) that is not seen in *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962], and which adds a spiritual element that is otherworldly. In Paradise it is so bright that:

sunbeams are blear and dark to view
compared with that fair wonderment
(Tolkien, 1975: 91, verse 7, lines 11-12)

and

Of sun nor moon they had no need,
For God Himself was their sunlight;

...

And through Him blazed that city bright
That unearthly clear did no light impede.

(Tolkien, 1975: 118. verse 88, lines 1-2, 4-5).

However, in the 1924 version of the poem, the land is basically one of darkness, a thing not associated with Paradise:

⁵¹ The final version of *The Song of Ælfwine* reads: “*Eressëa! Eressëa*” There elven-lights still gleaming lie” (LR: 102, line 1-2)

A dream less dark, no stars proclaim
A moonless night, it marches drear.
(*Lost Road*: 99, verse 3, lines 5-6)

In Tolkien's *The Nameless Land/Song of Ælfwine* [1924/1937/1945] series, the darkness is transformed by a peculiar light which Tolkien labels the Wandering Fire. The concept of the Wandering Fire is complex. As Massimiliano Izzo notes, Tennyson, Blake, and Milton use the term "wand'ring light" or "will-o-the-wisp" to speak of floating lights which, Puck-like, lead wanderers astray (Izzo, 2018, 17). Similarly, there are the tricky lights in the Dead Marshes which nearly draw Frodo into the pools in *The Two Towers* (*TT*: 627). Sometimes known as corpse candles, these lights are generated from the gases released from rotting organic material, and they were not uncommon sights on the battlefields of World War I (Amendt-Raduege, 2017: 83). They were intimately linked with the dead, as their folkloric names suggests. However, such a connotation does not fit with this poem's imagery, especially in the later versions. Rather, it seems to fit more with the light of the spirit of creation suggested in *The Silmarillion* [1977] and *Pearl*. Milton has an 'unctuous vapour' lead Eve to the forbidden tree in *Paradise Lost* (Izzo, 2018: 17). Tolkien calls this the Flame Imperishable and relates it to the creative energy of Ilúvatar that forms the centre of all creation (*S*: 20). It manifests itself physically as the vitality in nature, as well as the physical lights of the Trees and Lamps in Valinor (Bülbul Candas, 2018: 26). Here there is a coalescing of ideas expressed in Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939]. Fairies, and by extension Faërie itself, possess a kind of magic, a magic that is manifested in the act of sub-creating and is an expression of the spirit of the Creator (*OFS*: 33, 63-64). This theme has been running in the background of these poems from the beginning but is most clearly articulated in these more spiritual poems which Tolkien wrote in his later life. Thus, according to Tolkien, through interaction with and an appreciation of both Nature and Faërie, it is possible to perceive a tiny glimpse of God's spirit and the salvation that it promises (*OFS*: 77). Although there have been elements that could relate to Paradise in earlier poems, in this series of poems we see the first really clear link between Paradise and Faërie. This becomes a feature of Tolkien's later non-Middle-earth Faërie poetry in his poems related to the *Navigatio Sancti Brenani Abbatis*.

By the 1940's, Tolkien is beginning to explore Irish folklore more; a folklore that lends itself to merging his Catholic faith with his love of Faërie. His two poems, *Imram*⁵²

⁵² *Imram* was written around the time of *The Notion Club Papers* in 1945-1946 and was first published in *Time and Tide* in 1955. It was republished in *Sauron Defeated* in 1992 (C&G: 566).

[1945-1946/1955] and *The Death of Saint Brendan*⁵³ [1945-1946] are both based on an 8th-9th century work *Navigatio Sancti Brenani Abbatis* (Swank, 2015: 33). The work was popular during the Middle Ages and exists in over 120 Latin manuscripts and many translations and adaptations, each of which added a culture's or teller's individual flavour to the story (Frigtag, 2013: 111). The word Imram literally means 'rowing' and comes from a series of ecclesiastical works depicting the voyage of a sinner who, through trials during his journey, obtains redemption and, by acquiring a state of grace, receives a brief glimpse of Paradise. Unlike the more linear pagan tales, the *Navigatio* is a cyclic tale involving repeated visits to several islands and one extremely tolerant whale in a pattern which reflects the monastic year (Barron, 2005: 25). Saint Brendan and most of his followers are rewarded for their perilous journey by being allowed to stay for forty days in the warm and fertile oasis named Hy Brasil; the name of the land is thought to come from the Dutch name Hy Bressail meaning the Happy Isle (Delumeau, 2000: 104). When Saint Brendan returns to Ireland, he tells other monks of his adventures and dies soon afterwards.

Tolkien does not tell the traditional tale of Saint Brendan in his two poems, *Imram* and *The Death of Saint Brendan*. Rather he selects three motifs as representations of Saint Brendan's journey and weaves these into a poem. The earlier version, *The Death of Saint Brendan*, was written in 1945 and forms part of *The Notion Club Papers* that were published by Christopher Tolkien in *Sauron Defeated*. (*Sauron*: 261-262, 296-297). The second version, titled *Imram*, was first published in December 1955 in the periodical *Time and Tide*. It was subsequently reprinted in *Sauron Defeated* in 2002. In the poems, the dying Saint Brendan speaks to a younger monk of his travels and the three things that survive most strongly in his memory: they are a cloud, a tree, and a star. Of these the cloud and the tree are drawn directly from the *Navigatio*, though Tolkien changes the chronology. Although the star is not an image found in the *Navigatio*, it is a common motif associated with both Tolkien's Faërie and Tolkien's elves, for example in *Kortirion Among the Trees* [1915/1937/1962]. These three motifs become a signation of Faërie in Tolkien's later writing on Faërie. I use the word signation here quite deliberately, in its older meaning, being "a distinctive mark" (*OED*, 'signation') for it is possible to see these symbols in many of Tolkien's late descriptions of Faërie including his last one in *Smith of Wootton Major*⁵⁴ [1964-1965].

⁵³ *The Death of Saint Brendan* was written between 1945-1946 and was first published in *Sauron Defeated* in 1992 (C&G: 507,566).

⁵⁴ *Smith of Wootton Major* was written between 1964-1965 and was published in 1967 (C&G: 1214-1215).

In the *Navigatio*, the cloud is a foul-smelling, choking smoke which is produced from a volcano. The stench is said to be fouler than rotting flesh (Barron, 2005: 309). Worse still, whilst under the influence of the cloud, one of Saint Brendan's disciples despairs, foreseeing his own death, and is swiftly seized by demons (ibid.). In his poem *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], Tolkien describes an island encompassed by a pungent, murky cloud on which there is a volcano⁵⁵:

then the smoking cloud asunder broke,
and we saw that Tower of Doom:
on its ashen head was a crown of red,
where fires flamed and fell.
Tall as a column in High Heaven's hall,
its feet were deep as Hell;
grounded in chasms the waters drowned
and buried long ago,
it stands, I ween, in forgotten lands
where the king of kings lie low.
(*Sauron*: 262, lines 43-52)

This land sounds neither like Faërie or Paradise, though the shadowy sea and the "forgotten lands" (*Sauron*: 262, line 51), hark back to Tolkien's poems *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915/1937/1962], and *The Nameless Land* [1924]. Instead, the description of the land here could describe Tolkien's land of Mordor, with the tower sounding like a cross between Barad-dûr and the drowned Orthanc in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]. For Frodo in particular, Mordor was a place of testing, and this landscape appears no different. Lines 51-52 seem to imply a kind of Purgatory or Hell into which Christ is cast, possibly when the sky turns black at the moment of his death (James, 1611, Luke, 23:44-45). This imagery coincides with the increasing sense of isolation found journeying across the oceans in the later versions of *Kortirion* [1937/1962]. The torment caused by the cloud to the monks is more obvious in Tolkien's later version *Imram* [1945/1946/1955]. Even holy men like Saint Brendan and his disciples can no longer sing psalms because of its choking effects and the physical and spiritual blindness it produces:

Then a drumming we heard of thunder coming,
and a Cloud above us spread;
we saw no sun at set or dawn,

...

⁵⁵ Tolkien's description of the mountain is a little vague in *The Death of Saint Brendan* but is clearly a volcano in his poem *Imram*.

‘We sailed then on till all winds failed,
and we toiled then with the oar;
we burned with thirst and in hunger yearned,
and we sang our psalms no more.

(*Sauron*: 297, lines 28-32, 45-48)

Tolkien’s poems are in the spirit of the *Navigatio* even if they do not follow the story line directly. The cloud could be viewed as an emblem of something perilous, isolating, and unseen, all of which are elements of Faërie, and darkness, mist or clouds become a common feature particularly as barriers in Tolkien’s late Faërie such as in *The Sea-bell* [1962], *Lothlorien* (*FR*: 349, 378) and *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965] (*ATB*: 103; *Smith*: 31).

In Tolkien’s poems *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946] and *Imram* [1945-1946/1955], the voyagers pass through the cloud and, finding a break in the cliffs, find a fertile valley which contains a tree. This is a departure from the chronology of the *Navigatio*, for in the original poem the episodes of the Cloud and the Island of the Birds are not linked. The landscape of Paradise in *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946] closely resembles Faërie, particularly the Faërie of *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915/1960s] or *The Nameless Land* [1924/1937/1962] series. For example, most of this description of Paradise from Barron’s translation of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* could equally apply to Tolkien’s later representations of Faërie:

Bright as the sun it is; there was great pleasure there from trees and plants standing very thickly clustered on every side, and also from precious stones brightly shining far and wide. Every plant was full of flowers and every tree full of fruit; ...
Therein, with great contentment, we went roaming a long while, although it seemed to us a little time; we could find no boundary until we came to a river, most clear and bright.... (Barron, 2005: 285-287)

The flowers, the gems, the light, the plenty, the timelessness are all features of both the *Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] and the *Navigatio*. It is a place of peace and harmony and quiet delight very much in tune with Tolkien’s early vision of Faërie. It is not hard to see why he merged the two. In *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], Tolkien uses his Faërie motif of pearl-strewn beaches and the “singing” of water in the caves gives a much less sinister feel to this beach than in *The Sea-bell* [1962]:

the waves were singing in pillared caves
and pearls lay on the ground;
(*Sauron*: 262, lines 59-60)

In *Imram* [1945-1946/1955], the Faërie elements become even stronger, with not only gem strewn beaches, but dusk, starlight, a certain timelessness and a sense of danger being included in the description of the shore:

At last beyond the Cloud we passed
and came to a starlit strand;
the waves were sighing in pillared caves,
grinding gems to sand.
And here they would grind our bones we feared
until the end of time;
for steep those shores were upward leaping
to cliffs no man could climb.
(*Sauron*: 297, lines 49-65)

This cannot be Paradise, for Paradise, as discussed earlier, is a land of light because of the light of God and Christ. Equally, Paradise should be a land without fear or grief and here the cliffs are sighing, and the disciples are afraid. Yet the beauty, inaccessibility and remoteness mentioned in these lines is in keeping with both Faërie and Paradise. In fact, the unfriendly coastline, the caves, and the bejewelled beach, closely echo Tolkien's poem *The Sea-bell* [1962] (see Chapter 5 also). Once again this is a vision of Faërie which merges traditional Faërie with Paradise.

In the *Navigatio* in the valley there is a tree which is covered in exquisite white birds. A bird flies down to Saint Brendan and tells him that the birds are angels who have been expelled from Heaven for refusing to take sides in the war between the Devil and God. They spend their days singing hymns to God in beautiful and unearthly voices (Barron, 2005: 82). The Tree in this context has multiple layers to its meaning. As Amy Tigner discusses, Adam and Eve were vegetarians in the Garden of Eden so plants were not only a source of sustenance and therefore life, life itself was represented by the Tree of Life. It is their eating of the fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge which caused their fall and humankind's first encounters with "horticultural hardship" (Tigner, 2012: 74). Tigner points to a "symbiotic bond" between humans and plants suggesting that this is at the root of Isaiah's choice of a tree as an emblem for human genealogies (ibid.). Jesus is said to be a branch from the stem or tree of Jesse; being a symbol of the interconnectedness of humanity and its immortality through procreation. The cross is also linked to The Tree of Life as is demonstrated in the medieval poem *The Dream of the Rood* (Hostetter, 2015). Thus, the tree is a symbol of Paradise, the Fall, and the salvation of mankind through the crucifixion of Jesus. In pagan times, trees, because of their height and longevity connecting it to a paternal sky and its roots connecting to a maternal earth, were representative of the

dual nature of the Universe (Varner, 2006: 23-24). Christian teaching emphasised the patriarchal sky element, but still used the tree to symbolise of the tree is life, immortality, knowledge, and salvation making the tree a strong religious symbol. It is an important element in Tolkien's depiction of Faërie, particularly in the form of the forest, as I have discussed earlier in the Chapter. The Tree carries with it multiple layers of Christian symbolism, but it might also be a symbol of the supernatural. Trees were part of Tolkien's vision of Faërie from very early on; not only does *Wood Sunshine* [1910] take place in a forest, in his poem *Kor in the city of Lost and Dead* [1915], the whole of Faërie is centred around the two trees. The description of the city of Kor is a little unusual when it comes to Tolkien's depiction of Faërie, and, for that matter of Paradise. It is unusual because it contains rather exotic, non-English style, bejewelled buildings (see earlier in this Chapter). Normally Tolkien's Faërie landscapes are devoid of buildings, apart from *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] which contains a rather English-sounding cottage. Yet, once again, the trees at the heart of Kor echo the landscapes of both Faërie and Paradise. This means that this representation is a progression of his vision of Faërie rather than an abandonment of his original concept of Faërie. It is a reflection not only of his personal love of trees, but the timeless and richly variable folklore associated with them which allows him to merge his passion for Faërie and his deep Christian faith into a single symbol.

In *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], Tolkien implies a religious link with his tree by having the music sound like a pealing organ, yet it is produced by beings who are neither man nor angel, but a "third fair kindred [who] in the world yet lingers beyond the foundered land" (*Sauron*: 263, lines 100-102). *Imram* [1945-1946/1955] replaces the sound of an organ with trumpets having them sounding aloft. Trumpets are associated with angels, but it also conjures the Fellowship's arrival at Lothlorien where a horn sounds as they climb the tree to meet Galadriel (*FR*: 354). As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the theories of the origin of fairies was that they were fallen angels who had been cast out of Heaven but were not evil enough for Hell. In the *Navigatio*, the birds are fallen angels, who spend their days singing beautiful and unearthly hymns to God (Barron: 82). As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the theories on the origins of fairies was that they were angels that refused to take part in the war between Lucifer and God. As such they were not evil enough to go to Hell but were not good enough to remain in Heaven. But Tolkien explicitly says these creatures singing are not angels, therefore he is clearly considering another origin for his elves. Yet the goodness and wisdom of Tolkien's late elves, their role as advisors or prophets, and their ability to provide miraculous aid albeit by magic all of

which are seen in Tolkien's elves in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], give them an angelic vibe.

In *Imram* [1945-1946/1955] the tree's reaction appears more violent than in *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945/1946]. In *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946], the tree trembles, causing its birds to fly up into the air, but in *Imram* [1945-1946/1955] the tree shakes, dislodging its leaves "like white birds... wheeling in flight/ and the lifting boughs were bare" (*Sauron*: 298, lines 87-88). The singing of the monks has obviously broken a taboo with the reaction of the tree echoing both *Owain* or *The Lady of the Fountain*⁵⁶ from the *Mabinogion*, when the knight unleashes the storm by pouring water from the basin, and the destructive storm in *Smith of Wootton Major* (Guest, 1910: 154-155; *Smith*: 25-26). There are two possibilities here; speaking aloud was a common taboo in Faërie (Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 75), or, like church bells, the chanting of the monks, like the holiness of friars (Purkiss, 2000: 73), was distressing to the fairies present. The former would be in keeping with folkloric tradition about elves, whilst the latter does not seem to fit with the apparent spirituality of these elves. In his non-Middle-earth poetry, Tolkien does not resolve this issue, but, if one considers the elves of *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], he appears to have merged the two lineages. His Middle-earth elves live in remote places and have a love of music and song, in keeping with folkloric fairies, but also act as protectors and have a gravitas more in keeping with angels.

The final motif of the star does not occur in the original *Navigatio*. It is contained in a poem titled *St Brendan's Prayer* by D.F. McCarthy in the 1893 book called *Brendinian*. This is held by the Bodleian library (personal communication), however there is no certain information on whether Tolkien read it or not. In this poem McCarthy clearly links a star to the Virgin Mary:

And then, with eyes fixed on some glorious star,
We sang the Virgin-Mother's vesper hymn!

⁵⁶ In *Owain* or *The Lady of the Fountain*, Owain goes into a forest to fight a gigantic black knight. He summons the knight by pouring water onto a marble slab, and after a violent storm, the knight appears. Owain mortally wounds the knight and then follows him back to a huge castle. There Owain is trapped when his horse is killed as he passes under the portcullis. But Owain is saved by a fairy lady called Luned who gives him a ring of protection and invisibility. That night, the black knight, who is lord of the castle, dies and, during the black knight's funeral, Owain falls in love with a beautiful and chaste lady called "the Countess of the Fountain." Owain is informed that the Countess will lose her castle and lands if the fountain is not protected by a knight from Arthur's court. Owain does so for three years but eventually seeks permission for a leave of absence after he has fought some of his brother knights from Arthur's court who, concerned about his absence, came looking for him. Following this, there is a complex tale surrounding the castle being taken by an earl, and then a giant, but in the end Owain saves the day, marries the countess, and, after sending appropriate tribute to Arthur, becomes lord of the huge castle.

Hail, brightest star! that o'er life's troubled sea
Shines pitying down from heaven's elysian blue!
Mother and maid, we fondly look to thee,
Fair gate of bliss, where heaven beams brightly through.
(McCarthy, 2012: 77)

Stars are a common motif in Tolkien's Middle-earth and non-Middle-earth Faërie. In his Middle-earth writing, Tolkien uses the star-queen motif with his Queen of the Valar, Varda Elentári, Varda the Star Queen (*S*: 26). Her beautiful face is said to radiate the light of Ilúvatar. As Paul Kerry notes, Catholics call Mary "Stella Maris" or "Star of the Sea", an image that he claims resonated deeply with Tolkien and was manifest in both Varda and Galadriel⁵⁷ (Kerry, 2011: 30). This echoes McCarthy's poem and also fits with the imagery that Tolkien is building in his cloud, tree, and star motif. The straight road bent by the sins of man is a motif well known in Tolkien's works and forms part of his Legendarium. In his poem *Imram*, Tolkien writes:

The Star? Why, I saw it high and far
at the parting of the ways,
a light on the edge of the Outer Night
beyond the Door of Days,
where the round world plunges steeply down,
but on the old road goes,
as an unseen bridge that on arches runs
to coasts that no man knows.
(*Sauron*: 298, lines 101-108)

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the "lost road" is the road of humility (Masciandaro, 1991: 136) and this idea is in keeping with Tolkien's concept of the Fall having its roots in the sin of Pride and the sins of the Númenóreans causing the "Straight Road" to Paradise or Faërie to become bent (Birzer, 2013: 187-188; *Sauron*: 338). This is a central theme in *The Notion Club Papers*⁵⁸, the period of Tolkien's writing that contains both *Imram* [1945-1946/1955] and *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946]. I have already discussed the multiple uses of stars in his non-Middle-earth poetry, including the use of darkness or twilight and stars as a common motif in his early Faërie in poems such as *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962], *Habbanan beneath the Stars* [1916], and *The Nameless Land* [1924]. The stars often have other coded meanings such as the Pleiades in *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962] with its associations of the seasons of the dead and immortality (see the Introduction to this thesis). Again, this is a progression of a theme from his early Faërie,

⁵⁷ And the Fairy Queen in Tolkien's *Smith of Wootton Major*

⁵⁸ Christopher Tolkien thinks Tolkien was working on these during 1946. The story, along with a commentary and notes was published in *Sauron Defeated* in 1992 (C&G 866-871).

rather than something entirely new, but here Tolkien is placing an emphasis on the star by having it as an individual star, rather than a group of stars in the night sky in the background of his Faërie landscapes, which links it to the Virgin Mary.

The merging of Paradise and Faërie heralds the final phase of Tolkien's development of Faërie. In this vision he is drawing on the beauty of his earlier work, combined with some of the darkness and peril associated with the second phase of his Faërie. To this he has added the three motifs that echo the three layers of the Catholic afterlife: The Cloud of Hell/transition, the Tree of Purgatory/Salvation, and the Star of Heaven/guidance. The result is a Faërie with many layers of meaning, drawing from multiple sources, folkloric, biblical, and personal. Yet it is still very recognisable as Faërie, though the English elements of the landscape have faded. The theme of the Cloud, the Tree, and the Star will now become incorporated into many of Tolkien's later works, although, the mood of the pieces will change markedly from the relative positivity of the 1945 *The Death of Saint Brendan* [1945-1946] to darker and darker subjects as he ages. This is the last major shift in his development of Faërie and I shall discuss how Tolkien's later non-Middle-earth poems become an exploration of evil in Chapter 5.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has primarily discussed the landscapes of Tolkien's early and late Faërie, the landscapes from his middle period will be discussed in the next two chapters. Like Tolkien's fairy creatures, his Faërie landscapes draw from multiple sources, yet each retains elements that relate to traditional British versions of Faërie. Initially, they were merely beautiful scenes, but as his poetry progresses the landscapes become more and more symbolic having multiple levels of meaning. Some of these, such as the jewelled beaches and the triad of a cloud, a tree, and a star, become emblematic of his Faërie landscapes, alerting the reader to the fact that the land in the story of poem is Faërie. However, the transitions in this case are less clear, with Tolkien incorporating some earlier motifs such as jewelled beaches in his later work. The landscapes sometimes echo the darkening of Faërie seen in Tolkien's late Faërie creatures, for example in the drudgery of *The Last Ship's* [1962] Primary World, or the menace of Faërie in *The Sea-bell* [1962] (see also Chapter 5), but overall, his landscapes move towards the amalgamation of his love of Faërie with his Christian beliefs. To gain deeper insights into the poems, particular notice should be taken of the folkloric and colloquial meanings of the elements found in the landscape. Some of these elements are taken from works that Tolkien studied during his

student and professional studies, whilst others, such as the language of flowers may have been drawn from sources that Tolkien read for pleasure and are therefore maybe less academically robust compared to other sources in his works. However, critics should remember that Tolkien was writing many of these poems for pleasure and in order to flex his creative muscles rather than more academic purposes. When explored, these can tell the reader about the mood or theme behind that particular image of Faërie, an important source that helps unlock the deeper meanings in his writing, a source that has largely been ignored by academics. Thus, careful attention needs to be given to the individual elements of each of these poems, for these landscapes communicate not just at the level of living creations, but also symbolically through its underlying folklore. The individual objects or elements of many of these poems harbour conscious or unconscious associations in the reader's mind that may add meaning to the poem. Some may be obvious like the sinister nature of puffballs with the associations of poison and decay, whilst others such as Tolkien's choice of trees in *Kortirion* may be less directly discernible but still create a specific atmosphere. Overall, Tolkien's Faërie landscapes lack the clear periodicity of his Faërie creatures, but like his Faërie creatures, they do parallel Tolkien's life and the concerns of the world he lived in. This will become clearer in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4: Songs and Lays: Tolkien's Academic Poetry

4.1 Introduction

During the late 1920's through to 1940, Tolkien began to engage more with the legends and sagas that he taught at the University of Oxford. Part of this exploration was a tendency to express the tales in the form of poetry, four of which have been published recently, namely *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*⁵⁹ [early 1930s], *The Story of Kullervo* [1914], *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun*⁶⁰ [1930s], and *The Fall of Arthur*⁶¹ [1933]. Such was Tolkien's proclivity for rewriting these tales, that Tom Shippey once suggested that Tolkien was the Chrétien de Troyes of the twentieth century, as he mimicked Chrétien's habit of composing works based on well-known stories, expanding and enriching them to show his readers the full potential of these tales (Shippey, 2000: xviii). These tales influenced Tolkien's own vision of Faërie in several ways: the animism of the landscapes, the pivotal role of women, particularly as seen later in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], and the elements of Sacral Kingship and Fairy Queens and in this Chapter I will look at these concepts in more detail. Although some might argue that the landscapes represented here are mythological or drawn from legends, I contend that they might be considered Faërie as they fulfil Tolkien's rather broad definition of Faërie, for, although Tolkien excluded tales of the marvellous, traveller's tales, beast fables, and dream stories (*OFS*: 33-37), he included myths and legends. (*OFS*: 41-43).

I have divided them into two categories, placing *The Story of Kullervo* [1914] (Finnish) and *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] (Norse), in the category of Northern tales, that is tales of Scandinavian origin, and *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] (Breton Celtic), and *The Fall of Arthur* [1933] (Welsh Celtic and Old English) in the category of "Celtic" tales⁶². The order in which these stories are analysed is not chronological; rather I have moved from the Northern tale that most closely follows the

⁵⁹ *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* was written some time in the early 1930s and published in 2009 (*C&G*: 383,669).

⁶⁰ *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* was written sometime in the mid 1930s and first published in the *Welsh Review* (Cardiff) 4 no.4 in December 1945 and republished in 2016 (*C&G*: 645).

⁶¹ *The Fall of Arthur* was written around 1933 and published in 2013 (*C&G*: 381-383).

⁶² A side note to these descriptions is the use of "Celtic" in this essay. I recognise that the use of Celtic as a cultural term is anachronistic and that in modern times, the word Celtic should be reserved for a collection of distantly connected languages rather than cultures, however the distinction was not as clearly acknowledged during the period of Tolkien's writing, thus at times I will use Celtic as a cultural term in a way which would not be acceptable today (Hemmi, 2012: 5).

original, to the one that is more creative in its interpretation: - that is, from *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] to *Kullervo* [1914], and similarly with the “Celtic” tales from *Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] to *The Fall of Arthur* [1933]. I am doing this in order to contrast Tolkien’s style when he is writing in a more academic mode, interacting with the versification of poem, against a time when he is more interested in the tale itself. Although *Kullervo* [1914] is primarily a prose piece, it does contain poetry, so it is relevant to the discussion here (see also later in the Chapter). As I began to scrutinise these poems, I became more and more drawn to aspects of the poems which seemed to be peripheral to the main action of the story, namely the landscapes, the weather, and the women, for the men in the poems are fairly standard heroes with a fixed range of activities. The heroes kill things – monsters or each other depending on the circumstances –, as well as hoard treasure, woo maidens, labour, and feast, all before coming to a rather sticky, but truly heroic end. This is not to say that there are not some subtle differences, such as the stoicism of the Volsungs, the delinquency of Kullervo and the relative weakness of Arthur, but they appear to have more in common than they have to differentiate them. The subtlety, the unique flavour, and the symbolism are found in the peripheral or background elements and one can see how Tolkien carried the lessons learned in these poems forward into his legendarium.

4.2 The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún

The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún was written some time between 1925 and 1939. The poem is written in a metre which in old Norse is called *fornyrðislag* consisting of four stressed syllables and any number of unstressed syllables. The alliteration and stress patterns of the poem are similar to those of Old English poetry. Tolkien has written the poem in eight-line stanzas, in the published text at least. Originally Tolkien used four-line stanzas using half lines, which have been separated in the published version to improve readability. The effect of short sharp lines and short sharp stanzas gives the effect of “seizing a situation, striking a blow that will be remembered, illuminating a moment with a flash of lightning” (Rudd, 2011: 146-147).

The poem tells of the fortunes of the Volsungs, beginning with the death of Volsung at the hand of his son-in-law, the vengeance of his only surviving son and daughter, Sigmund and Signý, and the fate of Volsung’s grandson, Sigurd. Volsung marries his daughter Signý to a foreign king Siggeir, despite Signý’s protestations that Siggeir is an evil man. Siggeir invites Volsung and his sons to a feast where he murders

Volsung and captures his sons. Signý manages to persuade Siggeir not to slay her brothers immediately, but to leave them tied in the forest to be eaten by a she-wolf (probably Siggeir's mother in wolf form), one each night. Finally, only Sigmund is left, and Signý manages to save him by smearing his mouth with honey so that he is able to grapple with the she-wolf and bite her tongue off when she goes to lick the honey off his face. Sigmund then hides in the forest and Signý sends her sons by Siggeir to him, hoping that they will prove strong enough to revenge Volsung. But each one of them fails and eventually Signý decides that only a full Volsung is up to the task, so she disguises herself and lays with her brother, subsequently bearing him a child called Sinfjötli. Together Sigmund and Sinfjötli kill Siggeir, and, vengeance complete, Signý kills herself by walking back into the flaming hall in which her husband's body burns.

Sigmund returns home and eventually has another son Sigurd. (Sinfjötli is poisoned by Sigmund's first wife.) Sigurd is apprenticed to Regin, a king's youngest son. Regin himself is seeking vengeance for the murder of his father, for his father was killed by his older brother. Regin's father has three sons, Fafnir, Otr, and Regin. Otr, the middle son, was very greedy and loved to eat. He used to spend his day in the form of an otter swimming in a pool catching and eating salmon. The pool was shared by a dwarf called Andvari. Andvari had been cursed by a witch and spend his life swimming around the pool in the form of a pike. However, Andvari was very fortunate for he possessed a magical ring which every eight days produced seven new golden rings of equal beauty. One day three gods are walking near the pool and spy Otr in his otter form eating salmon on the bank. Admiring his beautiful pelt, they slay him, and then journey on to the king's palace. The king immediately recognises the pelt as the one that belonged to his son and demands a wergild from the gods. The gods steal Andvari's gold to pay the fine, but, before his magical ring is taken, Andvari lays a curse on it so that whoever possesses the ring will not have good fortune. Fafnir goes to his father and requests some of the gold. When he is refused, he slays the king and turns himself into a dragon and lies upon Andvari's treasure.

The king's youngest son, Regin, takes Volsung's grandson, Sigurd, as an apprentice and plans to use Sigurd, to slay Fafnir, his brother turned dragon. He then plans to slay Sigurd himself, and to take Andvari's gold. But the plan backfires when Sigurd learns of his treachery and slays Regin whilst he is asleep. Sigurd then journeys with the gold until he falls in love with a beautiful Valkyrie, Brynhild, who is sleeping in a circle of flames. They pledge to marry each other, but first Sigurd has to make a name for himself.

However, Sigurd is thwarted in his plans when he falls under the spell of Grimhild who causes him to fall in love with and marry her daughter Gudrún. Gunnar, Gudrún's brother, hears of Brynhild and goes with Sigurd to her flaming circle with the intention of marrying her. But he is too afraid to enter the ring of fire and persuades Sigurd to disguise himself as Gunnar and go in his stead. Brynhild is fooled and marries Gunnar, who she thinks is a brave man, but soon she learns the truth from Gudrún, and, in a terrible rage, demands the death of Sigurd, then kills herself. Widowed, Gudrún marries King Atli, who, in keeping with the curse, slays the possessors of Andvari's Ring, Gunnar and his brother Hogni. Atli in turn is murdered by Gudrún.

Classically Norse, the storyline is heavily laced with incest, suicide, and murder, all of which are permeated by "Northern Courage" (also see Chapter 5), an impassive and stoic courage in the face of certain doom. Tolkien strays but little from the classical version of the tale as attested in the *Prose* and *Poetic Eddas*, a series of semi-historical, semi-literary pieces following the tribulations of various Icelandic and Norse families [c.1200s] (Sturluson, 2001; Larrington, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2004, pp. 24-25, 224). This may be because of two interrelated reasons: firstly, because the tale was probably the best-known of the four lays he rewrote, and secondly, because he relies on reader's familiarity in order for the poem to make sense. The sharp flashes of action have the potential to be confusing to a reader who does not know the tale. Take, for example, the following scene:

Signý: 'What found ye in the forest,
my fair servants?'
Servants 'Nine brothers' bones
under night gleaming;
yet were shackles broken,
she-wolf lying
torn and tongueless
by the tree riven.'
(*S&G*: 82)

Tolkien is relying on the knowledge of the reader to understand that this scene refers to the fact that Sigmund is the only one of his brothers who has escaped murder by the she-wolf by tearing out the tongue of the she-wolf when she attempted to lick the honey which Signy had smeared on his face. Cursed rings, dragons, witchcraft, and the superhuman strength required to tear out a wolf's tongue whilst both ones hands and feet are fettered, place this tale beyond the bounds of the Primary World, but are all features found within the realm of Faërie.

The land that this tale takes place in reflects the harshness that is inherent in the tale. The general atmosphere and mood of the land is one of darkness and shadow:

Ever wide and wild
the wandering path;
long lay the shadow
of lone rider.
Ever high and high
stood Hindarfell,
mountain mighty
from mist rising.
(S&G: 118)

According to one of Tolkien's favourite authors, William Morris, the land, 'lava, moss, streams, clouds, cliffs, plains, skies, seas, and slopes' of this Northern region were all grey (Wawn, 2002: 254), giving a monochromatic landscape distinguished by texture rather than colour (Burns, 2005: 52). Tolkien enhances this formidable darkness by adding in splashes of gold, greenness, and light. Compare these two verses:

In dragon's likeness
darkling lies he;
deep his dungeons,
and dread he knows not.
A helm of horror
his head weareth
on Gnitaeiði
grimly creeping.'
(S&G: 104)

'A maid have I seen
as morning fair,
golden-girdled,
garland-crowned.
Green runs the roads
To Gjúki's land;
fate leads them on,
who fare that way.'

...

Gudrún groweth
golden-lovely;
as flower unfolded
fair at morning.
(S&G: 116-117, lines 5-8)

In the first, the man/dragon Fafnir is shrouded in a dreadful darkness that his bright gold cannot illuminate, in an environment that is man-made, that is as cut off from the world as a tomb. In contrast, Gudrún is portrayed as youthful and fresh, the green and golds colours in her description contrasting sharply with the dark grimness of the men. It creates a land and a people of extremes.

Despite the vividness of these contrasts, the landscape is oddly ambiguous. There seems to be little separation between man, man-made, and nature. For example, in the following verse the darkness of the forge seems to merge with the darkness of the forest. Even Sigurd himself is described as ‘the seed of the Volsung’, links him in an odd way with the flora as much as the fauna of the land:

The forge was smoking
in the forest-darkness;
there wrought Regin
by the red embers.
There was Sigurd sent,
seed of Volsung,
lore deep to learn;
long his fostering.
(S&G: 100)

The symbolic is made flesh. The greed and selfishness of Fafnir’s desire for gold is manifested in his physical form as a dragon. In the story the savagery of kin-slaying, a particularly heinous crime in Northern society, is reinforced by the fact that both Sigmund, Sinfjotli, and Siggeir’s mother all transform into wolves at the time of or shortly before carrying out the kin-slaying.

... wolvish-coated,
men they murdered,
men they plundered.
Daylong slept they
in dark cavern
after dreadful deeds
of death in Gautland.
(S&G: 84, lines 2-8)

Such transformations are not uncommon in the realm of Faërie where natural phenomena such as night have an animism of their own:

Night lapped the world
and noiseless town;
(S&G: 284)

This animism is not that unusual in poetry, but added to the other images mentioned above, it creates a sense of unease or uncertainty that pervades the poem for nothing is quite what it seems. It is also a theme that has been running through Tolkien's Faërie. It is seen in *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915/1937/1962] (see Appendix), where, in the early versions of the poem, the town was a living entity with a beating heart, and the trees themselves are portrayed as kings, lords, or warriors.

Like *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962], there is also an ambiguity around time in this poem, with time running both fast and slow at the same time. Time is fast, the staccato lines of the poem jump from scene to scene, each creating a vivid tableau before leaping forward in the tale. Yet at the same time Tolkien is using the ancient device of kennings⁶³ in his poem, which adds a sense of history. For example, the violence of this battle is sparsely written, yet it takes on a grander and more protracted aura as the violence and skill of the blacksmith at the forge and the warrior are merged:

At the dark doorways
they dinned and hammered;
there was clang of swords
and crash of axes.
The smiths of battle
smote the anvils;
sparked and splintered
spears and helmets.
(S&G: 286)

Tolkien encapsulates this thought by calling warriors "The smiths of battle" (Rudd, 2011: 159). This brief glimpse of action is given a history which begins with the forging of the weapons and helmets that the warriors bear and ends in the light glinting off the forged weapons as they are broken apart in battle. The lines are at once in the moment and in the past. This ambiguity of time is one of the hallmarks of traditional Faërie.

Yet, despite the presence of mythical objects and beings, the sharp contrasts in colour and texture, and the general animism and ambiguity of the land, this realm lacks a clear boundary between the Primary World and Faërie. This is in stark contrast to the Faërie of Celtic literature where Faërie can only be entered by crossing some kind of threshold. In the setting of this tale, gods come and go from the landscape, manipulating humans' fates to their own ends, but the traffic is one way. Humans themselves are trapped

⁶³ A compound expression in Old English and Old Norse poetry with metaphorical meaning, e.g. oar-steed = ship. (OED, 'kenning, n2, 6')

on Earth until they die where, if they were of sufficient merit, they might enter the halls of Valhalla. Again, this is in contrast to the Faërie of the Celtic regions where men enter and leave it, sometimes of their own volition, and at other times at the volition of the fairy creatures they encounter. Wolves, ravens, and eagles, the animals of the battlefield, prowl the lines of the poem, adding a violence to the landscape which is not present in the Faërie of the other lays apart from *The Fall of Arthur* [1933], which shares some of *Sigurd's* [early 1930s] northern roots. Most of all, this landscape is one of uncertainty as, though the essence of the person or thing does not change, their form, nature, and attributes might. A human might appear as a wolf or dragon yet have some part of themselves that is still human. Faërie is said to be a liminal space, a space set apart from the Primary World, yet in this case we get a similar disorientation or strangeness, not from separation, but from a blurring of margins.

The men in Tolkien's retelling are remarkably stoic and are resigned to fate. The gods determine whether they live or die and there is little point resisting this. Rather it is more honourable to remain faithful to their lord and to their reputation and to suffer their assigned death with minimal displays of suffering. One could even argue that the Volsungs and Niflungs are so extreme in their actions that one could call them reckless or even foolhardy, as only extreme, almost obscene, courage might persuade the gods to alter their destiny. The gods, on the other hand, are interested in preparing for Valhalla, and desire strong warriors with good fighting skills to "draft" into their army for the end of time. The focus of men is to leave behind a name that shall be remembered and revered. Whilst all of the men in these poems show remarkable courage, it is the proclivity of Norse men to deliberately put themselves into unwinnable situations that most distinguishes them from the heroes in other tales.

The women of *Sigurd and Gudrud* [early 1930s] are strong and courageous like the men, but they are more varied and take on many different roles. They are fisherwomen, lovers, mothers, warriors, murders, adulteresses, queens, conspirators, enchantresses, seers, cooks, wives, and jealous rivals. They are equally strong in their loyalties and, although they place their blood relatives first, many will follow their husbands to their graves. Their loyalty is the attribute that they are remembered for, just as the man's courage is his. This flexibility allows the women in this tale to act in ways that are simply not available to the men in the story. More importantly, women, like the gods, manipulate the fate of men. In Tolkien's poem, their activities create the pivot points of the story. Without Hreidmar's net, Loki would not have obtained Andvari's gold. If Signý had not saved Sigmund, Sigurd

would never have been born. If Grimhild had not enchanted Sigurd, the fiasco with Brynhild and Gudrún would never have occurred and the Niflungs would have never possessed the cursed gold. Brynhild, Grimhild, and Gudrún could even be said to echo the three Norns as they manipulate the men around them to bring down the Volsungs. They use magic, more frequently, and in some ways more openly than the men to achieve their goals, possibly because they do not possess the sheer brute strength of their male counterparts. However their power or vision does not appear to have been strong enough to recognize the peril of the cursed gold, nor to counter the curse's effects on the ones they loved. Just as Andvari's gold brings down the Volsungs, the Niflungs and Atli also fall victim to its influence. One could say that they are very typical of Tolkien's women. They are strong, independent, with minds of their own, yet are not really the main characters of the plot. Despite this, it is their actions that directly dictate the fates of their men.

4.3 The Story of Kullervo

I admit to taking a liberty by including this piece in this section of the thesis. It is a liberty for two reasons, firstly because it is a combination of poetry and prose, so not strictly a non-Middle-earth poem, and secondly, because it was written in the early phase rather than the middle phase of Tolkien's Faërie. I have included it because it is still an attempt at rewriting a well known mythological story, and, because it creates an interesting contrast to his other Northern poem, *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. Tolkien first read *The Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic composed by Elias Lönnrot, in 1911 (*Kullevo*: xiii). The piece inspired him to write a retelling of his own, *The Story of Kullervo* [1914]. Written some time between 1912-1916 (*Kullervo*: xiii), Tolkien has tried to mimic the four-foot, eight-syllable lines of the William Kirby translation of *The Kalevala*, which, though slightly different from the traditional *Kalevala* rhythm (*Kullervo*: 55) still gives the strong swaying rhythm typical of that genre.

The original story follows the life of Kullervo, a young man who is born into slavery after the death of his father. His master (Kullervo's paternal uncle), can neither use him or kill him because of his peculiar strength, for everything that Kullervo touches he destroys or makes useless in some way. In desperation, Kullervo's uncle sells Kullervo to a smith, Åsemo. The smith's wife is equally abusive towards Kullervo, baking a stone into his bread so that Kullervo breaks his father's knife on it. In revenge Kullervo murders the smith's wife, and then, through ignoring the advice of Mielikki, the goddess of the forest, he strays from his intended path, and meets and falls in love with a woman he meets in the

forest. The woman turns out to be his own sister, who has been lost in the forest. When they discover this, his sister, Wanona, commits suicide, and, fuelled by grief and anger, Kullervo seeks out and murders his uncle, in the process killing his whole family and his father's dog Musti, who saved him when he was a child. Kullervo then commits suicide. Tolkien's version differs slightly from Lönnrot's. He adds the black dog, Musti, as a magical guardian for Kullervo when he is young. He gives Kullervo older siblings, and sorts out the confusion which is present in the original around Kullervo's mother first being slain by his uncle, but then reappearing, living in the forest with the rest of his family. Tolkien also creates a much closer bond between Kullervo and his twin sister Wanona than is present in the original, and introduces more conflict between the twins and their older siblings. Finally, he changes the woman in the forest from just a spirit of a place to the forest goddess Mielikki. Mielikki is mentioned in the original tale, but is invoked in the smith's wife's prayer rather than being named as the figure who appears to Kullervo.

The landscape that Tolkien depicts in *The Story of Kullervo* [1914] is both like and unlike that of *The Lay of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. There is the same relative lack of colour, and when it is present, it is gold and silver, though this time the silver and gold of 'moonlight and sunlight' rather than treasure or dragon fire (*Kullervo*: 82). There is the same wild landscape of mountains, rivers, and grasslands, although this land appears to have more forested areas than the Volsung's homeland (*Kullervo*: 101). In the second draft of an essay written on *The Kalevala* possibly in the early 1920's, Tolkien writes of the landscape:

... it is more likely that an indefinable sense of newness will either delight or disturb you too much for comparisons, there will be a glamour of strangeness even upon the familiar things; the trees will group themselves unusually on the horizon; the birds will make unfamiliar music; the inhabitants will talk a wild and at first unintelligible lingo. (*Kullervo*: 101)

... there is a 'nowness', a quite unhazy unromantic momentariness and presentness that startles you mightily when you suddenly realize that you are all the time reading about the earth being made out of a teal's egg, or the sun and moon being imprisoned in a mountain. (*Kullervo*: 109)

The tales are quite diverse and the "wild- feeling" of this landscape is quite different from *Sigurd* [early 1930s], though it has some elements in common. It is not shadowy, though is a strange land with magical beings of its own. There is the odd mixing of time, with the immediate, here and now, of the tales intertwining with their ancient origins. In the

following lines mythological beings are invoked to curse a land whose description would fit that of a modern forest or field:

But Saki [Kullervo] shouted, 'May Tanto Lord of Hell do such labour and send Lempo for the timbers fashioning.'

And he sang:
Let no sapling sprout here ever
Nor the blades of grass stand greening
While the mighty earth endureth
Or the golden moon is shining
And its rays come filtering dimly.
(*Kullervo*: 14)

In this scene there is nature and the unnatural which harmonize into a land where the mythic beings and legendary heroes in the tales of that land (*Kullervo*: 246). These lines speak of a barren land without tree or grass yet does so by mentioning them, emphasising their absence. It is lit by a golden moon, a richer, more mystical version of the normal silver moon. Kullervo comes of age in a fairy-tale like fashion. As an infant he tears his swaddling clothes and kicks his cradle to pieces (*Kullervo*: 8). Having survived his uncle's attempts to kill him three times, he takes his revenge cutting fine oak trees into match sticks then cursing the ground so it becomes infertile. He builds a high wall with no gate, threshes rye to powder, and splinters the boat and turns the catch into slime when he is sent fishing (*Kullervo*: 15-17). Like Tolkien's version of Beowulf, he is so strong and angry that Kullervo cannot function in the Primary World, a trait that is clearly seen in Tolkien's poem *Sellic Spell* printed at the end of Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* published in 2015.

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Figure 3: The Land of Pohja (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Tolkien Drawings 87, fols. 17-18). Copyright: The Tolkien Trust 2015. Reproduced with permission.

For all its brightness, the forest is encased in a misty blueness, a colour which Tolkien associated with mystery and magic. In this illustration, based on his reading of *The Kalevala*, Tolkien contrasts the blue gold/silver with the vague shapes of the trees in the distance (see Figure 3). The trees are curiously clumped in groups of three like rugby players in a team huddle, their trunks almost appearing leg like. They rapidly disappear into the background of the picture in a haze of mysterious, almost ghostly forms. The colours are muted, –including soft blues, greys, and purples, contrasting with the bright, sharp-edged blue and gold of the foreground.

The Finnish landscape contains pine, juniper, birch, oak, fir and aspen, trees that Tolkien, a lover of trees would have known. It also contains animals such as wolves and bears, but the language around these creatures is very different to that found in *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. In *Sigurd*, Tolkien pairs wolves with eagles and ravens, animals that are associated with battles and gods, emphasising their wildness and bloodthirstiness. In *Kullervo* [1914], bears and wolves are of greater import, and are treated with a kind of wary, respectful affection. As Tolkien notes, to speak the names of these animals might invite their appearance, so the inhabitants of the land have developed euphemisms in order to avoid attracting their attention. Bears might be termed “honeypaw”, “brutin”, “winter sleeper” or “woodapple” (*Kullervo*: 244). These names are similar to the kennings seen in

Sigurd [early 1930s], but they are an indication of desire for good relationships rather than adding sense of history to the tale. There are echoes here of Beorn and the eagles in *The Hobbit* [1937] and *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], who, though they are wild creatures integrated into the landscape, they still have a kind of guardedly respectful relationship with the good beings they meet and have a sentience beyond mere wild instinct with an morality grounded in preservation of the land.

But it is more than the creatures of the land that have sentience. In his essay on *The Kalevala* Tolkien writes:

The Religion of these poems is a luxuriant animism- ... this means that in the Kalevala every stock and stone, every tree, the birds, waves, hills, air, the tables, swords and the beer even have well defined personalities. (*Kullervo*: 80)

Every tree, wave, and hill has its nymph and spirit, distinct from the character, apparently, of each individual object. There is the nymph of the Blood and the Veins; the spirit of the rudder; there is the moon and his children, and the Sun and his (they are both masculine); there is a dim and awesome figure, the nearest approach to regal dignity in the poems, Tapio, God of the Forest, and his spouse Mielikki, and their fairy-like son and daughter, Tellervo, 'little maiden of the forest clad in soft, beauteous garments', and her brother Nyyrikki with his red cap and blue coat; ... (*Kullervo*: 122-123)

This echoes the elementals seen in Tolkien's *The Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] or the dryads of *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962]. It can also be seen in the forests of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] where the trees in Fangorn, The Old Forest, and Mirkwood all have a kind of consciousness not normally associated with plant life. In Finnish mythology such spirits were not ordered into hierarchies or genealogies; each had the capability of operating independently in their particular domain. Nor were they particularly focussed on manipulating the inhabitants of Finland, as the Norse gods were. They could be persuaded or induced to aid humans by incantations or prayers sung, played, or woven with fingers, as both Kullervo and Åsemo's wife do. This might imply that they are less discerning compared to Tolkien's eagles. They might elect to advise or aid humans if they desired to do so, as Mielikki aids Kullervo, although Kullervo is not bound to follow her advice, and, using his own free will he chooses not to, to his detriment. This appears quite a different relationship than between the Volsungs and their gods, where the Volsungs were very much at the mercy of their gods' desires. Finally, they could "infect" or "take" an individual if for some reason their barriers were down, as Wanona was taken. The result is a complex and dynamic spirituality relatively free from the influence of Christianity.

Kongas-Maranda argues, the Finnish supernatural consists of a number of realms (Stark-Arola, 1998: 162), for example, the forest and the land of the dead both of which are associated with British Faërie in Tolkien's work as I have discussed previously. In Finnish society Faërie realms are spiritually if not physically separate from the human world of the village (Stark-Arola, 1998: 162); that is, the village might lie within the bounds of the forest but there is a clear atmospheric distinction between what is village and what is forest even if there is no clear physical boundary. Once again, this is a feature of Tolkien's Faërie right from his earliest non-Middle-earth poetry, though his concept of what this atmosphere was changed from one of light and beauty to more complex emotions as his vision developed. They represent the "other", the unknown; that which is not contained in the familiar surroundings of home and village. Yet unlike the Celtic Faërie, where the boundary to Faërie is defined by time and space; in Finnish magic, the boundary between self and other, known and unknown, is at the level of the individual, both physically and spiritually. The boundary between self and other could be strengthened by charms or prayers or emotions such as anger or hostility. On the other hand, strong emotions such as fear, physical states such as pregnancy or menstruation, or being cursed can all open an individual to the influence of the "other" be it good or bad. Tolkien might have been thinking on this when writing about Bilbo and the Dwarves. In *The Hobbit* an agitated and upset Bilbo is 'infected' by the tales of the Dwarves, awakening his Tookish desire to explore the outside world; a thing quite at odds with Bilbo's normally conservative hobbit nature.

In many ways, Tolkien's version of Kullervo is very different from the Kullervo of *The Kalevala*. The Kullervo of *The Kalevala* is the son of Kalervo, a giant, so his enormous strength and rapid growth is in keeping with a supernatural hero. This Kullervo is beautiful, Tolkien even described him as 'a bit of a dandy,' with his 'finest locks of yellow colour,' 'blue-dyed stockings,' and 'shoes of best leather' (*Kullervo*: 150). The power he possessed was his from the beginning, a natural extension of his being. He did not need a Musti, Tolkien's invented supernatural helper in the form of a large black dog⁶⁴, to save him as a child, he was quite capable of doing this himself. His mother obviously saw his future going in one direction, and one direction only, for she named him 'Kullervo' – wrath, "Untamo"- battle hero. Yet the Kullervo of *The Kalevala* shares with Tolkien's

⁶⁴ This association with a black dog is a departure from the traditional *Kalevala*, though a black dog does appear at the family's home in the forest. This may represent a more traditionally Finnish use of the dog motif where a curse performed by a magician on another person was said to come back to the caster in a magnified form. It was often colloquially called "sending back the dog"; (in this case, the dog referring to an agent of magical harm) (Kirby, 1985: 1888, Stark, 2015: 137).

Kullervo a social ungainliness, and a tendency to extreme behaviour and black humours, which belie his good looks. Against this, Tolkien's Kullervo appears even darker than *The Kalevala's*. Tolkien describes Kullervo as lacking his mother's care and being raised in crooked fashion, physically abused by those who rocked him, and psychologically traumatised even as he sucked at the breast of his angry, grieving mother. (*Kullervo*: 7-8). He is deeply flawed and this is augmented by the isolation and loneliness brought on by his status as a thrall; a key characteristic in Tolkien's characters who descend into evil (see Chapter 5). He was said to be 'ill-favoured and crooked', 'broad', ill-knitted', and 'knotty', with an 'unrestrained and unsoftened' character of one who had spent too much time amongst the wild animals of the forest (*Kullervo*: 20). This mimics another of Tolkien's characters Turin Turambar, who, Tolkien writes in a letter to Milton Waldman in 1951, is partly based on Kullervo, partly on Sigurd, and partly on Oedipus (*Letters*: 150). All of these heroes share common themes of incestuous love and tragic ends, but the connection between Turin and Kullervo is particularly close, as both fall in love with their sisters and both commit suicide (*S*: 219-226). Yet, in Kullervo's case, Tolkien only calls him Kullervo meaning wrath, there is no hint of his being a 'civilised' battle-hero, despite his murdered father's lordly status. He is more successful than Turin at avenging his father and bears his father's sword as Turin possesses his father's dragon helm. A possible explanation of the simplicity of Kullervo's name is that is all the name he needs, for it defines nearly every stage of his life. Unlike Turin, who constantly changes his name as his fortune waxes and wanes, in Tolkien's Kullervo tale, Kullervo is born into strife to a remote, grief obsessed mother, who names her children wrath and weeping (*Kullervo*: 7). She sets him on the path of vengeance from an early age, and this becomes his main way of interacting with the world, apart from brief times of kindness associated with interactions with his sister, Wainona, and his dog Musti. In other words, unlike Turin, Kullervo is very single-minded.

Kullervo is a cursed man, possibly four times over. Untamo hates him and tries to murder him three times. Anger, particularly in those who possess magic, which given that Untamo is Kullervo's uncle is highly likely, was a very dangerous thing. Anger was thought to augment the power of a wizard, raising a supernatural force within the body of the caster (Stark, 2015: 126). Untamo is driven into blinding rages at least three times by Kullervo. To wish someone ill verbally can open that person to the "other" and allow them to fall under the influence of the spiritual world. Secondly Āsemo's wife curses Kullervo as she is slain by the wolves and bears which Kullervo has lured from the forest in place of her cattle in revenge for her causing him to break his father's knife. In this case, it is a dying curse, a powerful curse, and she calls on the most powerful of the Finnish gods to

enforce it. Thirdly, to curse someone in Finland was a risky business, and, particularly if the curse was unjustified or the person was not powerful enough, the curse could rebound onto the persons making the curse. Sometimes termed “sending back the dog (agent of magical harm)”, a perpetrator of a curse might be even more severely affected by their own curse if the person sending back the spell secured the assistance of a shaman (tietaja) (Stark, 2015: 127). In Finnish terms, one could argue that that Kullervo’s curse was justified, and therefore should not rebound on its caster. Åsemo’s wife had failed in her duty to provide her thrall with food by baking a stone into his bread. Magic was one of the few weapons a person of lower class had against those richer than themselves and it was considered a legitimate use of magic to curse those of a wealthier class who mistreated those of a lower class. Åsemo’s wife does unjustly use her power over Kullervo to make his life miserable, therefore in Finnish tradition, Kullervo is justified in cursing her, though slaying her with the curse may be a rather extreme. However, in cursing someone there is always the risk it may rebound or that the curser or their family may be affected by a counter curse. It might be the countercurse which kills Kullervo’s family. Stark describes a countercurse, which returns a curse to its sender, using these words:

“Go, dog, to your home/ to your master by supper/ to your mistress by breakfast/ to the rest of your family by mealtime/ to bite, to gnaw/ to cause extreme pain./ Go far from the blameless/ skirt ‘round the innocent/ go past the decent people.” (Stark, 2006: 183)

The black dog that appears after Kullervo’s family have been slain might be an indication that the curse is in operation. Finally Tolkien’s Kullervo disobeys the instructions of the blue-robed Mielikki, the goddess of the forest, and strays away from the shadows into the sunlight. It is in the forest that Kullervo meets his twin sister Wanona. It appears the effect of the curses prevent him from recognizing his sister and leads to his incestuous relationship with her. Each of these curses is a manifestation of vengeance against a wrong either done to or done by Kullervo, a continuing chain of retribution that pervades his life.

Like the women of *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], the women in this tale influence the fate of Kullervo. I have already discussed how Kullervo’s mother raises an angry young man, and this culminates when she presents Kullervo with his father’s knife, a knife which becomes very precious to him. Little does she know that such a gift will add to his already destructive life. Because of his upbringing, Åsemo’s wife ends up with an antisocial young man who possesses supernatural strength. Unfortunately, Åsemo’s wife herself was not known for her even temper, and she too possessed an antisocial and sadistic

nature. The two clash immediately, and she seeks to injure Kullervo by breaking his father's knife on a stone she has baked into his bread. Her behaviour towards Kullervo is 'treacherous and hard [with] little love' (*Kullervo*: 20). She does not even seem to show him the respect she has for the creatures of the forest such as the wolf and the bear. But she is a fool to disrespect someone of such physical and magical might as Kullervo, for he is 'but one generation from the men of magic' (*Kullervo*: 8). Though she is the daughter of Koi, Queen of the marshlands of the north, her charms of protection for her cattle fail to protect her cattle and herself. This is some indication of just how powerful Kullervo is. However her dying curse has teeth:

Woe thou Sari Kampa's offspring,
Woe thou crooked fated child Nyelid
Ill thy fortune dark thy fairing,
On the road of thy lifetime
Though has trod the ways of thraldom
And the trackless waste of exile
But thy end shall be more awful
And a tale to men forever
Of a fate of woe [and] horror.
(*Kullervo*: 31)

And indeed his fate is awful, a tale filled with woe and horror. So here is a young man, raised by a malevolent uncle and a distant, bitter mother, abused and then cursed by the spouse of his master, alone, homeless, and so powerful that, like the young Beowulf, he causes devastation wherever he goes. It seems Kullervo's prospects are few.

Wanona, Kullervo's twin sister, on the other hand, is his opposite. She is beautiful and fair, against Kullervo's dark ugliness. She is gentle and loving, especially towards Kullervo, against Kullervo's violence and hatred. She is a child of the forest, whereas Kullervo persists in trying to belong to the world of men. In Tolkien's version, Wanona seeks the forest from an early age.

And a wild lone-faring Wanona did grow, straying in the grim woods of Untola so soon as she could stand –and early was that, for wonderous were these children and but one generation from the men of magic... (*Kullervo*: 8).

As a young woman, she then disappears into the forest one day after going berry picking. On meeting Kullervo, Wanona tells him 'I be lost in the evil woods, and Tapio [the god of the forest] has me fast in his hold' (*Kullervo*: 36). The Finnish people have a concept of a thing or a person being 'taken by the forest.' In such cases, the person was made

vulnerable to incursion by the spirits of the wilderness into the individual's body, confusing them, possessing them, and causing them to lose their way.

To "be taken by the forest" was not only to become socially isolated but also involved losing those qualities which made a person recognizably human:

In their subjective experiences, their ability to communicate with and be recognized, their sense of direction, and need for food, warmth, and human company were all profoundly altered. They saw themselves take on the characteristics of the forest, transformed into beings that were mute, passive, and invisible; impressions that were reinforced when searchers later reported that the lost person had appeared to their eyes as a stone or tree stump. ... lost persons had difficulty reattaching to society and re-entering the community... The difficulty of reattachment was expressed on several levels: lost persons did not recognize places that should have been familiar, they felt an overwhelming urge to run away from human searchers, encountered anthromorphic figures that forebade them or prevented them from returning home or making contact with other humans, and they did not feel the bodily sensations (hunger, cold, fatigue) that would have compelled them to seek human shelter. (Stark, 2015: 134)

Stark goes on to say that the individual was in a "kind of limbo", having lost the ability to act or decide for themselves (Stark, 2015: 134). This helps explain what is happening when Kullervo comes across Wainona in the forest.

the curse of Louhi's daughter was on him and his eyes saw and saw not: and he forgot the slaying of Untámo and strode to the maiden who heeded him not. A garland of flowers was she plaiting and was singing yet wearily and half-sorrowfully to herself. ...

And the maid was affright and shrank from him.

(*Kullervo*: 35-36)

Kullervo is under the curse but Wanona, as far as we know, is not cursed. Yet she seems to be half in and half out of the world. She does not embrace Kullervo as a potential rescuer, rather she shrinks away from him, frightened, despite being lost in the forest for a long time. Furthermore she seems to have some kind of supernatural sight, for she exclaims "Death walketh with thee, wanderer, and woe is at thy side" (*Kullervo*: 36). Wanona appears to be able to sense Kullervo's curse even though she has no knowledge of it. She tells Kullervo that she desires to return to her people but is unable to find them because "Tapio [the god of the forest] hides the way from me" (*Kullervo*: 36). Thus, both Kullervo and Wanona have been drawn into Faërie, one by a curse and the other by the forest spirit

Tapio, and neither is able to help other escape, setting the scene for their incestual love and Wanona's suicide upon learning the true identity of Kullervo.

As in *Sigurd*, there is no clear boundary between Faërie in the form of the forest, and the Primary World, the physical components are the same, but the forces operating in each are vastly different. Faërie has a more overt spiritual level compared to the Primary World. In these Northern tales, there is a fundamental connection between the land and the people in it so that the land becomes more than simply a place that the humans live in, rather its spirits and creatures are invoked, feared, admired, and manipulated as a fundamental part of everyday life. There is still a sense that these beings/animals are "other", but they are as inseparable from the humans as Princess Mee is from her shadow (see Chapter 2). This is and is not the land of desire: the spirits and animals are able to fulfil the desires of those who invoke them, if the caster has sufficient power, but the landscape is physically much more ordinary and mundane compared to other Faeries. The separation from the Primary World occurs at a spiritual level.

Looking at the role of the women in *The Story of Kullervo* [1914], it is clear that once again they form pivot points which alter the course of Kullervo's life. His mother neglects him, then urges him towards revenge, giving him his father's knife, which induces his rage against Āsemo's wife. Āsemo's wife is cruel to him and is murdered for her treachery but manages to curse him with a dreadful curse before she dies. Wanona, though kind to him as a child, is lured into a relationship whilst she is under the spell of the forest. The discovery of their incest and her subsequent suicide spurs Kullervo into a dreadful rage and killing spree in which he not only kills his uncle, but also his older brother and sister. Even his faithful hound, Musti, does not survive the fray. Kullervo ends his days by suicide, having slept with his sister, murdered his kin, and caused the killing of his most faithful friend, and though Kullervo is still responsible for his actions, it is worth noting that at each of the pivotal moments in his life, it is a woman who is somehow involved in his action, either inciting him to them or warning against them. These women do not seem to have the same Norn or Fate like qualities as the women of Tolkien's *Sigurd and Gudrún*, yet each play a key role in determining Kullervo's fate.

4.4 Northern Faërie

In summary, the Faërie of the North is integral to the Primary World, with little or no physical barrier between the world of men and the supernatural elements which inhabit

their world. This means that Faërie and magic appear to be part of everyday life. The heroes, as well as the creatures of Faërie, appear to have magical abilities, though the degree to which they try to manipulate or interact with the supernatural seems to differ between the Finnish and the Norse Faërie. *Kullervo* [1914] is marked by many incantations, prayers, and curses, aimed at invoking the spirits of the other to protect or harm the chosen targets. Yet in both worlds, the women, whether they are acting for good or ill, mimic the fates and form the pivot points of the story, even if they are not central characters. This is an element that Tolkien will carry through into *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]. Though Galadriel and Shelob appear for very short periods during the book, they play pivotal roles in the characters' journeys, particularly Sam's. By offering Sam the possibility of going home when they reach Lothlorien, Galadriel changes Sam's journey from something imposed upon him, to one of his own volition. By providing the Light of Elendil, Galadriel makes it possible for Sam to defeat Shelob and makes it feasible for him to recognize himself not just as a follower, but as a leader. It is Sam who gets Frodo through the land of Mordor, caring for him, encouraging him, and, at the end, even carrying him to Mount Doom. Equally Shelob is the pivotal point for Gollum. At her lair he is given the choice of guiding Frodo and Sam through without encountering the spider or allowing them to wander into her webs in the hope of obtaining the Ring. In other words, he is given the choice to forego the Ring and help in its destruction, or to give in to his desire for the Ring.

The landscapes are similar in their colouring, though the Norse landscape is darker. Tolkien uses blue in both poems to represent the mystical and the magical. Though the landscape of *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s] is harsher and rockier, both Faëries contain forests, a recurring theme in Tolkien's Faërie. In the Norse Faërie, the merging of human and nature takes on an organic quality with humans and human activity echoing the flora around them, so at times they merge. In Tolkien's Finnish Faërie, the separation of Faërie from the Primary World is at a spiritual rather than a physical level. Both worlds contain gold and silver, but in the Norse tales this is the gold and silver of a dragon's hoard or a metaphor for that which is beautiful and valuable, whilst in the Finnish tale it is the gold and silver of moonlight or sunlight and contains no worth other than the delight and perhaps warmth that it brings. As I have alluded to earlier, Tolkien goes on to use these ambiguous, animated landscapes in his legendarium, creating locations with a particular "mood" and activity so that the landscape becomes a character in its own right. These features of Northern Faërie are quite distinct from the next two Faëries Tolkien describes, those that I shall label the "Celtic" Faëries.

4.5 The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun

The *Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] is the longest poem Tolkien published during his lifetime. It was written around 1930 then revised and published in the *Welsh Review* in 1945 (Rateliff, 2014: 137). As Christopher Tolkien describes, besides the published version there are three other manuscripts containing renderings of the poem:

a good but incomplete manuscript that was apparently overtaken by the second text (very little changed from the first) and a fine fair copy on which my father wrote at the end a date: September 23, 1930. (*Aotrou*: xi).

The poem is based on the Breton Ballad “Aotrou Nann hag ar Gorrigan” (Lord Nann and the Corrigan), a Breton-Celtic tale made famous in an eighty-five-line poem by the author Vicomte Hersart de la Villemarqués’s *Barzaz-Breiz* in 1839. Tolkien both expanded the story and increased its complexity; his poem, in its original form, contains 506 lines (Rateliff, 2014: 137). It is possible that Tolkien read the version in Child’s *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* along with a translation of the Villemarqué version. Tolkien’s poem is written in rhyming octosyllabic couplets in imitation of the Breton Lays of Marie de France.

The poem tells of a lord who, despite years of marriage to his beloved wife, remains childless. Whilst his wife prays for God to provide them with children, the lord despairs and seeks the aid of a Corrigan from Broceliande Forest. The Corrigan gives him a potion which he secretes into his wife’s wine and she soon bears him twins, a son and a daughter. However, the Corrigan has not told the lord her price for the potion, and when his wife’s desire for venison and fresh water from the well in the forest drives him to return, the Corrigan demands that he remain as her consort in the forest forever or he will die. The lord refuses her demands, returns to his hometown and dies at the end of three days. His wife finds him lying dead on a bier in the church when she herself goes to be ‘churched’ after the birth of her children. She dies and rests beside her husband. What becomes of the children is not known, but at the beginning and the end of the poem, the castle that they inhabited lies in ruins.

The first and most striking thing about the world of *Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] is that the worlds of Faërie and the Primary world are separate entities, though they touch at certain points, allowing humans to pass from the Christian Primary World to the more pagan and wilder world of the Broceliande forest: the poem’s version of Faërie. Tolkien

separates the two in several ways. As in some of his earlier representations of Faërie there is a disparity in the passage of time in the Faërie and the Primary World. It is noticeable that throughout the poem Tolkien emphasizes the time-fullness of the world of men as opposed to the unchanging nature or timelessness of the world of nature or Faërie. Two verses of the poem describe the landscape near the forest of Broceliande, but include the ruined tower of Aotrou:

In Britain's land beyond the seas
the wind blows *ever* through the trees;
in Britain's land beyond the waves
are stony shores and stony caves.

There stands a ruined toft now ever green
where lords and ladies once were seen,
where towers were piled above the trees.

(*Aotrou*: 3, lines 1-7)

Tolkien repeats the image of trees, sea, and stone several times in lines 341-346 and 493-498. The lord and his lady are now dead, but the wind still blows through the trees, the waves still move slowly hollowing out caves in the stony cliffs and the ancient land endures. Stones were symbols of deathlessness in the "Celtic" races (Hemmi, 2012: 9). A similar imagery is seen in Tolkien's poem *Kortirion* (see Appendix), where the forest once again outlasts the structures of men. In the forest, the sense of timelessness is reinforced by its dimness, which is so dense that the normal cycles of day and night seen in the forest of *Kortirion* is lost. This becomes a symbol of the power of the Natural world/ Faërie and also its separation from the Primary World.

Thus, the forest is a place of "otherness" akin to the Finnish Faërie, but in this case it has been taken a step further. The forest forms a physical barrier to pass through to reach this place, something that is not present in the Northern Faërie. The darkness and gloom of the forest intensifies the danger associated with entering it. In the darkness and mist, things become less distinct and more wraith-like. It is difficult for Aotrou to be able to distinguish the real from the imaginary. The lord is less in control of his environment. As the lord penetrates deeper into the wood, the world becomes more and more tomb-like:

In the dell
deep in the forest silence fell.
...

and trees like shadows waiting stood
for night to come upon the wood.

The sun was lost, all green was grey.

...
before a cave on silver sand,
under dark boughs in Broceliande.

...
He saw her then, on silver chair
before her cavern, pale her hair,
slow was her smile, and white her hand
beckoning in Broceliande.

(*Aotrou*: 13, lines 277-278, 281-283, 285-286, 289-292)

The Corrigan's grotto is an odd combination of both life and death. There is life here: the trees are alive and the grass is soft, not dry and brittle, though both are grey and shadowy. There are birds and animals present, cats, bats, and owls –though they do not make the environment feel less sinister. But there is also death. The richness of the Corrigan's belongings, her white hand, and a voice which is 'cold as echo from the world of old' all invoke the feeling of a barrow. There is a kind of ominous beauty akin to Tolkien's villains such as Melkor and Feanor (*S*: 60, 66). Like the Corrigan, these beings have the ability to be compelling, superficially kind, and lead the misguided astray by seeming to promise them what they desire. There can be no question in the reader's mind that the Corrigan is evil, even though she agrees to help Aotrou. Tolkien, particularly later in his writing, equated beauty with good, and ugliness with evil. As he notes in a draft version of his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939]:

We cannot really conceive of beautiful evil. ... In *Faerie* one can conceive of a demon or ogre that posses a castle of hideous nightmare shape (for that is his will and nature); but one cannot conceive of a house built with a 'good' purpose – a hospital, an inn or refuge for travellers – being ugly or squalid. (*OFS*: 256-257, underline original)

In this poem, Tolkien dilutes the power of the Corrigan's beauty by surrounding her with things which are more in keeping with her sinister nature and, at the end of the poem, when the Corrigan is singing Aotrou to death, she transforms into a hideous hag.

The ambiguities extend in the forest to a moral ambiguity. The Primary World, as I have mentioned, is Christian. Itou prays for children, and Aotrou, at least on the surface, behaves in accordance with Christian chivalry. But in the forest, a pagan world, the laws of the court no longer exert the same power. In the Classical tradition (Greek and Roman) the forest was associated with disorder, chaos, and primordial matter, a place where humans

could mingle freely with supernatural creatures, and sexual desire reigns supreme (Saunders, 1993: 1, 32). However, as Saunders notes, the romantic landscapes of the Breton Lays included elements of *perilleux* and *merveilleux*, which changed these forests from simply landscapes of desire to settings for destiny, wonder, and *aventure* (Saunders, 1993: 57). In the forest the constraints of social of decency, morality, and Christian “good” are removed. The forest is dark, hidden; what one does there is not obvious to the rest of the world. There are no neighbors to see, no priest to confess to, yet it still has the glamour of knightly pursuits. Along with this is the connection between woods and madness mentioned in Chapter 2. This implies that it is almost expected that a person entering the wood might behave in strange or unusual ways. As Saunders argues, forests are landscapes primed for chivalric trysts:

It is in the forest that the ambiguities of human nature became apparent: here the boundary between sexual desire and love is blurred, and irrationality and chivalric behaviour begin to blend into each other; here the passage from hunt to otherworld may as easily present a situation of nightmare as one of wish-fulfillment, and adventure may fade into spiritual vision. (Saunders, 1993: 132-133)

This is why the forest becomes such a good testing ground for Aotrou. He is alone with his God in the face of his ultimate temptation, for Faërie is the land in which any desire can be fulfilled. Yet, he is not totally in control here. As Zipes notes:

The forest is always large, immense, great, and mysterious. No one ever gains power over the forest, but the forest possesses the power to change lives and alter destinies. In many ways it is the supreme authority on the earth and often the great provider. (Zipes, 1987: 66)

So by entering the forest to gain his heart’s desire, Aotrou is putting himself at the mercy of the forces of Faërie, who have an agenda of their own.

On the surface, Aotrou appears to be a normal knight, at least in terms of medieval romances. He woos his lady, hunts, and rules his lands. However, he is a man tormented:

Thus pondering oft at night awake
his darkened mind would visions make
of lonely age and death; his tomb
unkept, while strangers in his room
with other names and other shields
were masters of his halls and fields.
The counsel cold he took at last;
his hope from light to darkness past.
(*Aotrou*: 4, lines 19-26)

In this case Faërie is the land of desire. The union with the Corrigan would give him exactly what he wants, just not in the way he expects it. Aotrou has three desires: to be cared for in his old age, to have his tomb tended, and to have his kin inherit his hall. The Corrigan, though he does not know it at the time, offers Aotrou a child and his other wishes. By becoming her consort, he could rule over her realm in Broceliande, at least he could for as long as the Corrigan's heart desires it. His halls will be filled with kin and his grave will not go untended as there might be no grave. Even if he did leave Faërie some time in the future, according to fairy lore, he might disintegrate into dust as soon as he sets foot in the Primary World. All he has to do is to leave his lady, the woman he loves and of course, in true fairy tradition, lose his access to an afterlife in Heaven. Tolkien's poem points to the latter as he does not have Aotrou and Itroun's souls flying up to Heaven as in the Villemarque version, rather he finishes the poem with a warning against sin and a prayer for the lord and lady's souls. It is at this point that Aotrou partially redeems himself. His love of his wife drives him to choose death and Heaven over a life in Faërie. For Aotrou, his earthly love holds more power over him than his love of God and it is so strong it defeats the temptation of Faërie. In this way, Aotrou sins again.

The women themselves are symbolic of this conflict between the desires of men and the Christian chivalric code. Tolkien represents Itroun as the ideal wife of a lord. She is virtuous, honourable and obedient to the marriage vows she has made before God to her lord. Yet despite Itroun being the epitome of an ideal wife, her own aging and mortality betrays her; her fading beauty and age palling against the enduring beauty and immortality of the Corrigan. Itroun would appear rather weak and passive in the tale, if it were not for the strength of her faith.

The Corrigan is a fairy in Breton folklore (see Chapter 2). Like the women of *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], however, she takes on multiple roles. As the previous lines I have quoted show, she is a powerful witch and necromancer. She can read minds, change shape, make potions that can raise the dead and heal humans. She is a seductress and a murderer. Her skin is white, her hair pale. In Villemarque's version, the Corrigan has the traditional red eyes, the colour of the blood of a dove, but Tolkien changes this to eyes that are "filled with lies", "dark and piercing", "needle-keen" (*Aotrou*: 5, lines 57-62), like those of a cat. Both have the same effect though: to associate her with witchcraft and the devil. She appears as a crone, a maiden, and a beautiful, glistening white doe. Finally, and most importantly, she is a king-maker.

The concept of royal wedding, or *banfheis rigi* or “wife-feast of kingship”, was popular in early twentieth-century scholarship. This tradition is thought to have its origins in the ancient Greek rite of *hieros gamos*, in which the king gained a “sacred aura” which allowed him to interact with supernatural forces (Jaski, 2013: 58). It stems from an ancient belief that humankind were required to intervene in Nature in order to ensure the fertility of both the land and its people. To do this the king underwent a ceremony so that he might act “as a mediator between human and divine and between nature and society” (Jaski, 2013: 57). According to ancient Irish tradition, the feast was held at Samain (November 1st), a time when the barriers between the Primary World and Faërie were low and it was possible for humans to meet fairy creatures (Jaski, 2013: 63). The rite involved the king ceremonially mating with the goddess Tara (Jaski, 2013: 63-64). By the twentieth century, the tradition had been heavily influenced by Christian values and had been misinterpreted as a fertility rite, a fact that is now in dispute, but it was a popular amongst folklorists theme in the 1930’s when Tolkien was writing his lay.

The concept of sacral kingship can be seen throughout the poem in particular through Tolkien’s use of the weather and the seasons. The poem begins with wind in the trees and waves on stony shores. There is movement here, a kind of restlessness in the land, an indication in the landscape that things are changing. It is not the mild weather of summer but more suggestive of autumn, or even possibly winter. When Aotrou enters Broceliande, seeking the Corrigan for the first time, it is night and the land is enveloped in mist; a weather pattern that is more commonly associated with cold weather. Yet here Tolkien breaks from the literary tradition of the “royal wedding”. The Corrigan appears to him in the form of a crone. Traditionally at night she would take the form of a beautiful maiden. Admittedly, Tolkien might have chosen to do this simply to make the Corrigan appear more frightening, or to act as a warning for Aotrou against carrying on with his sin, but it seems a rather odd choice if she later wants to seduce him. An alternative explanation is that the Corrigan’s inability to transform herself into a maiden is indicative of the sickness and failing of the sovereign and the land. As soon as he accepts the flask, the weather begins to change. Initially he just dreams of spring, but on the day he decides to hold a feast for Itroun:

Then sprang the day with weather fair,
for windy rain had washed the air,
and blue and cloudless, clean and high.
(*Aotrou*: 7, lines 105-107)

The world feels fresh and clean like a new beginning. On the feast day when he gives Itroun the potion, the birds are mating, the plants prospering, everywhere the fertility of the land is rising. The potion is successful and Lady Itroun bears twins. The imagery that surrounds Lord Aotrou and Lady Itroun's children is one of summertime joy and plenty, yet there is a veiled threat implied by the shadow that appears at the edge of the scene:

... boy and maid,
that fair as flowers danced and played
on lawns of sunlight without hedge
save a dark shadow at their edge.
(*Aotrou*: 9, lines 163-166).

Just prior to Aotrou's second visit to the Corrigan, the forest is described as pale. Possibly this means that the year is fading into autumn or even winter, though the white hart he hunts still glistens in the sun. The hunting of the stag was a popular classical and medieval motif for the pursuit of women and love in literature. The whiteness of the hind was not only symbolic of female virtue, purity, nobility and innocence, but also magical abilities such as prophetic visions and elegant speech (Lee, 2009: 193). Whilst the Corrigan is hardly innocent, Tolkien's use of this motif implies that the Corrigan is both powerful and sexually attractive and indeed, when Aotrou finds her in the forest, she has become young again, and her white hands hold a comb of gold with which she combs her fair hair (*Aotrou*: 13, lines 289-291). The Corrigan and the land have been restored by the symbolic union with Aotrou through his acceptance of the potion. Tolkien seems to use the exchange of drinks frequently as a kind of pledge between couples in these poems. However, when Aotrou rejects the Corrigan, she reverts back to the aged crone: her hands are clawed, the comb has 'bony teeth' and her tresses are grey (*Aotrou*: 16, lines 371-373). What is more it is now winter in the dreams of Aotrou:

in sunless thickets tangled deep
he dreamed, and wandering found no more
the garden green, but on the shore
the seas were moaning in the wind;
(*Aotrou*: 16, lines 362-365)

The land dies with the death of its lord. So the state of the Corrigan is linked to the state of the land which in turn is linked to Aotrou's acceptance or rejection of the Corrigan's advances. When he first accepts the contract by taking the potion, he becomes fertile, and so does the land. When he rejects her on their second meeting Aotrou dies, and the land, at least in his dreams, is enveloped by winter. Verlyn Flieger notes that Tolkien

appears to use the motifs of the Grail Knight and the Maimed King found in the Arthurian legends, in restoring Middle-earth through the characters of Aragorn and Frodo respectively (Flieger, 2004: 134). Whilst this is true, I think Tolkien's concept extends beyond sacral kingship to that of union between the king or in this case lord and a fairy queen. I shall discuss this further on in the chapter.

4.6 The Fall of Arthur

Tolkien began to write *The Fall of Arthur* in the 1930's. There is a mention of it in a letter to R.W. Chambers in December 1934. The poem consists of nearly 1000 lines of verse written in cantos of varying length in a meter similar to the fourteenth-century English alliterative *Morte Arthur*. The fact that Tolkien chose to write such a poem is interesting as he was said to have disliked Arthurian tales and complained in a 1951 letter to Milton Waldman that the legend of Arthur was 'British', that is Celtic, rather than English and that the Faërie of Arthur was too lavish, fantastical, and incoherent and furthermore it was distorted by the presence of Christianity (*Letters*: 144). Tolkien's poem is set at the end of Arthur's reign, when in a final bid for glory, Arthur plans to fight a campaign in Europe, heading towards Rome. Lancelot has been exiled because of his affair with Guinever. He returns briefly from exile to save Guinever from burning but accidentally slays two of Gawain's brothers in the process. Arthur invades France in order to take revenge on Lancelot as Gawain and his brothers were blood relatives of Arthur. He leaves his nephew/son Mordred as regent. However whilst he is away in France, Mordred attempts to seize power and marry Guinever, as Tolkien spells her name in the poem. She manages to escape through London to Wales and Mordred is slain by Arthur in the battle to regain his kingdom. Although Tolkien did not finish his poem, his notes suggest that the tale will follow the standard form where Arthur is mortally wounded in the battle against Mordred and carried to the island of Avalon, maybe one day to return. Though Lancelot and Guinever are now free to marry, they both take holy orders and do not meet again until Guinever's death.

In *Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], Tolkien used the weather in the form of changing seasons to indicate the health of the land and the relationship between Aotrou and the Corrigan. In *The Fall of Arthur* [1933], Tolkien uses the weather to colour the action, giving the reader a sense of the mood or outcome associated with the action. In the first part of the poem, it is the autumn of Arthur's reign but he is still restless, and desires to go to war one more time.

As when the earth dwindles	in autumn days
and soon to its setting	the sun is waning
under mournful mist,	then a man will lust
for work and wandering,	while yet warm floweth
blood sun-kindled,	so his burned soul
after long glory	for a last assay
of pride and prowess,	to the proof setting
will unyielding	in war with fate.

(FA: 17, lines 10-17)

In Tolkien's poem Arthur is represented by the sun which here is in decline, though there is enough afterglow for him to desire more glory. But the campaign does not go well. It is later than Arthur thinks and the end of his reign is nigh. The land in France rapidly sinks into winter:

Cold blew the wind,	keen and wintry,
in rising wrath	from the rolling forest
among roaring leaves.	Rain came darkly,
and the sun was swallowed	in sudden tempest.

(FA: 20, lines 79-82)

Mordred and his attempt to usurp the throne, is represented by the storm breaking and even back in England the wind, Tolkien's harbinger of change, is beginning to blow. The reign of Mordred is marked by storms, an indication that he is the usurper king and the land and heavens will not yield to his rule:

Dark wind came driving	over deep water,
from the South sweeping	surf upon the beaches,
a roaring sea	rolling endless
huge hoarcrested	hills of thunder.
The world darkened.	Wan rode the moon
through stormy clouds	streaming northward.

(FA: 26, lines 1-6)

This is the opposite pattern from that seen in *Aotrou* [1930s], where as the rightful lord's power rises, the land prospers. The storm is so wild and fierce that it even reaches Lancelot, who has been banished to Benwick. It tells him his lord is in trouble, but no summons comes for him to ride to his aid. However Arthur hears of Mordred's betrayal and returns, posthaste, to England. The return of Arthur to England is like the rising of the sun:

The sun mounted and the sails whitened.
 ...in the morn gleaming
 high, white timbered, with hull gilded;

on its sail was sewn a sun rising.
(FA: 50, lines 136, 140-142)

But his sun is too hot. It burns too brightly. This is one last spark of life before his plunge into death. Arthur's return does not bring salvation to the land, only its fiery destruction. The ensuing battle ravages the land on an apocalyptic scale:

as plague of fire	...evil horsemen
white towers were burned,	pouring ruinous;
the ground groaning	wheat was trampled,
There was woe in Britain	and the grass withered.
bells were silent,	and the world faded;
hell's gate was wide	blades were ringing
(FA: 56, lines 19-25)	and heaven distant.

The horsemen, the gates of Hell opening, the groaning ground, and burning towers sound like a scene from Revelations; it is as though Arthur's final battle is the end of the world.⁶⁵

Tolkien's use of the weather might mimic his other 'Celtic' poem, but *The Fall of Arthur* [1933] also contains echoes of his Norse poem *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. Like that poem, this poem's lines are laced with the animals of war-wolf, eagle, and raven, and as in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], Tolkien is using the traditional Old English 'beasts of battle' motif to embellish his war scenes (Griffith, 1993:182). There is none of the affectionate 'honeypaw' or 'wintersleeper' of *The Story of Kullervo* [1914]. This mixing of cultures can be seen in the landscape in *The Fall of Arthur* [1933]. Whilst it is still a 'Celtic' poem in the sense that its Faërie is separate from the Primary World in the form of Avalon: Arthur was to reach Avalon by being carried across water in a barge, yet there is something of the Northern mythology in the way that the land is described for it is full of references to fay creatures, giving it a kind of life or spirit of its own. In fact in this poem Tolkien uses a wider variety of Faërie creatures than he does in any of the other lays, entwining their presence in the landscape much like the Norse poem of *Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], though their presence is figurative rather than literal. He uses Faërie creatures to describe emotion, although in this case it is the inanimate sea which is expressing it:

On Benwick's beaches	breakers pounding
ground gigantic	grumbling boulders
with <i>ogre</i> anger.	The air was salt

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that despite Tolkien's complaints about Christian motifs in the Arthurian legends, he is not above using such themes himself (*Letters*: 144)

with spume and spindrift splashed to vapour.
(FA: 35, lines 7-10, emphasis added)

Faërie also features in the imagery of the land; in this section in the mists and twilight both men and nature become wraith-like.

... lost in darkness,
while *phantom* foes with fell voices
in the gloom gathered.
(FA: 20, lines 93-95, emphasis added)

In the huge twilight
gleamed *ghostly*-pale, on the ground rising
like *elvish* growths in autumn grass
in some hollow of the hills hid from mortals,
the tents of Arthur.
(FA: 21, lines 115-119, emphasis added)

Finally Faërie is seen in the objects of the world. Gawain's banner bears the figure of a griffin, Arthur's ships are dragon-prowed. The tale is full of Faërie, yet at the same time lacks the battles with giants and dragons seen in *The Alliterative Morte Arthur*. In this sense, the landscape is close to the Finnish Faërie with the spirituality of the land woven into the landscape of the Primary World with little separation between this world and Faërie. By spirituality I mean that the combination of Faërie motifs intertwined in the descriptions of the landscapes and its responsiveness to the actions and fates of the humans present in the land, gives a sense that the landscapes have a kind of awareness over and above that of the flora and fauna of the landscape itself.

The men of *The Fall of Arthur* [1933] are probably the most stereotypical as far as chivalric figures are concerned. They are knights, who slay foes and woo ladies, and behaving very much as we would expect them to in the Arthurian tradition. Perhaps Arthur himself looks a bit weak in that he is cuckolded and appears ignorant of the fact, though the rest of the court knows. Or maybe he is just a wise leader and choses to ignore the fact, recognizing that both Lancelot and Guinever are essential parts of his kingdom. He is then forced to act when Lancelot's dalliance with his Queen is publicized by Agravaine. Although Tolkien does not stress this, or particularly punish him for it, Arthur is at least in part the author of his own destruction. His desire for one last battle, despite the loss of his champion Lancelot, sets up the situation which leads to Mordred's betrayal and his own death. In Chapter 5, the chapter on evil, there is a discussion of the sin of hubris, a sin that I shall include in my concept of the deadly sins according to Tolkien, and I wonder if his

treatment of Arthur might in part be a critique of his decision to go and fight. In his essay on *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*⁶⁶, a play about the fallout after the Battle of Maldon, a battle in which the commander of the forces Beorhtnoth allows the invading Vikings to cross the estuary, removing the advantage his smaller forces had, Tolkien criticizes the actions of the earl:

... this element of pride, in the form of the desire for honour and glory, in life and after death tends to grow, to become a chief motive, driving a man beyond the bleak heroic necessity to excess— to chivalry. ‘Excess’ certainly, even if it be approved by contemporary opinion, when it not only goes beyond need and duty, but interferes with its. (*T&L*: 144)

Tolkien’s perception that Arthur acted out of ‘pride and prowess’ might explain the rather flawed nature that Tolkien ascribes to him.

Lancelot himself is also treated with some leniency. In Canto III he is described as:

the noblest knight of Arthur,
...
deemed most daring, in deeds of arms
all surpassing, eagerhearted;
...
in face fairest, formed in manhood
strong and gracious,
...
but to his lord alone his love giving;
no man nor woman in his mind holding
dearer than Arthur.
(*FA*: 36, lines 20, 22-23, 25-26, 34-36)

Lancelot still loves Arthur, and would, if called, come to his aid. He is the victim of the power of Guinever, something I will discuss later, and takes a long time to succumb to her advances. This leads him to murder Gaheris and Gareth, two of his brother knights in a fit of passion whilst trying to save Guinever. Only this tragedy breaks Guinever’s hold on him. He eventually redeems himself, leaving his exile at Benwick, and foregoing his chance at the throne, to follow in Arthur’s wake into the West.

In Tolkien’s version of events, as in *The Alliterative Morte Arthur*, it is Guinever who is culpable for Mordred’s betrayal and Arthur’s death. It is Mordred’s love, or rather lust for Guinever which leads him to betray Arthur, and seek to take the throne. Even

⁶⁶ *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhtnoth’s Son* was possibly written around 1931-1933 and was first published in *Essays and Studies* in 1953 (*C&G*: 547).

though Mordred offers Guinever the choice between becoming his wife or becoming his slave, either way she is going to become his mate; she is given very little sympathy for her plight. Nor is she given credit for her clever ruse of pretending to go to London to buy wedding clothes and using this journey to escape to Wales. There are two possible reasons for Tolkien's reaction to Guinever. He could have seen her as abandoning her post as Queen, betraying both Arthur and the kingdom itself. Her presence in the court may have acted as a reminder to people of who their rightful king was, and her absence may have weakened Arthur's hold on the throne. Another possibility is that Tolkien saw Guinever as the Fairy Queen similar to the Corrigan of *Aotrou and Itroun* and demonized her on this basis.

Admittedly in Tolkien's essay *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien states that neither Arthur, Guinever, nor Lancelot are fairies (*OFS*: 30), but in *The Fall of Arthur* this may not be true. There is a lot of the fay about this Guinever. Tolkien even calls her a fay woman in one of his lines: "Fear her no longer, the fay woman!" (*FA*: 48, line 71). Her name, Guinever, is connected with white, a colour frequently associated with fairies, particularly fairy queens (Paton, 1903: 18, 149; Sikes, 2007 [1880]: 18). Her colouring of white skin and golden hair echoes that of the young Corrigan. She is described as being incredibly beautiful, so much so that she is able to enthrall multiple men including Arthur, Lancelot, and Mordred; two of whom actually betray their oaths to their King in order to pursue her. Guinever is so beautiful that she could be said to be on a level with Tolkien's elves who were noted for their exquisiteness. Tolkien describes her as "fair as fay woman and fell-minded" (*FA*: 36, line 55), a description that is very close to Aragorn's description of Lothlorien: "fair and perilous..." (*FR*: 338). She is even said to drive men mad with desire:

To Guenever the golden, with *gleaming* limbs
that minds of men with madness filled,
(*FA*: 214, emphasis added)

There is a kind of light that surrounds Guinever whenever her appearance is described:

Wan gleamed the day
in her *bright* tresses bleakly *golden*.
Grey her eyes were as *glittering* sea;
glass-clear and chill this his glance challenged
(*FA*: 31, lines 116-119, emphasis added)

Fairies are often said to have a light around them or to shine in the gloom. There is even a dragonish edge to her in his description when Tolkien describes her desire for Lancelot:

But cold silver
or glowing gold greedy hearted
in her fingers taken fairer thought she,
more lovely deeming what she alone treasured
darkly hoarded.

...

Fair she deemed him
beyond gold and silver to her grasp lying.
Silver and golden, as the sun at morning
her smile dazzled, and her sudden weeping
with tears softened, tender poison,
steel well-tempered. Strong oaths they broke.
(FA: 37, lines 49-53, 57-62)

The imagery here not only invokes the dragon's lust for gold, but also his hard coat and venomous secretions. Yet one could also say that this gold and silver darkly hoarded could remind the reader of the Corrigan's lair in the Broceliande forest with its cold and unfeeling mistress. As mentioned in Chapter 2, dragons delight in possession alone, there is no pleasure in the beauty of the item, no sharing of its virtues, rather it is left to molder in the darkness. Guinever appears calculating in her behaviour towards Lancelot, manipulating him with her emotions and beauty. Not even the power of Lancelot's love for Arthur is able to stop Lancelot falling under Guinever's spell. This is unusual in Tolkien's world view as he seems to rate love a power that can overcome evil. He demonstrates this in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], where Aotrou's love for his wife overcomes the power of the Corrigan and then, of course, there is the love between Frodo and Sam whose bond overcomes the power of Sauron. Finally there is the motif of the hunting of the deer, a motif which we have already seen associated with the Corrigan in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s]. Tolkien invokes a similar imagery in Mordred's hunt for Guinever after she escapes though in this case the hind is hunted by a wolf rather than a knight:

Wolf had wakened in the woods stalking,
and the hind hardly from hiding driven
her foe had fled, fear-bewildered,
cowed and hunted, once queen of herds
for whom harts majestic in horned combat
had fought fiercely. So fled she now,
Guinever the fair in grey mantled,
cloaked in darkness, from the courts stealing.
(FA: 33-34, lines 188-195)

This has implications for Tolkien's treatment of Guinever. If she is truly a fairy-queen like the Corrigan, then she is potentially a king maker through the rite of the *banfheis rigi*, the royal wedding. If one pays close attention to the seasons, and in

particular the weather in this poem it becomes very apparent that Guinever has chosen her king, and it is not Mordred, who is immersed in darkness, nor is it Arthur, though he shines as brightly as the sun: spring and growth only come to the land of Benwick, Lancelot's home.

His eyes opened upon early day;
the wind still walked in the wide heaven
lofty faring, but on lowly earth
peace had fallen. Pools reflected
the slanting sun silver gleaming
washed with water the world shimmered;
bird sang to bird blithe at morning.
(*FA*: 43, lines 202-208)

At this point Lancelot is faced with a choice. The land is blooming, its fertility rises. The kingship is there for his taking if he so chooses, but, away from Guinever's influence, his love of Arthur re-exerts itself, and, like Galadriel, he chooses to fade and go into the West. Lancelot's choice is the same as Aotrou's, whether to reign enthralled by his Faërie Queen, or to 'go West' with the one he loves, and like Aotrou, Lancelot chooses to die.

In this sense, *The Fall of Arthur* [1933] is the most British of his poems for the history of Britain is one of recurrent invasion, making its stories a complex merging of tales and images from multiple cultures. In this poem Tolkien is drawing on the excessive bravery of the Norse in Arthur's subsequently foolhardy pursuit of war despite his weakened forces. There is the spiritual animism of the Finnish epics is seen in the weaving in of fay creatures into the descriptions of the landscape. While the use of weather and seasons to underscore the action and the relationship between characters echoes Tolkiens *Aotrou*. Furthermore, Guinever is both pivot point and fairy queen. It is her affair with Lancelot which causes him to be banished, weakening Arthur's army. It might be that Arthur's own desire to go to war is based on his desire to be remembered as a warrior king rather than a cuckold. Finally, her beauty is part of the temptation for Mordred to try and assume the throne in Arthur's absence. Yet, she continues to be a fairy queen, bringing spring and fertility to the land of her true love, Lancelot.

4.7 The Celtic Faërie

The Celtic tales then use weather as well as the landscape to set the mood and stimulate the imagination of the protagonists and the reader. Faërie itself is a land quite separate from the Primary World and must be entered into by passing through a barrier such as a forest or

crossing a stretch of water, or in some cases it only exists symbolically in the Primary World. The heroes are more clearly the typical rulers or warriors of legend whilst the main female protagonist takes the form of a fairy queen. The fairy queen does not manipulate the hero as much as give him a range of choices which can lead to his union with the Faërie queen and the prosperity of the land or his rejection of her in favour of one that he loves more which means his death. The tales include Christian overtones in their workings which at least offers the hero the hope of salvation of his soul when he dies. A similar pattern can be seen in the sacral kingship of Aragorn, he gains his kingdom and restores fertility to the land, after he fulfills his quest and gains the hand of his fairy, or in his case, elven, queen. The same is true of Sam and Rosie Cotton, with the Shire becoming particularly fertile and Sam becoming mayor on the successful completion of his quest.

4.8 The Faërie of Tolkien's Translations

Over the 1920-1930s, Tolkien was involved in teaching and translating three other related works, *Beowulf*⁶⁷ [1922-1923], *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*⁶⁸ [around 1923], and *Sir Orfeo*⁶⁹ [1943-1944]. All three of these works have English authors, *Sir Gawain* [1923] probably sharing the same author as the medieval poem *Pearl*; a poem which also inspired some aspects of Tolkien's Faërie (see Chapter 3). This Englishness is reflected in their Faërie, with elements of Northern and Celtic Faëries, combining their landscapes in ways that echo Tolkien's *Fall of Arthur* [1933]. In *Beowulf* [1922-1923], the story moves from the open tundra and mead hall of Hrothgar's lands, to Beowulf's encounter with Grendel's mother in her lair in the dark, isolated marshlands. Entry to her den requires Beowulf to cross water by diving into a pool of fire and water. This image may have inspired Tolkien's own fiery elementals on the lake in his story *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965]. The exact nature of Grendel and his mother is not entirely clear, although Tolkien calls Grendel's mother a troll, but their fate lacks the humour and stupidity associated with Tolkien's troll poems. Grendel's mother, at least, is cunning in her attack, and succeeds in revenging her son by carrying off a king's man. This maternal attitude gives her a kind of humanity, generating an empathy towards her in the reader's mind.

⁶⁷ Tolkien finished translating *Beowulf* around 26 April 1926, but it was not published posthumously until 2014, along with Tolkien's poem based on *Beowulf*, *Sellic Spell* (C&G: 127).

⁶⁸ Tolkien worked on his translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, together with his Leeds University colleague, E.V. Gordon, during 1922-1923. It was published by Oxford University Press in April 1925. Christopher Tolkien published Tolkien's translations of *Sir Gawain*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Orfeo* in 1975 (C&G: 1193-1198).

⁶⁹ Tolkien translated *Sir Orfeo* for the Navy and Air Force cadets who were attending the Oxford English School between 1943-1944 (C&G: 1204).

Recent scholarship has often approached Grendel's mother from a feminist/gender studies perspective, including by Tolkien scholar Jane Chance (Nitsche, 1980). In Grendel's mother we see a fierceness and strength that is reflected in many of Tolkien's female characters.

The dragon in *Beowulf* [1922-1923] is less developed than his species traits would allow. Like the dragon from Tolkien's poem *The Hoard* [1962], he is obsessed with his treasure and is sent into a murderous rage by the theft of a single cup, yet this is a wild rampage without any sign of intelligence or subtlety. There is no music or banter as in Tolkien's poem *The Dragon's Visit* [1928], and no devious attempt to learn Beowulf's name or enthrall him with his gaze. Their encounter is a fight to the death between a man and a beast. This lack of development of the dragon to his full potential may be why Tolkien labelled him *draconitas* (the vice of avarice) rather than *draco*, and may have served as an inspiration for Tolkien's poem *The Hoard* [1962], where the full effect of his lust for treasure makes each individual a lesser being. There is no doubt *Beowulf* [1922-1923] influenced Tolkien's writing; *The Hobbit* [1937] itself could be seen as a partial retelling of that tale⁷⁰, and as demonstrated above, it has influences over many of his works including his non-Middle-earth poetry.

In *Sir Orfeo* [1943-1944] and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [around 1923], Faërie is located in a forest. In *Sir Gawain* [around 1923], entry into the forest is enough to enter Faërie, but in *Sir Orfeo* [1943-1944], Orfeo seems to need to be somehow integrated into the forest itself before he is able to follow the fairies back to their palace. This otherness in *Sir Orfeo's* Faërie is echoed in the use of the apple tree as a location for the initial encounter with the King of Faërie as apple trees are often grafted trees making them both natural and unnatural at the same time; their dual nature creating a kind of paradox. In *Sir Gawain*, as in *The Fall of Arthur* [1933], the landscape is depicted as threatening by the inclusion of supernatural creatures and animals of the battlefield such as wolves and ravens. The Green Chapel itself is a burial mound like the mound in *The Grey Bridge over Tavrobel* [1917] which echoes the meeting of life and death seen in *Sir Gawain* [1923]. Death haunts Sir Gawain's footsteps wherever he goes in the land. Tolkien himself creates this sinister atmosphere in his poem *The Seabell* [1962], where homicidal plants and

⁷⁰ Many scholars have discussed parallels between the two works, with an entire PhD thesis devoted on the topic as early as 1969 (Christensen, 1969).

animals associated with death inhabit the land though on the surface they are seemingly innocent elements of nature. (see Chapter 5).

The fairies in both knights' poems differ markedly in their overt behaviours though not in their essential natures. In *Sir Gawain*, the lady of the castle is beautiful and seductive, like Tolkien's own femmes fatales discussed in Chapter 2. Her aim is to tempt Sir Gawain into betraying his host by making him a cuckold or by causing him to lie: the former Gawain manages to resist, but he succumbs to the latter when the security the green girdle offers him against the Green Knight's blow proves too much of a temptation for him to relinquish to his host. For his pains he receives a small cut to his neck⁷¹. Temptation is a theme seen in many of Tolkien's poems, especially those involving women. *Over the Broad Ocean* [1920s], *Ides Ælfscýne* [1920s], *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], and even *Firiel/The Last Ship* [1930s/1962] involve desire for the fay and their possessions.

In *Sir Orfeo* [1943-1944], the fairies are all aristocratic, pursuing courtly activities such as hunting and hawking and residing in a palace. In order to gain his beloved wife, Eurydice, back, Sir Orfeo must give up his possessions, his kingdom, and humble himself with cold, starvation, and poverty. He then must have the courage to face the Fairy King in his palace with only his harp as a tool to win her freedom. So in both stories, Faërie serves as a testing ground to discover the knights' true nature and whether they possess the knightly qualities of honesty, humility, and courage. In Tolkien's Faërie, this aspect of testing can be seen from the 1930s poems onwards. In the Bimble Bay poems, modern humanity is put to the test to see if they possess the respect, caring, and creativity to appreciate Faërie (see Chapter 5). In Tolkien's poems, such as *Firiel/The Last Ship* [1930s/1962], *Looney/The Seabell* [1932-1933/1962], and in Tolkien's prose work *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965] (see Conclusion), honesty and humility are prized by Tolkien's fairies as much as they are by their medieval counterparts.

Thus, there is evidence that, though these works were translated rather than reshaped into new poetic works, elements of their Faërie are present in Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poems. One could argue whether they share a common basis drawing from medieval Faërie, or whether Tolkien was inspired by the individual poems themselves. Whatever the reality of his specific inspiration, the use of these medieval texts in Tolkien's

⁷¹ For Tolkien's own analysis of this theme in *Sir Gawain* see his lecture "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (2006).

Faërie gives the latter a sense of rightness or authenticity by giving his poems a basis in familiar folk knowledge of fairies whilst still leaving room for Tolkien to experiment.

4.9 Conclusion

As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, although some might consider myths and legends to take place outside Faërie, Tolkien encompasses these things in his vision of Faërie. They are definitely not tales for children, nor do any of them have a happy ending, or as Tolkien describes it, the *eucatastrophe*: the sudden turn for good which hints at the Evangelium that lies beyond the world. Rather, in these cases, all of the endings are sad; the main characters die, and none of them go to Heaven, not even in the “Celtic” tales which involve elements of Christianity. Itroun is the most likely to go, but the image of her dove-like soul flying upwards with her husband is not present in Tolkien’s version of the story. Rather, these tales seem to draw on customs of a more mixed origin, true of much of Tolkien’s middle to late Faërie. Both sacral kingship and the hunting of the deer might hark back to older traditions and rituals, although in the form they are seen here, they are heavily influenced by Christian and literary inspirations. This is one of the hallmarks of Tolkien’s late Faërie.

It is possible to draw some distinct patterns when it comes to the Faeries of these lays. The landscapes of Faërie are generally wild places, isolated from humankind either by their location in the Primary World in his Northern lays, or by some kind of barrier in his Celtic lays. In the Northern mythologies, it is the gods or the spirits who encounter humans in the primary world, whilst in the Celtic, classically it is humans who enter Faërie to meet the supernatural. Guenever is the exception here, maybe because there is a kind of blurring between her role as both fairy and human. Forests in particular dominate the landscapes of Faërie, the trees providing a kind of impenetrable barrier that further isolates the occurrences in these realms from the eyes of humans. The sense of timelessness and the presence of supernatural beings, real or imagined, defines these landscapes as “other”, making them something outside the control of the humans that enter them. Whilst at times the weather or seasons might simply represent the state of the relationship between the human protagonist and Faërie, it is not uncommon for the weather to become a physical threat in itself: mists disorientate, storms freeze, and the sun burns. Although the landscape itself is made of things of the natural world, the sentience or spirit of the landscape comes to the fore in these tales, shifting from the merely beautiful to becoming an active participant in the tales. In *Kullervo* [1914], the forest takes over the mind of Wainona, in

Aotrou [1930s] the landscape not only emphasises Aotrou's mortality by its seeming timelessness, but the weather patterns follow the relationship between Aotrou and the Corrigan and in *Arthur* [1933], the fates of the characters are echoed in the weather.

Magic is a common feature of these tales, but takes a different role in the Northern versus the Celtic tales. In the North, both humans and fairies are capable of magic. The magic takes the form the spells that vary between potions and runes in the Norse lay to music, prayer, and chanting in the Finnish. It is used to manipulate or save the humans around them. In the 'Celtic' lays, magic is restricted to persons of Faërie and is an inherent part of their nature. In the Norse and Finnish tales, men and women both have magical abilities, whereas in Tolkien's "Celtic" tales, it is women alone who have the power. Though the Corrigan in *Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] does use a potion to promote the fertility of Itroun, this might be more part of the ritual of the 'royal marriage' rather than a necessary part of her power. Guinever's power is more subtle, there is no record of her performing any ritual or making a potion in order to enthrall Lancelot, but she does seem to have an allure for most of the men she meets. Where magic is used to dominate, even when the intentions are good, the outcome is disastrous. Sigurd's winning Brynhild for Gunnar causes his own, and her death, Aotrou's use of the Corrigan's potion on Iotrou leads to his death and the fall of his dynasty. This is the difference between magic and a miracle. Miracles, according to Tolkien, are a response by God to human or angelic prayer and produce real effects in the world, altering the past or future or both (*OFS*: 252). But, with magic, although the power itself is derived from God, the individual draws on the power that God has imbued into Nature itself, and therefore it is no longer directly under the control of God. This is why magic might, in some cases, be used frivolously, or even immorally, seeking to dominate individuals as Grimhild dominates Sigurd (*OFS*: 253). Although faith in God is a protection against these spells, in Tolkien's lays, magic is overcome by love rather than faith: Musti saves Kullervo, Aotrou partially saves himself by remembering his love for Itroun and rejecting the Corrigan, and Lancelot's love for Arthur frees him from Guinever's thrall. It is a theme that Tolkien repeats in the bond between Frodo and Sam in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955].

In these tales it is possible to explore Tolkien's female "monsters" more fully. Chapter 2 discusses some female monsters such as mermaids and the elf maidens including the Corrigan. But these poems are quite short which allows little space for any in depth character development. Admittedly the main characters in these stories are men, but it is possible here to observe Tolkien's perception of characters who might be perceived as

“monstrous”. They tend to be single minded in their purpose, acting in a way that will meet their desires, often in a ruthless manner. Gunnar may have been reluctant to kin-slay Sigurd in order to get his gold, but Brynhild has no such reluctance to slay her love/brother-in-law. Signy slays her own children if they were too weak to seek vengeance and the Corrigan has little hesitation in condemning Aotrou to death when he reneges on the deal. Because of this, the female characters in these poems, tend to have a much greater impact on the story than their relatively minor roles would normally allow. Again, this is a theme which Tolkien carries through into *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]. Shelob, Galadriel, and Éowyn, all play relatively minor roles in the story, but punch far above their weight in impact. Yet one could argue that Tolkien is a little unjust in his treatment of women, for quite a lot of the misfortunes that occur in these tales would have been different if the men had behaved differently or made different choices. For example, if Sigurd had wedded Brynhild when he first met her rather than riding off to make a name for himself he would not have been free to marry Gudrún. If he had refused to go into flames to retrieve Brynhild for Gunnar, he would not have betrayed her and her anger might have been assuaged. Kullervo’s mother was a grieving widow forced to live within the household of her husband’s murderer; leading to a situation where emotional shutdown and a desire for revenge might be the things which are keeping her sane. The Corrigan does not force Aotrou into the forest and she offers him a choice, though she does not name her price. It is Aotrou who “signs the contract without reading the fine print” as it were: the Corrigan could be viewed as a good business woman. Guinever is guilty in that she had an extra marital affair, but she neither sought nor cooperated with the advances of Mordred, escaping the realm as soon as she was able. Apart from the coming of spring in Benwick, a subtle sign, there is nothing else in her behaviour which indicates her ongoing attachment to Lancelot or that she is deliberately betraying Arthur. In these lays we see a richer, deeper and more complex Faërie that has now developed sufficiently that it is possible to see one to one correlations in Tolkien’s legendarium.

Chapter 5: Tolkien's Concept of Evil in Relation to Faërie

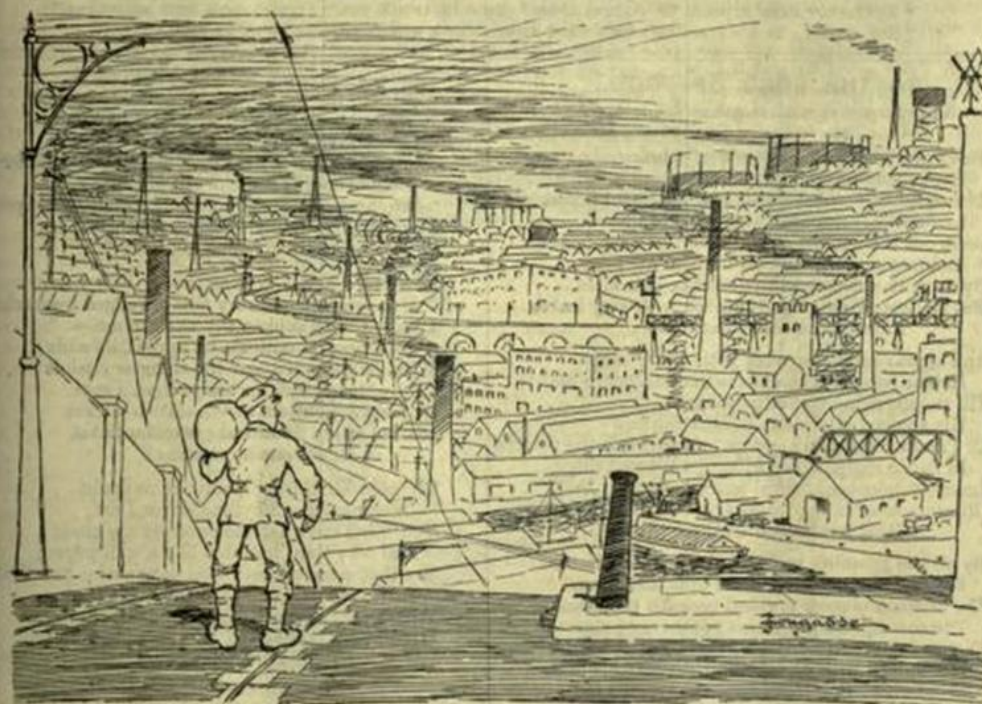
5.1 Introduction

This chapter involves a shift in focus in several senses; I shall be discussing the theme of evil rather than the physical elements of the Faërie and my focus will be on humans rather than Faërie creatures. This is a transition that Tolkien makes around the 1930's particularly in the academic arm of his middle phase. Evil, at least in human terms, might be seen in Tolkien's early Faërie creatures such as Tinfang Warble who lures unsuspecting travellers into the wilderness, or in the shadowy creatures in *A Song of Aryador* [1915], who confuse the maiden lost in the mountains (see Chapters 1 and 2). Faërie creatures mislead humans, abduct them but these things are linked to knowledge of fairy-lore and Tolkien tends to leave these threads in the background of his poems, not directly addressing these evils. For example, in the case of the Tinfang poems, the joyous tone of the poem is at odds with the peril the human faces as he is led into the wilderness and then abandoned. The Mewlips, whilst fierce, are not portrayed as any more evil than a lion hunting a gazelle. But this latter poem does begin to indicate a shift in Tolkien's monstrous fairy creatures. They are becoming more obviously dangerous, and this is a pattern that will continue as his Faërie progresses. In the previous chapter, we have already seen how the fay women lead to the death of the male protagonists. But this is only one side of Tolkien's vision of evil. As a man who survived two world wars, Tolkien had come face to face with humanity at its worst, and this left an indelible mark on him which is expressed more and more as his Faërie progresses. Having dealt with Tolkien's monstrous beings in Chapters 2 and 4, I will now discuss how Tolkien uses his Faërie poem to critique the modern world, war, and human iniquity. I shall begin with an examination of Tolkien's Bimble Bay series of poems, some of which have been discussed in Chapter 2, then explore the seven deadly sins according to Tolkien, as those are presented in his poetry. Central to all of these discussions is Tolkien's Christian faith and his vision of nature and human creativity as manifestations of God's own creativity and power.

5.2 Bimble Bay: The Evil of Modernity



1914.—MR. WILLIAM SMITH ANSWERS THE CALL TO PRESERVE HIS NATIVE SOIL INVIOLEATE.



1919.—MR. WILLIAM SMITH COMES BACK AGAIN, TO SEE HOW WELL HE HAS DONE IT.

Figure 4: William Smith Cartoon, 1919, Punch Cartoon Library / TopFoto. Reproduced with permission.

The following discussion examines the second branch of the middle phase of Tolkien's development of Faërie. It started in the late 1920's and continued on till 1939

and the outbreak of World War II. During this time the returning soldiers from World War I had not only experienced the horror of mechanised warfare, but came home to increasingly industrialised landscapes they barely recognised, transformed by the demands of the war. The feeling of the time was expressed in a 1919 *Punch* cartoon (Figure 4). The caption reads: “1914 – Mr William Smith answers the call to preserve his native soil inviolate. 1919– Mr William Smith comes back again to see how well he has done it.” Protests about the effects of industrialisation were not new. As early as the late eighteenth century, the ornithologist Gilbert White expressed an uneasiness about the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the British countryside (Hall Dewey, 2014: 1). William Wordsworth in England and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the United States took up his cause in their writing and poetry in the nineteenth century. But this all came to a head in the 1920s and 1930s with the return of the soldiers who had not only witnessed the wholesale destruction of human life by machines (Hall Dewey, 2014: 1), but also the destruction of nature and historic sites on a scale not seen before. Prior to the war, there had been numerous societies which protested individual environmental or social concerns such as the society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, or the Pure River society (Waine and Hilliam, 2016: 49). After the war, it was recognised that such circumscribed and small societies were unlikely to reach social or political significance. In 1926 many of these small societies were amalgamated into a single body “The Society for the Preservation of Rural England” which later became The Council for the Protection of Rural England (Waine and Hilliam, 2016: 46-47): a society that the Tolkien Trust supported till at least 2018 (Council for the Preservation of Rural England, 2018). It is in a book commissioned by this council that I believe Bimble Bay has its origins.

My research into the origin of this series of poems began with the rather sarcastic final line of the poem *Progress in Bimble Town*⁷² [1928/1931]: “see Britain First!” See Britain First was one of the advertising slogans of the Shell Oil Company who ran a marketing campaign in the 1920s and 1930s encouraging people to get into their cars and explore the beauty and history of their great nation (see Figure 5). The advertising campaign consisted of original paintings of scenic spots and historic landmarks done by British artists, which were displayed on billboards, railway stations, and even on the sides of the petrol tankers themselves. The campaign was immensely popular as it brought British art out of homes and galleries to be displayed in public places.

⁷² *Progress in Bimble Town* was probably written around 1928 and first published in Oxford Magazine on 15 October 1931 (C&G: 1038).



Figure 5: An Example of the 'See Britain First' Advertising Campaign. 292 Salcombe, Hal Woolf, 1931. Lithograph. Courtesy of the Shell Heritage Art Collection.

Or at least it was popular, till the sheer number of posters, billboards, and advertisements became so high that they themselves became an eyesore, detracting from the beauty and significance of the spots they were set to advertise. The public protested, and they were removed (McKinnon, 2015). The company also produced a series of guidebooks to accompany the campaign, the first written by architecture reporter and eventual Poet Laureate John Betjeman (John Betjeman Society, 1999) and it was Betjeman who first led me to the Society for the Protection of Rural England. In 1925, the year that Tolkien became the Rawlinson Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon, Betjeman enrolled at Magdalen College Oxford (Carpenter, 1979: 108-111). The results were disastrous. Betjeman did little work, spending much of his time socializing or travelling up and down to London. In particular, he clashed quite spectacularly with his Anglo-Saxon tutor, one C.S. Lewis (Carpenter, 1979: 19-23). At the end of his first year, Betjeman was sent down for failing a compulsory paper in Divinity and began pursuing a career working as an associate editor for the *Architecture Review* (John Betjeman Society, 1999; Carpenter, 1979: 20-23). Betjeman appears to have shared Tolkien's distress at the ugliness, and banalness of modern towns and villages, publishing his own protest against the modern world, particularly modern architecture called *Ghastly Good Taste: or a depressing story of the rise and fall of English Architecture* (Betjeman, 1933). This book shares the sarcastic tone and some of the fairy imagery of Tolkien's Bimble Bay series but was not published till 1933, too late to have influenced Tolkien's poems directly.

However, Betjeman's work led me to his friend Clough Williams-Ellis, a young man who had been studying mathematics at Trinity College Cambridge before leaving to study architecture (Craven, 2018). Williams-Ellis also had a love of horticulture and he became famous for designing the beautiful village of Portmeirion in North Wales and it was this unique combination of natural sciences and appreciation and understanding of architecture that made him the ideal candidate to write a book commissioned by The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (Waine and Hilliam, 2016: 55). This he titled *England and the Octopus*: the black tarry tentacles of the octopus being the roads which spread out from London into the surrounding countryside. *England and the Octopus* was published on January 1st, 1928, the same year as Tolkien's *Progress in Bimble Town* [1928/1931], and, like Tolkien's poem, features a fictional sea-side town, in this case called Castle Malory. Hammond and Scull believe that Tolkien's own fictional town, Bimble Town, was based on the seaside town of Filey, a place that Tolkien and his family holidayed in 1925 (*Roverandom*: 12-13). *Progress in Bimble Town* [1928/1931] and *England and the Octopus* share the same general theme of the destruction of the environment associated with hordes of people escaping from their cities in motorised transport to vacation in rural localities. Williams-Ellis summarises this in his pithy phrase that "as the Joneses fly from the town, so does this country fly from the pink bungalow that they have perched so hopefully on its eligible site. The true countryman will know that this area is infected- the Joneses have brought the blight of the town or suburb with them" (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 40). Both works share a cynical tone and they both speak of Faërie creatures, though Williams-Ellis uses Faërie creatures in his imagery of humans invading the landscape, whereas Tolkien uses Faërie creatures as representatives of Nature or true morality.

Looking more deeply, the similarities between the two works are striking. To be specific, both works protest the noise, light, fumes, and general garishness of the petrol stations that have sprung up to feed the ever-increasing number of cars that bear the escapees from the city. Williams-Ellis bemoans the garage with its noise, highly coloured pumps, clamorous tooting, and fumes that attempt to seduce motorists at every road (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 166-168). Tolkien echoes this sentiment when, in his poem *Progress in Bimble Town* [1928/1931], he decries the "loud garages where toiling hard/ grimy people bang and roar/ and engines buzz, and the lights flare, all night long – a merry noise! (*H*: 254, lines 23-26). Although Tolkien was said to have enjoyed driving (Lee, 2018: 150), he did not like the car's effect on the environment. In an exert from the 1939 draft of *On Fairy-stories* [1939], Tolkien writes:

The motor-car attracts because it enables people to live far away from their noisome and inhuman ‘works’, or to fly from their depressing dormitories to the ‘country’. But it cheats: for the motor-factories, and their subsidiaries (garages, repair-shops, and pumps), and the cars themselves, and their black and blasted roads, devour the country like dragons. This is the splendid gift of a magician: he offers to a caged bird that has defiled his cage and perch – what? a little length of chain so that it can flap to a near-by twig and foul that. (*OFS*: 276)

It appears Tolkien prefers dragons to octopi but, once again, the response is very close to Williams-Ellis’s description.

Once there, the holidaymakers proceed to pollute the beaches in both localities.

Compare these two extracts from Tolkien’s poem and Williams-Ellis’s book:

Progress in Bimble Town	England and the Octopus
<p>[The Sea]...</p> <p>At churning orange rind, piling up banana skins, gnawing paper, trying to grind a broth of bottles, packets and tins (<i>H</i>: 254, lines 33-37)</p>	<p>... a superstitious urge seems to impel the semi-civilized to cast their discarded goods and utensils into the nearest available water, whether a crystal chalk stream, a horsepond, or a millrace. Old bicycle wheels, jam pots, tins, bottle, cast off clothing, kettles and broken chambers are common objects (William-Ellis, 1975: 178)</p> <p>... not even a basket for the waste paper and orange peel that litter the arena (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 58)</p>

Table 2: Litter in Bimble Bay and England and the Octopus

Tins, bottles, and orange peel appear to be particularly popular choices to deposit in the environment. It is not just the accoutrements of the car which befouls the situation. Williams-Ellis labels them “semi-civilized” for they are neither so natural as to be part of and therefore respect nature, but not so civilized as to recognize their connection with their world and therefore venerate it. This echoes the sin of acedia, a sin that I believe was close to Tolkien’s heart which I shall discuss in the second half of this Chapter.

Adding to the litter are a bevy of shops selling shoddily-made or disposable items in abundance which are consumed, or only used for short periods at best (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 58, 68, 176). In Bimble Town, useful shops are replaced by: “a toy bazaar with things of tin,/ and bits of rock,... windows, windows with chocolate in, cigarettes,/ and gum one chews/(wrapped in paper, cased in card,/ for folk to strew on grass and shore) (*H*, p. 254, lines 17-18, 20-22). Rather than hoarding belongings like dragons, humans on holiday are marked by conspicuous consumerism of, in this case, mass produced and mass marketed detritus. They are designed to be consumed and their packet discarded, or to break after being used briefly and to be thrown away. These are not crafted goods designed to last. There is no pride in the manufacture, no desire for beauty or quality, rather they are designed to be disposable. Their very presence and the shops that sell them add to the rather dowdy ugliness of the place.

To assist the holidaymakers to boast to their friends about where they have been, in both villages the local chemists sell postcards that look nothing like the village that the tourists are visiting. Tolkien’s cards are more generic whilst Williams-Ellis increases the sarcasm related to these cards by having them depict the castle that has been destroyed to make way for a military barracks which has been built in a garish blue (Table 8).

<p>picture cards (of Godknowswhere and a fat woman dipped in ocean), (<i>H</i>: 254, lines 14-16)</p>	<p>the steep banks back of a curving river with hanging beech woods open towards the sea and the setting sun, framed on the one hand by the ruins of a castle perched high above the red roofs and smoking reek of the town, on the other by the tall masts of merchantmen docked within the shelter of Barton’s Bluff.</p> <p>[The castle ruins have been destroyed by the Royal Engineers who have built a bright blue barracks in their place.]</p> <p>(Williams-Ellis, 1975: 51)</p>
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Table 3: The Postcards of Bimble Bay and Castle Mallory

Such postcards reinforce the cynicism and cavalier attitude that the visitors have to the respective locations. Tolkien reinforces this concept by calling the places that the postcards depict “Godknowswhere” and later in the poem he says that the people are

visiting “Theydon’tcare”. The irony in the postcards of Williams-Ellis’s Castle Mallory is exemplified further when they proudly show “Castle St”, a street which no longer leads to a castle, the local fountain, which has not worked for thirty years, and an “avenue” which is totally devoid of trees (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 51). The inherent ugliness and lack of utility in both towns is demonstrated by their two post offices. In Bimble Town it is described as new and squalid (*H*: 254, line 6), whilst in Castle Mallory, it is said to be “a mid-Victorian post office, a preposterous ineptitude of Anglo-Venetian-Gothic style which was so dysfunctional that it was quickly abandoned” (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 53). It is almost like the tourists and town’s people are so inured to the evils of modernity that they have become blind to unsightly things and see them as a normal part of the environment. It is emblematic of the loss of care and creativity associated with the rise of industrialisation and consumerism. It seems that such influences somehow distort the populace’s perception.

Finally, both Bimble Bay and Castle Malory are distinguished by the pungent, foul-smelling odours. Tolkien’s Bimble Bay visitors are transfixed by the pungent smell of drying “bloaters”-smoked herrings left out in boxes in the sun, that have been transported many miles by rail to be dried in the “fresh sea-air” of Bimble Bay. Whereas in Castle Mallory, rail passengers are assailed by the powerful combination of odours generated by the gasometer and local sewage works (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 58). These places assault the senses in every possible way, sight, sound, smell and therefore taste, and even touch if the probability of walking on banana skins and dry paper bags on the beach is considered. These places have become the converse of what they should be. As Williams-Ellis puts it: “commercial enterprise has done wonders for poor old Castle Malory and reduced it from being a country town of real distinction and quite unusual amenity almost to the average English level of urban insipidity and tediousness, than which there are few lower” (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 54).

But this is a chapter on Evil; the changes in these townships are undesirable, even unpleasant, but could they really be classified as evil? I argue that to Tolkien, yes, they are. There is an insidiousness to the attitudes involved in the behaviour of the tourists which is a blight of modernity. It involves a kind of arrogance, a kind of ignorance, that denies our connectedness to our environment, and disregards our responsibility to care for it. To many of the writers of the time, there was a kind of deep spirituality associated with rural life and which often incorporated the fairy tradition. As Betjeman notes:

No part of England today is so remote that one can sit in it for half an hour without hearing somewhere the hoot of a train or the roar of car and motor bicycle. Today in Ireland it is certainly possible sometimes to find silence among those remote inland counties, where the colour-washed towns will be full of jennet—, donkey and horse-drawn carts of a market day, and when on every other day of the week houses and fields are still as the bare hills. And today in Ireland something of the faith of the Middle Ages prevails. To people who live in small cabins among wastes of bog and water, closed in by hills and only approached by uneven lonely roads, the silence brings a faith. The hills have personalities, the hawthorn hedges are full of fairies, the rowan trees keep evil from the threshold, and the voices of heavy swans that fly across the distance are singing of departed spirits. Today we call such beliefs superstition. But if we in England consisted, as we did once, of scattered communities huddled between a silent earth and sky, disturbed only by the noises of animals and the elements, we would readily believe in ghosts and evil, and though our vehicles moved slower, our minds might progress a little faster in unearthly things. And as the horse carried us through empty forests or over stormy downs, we might realise that man can be driven as much by the fear which follows him behind as by the more pleasant hopes, affections and aspirations that lead him on. (Betjeman, 1933: location. 578)

As Chapters 1 through 3 have shown, Tolkien emphasised the spirituality and animism of the land in his depiction of Faërie, connecting it with a kind of essence or spirit of creation made manifest in the world. But as Christopher Dawson, one of the writers who is cited in Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939], wrote:

The vast progress of material civilization and of man's control over nature in the 19th century was not accompanied by corresponding advance in a spiritual unity. It seemed as though the new powers had outstripped all social control, and that man was becoming the slave of the machinery that he had created. While the ancient Greeks, or the men of the Middle Ages, had used their poor resources to create great artistic works as the material embodiment of their social and spiritual ideals, the men of the 19th century used their vast powers to build up the ugly, unhealthy, and disorderly cities of the industrial era, which seem devoid of form or of any common social purpose. (Dawson, 1929: 169)

This is one of the aspects of Tolkien's view of evil. There are obvious evils such as Sauron or Balrogs, creatures whose aim in life is chaos, violence, and domination, but there are also subtler forms of evil, where the initial goal might be deemed to be good, but the sheer quantity of power involved distorts the final outcome. Saruman and his desire to understand the enemy, Gandalf if he had taken the Ring are examples of this. As Dawson notes this is echoed in the rapid advancement of "progress" in modern society. According to writers like Tolkien and Betjeman, to befoul nature is to reject or besmirch God's creativity, his gift of the world and therefore it is unquestionably evil. It is only the rapidity of change, the constant drive for supposed progress, that somehow numbs the spirit to the impact of humanity on their environment. In a discussion off camera, during his 1968

interview for the BBC programme *Tolkien in Oxford*, Tolkien expressed envy of his friend C.S. Lewis, being able to return to Ireland to find the landscape still the green and pleasant land of his boyhood:

I lament the particular fact that having been born into a country which has developed and changed very quickly and the population of which has doubled since I was young that – that I practically can't go back to any site which is even visibly similar. Mr. Lewis can go back to Northern Ireland and see the tree that was the first tree he ever called a tree. (Tolkien, quoted in Lee 2018: 161)

Here Tolkien is not saying that human beings did not leave an imprint on the landscape before, but with industrialisation, and particularly during times of war, the rate at which this process accelerated grew faster and faster. Childhood memories in particular imbue places with special emotions or even a little magic. I still remember looking desperately for fairies in a forest we used to drive past when I was young. I argue the loss of these places alters the link between the person and their homeland, making them more disconnected, and less invested in their surroundings than they might have been as Tolkien protests in his poem *Progress in Bimble Town* [1928-1931].

Both Williams-Ellis and Betjeman use Faërie creatures as symbols of things they wish to describe. In Williams-Ellis' case, it is the monsters of modernity – gigantic, ogre-like and fierce, uncouth monsters (Williams-Ellis, 1975: 35) but in Betjeman, the presence of the supernatural is a sign of drawing closer to nature. Tolkien uses his creatures of Faërie in both ways. In one sense Tolkien displays the qualities of a deep ecologist, one who gives equal weight to the needs and rights of other species and their environment against the needs and rights of humans, acknowledging that all life, human or non-human, is intrinsically valuable (Naess, 2015: 49). He does this by using the creatures of Faërie to give nature a voice. As discussed in Chapter 2, his character Glip, the main protagonist of his second Bimble Bay poem entitled *Glip* [1928], is a kind of personification of the destructive impact of modernity on nature, and therefore Faërie. The creature is a weakened and distorted version of his country-cousins, the Mewlips (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, Tolkien echoes Williams-Ellis's use of monsters as representations of the evils of modernity, however, Tolkien contravenes Williams-Ellis, by having the fairy creatures be representations of good, whilst the humans exemplify that which is evil. Tolkien uses his poetry to protest the diminishment of humankind through a loss of creativity, a loss of community, a loss of morality and a loss of their connection to history, again using fairy creatures as moral guides.

5.3 The Bumpus

Tolkien is known for his views on ecology, but in his non-Middle-earth poetry, his protests concerning modernity extend beyond this. In another of his Bimble Bay poems, *The Bumpus* [1928], a lonely troll is rejected by society purely on the grounds of his race, despite doing his best to adopt the customs of the people of Bimble Bay, greeting them courteously and not attempting to eat them. Their rejection only lasts until they discover that the Bumpus happens to be an excellent baker, and, by denying him entry into their society, they are missing out on a tea of prodigious proportions. Then suddenly, all is forgiven, and they all express a great desire to sample his baking. But they are too late, for, a small boy⁷³ has seen beyond the troll's outward appearance and used his imagination and compassion to understand the troll's loneliness. He befriends the troll and this small boy is the only friend the Bumpus needs. The pleas of the townsfolk for him to bake fall on deaf ears. Admittedly, there might be some justification in the townsfolk's wariness around befriending a troll, for, as Chapter 2 shows, their reputation is less than savoury, but their behaviour still displays four evils of modern society: i) the decline of hospitality, ii) the introduction of a pseudo-morality, iii) the denigration of the child, and iv) the emphasis on greed and consumption.

Though it might be tempting to place the populace's rejection of the troll squarely at the feet of his reputation as a social disruptor and cannibal, such an argument cannot be held for the Man in the Moon when he came down too soon, for he does not pose any such threat, but is equally rejected by the townsfolk. It appears that hospitality, particularly towards those that fall outside normal customs or laws of society, is a diminishing thing. The modern world does not embrace the philosophy of love thy neighbour or kindness to strangers; rather, they invoke a new morality of the conservative, urban, bourgeois elite: one that espouses such virtues as order, discipline, industry, modesty, and cleanliness (Zipes, 1979: 12). On the surface, such qualities might be seen as good, but in the hands of the urbanites they can become sources of pride and vanity and used as excuses to reject those that are deemed not to possess such attributes. For there is a greater, more fundamental law that, according to Lady Troubridge's roughly contemporary *Book of Etiquette* (originally published in 1931), should guide one's behaviour in society:

In fact, a true knowledge and understanding of social laws will indicate when they can be put aside with impunity in obedience to some greater law, such as the law of

⁷³ In Tolkien's revision of *The Bumpus*, *Perry-the-Winkle*, the small boy is replaced by a young hobbit

kindness, should a social occasion indicate that politeness will be better honoured in the breach than in the observance. (Troubridge, 1987: v-vi)

Thus, the correct and civilized response to the fairy creatures would be to treat them with the compassion and courtesy their behaviour warrants, rather than their race engenders. Tolkien agreed with the concept that there were fundamental laws that superseded any social niceties or local traditions. In Tolkien's eyes, customs, culture, or peer pressure of the modern world are not excuses to disregard his philosophy of respect for all living things; an attitude that the small boy who befriends the troll displays.

In fact, a child is the only one in the town who responds to the troll with the appropriate level of kindness and courtesy, receiving the troll's overtures of friendship in the spirit that they were intended. In this situation children do have several advantages over adults. Children have had less experience of the world, therefore are more curious and more full of wonder than their adult counterparts, making it easier for them to enter Faërie (*OFS*: 56-59). They feel the "natural love of uncorrupted men for animals, and "have a natural desire to 'get inside the skin' of living things" (*OFS*: 283) and they are less distorted by the demand of social convention and conformity, being humbler and more innocent. As Tolkien writes in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939]:

I do not deny that there is truth in Andrew Lang's words (sentimental though they may sound): 'He who would enter into the Kingdom of Faërie should have the heart of a little child.' For that possession is necessary to all high adventure, into kingdoms both less and far greater than Faërie. But humility and innocence- these things 'the heart of a child' must mean in such a context – do not necessarily imply an uncritical wonder, nor indeed an uncritical tenderness. (*OFS*: 57)

So, it is not lack of discernment that causes the child to approach the troll, rather it is the spirit of inquisitiveness and humanity unclouded by the pseudo-morality of the townspeople. In fact, here the child is showing himself to be morally superior to the adults, for as Marina Warner (1993: 39-40) points out, this is one of the two aspects of childhood morality that it is purer, more just, and less interested in preserving the status quo than adults. The second aspect is expressed in St Paul's quote 'When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood like a child, I thought like a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' (1 Corinthians: 13.11). In the eyes of the townspeople of Bimble Bay to be childish is to be tainted, flawed, a thing that must be put aside in order to reach one's full potential. The child potentially puts himself in terrible danger by approaching the troll and thus displays his ignorance and inexperience of the world and its perils, as well as a

possible moral inferiority by associating with such a dubious character as a troll. However, Tolkien's poem celebrates the child, for in the poem, the innocence, ignorance, kindness and curiosity of the child is rewarded: the troll was genuinely looking for a friend, and they both found one. However, it could have ended very differently if the troll had been crying because of hunger rather than loneliness and a tasty morsel came within reach. Fortunately, the former was true, meaning the humour of *The Bumpus* [1928] works on two levels: on one, we have the comic description of townsfolk turning interesting shades of pink and purple as they flee the approaching troll, on the other there is the deep irony as a supposedly ignorant child and a son of Cain (the troll, see Chapter 2), are the closest thing to true Christians that the poem contains.

The child's kindness is rewarded by a magnificent feast. Not to be outdone, the townspeople, now they realize that there is something to be gained from befriending the troll, suddenly lose their "moral" objections to him, and arrive at his door demanding some of his delicious baking:

The People all knocked at the Bumpus door:
'A beautiful Bumpus-cake
O bake for us, please!' they all now roar,
'O bake, O bake, O bake!'
(*ATB*: 205, lines 69-72)

This shows just how superficial their rejection of the troll is. If it were truly a matter of conscience, no amount of delicious baking should be enough to induce them to associate with the troll, yet here they all are, roaring at the troll, demanding he bake, bake, bake! They even suddenly remember courtesy and add a please into their demands though "roaring" is not a polite tone to take with anyone when one is requesting something from them, let alone a troll. This goes beyond mere greed, it suggests a self-centredness to their actions, where they place their own desires before anything else. As one will see in the next section, this is a common feature of Tolkien's depiction of evil in humans. Just as the cook extorted jewels out of the Man in the Moon, the local populace now tries to force the troll to give them food, but either he is less naïve than the Man in the Moon, or his size and teeth give him courage, so the townsfolk are not given a crumb. In true fairy-tale tradition, justice is served.

The Bumpus [1928] then, is about social injustice, the alienation and exploitation of the other, and the replacement of true morality with rules that are set to divide communities and individuals. These rules encourage selfishness, pride, and a sense of a person's own

importance. Yet oddly, people follow these rules in an attempt to appear lovely and loveable, and most of all to be praiseworthy, for this is what we secretly desire (Lyman, 1989: 138-139). They reject that which is other, even if they try to conform to the rules of that society yet are prepared to exploit the other's talents or possessions at every opportunity. Though they would probably consider themselves upright, righteous citizens, they are very far from the teachings of Christ. But modern living, and in particular in larger population centres, requires a sublimation of the individual's wishes to those of the masses and results in a contraction of both hospitality and sympathy for that which is other (Williams, 1973: 290, 296-297).

5.4 The Dragon's Visit

In this poem, we see another failing induced by the modern world, though this loss is one more fundamental to humanity itself, the loss of creativity and wonder. I have already outlined the plot of this poem in Chapter 2, how a dragon goes to a cherry orchard to sing but is assaulted by the townsfolk for his efforts. As I mentioned, in the 1928 version the dragon slays the people, and in the 1937 version, Miss Biggins slays the dragon. In both versions however, the dragon sadly laments:

“None of them now have the wit to admire
a dragon's song or colour,
Nor heart to kill him brave and quick –⁷⁴
the world is getting duller!”
(*H*: 311, lines 73-76)

Tolkien would advocate that humans have a deep spiritual need to connect with beauty and to feel awe and wonder. He saw it as necessary for spiritual health and as a way of communing with God. Yet in this poem the wonder and delight that should have been present with a dragon singing in your orchard has been replaced by the community values of social order, cleanliness, hard work, and prudence. The irony is that when the humans are in charge, the environment is far from clean and ordered. When the humans are left in command of Bimble Bay, it is strewn with litter and polluted with light and noise, while when the dragon is left in control, the beach is pristine:

And he buried Tupper and Captain George,
and the remains of Miss Biggins,
On the cliff above *a long white shore*;

⁷⁴ In the 1937 version this line is replaced with “Nor the nerve with steel to meet his fire”(H: 312, lines 1-4)

and he sang a dirge for Mr Higgins
(*H*: 310, lines 69-72, emphasis added)

Thus, the loss of creativity and wonder appears to be at the heart of the problems of modernity. It blinds the individuals to the beauty of Bimble Bay. It induces a lack of curiosity and compassion to befriend a lonely troll and not even the marvel of a dragon singing in a cherry orchard could cause them pause in their race for conformity to admire its colour and song. Each of these evils in themselves might seem trivial compared to the savagery of war or murder, but they all point to a more fundamental flaw in the modern world, one that Tolkien was particularly passionate about, that is the moving away from God and his morality. So the isolation induced by modernity is not simply at the level of loss of interconnectedness from fellow humans, according to Tolkien, it also involves a separation from God. Such a shift might be expressed in what I shall call Tolkien's seven deadly sins.

5.5 Tolkien's Seven Deadly Sins

In 2008, Monsignor Gianfranco Girotti suggested that the traditional deadly sins, lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride, no longer covered the gamut of evil contained within the modern world, and he proposed a set of his own. These were: destroying the environment, genetic manipulation, obscene wealth, creating poverty, drug trafficking, immoral scientific experimentation, and violation of people's fundamental human rights (Shannon, 2008). Looking at Girotti's list, it appears that, like Tolkien, he viewed the values of the modern world with concern. Both Birzer (2003) and Wood (2003) have written about Tolkien and the traditional seven deadly sins, but to me these do not really encompass the types of evil that Tolkien was writing about in his non-Middle-earth poetry. Instead, I propose that from Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, it is possible to devise a list of seven deadly sins according to Tolkien which are more relevant to the contemporary world. They are: acedia, concupiscentia, lack of creativity, isolation, domination, hubris, and despair. Some of these we have already met in his Bimble Bay poems, others are scattered through other poems, particularly one of his late poems, *The Sea-bell* [1962], especially when compared to its early version, *Looney*.

5.6 Bimble Bay and the Sins of Modernity

The Bimble Bay poems have already been discussed in some depth so I will mention them only briefly here to show how their themes interrelate to the concept of

Tolkien's seven deadly sins and his other non-Middle-earth poems. Acedia, according to the Oxford English Dictionary is defined as a kind of listlessness, a lack of care or concern (*OED*, 'acedia'), and this to me resonates with the attitude of the people and tourists visiting the town of Bimble Bay. It is expressed in the ugliness of the buildings, the polluting of the environment, the destruction of history and then the misrepresentation of the place in name and depiction on postcards and the cynical "Godknowswhere" and "Theydon'tcare" when referring to their current location. Nothing excites or inspires them anymore. It is a kind of spiritual blindness to the world. It connects to the uncreativity and lack of wonder expressed in the poem *The Dragon's Visit* [1928]. How much more amazing than a dragon singing in a cherry orchard does one need to get before someone will express awe and wonder? How much imagination does one need to have to recognize that the only troll in your region might be lonely? It appears that the people in these poems are so obsessed with order and conformity, that there is little room for anything else in their lives. Anything which is different, unique, or interesting, is quickly sublimated to avoid rejection by the masses, this in turn further stunts the imagination and creativity of the individuals. The result is a kind of paradox where individuals, being unable to connect in a meaningful manner, are increasingly lonely within the crowd. This is a subtle kind of evil, an evil like the Ring; the Ring, after all, often tempts its user with a desire to do good, take the example of Boromir and his aspiration to save Minas Tirith. Yet it distorts and perverts it, just as the desire to be a good citizen of the world is warped when denial of our creative sides forgoes that aspect of humans which, according to Tolkien's poem *Mythopoeia* (*T&L*: 85-90), makes us most like God. This disconnects humans from nature and forces them to avoid meaningful connection with their fellow human beings by compelling them to act in a kind of charade based on the need to present oneself in a particular way to appear socially acceptable, and, finally, in Tolkien's eyes, further separates people from God.

It appears that in an attempt to fill the void left by this lack of spiritual connectedness, the humans of the modern world, have become obsessed with acquiring the things in it. I call this the sin of concupiscentia (Mahoney, 2002-2021), being the desire for worldly things, using this term instead of lust, for, although sexual attraction is part of this love of earthly things, it is not its only manifestation. This sin is pervasive in Tolkien's middle to late non-Middle-earth poetry. It is in the commercialism and litter of Bimble Bay, the dragonish lust for gold in *The Hoard* [1962], and the desire of Gjuki and Gunthar for Sigurd and his treasure in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s]. It is a form of insatiable greed where the sinner places his own desires before those of others. It turns

the vision downwards and inwards away from humanity and away from God. It is this turning inward that differentiates it from the gluttony associated with a feast, or the sexual desire for the one you love. Neither of these things are necessarily sinful. For example, in *The Bumpus* [1928], William Winkle, despite an appetite which would have rivalled Thor, consumed his feast in a spirit of companionship and giving, therefore it is not true gluttony, because his focus is outwards towards his friend and an expression of his appreciation of the troll's cooking. In the modern world, it appears that the dragon-sickness of the medieval world has been replaced by the anti-dragon-sickness where things are brought then discarded more than doted on and held close, though both are pathological to the human spirit.

This is not to say that Tolkien ignores lust. One only has to look at the creeping Glip and his stalking of the mermaid to see that Tolkien included lecherousness in his poems. It is quite different from Gunnar lusting after Brynhild's beauty or Sigurd's gold, for in both cases each one is thinking of himself and gives little thought to the happiness or prosperity of those he exploits. The contrast of this lust and genuine love is obvious when considering two segments of non-Middle-earth poetry; the first is lines taken from *Corrigan II* [1929-1930], where the Corrigan "proposes" to Aotrou, the second is an untitled love poem that Tolkien wrote to his wife Edith, published in Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Tolkien.

Corrigan II [1929-1930] (<i>Aotrou</i> : 50, lines 45-52, emphasis added)	Untitled Love Poem (<i>Bio</i> : 74, emphasis added)
<p>He heard her voice and it was <i>cold</i>; Her words were of the world of <i>old</i>, When walked no men upon the mould, And young was moon and mountain.</p> <p>"How darest though my water wan To trouble thus, or look me on? <i>Now shalt thou wed me, or grey and wan</i> <i>Ever stand as stone and wither!</i>"</p>	<p>Lo! <i>Young</i> we are and yet have stood like planted hearts in the great <i>Sun</i> of Love so long (as <i>two fair trees</i> in woodland or in open dale stand <i>utterly entwined</i>, and <i>breathe</i> <i>the airs, and suck the very light</i> <i>together</i>) that we have become as one, deep-rooted in the soil of Life, and tangled in <i>sweet growth</i></p>

Table 4: Comparisons of Love from The Corrigan II [1929-1930] and an Untitled Love Poem by Tolkien.

The Corrigan is clearly separated from Aotrou, both emotionally for her voice is “cold”, and simply by her longevity. Her life span is beyond anything that Aotrou could comprehend or connect with. Her proposal to Aotrou is not one of love but rather a command with a stark choice between marriage or death. The words “grey”, “stone”, and “wither” create a sense of barren austerity in contrast to Tolkien’s poem to Edith. Here there is greenery, life, growth. Tolkien and Edith are mutually entwined, feeding on and supporting each other in a kind of intensity that excludes everything else in the world. Their love is life affirming, new, fresh, yet as deep rooted as the Corrigan. According to Tolkien, good sexual attraction in the form of love is fulfilling for both partners at more than just a physical level. It nurtures and supports the relationship drawing together both humans into a deep bond which promotes the growth and flourishing of both parties, for it is outward looking, valuing the person as much if not more than self. Thus, the lust of Faërie is very different to true love.

His Bimble Bay series shows the adverse effects on society when earthly things become valued more than heavenly, and where society becomes dominated by the machine and the need to consume. Religion serves as a barrier to unfettered progress by creating a unified series of taboos, beliefs and values that become inherent in a culture (see Dawson’s quote earlier in the chapter). Rationality, when used in isolation without the curbing influence of religion or taboo, produces factories, guns, or bombs (*OFS*: 71). The result is that people are deceived into thinking that this technology represents progress, when in actual fact it causes regression in personal well-being and social interconnectedness.

5.7 Humans and Evil: Isolation, Domination, Hubris, and Despair

In this section, I am leaving behind the Bimble Bay poems and focussing on Tolkien’s perception of evil as discussed in his broader non-Middle-earth poetry. These include his poems inspired by his academic life in Chapter 4 and his later poems, particularly his penultimate work, *The Sea-bell* [1962]. As Tolkien matures, the failings of humanity come more and more to the fore in his poetry, moving from a critique of modernity to more fundamental shortcomings of the human spirit. Like his early poems in which Tolkien explores the various sources for fairies, in these later poems, Tolkien surveys various manifestations of these evils.

Tolkien's 1962 poem, *The Sea-bell* [1962], is a revised version of his 1932-1933 poem, *Looney* [1932-33], which tells of a man who finds an empty boat on the shore and is swept away to Faërie (ATB: 103-108, 252-255). Each protagonist is first enraptured by the beauty of the land, but then breaks a taboo, and is punished by being driven mad for a year and a day before being returned to the mortal world. However, the manner in which they break the taboo and their attitude to Faërie is entirely different as demonstrated in this section. I shall begin where the poem opens with isolation and the Voyager's⁷⁵ choice.

The Sea-bell [1962] begins with a man on a beach finding a white shell which is somehow different from any other. The poem says:

I walked by the sea, and there came to me,
as a star-beam on the wet sand,
a white shell like a sea-bell;
trembling it lay in my wet hand.
(ATB: 103, lines 3-4)

The Voyager has put himself into a very vulnerable position. Not only is he in a liminal space, but more importantly, he is alone. This is a recurrent theme in Tolkien's writing; isolation is the beginning of a descent into evil. Saruman, all the humans and fairy creatures in Tolkien's poem *The Hoard* [1962], the sailor in *Over the Broad Ocean* [1920s], all separate themselves from their peers and this forms part of the descent into evil. Looney, on the other hand, begins the poem in contact with people, though he is ragged, he does not run away and hide when he is approached but replies to the query, though he too has been sequestered when he journeyed to Faërie:

'Where have you been; what have you seen
Walking in rags down the street?'

'I have come from a land, where cold was the strand,
Where no men were me to greet.

(ATB: 252, lines 1-4)

In some poems Tolkien extends the concept of isolation into an actual rejection of one's companions or kin. The sailor in *Across the Broad Ocean* [1920s], not only rejects his companions in the ship who "sought him far across the sea" and "wept and cried out and scanned the sea-bottom" (Shippey, 2003, 360, lines 19-20), but he abandons his niece

⁷⁵ I shall give the protagonist of *The Sea-bell* the name Voyager to distinguish him from Looney, the protagonist of the poem *Looney*.

and mother who await him in his homeland. In turn the steersman curses him saying: 'Fare you well, and may Hell take you, near the deep sea-bottom.' (Shippey, 2003, 361, line 30). Equally, Aotrou goes alone into the wood to meet the Corrigan, abandoning his wife and young family. The King in *The Hoard* [1962] enthralled by the gold, loses his bright sword and companions and withers physically, psychologically, spiritually, and eventually materially, as alone, he is unable to defend himself against the army that invades. Although we do not know the fate of the sailor, the outcomes for Aotrou and the Voyager are not good. The King and Aotrou die in a bed isolated from those who love them, and the Voyager is left impoverished and socially isolated, living in a kind of limbo:

in my clutching hand some grains of sand,
and a sea-shell silent and dead.
Never will my ear that bell hear,
never my feet that shore tread,
never again, as in sad lane,
in blind alley and in long street
ragged I walk. To myself I must talk;
for still they speak not, men that I meet.
(*ATB*: 108, lines 112-120)

The Voyager exhibits another possible form of isolation, but this depends on how one interprets what happens when he picks up the shell. For not only does the shell tremble in his hand but he also hears the ringing of a bell which seems to come from the shell. Bells in everyday life and in folklore can be used in a variety of situations. They are used at weddings and sometimes funerals to send tidings of a significant event to the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. As such they can be an expression of joy or mourning. They can be a call to fellowship and worship at a church. Both companionship and the church, including their bells, were said to be defences against incursions by fairies (Briggs, 1978: 51) and might help a luckless human escape Faërie if she or he has been abducted (Briggs, 1978: 103; Henderson and Cowan, 2001: 87-88). Bells can also be a warning. In the poem the bell is said to sound like a buoy swinging by a harbour bar. In this case the sound of ringing would alert sailors to avoid what was ahead and to take a different path. There is also a tradition in Welsh mythology of bells ringing in towns which had sunk beneath the water (Jenkyn, 1908: 31; Rhys, 1901: 334-335). These towns were said to have sunk because of the wickedness of the inhabitants and the bells served as warnings to those who heard them against sin (Rhys, 1901: 335). Finally, there is the tradition of the mort bell or passing bell which indicates a person is dying or their soul is passing over and is possibly designed to frighten away evil spirits at the time of death (Puckle, 1926: Chapter 5). How the reader interprets the bell determines whether one views the Voyager as having

been invited to Faërie, warned against going there, or called to fellowship with his fellow Christians and to repentance of his sins.

In keeping with Tolkien's signation of Faërie, the Voyager passes through mist on his journey across the water to Faërie. In this case, the veil is heightened as the Voyager himself is asleep and dreaming, further isolating him from the world. When he awakes, he is in a "strange land" on a "forgotten strand" (*ATB*: 103, line 15) and the true nature of the bell becomes manifest for, from the outset, the land is unfriendly towards the Voyager. There are the "hidden teeth of a perilous reef" (*ATB*: 104, line 19) and "glooming caves/ weed-curtained, dark and grey" (*ATB*: 104, lines 29-30). The Voyager appears to understand, hurrying away, leaving the bejewelled beach of pearls, corals, opals, and amethyst unplundered. At first, it appears the Voyager is above the sin of concupiscentia, right up to the point where he attempts to claim the land for himself:

Of river-leaves and the rush-sleaves
I made me a mantle jewel-green,
a tall wand to hold, and a flag of gold;
my eyes shone like the star-sheen.
With flowers crowned, I stood on a mound
and shrill as a call at cock-crow
proudly I [the Voyager] cried: 'Why do you hide?'
Why do none speak, wherever I go?
Here now I stand, king of this land,
with gladdon-sword and reed-mace.
Answer my call! Come forth all!
Speak to me words! Show me a face!"
(*ATB*: 105-106, lines 57-68)

Having rejected kith and kin, he has imposed himself on the land, and now attempts to lord it over the inhabitants. It should be noted that the Voyager is attempting to dominate the fairies in several ways; he is declaring himself "king of this land", he adorned himself with the accoutrements of royalty giving himself a crown of flowers, a sword of state made from an iris and a mace of reeds, he attempts to command the fairies to appear, and most importantly, he turns his voice into a weapon against the fairies. A cockcrow, like church bells, was said to break fairy enchantments and was used as a weapon when trying to free abductees from fairy mounds (Briggs, 1959: 215-216; Briggs, 1978: 102-103; Rhys, 1901: 112-113). He does this despite every indication that he is really not welcome for the subtle threat from the landscape continues beyond the beach:

Alders were sleeping, and willows weeping
...

gladdon-swords guarded the fords,
and green spears, and arrow reeds.
(*ATB*: 105, lines 41, 43-44)

Alders traditionally have a diabolical nature and are said to bleed when they are cut down and were associated with witches and animating corpses (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 209). Anyone who has read *The Fellowship of the Ring* [1954] is aware of the threatening behaviour of willows (*FR*: 117-118) which is echoed in the traditional Somerset rhyme mentioned in the Introduction. Even the grasses and reeds of Faërie are shaped like weapons. In *Looney* [1932-1933], the plant life is dead and dying, as Looney reaps grasses and reeds to form his mantle, in *The Sea-bell* [1962] it is homicidal! The animals mentioned echo this theme. Each animal mentioned has an association with death or dying. Hares are native to Britain and were said to be witches' familiars because of their near human cry. A white hare in Cornwall was associated with fatal mining accidents (Kirk, 2008: 16; Newell, 2008: 35). Owls were said to be messengers for the dead and inhabited graveyards. Moths were thought to be the ghosts of unbaptized children and badgers were associated with the devil and were harbingers of doom (Sapstead, 2008). Even voles dwell underground and could be said to inhabit a kind of underworld. What is more, the animals, like the fairies of this land flee from the Voyager. This is quite different from the reception of Looney who is "enfolded" by the plants of Faërie and starlight and the light of the moon enter his eyes.

The behaviour of the Voyager is ultimately an act of hubris. Not only does he consider himself so worthy and important that he deserves to dominate a land which he knows little about, but he further disrespects its inhabitants by openly flouting their traditional rules and customs. The taboos Tolkien is invoking are traditional to fairy lore and are seen in tales such as *Thomas of Erceldoune* (Edwards, 2006). Admittedly Looney also breaks the taboo around speaking in Faërie, but this is accidental as he cries out when startled by the appearance of a black cloud. Looney also gathers:

... stones whiter than bones,
Pearls and crystals and glittering shells;
(*ATB*: 253, lines 13-14)

Looney does not exhibit greed by only choosing the valuable pearls, rather he seems drawn to things by their beauty. Nevertheless, it is forbidden to remove things from Faërie, and he would have been in trouble if he attempted to leave with them. On the other hand, the Voyager breaks multiple taboos including drinking water, speaking, lying, and attacking

the fairies with his voice. It is not clear if he took anything from the beach when he was passing through, though the poem does mention him running glittering sand through his hands and there only being sand in his pockets when he returns to the Primary World. Both Looney and the Voyager are punished but in very different ways. They both enter a wood and are driven mad for a year and a day. But the effect of this madness appears quite different. In Looney's case, it appears to have deepened his connection to Faërie, making him more perceptive regarding his surroundings:

Shadows were on me, stones beneath-
Under the hills, over the hills,
And the wind a-whistling through the heath.
Birds were flying there, ceaselessly crying;
Voices I heard in the grey caves
Down by the shore. The water was frore,
Mist was there lying on the long waves.
(*ATB*: 254, lines 38-44)

By contrast, the Voyager enters a catatonic state that leaves him physically, mentally, and spiritually drained by his ordeal:

At last there came light in my long night,
and I saw my hair hanging grey.
'Bent though I be, I must find the sea!
I have lost myself, and I know not the way,
but let me be gone!' Then I stumbled on,
like a hunting bat shadow was over me;
in my ears din'd a withering wind,
and with ragged briars I tried to cover me.
My hands were torn and my knees worn,
and years were heavy upon my back,
(*ATB*: 106-107, lines 81-90)

On returning from Faërie, the Voyager must speak to himself for "still they speak not, men that I meet" (*ATB*: 108, line 120). This may be due to his ragged, haunted appearance, or it may be that the Voyager is in fact a ghost. According to traditional fairy lore, it was not uncommon for humans returning from Faërie to crumple into dust on touching the Primary World (Briggs, 1959: 14). Having been to Faërie, he has sacrificed his entry to Heaven (Silver, 1999: 171,178), and his soul is now caught between worlds. Silver notes that the souls of people who had been to Faërie can enter neither heaven nor hell but are caught in a kind of limbo. Although she is unable to ascertain the precise reason for this tradition, she proposes that death is concrete and understandable, whilst abduction to Faërie with its apparent but not actual death results in an ambiguous state and an uncertainty about the

soul's status. The individual, through the time shift involved in journeys to Faërie, has been so long that they are presumed dead, and their return disrupts society both physically and spiritually. When they return such people are outside both natural law and God's law (Silver, 1999: 171,178).

This fate is quite different to that of Looney, who, although he does break some taboos in Faërie, seems to connect with the land in a way that the Voyager never does, and whose interaction with the fairies shows none of the pride or aggression seen in the Voyager:

In pattering rain, counting my gain:
Only withered leaves and pebbles I bore,
And a single shell, where I hear still the spell
Echoing far, as down the street
Ragged I walk. To myself I must talk,
For seldom they speak, men that I meet.
(*ATB*: 254-255, lines 53-60)

Though most of the treasures that Looney collected on the beach have become withered leaves and pebbles, Looney is given one treasure, the sea-bell, which gives him a lasting link to Faërie. (The turning of Faërie gold to useless leaves and pebbles is a traditional motif in Faërie lore (Briggs, 1959: 14-15)). Yet he is still connected to the Primary World as he continues to be able to interact with people he meets. Looney seems to be between worlds, rather like the wild-men of medieval tales. He is able to interact with the Primary World, but his ragged garb and tendency to mutter to himself makes him appear rather strange to the average observer. So, in *The Sea-bell* [1962], one has come full circle, with Tolkien drawing heavily on British folklore to guide the plot and imagery of his poem, using traditional fairy lore in the behaviour of his fairies and the taboos of Faërie, as well as in the traditions belonging to the plants and animals he chooses to form his landscape. This is very similar to the techniques he used in his early poetry when he was exploring who or what the fairies were (see Chapter 1).

Tolkien often pairs greed with deceit and domination. In *Sigurd and Gudrún*, Gjuki and Sigurd use magic to trick Sigurd and Bryndhild respectively. This means both Sigurd's and Gunnar's marriages are built on a lie and both collapse spectacularly once the lie is uncovered, resulting in the deaths of Sigurd and Brynhild. Aotrou tricks his wife into taking the Corrigán's potion and betrays both his wife and the Corrigán to get the children he desires. This is a very serious breaking of traditional fairy taboos, for fairies have a very

high regard for truth (Briggs, 1959: 18; Briggs, 1967: 7). Deceit often destroys loves and friendship as it becomes a kind of domination by manipulating those lied to. Although Itroun does not reject Aotrou, possibly because she is not aware of his duplicity, in Tolkien's poem, Aotrou is rejected by God whom he has besmirched through his lack of faith. But it is the desire for domination that is more central to Tolkien's concept of evil as his legendarium demonstrates. This might be where some of Tolkien's conflicted feelings about magic stem from. He discusses this further in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939].

In *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], magic in its darkest form is used to dominate the mind of Sigurd and fool him into marrying Gudrún. Tolkien mentions two forms of magic in a draft of a letter to Naomi Mitchell written in the 1950's: *goeteia* and *magia* (*Letters*: 199-200). *Goeteia*, according to the famous Renaissance occultist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, was concerned with invoking the aid of spirits via magical ceremonies (Bachmann, 2007: 49). Although Tolkien does not simplify the dichotomy between *goetia* and *magia* into black and white magic, he does indicate that *goetia* involves the domination of free will by magic. Sigurd, when influenced by Gjuki's glamour, is incapable of choosing his destiny as his mind is no longer his own, thus he is coerced into his marriage to Gudrún. This kind of magic is quite different to the Corrigan's. Although she does not fully disclose her end of the bargain, the Corrigan leaves Aotrou free to decide his fate. Similarly, there is the more natural magic of Galadriel, who, uses her power to offer Frodo and Sam a chance to choose their destiny when she allows them to look into the mirror of Galadriel (*FR*: 363). As Dieter Bachmann argues, the distinction between good and evil magic is to do with the intention rather than the practice (Bachmann, 2007: 51). Where *magia* involves a union of minds and an enhancement of creativity and sensory perception, *goetia* is used to control and diminish its victim, removing from them the ability to make free choices and thus involves the evil of domination.

The non-Middle-earth lyrics are not conducive to epic martial themes like those seen in Middle-earth, the one exception being *The Song of Eriol* [1917], a poem written in 1917. The poem describes a rich, and fertile land where the people live in peaceful harmony with one another, until one day there came:

Wars of great kings and clash of armouries,
Whose swords no man could tell, whose spears
Were numerous as a wheatfield's ears,
Rolled over all the Great Lands; and the Seas

Were loud with navies; their devouring fires
Behind the armies burned both fields and towns;
And sacked and crumbled or to flaming pyres
Were cities made, where treasures and crowns,

Kings and their folk, their wives and tender maids
Were all consumed. Now silent are those courts,
Ruined the towers, whose old shape slowly fades,
And no feet pass beneath their broken ports.

(*LT II*: 298-299, lines 21-32)

The poem finishes with the death of the narrator's mother and father, the former by starvation in a siege, the latter in battle, and the capture of the narrator who, eventually, manages to escape to a land which might be Númenor. This could be said to be the most realistic portrayal of war in Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, containing the mindless destruction of the natural and man-made alike, and the catastrophic loss of human life. The destructiveness and ferocity of the fires might be more in line with modern warfare than medieval weapons. Its ending leaves the reader with a sense of the dreadful waste, yet the slight hope that the narrator can begin again despite his terrible personal losses. This small seed of positivity amongst the devastation of war might spring from Tolkien's belief that, though war contains much that is evil on both sides, the evil that it generates must be blamed on the aggressor, and that it was the responsibility of a good person to fight for a just cause. In a letter to W.H. Auden in 1956, Tolkien writes:

... I am more impressed by the extreme importance of being on the right side, than I am disturbed by the revelation of the jungle of confused motives, private purposes, and individual actions (noble or base) in which the *right* and *wrong* in actual human conflicts is actually involved. If the conflict really is about *right* and *wrong*, or *good* and *evil*, then the rightness or goodness of one side is not proved or established by the claims of either side; it must depend on the values and beliefs above and independent of the particular conflict. A judge must assign *right* and *wrong* according to principles that he holds valid in all cases. That being so, the *right* will remain an inalienable possession of the right side and justify its cause throughout. (*Letters*: 242)

Thus, like magic, war itself is not necessarily an evil, though it has evil effects, it is the intention, in particular the desire to dominate which separates a just war from an unjust war.

Tolkien also draws a distinction between ruling and dominating. This can be seen in his poems *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* [1931] and *Bombadil goes Boating* [1962]. In both poems, it is very clear that Tom, as the *genus loci* of the area, is more than capable

of dominating or even destroying the creatures of the area, be they natural or supernatural. But he does not. The most he will do, and this only when he is being held captive by various river folk, is to put them to sleep. For example, when Tom enters a badger's sett to escape from a shower of rain, the badgers proclaim:

‘Ho Tom Bombadil! Where have you come tumbling,
bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have caught you.
You’ll never find your way out, the way that we have brought
you!’
(*ATB*: 38, lines 56-58)

Rather than flying into a rage and destroying the brock, Tom takes on a rather paternal tone, admonishing the badgers for their behaviour, their grubby hands, and their dirty noses:

‘Now, old Badger-brock, do you hear me talking?
You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.
Show me to your backdoor under briar-roses;
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow
(*ATB*: 38, lines 59-32)

Yet there is one part of the poem where Tom seems to deviate from this jovial, fatherly control, to domination, maybe even kidnapping. This is his behaviour towards Goldberry. Tolkien's poem *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* says:

But one day Tom, he went and caught the
River-daughter,
...
He caught her, held her fast. Water-rats went scuttling
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was fluttering.
Said Tom Bombadil: ‘Here’s my pretty maiden!
You shall come home with me! The table is all laden.
...
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your mother
in her deep weedy pool: there you’ll find no lover!’
... lilted to the fiddle
clasping his river-maid round her slender middle.
(*ATB*: 42, lines 106, 109-112, 115-116, 121-122, emphasis added)

The scene has some eerie parallels with Tolkien's poem *The Shadow-bride* in which a strange ‘man’ who casts no shadow and sits incredibly still under a tree, suddenly comes to life when a dancing woman (possibly human, possibly elf) approaches him:

He woke, as had he sprung of stone,
and broke the spell that bound him;
he clasped her fast, both flesh and bone,
and wrapped her shadow round him.
(*ATB*: 96, lines 13-16, emphasis added)

It appears that Tom Bombadil is not above utilizing his power to dominate when it suits him, although admittedly Goldberry does not appear unhappy with the arrangement; the poem describes a rather playful relationship between Goldberry and Tom, with her pulling his beard which is hanging in the water, and reproving him for frightening the fishes. They obviously like each other and the wedding is described as merry, but his proposal, seizing Goldberry around the waist like the man in *The Shadow Bride* and the announcement that ‘*you shall come with me*’ sounds more like an abduction than a request. I found this aspect of Tom very difficult to reconcile with his other behaviour, in particular how this contrasted with his general leadership style. I wondered if Tolkien felt that seizing Goldberry around the waist was the only way to break her away from the influence of her mother, otherwise I cannot explain why such a model leader should abduct one of his subjects.

Hubris, like isolation and domination, are key components in Tolkien’s understanding of evil. It involves seeing oneself as superior or skilled than those around them. This may cause them to over-reach themselves, putting themselves in situations which are above what it is possible for them to achieve. In this sense hubris involves the individual placing their need for admiration or acclaim ahead of the needs or safety of those around them, thus it involves a separation of self from others. As part of this, it also involves separating oneself from God. Tolkien is critical of pride or *ofermod* as it is called in Old English. His notes on *Beowulf* point out that though Beowulf sought to help his people, his one-man displays of strength brought misery to others (*Beowulf*: 270-274). When Beowulf kills the dragon at the end of the poem, he joins the most elite band of heroes, the dragon-slayers (*M&C*: 16), his name shall live on, yet:

Within the limits of human life, Beowulf neither lived nor died in vain— brave men might say. But there is no hint, indeed there are many to the contrary, that it was a war to end war, or a dragon-fight to end dragons. But it was the end of Beowulf, and of the hope of his people. (*M&C*: 47)

Beowulf is not only risking himself by choosing to attempt to slay the dragon on his own, but he risks dying, and leaving his people without their hero, vulnerable to attack from the enemies that were kept at bay by the presence of Beowulf, *and* with a rampaging dragon

running around the countryside. Beowulf is saved from his pride by Wiglaf who disobeys his lord's instructions not to come near the dragon, and helps him slay it, enhancing his true courage and honour by ascribing the death of the dragon to Beowulf (*T&L*: 145).

This theme is repeated in Tolkien's play *Homecoming of Beorhtnoth*, a play that Tolkien wrote about the aftermath of the Battle of Maldon, where Beorhtnoth son of Beorhthelm, Duke of Essex, fatally compromises his army by allowing the Viking raid to cross a causeway to where his troops wait for them. Although his action might be seen to be chivalrous, giving both armies equal footing to attack, the outcome is disastrous, as, rather than being caught between an army and the sea, forcing a retreat, the Vikings overcome the Duke's army, slaying Beorhtnoth in the process. Beorhtnoth, like Beowulf and King Arthur, was "powerful, fearless, and proud" in his youth, but now was "old and hoar, but vigorous and valiant" (*T&L*: 121), attempting to prove his continued battle prowess and bravery to his retainers. In the introduction to the play Tolkien notes it was Beorhtnoth's "act of pride and misplaced chivalry [that] proved fatal" (*T&L*: 122). The actual Old English poem seems even more critical of the Duke, lines 89-90 stating that: "the earl in his overmastering pride actually yielded ground to the enemy, as he should not have done" (*T&L*: 143). Whilst Tolkien admired the concept of Northern Courage, that is continued bravery in the face of certain defeat, he felt that the desire for fame or good reputation often contaminated the spirit of such bravery:

But since such conduct [northern courage] is held admirable, the alloy of personal good name was never wholly absent. Thus Léofsunu in *The Battle of Maldon* holds himself to his loyalty for fear of reproach if he returns home alive. This motive may, of course, hardly go beyond 'conscience': self-judgement in the light of the opinion of his peers, to which the 'hero' himself wholly assents; he would act in the same way if there were no witnesses. Yet this element of pride, in the form of desire for honour and glory, in life and after death, tends to grow, to become a chief motive, driving a man beyond the bleak heroic necessity to excess- to chivalry. (*T&L*: 144)

In Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur* [1933], King Arthur did not need to abandon his kingdom to travel to Europe to fight, particularly given his relative weakness physically and militarily. Because of his choices, because of his desire that his name be remembered, his dynasty falls and a golden age in Britain ends. Both Richard Gallant and Mary Bowman, in separate articles, point to the fact Northern Courage is a morally neutral activity being capable of being used for personal gain or selfless sacrifice depending on the motivation behind the action. When it is done with a view to personal fame and glory, then it can be unnecessarily destructive even cruel in its actions, whilst when done in order to fulfil an

oath, maintain faithfulness to one's companions, or to fulfil a need or duty, then it can stand as a clear beacon of the hero's true character and courage (Gallant, 2020; Bowman, 2010).

Equally, pride is a factor in the downfall of the Voyager in *The Sea-bell*. His belief in his own importance, that the creatures of his land should flock to him, the attitude that he is the most superior being present and that it was his right to rule the land when he arrived, and his attempts to order the fairies around, without any hint of concern for others or desire to care for their welfare, mark him as one who is not fit to rule. Similarly, there is a difference between the self-centred greed in *The Hoard* [1962], versus the shared voraciousness of the feasting in *The Bumpus* [1928]. Companionship, fellowship, and serving others, moderated the excesses of self. The reaction of Faërie is swift and devastating; for Faërie might be just, but it is not merciful. Not only is he driven mad for a year and a day, but, instead of fame, honour, and glory, the Voyager returns from Faërie, ragged, aged, and withered, the shell is silent, he has only leaves and sand in his pockets, and he is as invisible to humans now as he was to the fairy creatures in Faërie.

The contrast between the two poems, *Looney* [1932-33] and *The Sea-bell* [1962] is an example of the growing darkness and despair seen in Tolkien's late poetry. It can be seen in the different versions of *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962], the contrast between *Firiel* [1930s] and *The Last Ship* [1962], and in his longer lays including *Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], and *The Story of Kullervo* [1914]. Whilst the latter examples are inherent in the plot, these later poems are in keeping with Humphrey Carpenter's comment that Tolkien despaired more and more as he aged, particularly after World War II:

In some ways he [Tolkien] found old age deeply distressing, while in other respects it brought out the best in him. He was saddened by the consciousness of waning powers, and wrote in 1965: 'I find it difficult to work- beginning to feel old and the fire dying down.' Occasionally this plunged him into despair, and in his later years he was particularly prone to the gloom that had always characterised his life;
(*Bio*: 236)

Although many would not view despair as evil, to Tolkien it was, for, as he notes in the case of *Aotrou*, it implies a lack of faith in God. To Tolkien it appears to be more than this. It seems to involve a loss of wonder or magic in the world. There are multiple examples in his non-Middle-earth poetry that portray this loss: rather than the dragon being triumphant in *The Dragon's Visit* [1928], in the later version he is slain by Miss Biggins, *Firiel* does not return to a fulfilling life in *The Last Ship* [1962], but instead to one of drudgery, and

the Voyager, rather than connecting to Faërie after going there like his counterpart Looney, is cast aside forever. As I commented in Chapter 1, his early poems include references to the fading of Faërie, but here it appears more personal, more real, culminating in his short story *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965], which I shall discuss in my conclusion to this thesis. Possibly this is most apparent in the lack of Eucatastrophe in his non-Middle-earth poems.

5.8 Eucatastrophe

The poem *The Last Ship* [1962] highlights a curious feature of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poems, particularly if one compares them to his Middle-earth legendarium; there is a lack of eucatastrophe in these poems. Tolkien describes eucatastrophe in his essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] as the "sudden joyous turn" (*OFS*: 75) or the consolation of the happy ending (*OFS*: 75). In this essay, he illustrates his point with the resurrection of the prince in Andrew Lang's *Prince Prigio* and a young woman gaining her love against impossible odds in *The Black Bull of Norway*. Tolkien considers eucatastrophe one of the most basic functions of fairy stories:

But the 'consolation' of fairy-tales has another aspect than the imaginative satisfaction of ancient desires. Far more important is the Consolation of the Happy Ending. Almost I would venture to assert that all complete fairy-stories must have it. At least I would say that Tragedy is the true form of Drama, its highest function; but the opposite is true of Fairy-story. Since we do not appear to possess a word that expresses this opposite- I will call it Eucatastrophe. The *eucatastrophic* tale is the true form of fairy-tale, and its highest function.

The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn'... it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. (*OFS*: 75)

Though many of the events in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955], particularly towards the end of the book, are dark, involving for example the death of Théoden, Frodo's failure at Sammath Naur, and the pathos of the physically and psychologically damaged Frodo leaving the Shire to seek recovery in the West, the ending is bitter-sweet, with just enough eucatastrophe, just enough joy, to generate hope in the reader. There is love as well as loss; Aragorn wins Arwen, Faramir Eówyn, and Sam and Rosie ensure there is still a Frodo in Bag End (*RK*: 1029). The land itself is healed. In contrast, in Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry, there is no such reprieve. Even in poems where Tolkien is entirely free to choose the ending such as *The Last Ship* [1962], *The Sea-bell* [1962], and *The Hoard* [1962], there is still no eucatastrophe, and the bleakness of the ending becomes

more marked as Tolkien ages. For example, contrast the endings of his poem *Firiel* [1930s] with its later version *The Last Ship* [1962]:

At eight o'clock in green and white,
with long hair braided,
She tripped down, leaving night
and a vision faded.

Up climbed the round sun,
and the world was busy,
...
Brooms, dusters, mats to beat,
pails, and dishes clatter.

Breakfast was on table laid;
there were voices loud and merry;

(*ATB*: 265, lines 85-90, 95-98)

Her life is not a bad one. There is some joy, but it is not of an intensity to bring tears to one's eyes as Fimi notes true eucatastrophe does (Fimi, 2017: 185). However, in *The Last Ship* [1962], *Firiel*'s life appears even darker, more mundane, with no magic or beauty:

She donned her smock of russet brown,
her long hair she braided,
and to her work came stepping down.
Soon the sunlight faded.

Year still after year flows
down the Seven Rivers;
cloud passes, sunlight glows,
reed and willow quivers
as morn and eve, but never more
westward ships have waded
in mortal waters as before,
and their song has faded.

(*ATB*: 113, lines 92-103)

The emphasis has shifted from a mortal life with immortality gained from one's descendants, to a world without magic and the endless drudgery of work. The joy and hope of *Firiel* [1930s] has disappeared in *The Last Ship* [1962]. In *The Hoard*, all those who become obsessed by the cursed gold, wither and die alone. The lover in *Ides Aelfscyene* [1920s] is abandoned and despairing, though is still in love with his elf maiden (Shippey, 2003: 358). None of these endings could be said to be spiritually uplifting. Even in his

early poems there is a lack of eucatastrophe. For example, the enchanting music of Tinfang Warble fails to keep its promise. The protagonist might be called from his bed by:

... something alluring, aloof and queer,
Like perfume of flowers from the shores of the mere
That in Elvenhome lies, and in starlit rains
Twinkles and flashes, came up to the panes
Of my high lattice-window. Or was it a sound?
I listened and marvelled with eyes on the ground.
For there came from afar a filtered note
Enchanting sweet, now clear, now remote,
(*LT I*: 108-109, lines 7-11)

He attempts to pursue the puck-like figure in the hope of catching up with him. But, as I said in Chapter 1, the beauty of Tinfang's music hides a kind of compulsion which leaves the protagonist oscillating between hope and despair:

He is gone, and the valley is empty and bare
Where lonely I stand and lonely I stare.
Then suddenly out in the meadows beyond,
Then back in the reeds by the shimmering pond,
Then afar from the copse where the mosses are thick
A few notes came trillaping quick.
(*LT I*: 109-110, lines 41-46)

I propose that Tolkien uses the wonder induced by the Faërie elements in the poems to generate in the reader the mixture of awe, joy, and regret normally engendered by the fairytale's eucatastrophe. In this case, the sharp contrast between the beauty of Faërie and the dreariness of the Primary World, or the oscillations between hope and desolation, serve to emphasise the contrast, potentially heightening the effect upon the reader. Though this creates elements of darkness and despair in the poems, this wonder still allows the reader to see the world in a new way and it might generate a kind of awe at the beauty of the scene. Awe might create hope in a Christian via a more circuitous route than eucatastrophe, for it might generate an increased awareness of God in the beauty of the natural and the supernatural world and thus reinforce the faith of the reader if they are Christian. But there is also a risk that the reader, having experienced the wonders of Faërie, might return to the Primary World with jaded eyes and consequently develop the dissatisfaction with an ordinary human life so common in traditional tales of humans returning from Faërie. Thus wonder, though capable of creating consolation and recovery through the generation of optimism, is a much more precarious path to hope, and might even be considered an evil in the eyes of some. Yet, wonder has an advantage over the traditional eucatastrophe.

Humans seem to have a desire for new experiences, new places, and things that are different from our day-to-day lives. Whilst children, whose knowledge of the world and stories is less, might be satisfied with clichés and the predictability of the ending of such tales might be comforting to adults, repeated sudden joyous turns will quickly lose their impact and will interfere with the tale's ability to create secondary belief. Here, wonder is far more flexible. Wonder or awe does not necessarily have to be engendered by something which is exactly pleasurable. An ocean lashed to frenzy in a storm is not precisely pleasurable but can create a sense of excitement or fear as well as awe depending on how close the individual is to that ocean. Edmund Burke, the eighteenth-century philosopher, calls this emotion the sublime, describing this terrible delight as the strongest emotion humans are capable of feeling (Burke, 1757: section V). Like Tolkien's eucatastrophe, this is a melding of a positive and negative emotion, in response to powers greater than those that humans are capable of. In eucatastrophe, according to Tolkien, it is the power of God manifesting in the sudden miraculous turn (*Letters*: 100-101; *OFS*: 75), in the sublime, it is expressed as manifestations of excess, including terror, obscurity, privation, vastness, infinity, magnificence, light, suddenness, and loudness to name a few (Burke, 1757: 12, 14, 17, 18, 19). Faërie in its guise as a "supernatural" land is well placed to engender sublimity in those who pass its borders. Like eucatastrophe, sublimity forces the individual to look beyond themselves, requiring the individual to respond to the greater power of the world around them, this time in the name of survival. Thus, though it does not awaken joy like eucatastrophe, the sublimity of Faërie might induce a similar outcome.

5.9 Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have shown that evil, and in particular human evil, is a central theme of Tolkien's middle to late non-Middle-earth poetry. It falls into two main categories: a critique of modernity including the sins of acedia, concupiscentia, and uncreativity and those that could be termed the sins of the fallen soul, the desire to dominate, hubris, and despair. Isolation, in the form of isolation from God, nature, and each other is the common theme that links these two groups. Although evil might be found in many of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poems, in his early poetry, the threat to humans is from the nature of fairy creatures and is very much in the background. However, in the 1930s, Tolkien responded to the burgeoning concern over the impact of industrialisation and commercialism on nature. This makes this Faërie very much a Faërie of its time. The second shift in his expression of evil follows the increasing use of Paradise motifs in his depiction of Faërie and harks back to the more traditional deadly sins. These middle to

later poems have moved away from being merely descriptive to having a stronger narrative component and it is becoming increasingly obvious that these are not ordinary fairytales if Tolkien's essay *On Fairy-stories* [1939] gives us an outline of their components, for, as with his songs and lays, these poems lack the eucatastrophe at the end of the tale. This becomes more prominent when comparing earlier and later versions of poems. This might stem from any number of sources including Tolkien's despondency at a second world war after the war to end all wars, his anguish at watching his sons go off to fight, his disillusionment with the promises of progress, or his own waning powers of imagination as he aged, all of which might be considered evils that pervaded Tolkien's later life. In keeping with tradition, Faërie dwindles in response to the encroaching evil of the modern world, and, as I shall discuss in the Conclusion, there is a sense that Faërie is not just fading in the generic sense, but somehow withdrawing from Tolkien himself. Tolkien really appears to struggle to come to terms with this and only in his final work, *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965], does he seem to accept it.

Conclusion: *Smith of Wootton Major* and Tolkien's Final Vision of Faërie

C.1 My thesis

In the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated that Tolkien used his non-Middle-earth poetry as a “sandpit”, experimenting with ideas and concepts which he later used in his prose works or continued to develop independently. His development of Faërie can be divided into three main phases. The initial phase, where he explores the origins of the fairies, primarily drew on the British folklore of his era. The second phase consisted of an academic arm, where he explored the literature that he studied and taught at university, and a second protest arm, where he bemoaned the ills of modernity. For this he drew on a much wider range of literature from medieval lays to contemporary non-fiction works on ecology and at the same time, he became more confident in his depictions of Faërie, broadening the sources he drew upon and inventing creatures of his own. Finally, from the 1940s onwards, Tolkien merged his Christian faith with his love of Faërie, to produce a realm which, though it drew its landscapes from Paradise, also said much about evil, sadness, and loss. Thus, Tolkien's Faërie is at once a deeply personal one, echoing his own loves, sorrows and fears, yet also one which reflects the social and cultural milieu of the day. I began this thesis by exploring Tolkien's poem *Kortirion Among the Trees*[1915/1937/1962]; a poem which was rewritten in each of the three phases in the development of Tolkien's Faërie. I will end it by analysing a prose piece, *Smith of Wootton Major*[1964-1965]; the last story Tolkien wrote about Faërie thus is his final representation of Faërie outside his legendarium. In my discussion, I will show how Tolkien has taken the threads of many of his non-Middle-earth poems and woven them into a coherent whole which is at once grounded in tradition but is also uniquely his.

C.2 Plot Summary of *Smith of Wootton Major*

Tolkien started writing *Smith of Wootton Major* in 1964-5 when he was aged 72 and it was first published in 1967, when Tolkien was aged 75. It is a true fairy-story in that it tells of a man's *aventure* in Faërie (see Introduction for discussion of *aventure*), and, according to Verlyn Flieger, it gives the “purest and most uncompromising representation of that world [Faërie]” (*Smith*: 67-68). Tolkien wrote an essay on the story for a lecture at Blackfriars on literature and Christianity in 1966 (*C&G*: 1220), commenting on certain aspects of the story. *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965] tells of a man, Smith Smithson, who as a child is invited to the Feast of Good Children. The village in which he lives,

Wootton Major, is renowned for its cooking prowess, and every twenty-four years it holds a special feast for twenty-four good children. The centrepiece of this feast is a great cake in which small coins and trinkets are hidden, including a fay star, a star that will allow its receiver to enter Faërie. The design of the main decoration of the cake for the feast is a fairy-queen made from pink icing and carrying a star-wand. The design was proposed by the unimaginative, poorly-skilled, Master Cook by the name of Nokes. However, the figure was created by his apprentice, a curiously young-looking, but highly skilled man called Alf, though most people called him Prentice. Prentice does not respond well to the Master Cook's gibes about tricky fairies and their underhand ways but is happy enough to make the fairy queen so at least there is some remembrance of Faërie in the human world. During the eating of the cake, young Smith swallows the fay star though this does not become apparent till his tenth birthday, when he wakes at dawn and begins to sing high and clear in a strange language. The fay star falls out of his mouth and before he can think, the young Smith places it on his forehead. The fay star allows Smith to enter Faërie, into which he journeys many times. He wanders deeper and deeper into the land, coming across more and more wondrous things. He sees an elven army arrive on shore singing songs of triumph after a dark battle of which humans know nothing. He passes through a cloud and sees the king tree shining as bright as the sun. He discovers a fiery lake in which creatures of flame move, but when he steps out to try and reach them, a harsh wind is raised which strips a nearby birch bare. And finally, he reaches a place where a beautiful woman is dancing. Smith is invited to dance with her and, before he goes home, she places a flower in his hair which never withers or dies. Finally, Smith expresses a desire to see the Fairy Queen herself. He finds his way to where she is holding court, and there realises she is the same lady he danced with. He is given a beautifully-wrought set of silver lilies that chime with a beautiful clear note if touched and that smell of a long-forgotten scent. But then he is told that the price of this wish is that he must give up the fay star and never return to Faërie. This fills Smith with grief, but he agrees to do so, and as a reward, he is allowed to choose which child shall receive it next. On his journey home he meets up with Alf/Prentice who he realizes is the fairy king, and they agree to give it to a young boy, Tim, the son of Smith's sister. Smith returns to his old life working with his son in the forge.

C.3 Analysis of *Smith of Wootton Major*

The story begins with Tolkien setting the scene:

There was a village once, not very long ago for those with long memories, nor very far away for those with long legs. (*Smith*: 3)

Immediately there is an enigma in both time and space, a feature which, as I mentioned in the introduction, is a feature of Faërie. The Primary World and Faërie exist in a different time and space from each other, the former being more circumscribed and limited, whilst the latter involves immensely long periods of time and limitless space (*Smith*: 112,113). Although the timelessness of Faërie is seen in the un-aging trees and stones in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s], this paradox of time and space is most obviously seen in Tolkien's poem *Kortirion among the Trees* [1915-1937/1962]. In the poem time is going both fast and slow, the unchanging pattern of the trees makes them appear almost suspended in time while the world of the humans crumbles around them. Similarly in *Smith* [1964-1965], the village hall where the feasts are held has aged and needs to be restored to its former glory, whilst Faërie remains pristine. Though the forest itself might be circumscribed, the image of empty, shadowy seas gives the impression of endlessness. In his *Smith* essay, Tolkien mentions the tradition that, unless they are particularly favoured like *Smith*, humans venturing into Faërie might find that many years have passed in the Primary World despite them only spending a short time in Faërie (*Smith*: 115). This is a possible fate of the Voyager in *The Sea-bell* [1962], his inability to communicate with others suggesting he might be a wraith caught between Heaven and Earth, having disintegrated on returning to the Primary World.

Like the village in *The Story of Kullervo* [1914], Wootton Major is on the edge of the Western Wood, with the smithy itself at the western-most edge of the village (*Smith*: 113). Thus, like the Faërie of *Princess Mee* [1915/1961], the Primary World is contiguous with Faërie, but it can only be entered if permission is granted, or, as in the case of *Smith*, if an individual has been shown favour by receiving the fay star. This is consistent with the "Celtic" Faërie of *Aotrou* [1930s] and with the Middle English tale *Sir Orfeo*, where there is the sense of a separation or barrier between Faërie and the Primary World. Tolkien confirms that this is a "Celtic" Faërie, noting in his essay that, besides underworlds as in *The Shadow Bride* [1936/1962] and *The Grey Bridge over Tavrobel* [1917], or overseas Faëries as in *Looney/The Sea-bell* [1933/1962], and *The Death of Saint Brendan/Imram* [1945-46/1955], forests were a common site for Faërie, and one Tolkien favoured (*Smith*: 201). The forest is said to be wild and uncultivated, "immune from human activity" (*Smith*: 116) and, like *Aotrou*, *Smith* moves farther and farther away from the anthropocentric world as he moves into the forest (*Smith*: 116). Thus, *Smith* is less and less in control of his environment and more vulnerable to its inhabitants the more he travels in Faërie. With the

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village itself, Tolkien appears to be harking back to his early poetry by setting the village in “an imaginary (but English) countryside before the advent of power-machinery” (*Smith*: 204); that is, a landscape that resonates with the image of Blighty, before the corrupting influences of modernity seen in the Bimble Bay poems. Later in the story, Smith realizes that Faërie might be an island, beleaguered by the sea (*Smith*: 24). An island in the west traditionally was Hy Brasil, the island of Paradise seen in *St Brendan* [1945-1946] and *Imran* [1955], but an island with an English countryside is closer to Tolkien’s poem *The Lonely Isle*⁷⁶ [1916], with its vision of Faërie superimposed on England. Thus, it appears Tolkien is merging his early and late visions of Faërie.

The village is noted for its skilled craftsmen, though the affluence this brings them is having a negative influence on their personalities, making them “vulgar, self-satisfied, and coarser” (*Smith*: 112). This is not quite the same as the dragon sickness of *The Hoard* [1962], or the duplicity of Regan, Grimhild, and Gunnar in *Sigurd*, but it appears that wealth often has a negative impact on humans. On the other hand, contact with Faërie seems to have a beneficial effect. Not only are the artisans of the village skilful, (a common result of contact with fairies, see Chapter 2), but the Smith’s implements in particular are fair of form and durable (*Smith*: 21). As mentioned in my discussion on *The Bumpus/Perry-the-Winkle* [1928/1962], humans who have contact with fairy creatures benefit by gaining special skills. In return, Smith respects the gift of the fairies by not producing weapons to attack his fellow humans nor the fairies themselves. The Master Cook who preceded Nokes comes back from a holiday in Faërie, a changed man: no longer quiet and reserved, he is filled with merriment, laughter, and song (*Smith*: 5). Contact with Faërie also unlocks strange powers of the mind. When the fay star becomes active on Smith’s tenth birthday, he is able to call it forth from his body by singing in a strange language (*Smith*: 16). Furthermore, he can communicate with both the birch tree and the Fairy Queen mind to mind. Such powers would normally be associated with more fay creatures such as Tom Bombadil with his ability to talk with Old Man Willow, barrow-wights, and birds or Sigurd after he has consumed Fafnir’s blood. Smith gains a light in his eyes and a beauty to his voice, akin to Looney when he too is embraced by Faërie.

The fairies, on the other hand, are courtly creatures, having a king and queen, but are not exactly the trooping fairies seen in *The Little House of Lost Play* [prior to 1962]. Alf, the Fairy King, is humble, soft spoken, and very polite, lowering himself to work as

⁷⁶ *The Lonely Isle* was written in June 1916 and was first published in *Leeds University Press 1914-1924* (C&G: 134).

Nokes' apprentice. He even fashions the cute, sugar paste fairy queen, though it must have pained him to do so. His willingness to fit in and his courtesy is akin to that of the troll in *The Bumpus/Perry-the-Winkle* [1928/1962] or the Man in the Moon who attempts to ingratiate himself with the townsfolk. However, this is not to say that Alf is without power. When he presents himself to Nokes at the end of the tale, he is transformed like the Corrigan into a tall, white shining being:

To Nokes' dismay he grew taller as he spoke. He threw back his cloak. He was dressed like a Master Cook at a Feast, but his white garments shimmered and glinted, and on his forehead was a great jewel like a radiant star. His face was young but stern. (*Smith*: 51)

Tolkien's Alf is an elf akin to the elves of *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955] or *The Silmarillion* [1977]. Almost angelic in their appearance, this type of elf appears to be a cross between the elves of *Kortirion* [1915/1937/1962] and the glittering white creatures in *The Death of Saint Brendan/Imran* [1945-1946/1955]. Tolkien gives a hint on his thinking on elves in his notes on *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965], saying an elf is "a supernatural (but not divine) being believed to influence human affairs. Elves were part of the folk-beliefs of Northern Europe, the 'lower' rather than the 'higher' mythology of gods" (*Smith*: 179). Thus, placing them about the same level as, but different from angels, might be accurate.

Part of this benevolent reaction on the part of the fairies is Smith's attitude on entering Faërie. Tolkien says Smith was honest and largely humble in his dealings with Faërie (*Smith*: 20). He was grateful for the protection the star afforded him, recognizing that he would be unable to wield a weapon that would be powerful enough to withstand the evils of Faërie, even if he could forge it (*ibid.*). Instead "He remained a learner and explorer, not a warrior" (*ibid.*), qualities often associated with children. Tolkien illustrates this in two ways in his non-Middle-earth poems. On the one hand, it takes a super-human hero like Sigmund to slay a dragon like Fafnir in *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* [early 1930s], on the other the Voyager is utterly defeated when he tries to overthrow Faërie with just his voice as a weapon in *The Sea-bell* [1962]. The one perverse element is the death of the dragon at the hands of the elderly spinster, Miss Biggins, in *The Dragon's Visit* [1928]. I think Tolkien is being deliberately eccentric in this instance, creating a kind of anti-fairy-story, with fairy creatures having *aventures* in the Primary World which, in its ignorance, treats them with contempt. This links to Tolkien's seven deadly sins, with the elements of

acedia and un-creativity associated with the modern world. For, as Tolkien notes in his essay on *Smith* [1964-1965]:

The love of Faery is the love of love: a relationship towards all things, animate and inanimate, which includes love and respect, and removes or modifies the spirit of possession and domination. Without it even plain 'Utility' will in fact become less useful; or it will turn to ruthlessness and lead to mere power, ultimately destructive. (*Smith*: 131)

Smith demonstrates this love in his behaviour in Faërie. In his early visits, he would sometimes go to look at a single flower or tree (*Smith*: 20-21), but in later journeys he grows bolder and his hubris rises as he begins to believe that the star gave him the right to go anywhere (*Smith*: 28).

As he does so, Smith encounters more and more dangers, and it is here that he begins to break taboos that he is ignorant of. The scene where Smith touches the water of the lake with the fiery creatures thus raising a great wind which damages the birch tree is the most prominent example of this. Like Looney, he is ignorant of the taboo that he is breaking, but this does not stop Faërie from punishing him. "Faery makes no concession to human curiosity and no allowances for human frailty" (*Smith*: 70), it is about justice not mercy (*OFS*: 57). In this scene there is a clear realization that Faërie is "other" and that Smith is in an alien land. This sense of separation between Faërie and humans is a growing theme in Tolkien's later Faërie poetry, and we see it in poems such as *The Sea-bell* [1962], *Firiel* [1930s], and *The Last Ship* [1962]. Smith is coming to realize that this land has events and a history of which he is totally ignorant (*Smith*: 70). The creatures in the lake are elementals, like those found in *You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play* [1915] and might be the wandering fire of *The Song of Ælfwine* [1937/1945], while the sentience of the birch tree echoes the Bombadil poems and the animism of the landscape found in *The Story of Kullervo* [1914].

As Smith travels further into Faërie, we appear to move forward in the chronology of Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poetry. Now, passing through the mountains, Smith comes to a valley where:

... the green surpasses the green of the meads of Outer Faery as they surpass ours in our springtime. There the air is so lucid that eyes can see the red tongues of birds as they sing on the trees upon the far side of the valley, though that is very wide and the birds are no greater than wrens.

As he set foot upon the grass of the Vale he heard elven voices singing, and on a lawn beside a river bright with lilies he came upon many maidens dancing. (Smith: 26)

The light and beauty are akin to those of Paradise in *The Death of Saint Brendan/Imram* [1945-1946/1955] or *The Nameless land/The Song of Ælfwine* [1924/1937/1945], and the maidens singing and dancing are like those in *An Evening in Tavrobel* [1916/1924]. It is here Smith meets the Fairy Queen, a person far different from the dainty sugar being on the cake. There are clues to what is about to happen in the preceding paragraphs and in the scene itself. As with Tolkien's other Paradise-style Faeries, it is possible to find the motif of the cloud, the tree, and the star. Smith finds himself on a strand and believes himself to be on an island realm (Smith: 24). As he wanders, he becomes "overtaken by a grey mist" (ibid.), then coming to a wide plain, he sees in the distance on a hill:

the King's tree, springing up, tower upon tower, into the sky, and its light was like the sun at noon; and it bore at once leaves and flowers and fruits uncounted, and not one was the same as any other that grew on the Tree. (Smith: 24)

The symbolism of both flowers and fruits occurring at the same time is part of the symbolism of the tree of life and is also part of the time dislocation associated with Faërie or "Paradise" with several seasons occurring at the same time. Trees, as discussed in Chapter 2, have a particular symbolism surrounding them including the Cross, eternity, and a connection between heaven and earth. Here we see the cloud and the tree of Tolkien's Faërie signation, but where is the star? As I have said, some of the clue is in the lilies in the Vale of Evermore. Lilies have the meaning of purity and sweetness in the Victorian language of flowers and are flowers special to the Virgin Mary (Gray, 2011: 84). This links the Fairy Queen with the Virgin Mary (Hazel, 2006: 210), a connection that is confirmed in Smith's subsequent meeting where she is surrounded by stars:

...at last he came to a high place under a night-sky of innumerable stars. There he was brought before the Queen herself. She wore no crown and had no throne. She stood there in her majesty and her glory, and all about her was a great host shimmering and glittering like the stars above; but she was taller than the points of their great spears, and upon her head there burned a white flame. (Smith: 31-32)

So, the star in the triad cloud, tree, could be said to be both the star like trinket that burns on the forehead of Smith which allows him to enter Faërie, and the Fairy Queen herself, the flame on her forehead echoing the wandering fire motif from *The Nameless Land/The Song of Ælfwine* [1924/1937/1945] poems. On his first meeting with the Fairy Queen, Smith is humbled, but this results in spiritual growth. His son comments that his shadow

looks like a giant (*Smith* p. 29). Shadows, as discussed in Chapter 2 in the section on *The Shadow Bride* [1936/1962], are related to a person's soul. The sight of the Fairy Queen creates a plethora of emotions in Smith, he trembles which suggests he is afraid, he is "dismayed", "troubled", "amazed", joyful, grieving, and ashamed (*Smith*: 32). For, like many of Tolkien's women, she is a harbinger of change in the protagonist's life. After meeting her, Smith must return to his mortal life, leaving his beloved Faërie behind and, although he prospers, one does not see the blossoming of fertility and prosperity normally associated with fairy queens, possibly because Smith did not marry her. Finally, as he kneels before the Queen and is somehow taken outside both worlds, he feels "bereavement", "ownership" and "peace" as he comes to accept his departure from Faërie (*Smith*: 33). As in Tolkien's non-Middle-earth poems, the story does not contain the element of eucatastrophe, but the vision the Fairy Queen gives Smith elicits a combination of positive and negative emotions that characterises reactions to eucatastrophe or the sublime.

Yet everything in Faërie has a price, as Aotrou finds to his cost. Smith's desire to see the Fairy Queen is fulfilled, but for this, he must relinquish the star. Like *Aotrou* [1930s] and *The Fall of Arthur* [1933], this parting is heralded by a change of seasons in Faërie. Prior to this, the landscapes have been green and fair, as though it were summer, but as Smith travels to meet with the Queen that final time: "... Smith was walking in the woods of Outer Faery, and it was autumn. Golden leaves were on the boughs and red leaves were on the ground." (*Smith*: 31) As in *Wood Sunshine* [1910], *Goblin Feet* [1915], *Firiel/The Last Ship* [1930s/1962], and *The Death of Saint Brendan/Imram* [1944-1945/1955], Faërie is only lent. Its influence on the Primary World is fleeting, and, though humans might visit it, they are not of Faërie and do not belong there, therefore they cannot stay. Smith grieves the loss, but because he does it freely, like Looney, he is rewarded, in part with an immortal flower, which carries a nostalgic scent, and in part with the right to choose his successor. Like Firiel, he returns to his own form of immortality, through the lives of his children and grandchildren, and experiences the satisfaction and happiness of working with his son and leaving a legacy. Tolkien wrote in a letter to Roger Lancelyn Green in 1967 that this story was: "An old man's book, already weighted with the presage of 'bereavement'" (*Letters*: 389). Yet its ending is not nearly as despairing as those of *The Sea-bell* [1962] or *The Last Ship* [1962]. One gets the sense that, in this tale, Tolkien has finally come to terms with the loss of Faërie in his life.

So, Tolkien's final vision of Faërie is formed, consciously or unconsciously, from the multiple visions of Faërie he has generated over his lifetime in his works, including his non-Middle-earth poetry. It is a western island with an English landscape, located in a forest which lies beside a pre-industrial village. On the outer borders, its landscape is akin to Blighty, the idyllic, rural countryside so beloved of World War I soldiers, but as Smith passes through the mountains, it becomes more and more like a medieval Paradise till he finds the light, beauty and clarity of the Vale of Evermorn. Entry into inner Faërie is heralded by the cloud, the tree, and the star. The inhabitants are beautiful, tall, shining, courtly beings, clad in white, a combination of Trooping fairies and the saintly daughter in *Pearl*. They are powerful beings, too powerful to be subdued by any weapons a human is capable of wielding, but they treat outsiders justly; punishing law breakers, exacting a price for any boons granted, but treating those with a humble, curious, marvelling heart kindly. Humans are merely visitors to the land who are allowed access for a limited time, but they are mortal beings and must eventually return to their own world, for, unlike the elves, humans' immortality lies beyond the bounds of the earthly realm. At times, if humans are especially favoured, they might receive a keepsake, an object that encompasses the properties of Faërie, and they might be allowed to choose their successor, a mark of high regard and trust by the elves.

C.4 The Definition of Faërie.

How does Tolkien define Faërie? Tolkien produced several definitions of Faërie or fairies over his lifetime including the well-known "perilous land" with "pitfalls for the unwary and dungeons for the overbold" (*OFS*: 27), and "fairy... meant enchantment or magic, and the enchanted world or country in which marvellous people lived, ..." (*Smith*: 95) from his introduction to George McDonald's *The Golden Key*. However, I think the one that is most apt when considering his non-Middle-earth poetry is the one he includes in his essay on *Smith of Wootton Major* [1964-1965]:

Faery might be said indeed to represent Imagination (without definition because taking in all the definitions of this word): esthetic: exploratory and receptive; and artistic; inventive, dynamic, (sub)creative. This compound – of awareness of a limitless world outside our domestic parish; a love (in ruth and admiration) for the things in it; and a desire for wonder, marvels, both perceived and conceived- this 'Faery' is as necessary for the health and complete functioning of the Human as is sunlight for physical life: sunlight as distinguished from the soil, say, though it in fact permeates and modifies even that. (*Smith*: 144-145)

This definition speaks not so much to the physical attributes or inhabitants of Faërie, for they can be as marvellous or horrifying as the mind can invent, but rather the fundamental spirit which pervades the realm, and this is what is at the heart of his non-Middle-earth poetry. This spirit could be viewed as the spirit of Nature, though, this could equally be viewed as a manifestation of the creative power of God infusing the world. Tolkien's Faërie encompasses the complex interconnectedness of language, religion, and folk belief, using imagery from all three to create worlds with multiple levels of meaning. Some of these are easy for the reader to interpret, almost becoming playful nods to well-known stories or mythologies, but others are deeply personal and require knowledge of particular areas of interest or study to decipher them. Most importantly, these poems were Tolkien's sandbox; works where he was free to express his ideas, fears, and desires without any restriction or inhibition by a requirement to fit in with his legendarium. As I discussed in my Introduction to this thesis, many critics have underrated these poems, and scholars have frequently ignored them. I hope I have demonstrated why this needs to change. These poems frequently contain the building blocks of his prose works and the study of these works uncover hidden depths within Tolkien's writing.

Appendix: Case Study: An Analysis of *Kortirion Among the Trees*

Kortirion among the Trees is a poem that Tolkien revised multiple times during his lifetime. As such, many academics treat it as a single work and fail to recognise the shifts in tone and themes that occur as Tolkien rewrites the poem. Through my analysis of not only the language, but also the flora and fauna of the land and the traditions associated with them, it is possible to see quite a startling shift in the underlying themes in these poems. This is representative of my technique in the thesis, where I examine not only the language but also the items seen in the poems and their folkloric associations. The three published versions of *Kortirion*⁷⁷ range from 136-140 lines divided into three to four sections of three, variable-length verses each. In the first two versions, these sections are simply marked by numbers, however, in the final version, the changing seasons, which are at the heart of the poem, are emphasised by Tolkien identifying each section with the name of a season in Elvish. The changes in seasons are reflected in the flora (most notably the trees), in the weather, and in the elves. The passage of seasons is a familiar, but more archaic measure of time than we use in our day-to-day lives. The entire poem spans a year, yet not quite, for the poems end in winter with no indication of a coming spring. This gives them a sense of decline and death without any hope of renewal. This becomes more marked as Tolkien ages, as I shall discuss in this section. A way of looking at seasonality in these poems, and possibly one that Tolkien did not intend, is to look at the different versions of the poem as seasons in the author's life. The 1915 version is his springtime, a young man at the start of his life, the 1937, summertime, a life that is increasingly fulfilled with work and family, and finally the 1962 version, winter, where death and loss press in. To illustrate this, I will begin by comparing the language used to describe the landscape and especially the trees (see Table 1).

1915	1937	1962
<i>Behold</i> the girdle of a wide champain Line 16	Amid the girdle of this <i>sleeping</i> land, Line 16	<i>Once long ago, amid this sleeping land</i> Line 16
<i>Sunlit</i> , and watered with a <i>silver</i> rain,	Where <i>silver</i> falls the rain and <i>gleaming</i> stand	Of <i>silver</i> rain, where still <i>year-laden</i> stand

⁷⁷ *Kortirion among the Trees* was first written in November 1915 and published in *The Book of Lost Tales I* and rewritten multiple times during Tolkien's lifetime including the 1937 and 1962 versions included in that volume (C&G 1342).

And richly wooded with a thousand <i>whispering</i> trees Lines 17-18	The <i>whispering host of old</i> <i>deep-rooted trees</i> Lines 17-18	In <i>unforgetful</i> earth the <i>rooted trees</i> Lines 17-18
When the late mornings are <i>bejewelled</i> with rime, Line 91	When the late mornings are <i>begemmed</i> with rime, Line 90	When morning rises late all <i>hoar</i> with rime, Line 90
The <i>seven lampards</i> of the Silver Bear Are <i>waxen to a wondrous</i> <i>flare</i> <i>That flames above the</i> <i>fallen year</i> Lines 120-122	The <i>seven candles</i> of the Silver Wain, Like lighted tapers in a darkened fain, Lines 119-120	The <i>funereal candles</i> of the Silver Wain Now flare above the <i>fallen</i> <i>year</i> Lines 120-121
Already stoops to listen to the clear cold spell Come up her sunny aisles and perfumed halls: <i>A sad and haunting magic</i> <i>note,</i> <i>A strand of silver glass</i> <i>remote</i> Lines 61-64	Then stooping heard afar that haunting flute Beyond the summer aisles and tree-propped halls; <i>For thin and clear and cold</i> <i>the note,</i> <i>As strand of silver glass</i> <i>remote.</i> Lines 61-64	Already stoop to hear that elven-flute. Though the wood's sunny aisles and tree-propped halls Winding amid the green with <i>clear cold note</i> <i>Like a thin strand of silver</i> <i>glass remote.</i> Lines 61-64
That cast long shadows in many a bygone noon, <i>And murmured many</i> <i>centuries</i> in the breeze Lines 19-20	That cast long shadows in many a bygone noon, <i>And murmured many</i> <i>centuries</i> in the breeze Lines 19-20	That cast long shadows in the bygone noon, <i>And whispered in the</i> <i>swiftly passing breeze,</i> Lines 19-20
<i>A gathered sound that</i> <i>overwhelms</i> The voices of all other trees Sing then of elms, below'd Kortirion! Lines 36-38	Then <i>full music</i> were thine elms: Green was their armour, green their helmets, <i>The Lords and Kings</i> of all thy trees.	About you stood arrayed your host of elms: Green was their armour, tall and green their helmets, <i>High lords and captains</i> of the trees.

	Sing, then, of elms, <i>renowned</i> Kortirion, Lines 35-38	<i>But summer wanes</i> , Behold, Kortirion! Lines 35-38
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Table 5: *Landscapes of Kortirion (LT I: 33-43, emphasis added)*

In the 1915 poem, the landscape is a “grand champain”, richly wooded, it sparkles with sunlight, rain and bejewelled frosts (*LT I*: 33, line 16). The trees are alive and vital, whispering among themselves, the voices of the elms loud enough to drown out the other trees despite their quiet tones. The stars crown their “hair” like a moving “diadem” (*LT I*: 33, lines 31-32). Even the piper who heralds the coming of winter still has magic in his sad and haunting music. Tolkien is presenting the land in a slightly brash, enthusiasm of exclamations writing “Behold thy girdle” (*LT I*: 33, line 16) and “Sing of the trees, old, old Kortirion!” (*LT I*: 33, line 23). Certainly, it is a landscape close to his heart, for he calls it “belov’d Kortirion!” (*LT I*: 33, line 38). He also clearly links the landscape with Faërie saying in lines 21-22: “Thou art the city of the Land of Elms, Alalminórë in the Faery Realms” (*LT I*: 33). There is a brightness, a freshness to this poem, much like the young man who wrote it.

By 1937 the vivacity and light of the land is softening and diminishing. Tolkien is using the past tense in the poem to reinforce the sense of history. The land is still richly wooded, but it is sleeping in its girdle of trees. The trees are “old” and “deep-rooted” (*LT I*: 36, lines 17-18). Some of their vitality seems to have gone, for the elms no longer overpower the voices of the other trees, murmuring among themselves. The gathered sounds have merged into a more harmonious music, which the elms still sing. They are clad in a lordly raiment as “Lords and Kings of all thy trees” (*LT I*: 37, line 37). The rain gleams rather than sparkles, and the frost is begemmed rather than bejewelled. The brilliance of the stars has softened from jewels to candles. The music of the flute is still haunting but somehow sharper, more penetrating; it is “thin, clear, and cold” (*LT I*: 37, line 63). Yet it is still the city of Elms in Faërie (here spelt Faery) and he adds to this the image of the “Lonely Isle” (*LT I*: 37, line 33), an image that might be linked to England, as well as the mythical isle of Hy Brasil (see Chapter 3). Tolkien’s own relationship seems to have changed. He is less grandiose, more respectful, no longer calling the landscaped beloved but rather “renowned” (*LT I*: 37, line 38). The image has softened, matured, taking on a luminous rather than a stark beauty. This is a poem of one middle-aged.

In the 1962 version of the poem, the winter of Tolkien's life has come. This is an old man's poem and much of the beauty and the magic has faded from the world. The winters have become sharper, colder, and more piercing. The music of the piper echoes Winter's spears. The winter mornings no longer sparkle like gems but are hoary like an old man. The stars might still shine in the sky, but they take the form of "funereal candles" rather than the bright "diadem" of his youth. The summer wanes and the year has fallen. The land itself is failing. In 1915, the voices of the elms that dominated the land, now have faded to a whisper swiftly torn away by the passing breeze. They are still lordly, but are no longer kings of the land, being mere "high lords and captains" (*LT I*: 40, line 37). It is the earth not the trees that now hold memory of this land. Tolkien has dropped any reference to Faërie, rather, he has drawn the poem into his legendarium, noting that it was the *Edain* who built Kortirion (*LT I*: 40, line 11) and saying that: "Once long ago, .../ High City were you of the Inland Realms" (*LT I*: 40, line 21-22). No longer beloved or renowned, Tolkien only notes that this land is fading, its "summer wanes" (*LT I*: 40, line 38). This is a poem about endings.

1915	1937	1962
O spiry town upon a windy hill With sudden-winding alleys shady-walled Lines 12-13	O climbing town upon thy windy hill With winding streets, and alleys shady-walled Lines 11-12	Kortirion! Upon your island hill With winding streets, and alleys shadow-walled Lines 11-12
O <i>fading town upon a little hill,</i> Old <i>memory</i> is waning in thine <i>ancient</i> gates The robe gone gray, <i>thine old heart almost still;</i> The castle only, <i>frowning,</i> ever waits And ponders how among the towering elms Lines 1-5	O <i>fading town upon an inland hill,</i> Old <i>shadows</i> linger in thine <i>ancient</i> gate, Thy robe is grey, <i>thine old heart now still;</i> Thy towers <i>silent</i> in the mist await Their crumbling end, while through the storeyed elms Lines 1-5	O ancient <i>city on a leaguered hill</i> Old <i>shadows</i> linger in your <i>broken</i> gate, Your stones are grey, <i>your old halls now are all still,</i> Your towers <i>silent</i> in the mist await Their crumbling end, while through the storeyed elms Lines 1-5

<i>Touches my heart no distant bell that rings</i> In populous cities of the Earthly Kings. Lines 133-134	And tolling faintly over windy miles <i>To my heart</i> calls no distant bell that rings In crowded cities of the Earthly Kings. Lines 130-132	<i>I heed</i> no call of clamant bell that rings <i>Iron-tongued</i> in the towers of earthly kings. Lines 131-132
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Table 6: *Descriptions of the Town (LT I, pp.33-43, emphasis added)*

As Table 2 shows, with the fading of the land, the town appears to be becoming larger and darker. The shady alleys of 1915 have become shady streets and alleys in 1937, then shadowed streets and alleys in 1962. The town grows into an ancient city that is no longer perched, fading, on a little hill but is an ancient city under siege, possibly by time itself. This is reinforced by the fact that the gate which seals the city entrance is broken in 1962, and the towers, which pondered in 1915, are crumbling in 1937 and 1962. With the growth of the city some of its magic is lost. In the 1915 poem the town appears to be a living being, though with an emphasis on its age. It has memory, robes, and an old heart, which though it is almost stopped, beats on. I interpret this as meaning that for the young Tolkien, the world still has a kind of magic to it, that the landscape has a kind of vital spirit. By 1937 the once living town has died, its old heart still and it can no longer frown or ponder. In 1962 the town is not just dead, it was never alive; its robe has been replaced by stones, its heart by old halls. Despite the expansion of the city around it the crumbling castle is sinking ever more into silence. The diminution of the landscape is not just at a physical level, it also involves the loss of the spiritual or mystical components of the realm. With the loss of magic, the modern world appears to become more intrusive. In 1915, the bells of the “populous cities of Earthly Kings” (*LT I*: 36, lines 133-134), hold no appeal to the young Tolkien. By 1937, the sound of the bells is quieter, less distinct, and thus holds no sway. But, in 1962, the bell is loud, intrusive, and “iron-tongued” (*LT I*: 43, line 132), emphasising its synthetic nature, though Tolkien still seeks to ignore it. Iron has a higher melting point than softer metals such as copper or lead implying a higher degree of industrialisation or technology to produce it. It is also a metal that is repellent to fairies and iron objects are used to ward against fairies or rescue those abducted by them (Briggs, 1959, 30-31, 226-227). This further separates the town and the natural world with its resident elves.

1915	1937	1962
<p>Seen rising up through pallid mists and wan, Like vessels floating vague and long afar Down opal seas beyond the shadowy bar Of cloudy ports forlorn: ... Wherein their crews a while held feasting long And <i>gorgeous ease</i>, who now like <i>windy ghosts</i> Are wafted by slow airs to empty coasts Lines 109 -112, 114-116</p>	<p>Through pallid mists seem rising tall and wan, Like vessels floating vague and drifting far Down opal seas beyond the shadowy bar ... Bare are thy trees become, Kortirion; <i>The rotted raiment from their bones is gone</i> Lines 108-110, 117-118</p>	<p>Through pallid mists seen rising tall and wan, Like vessels vague that slowly drift afar <i>Out, out to empty seas beyond the bar</i> Of cloudy ports forlorn; ... In lordly ease, they now like windy ghosts <i>Are wafted by cold airs to friendless coasts</i> And <i>silent</i> down the tides are borne. Lines 108-111, 114-116</p>
<p>When <i>flitting</i> ghost-moths dance like satellites Round tapers in the moveless air; Lines 68-69</p>	<p>When <i>flitting</i> ghost-moths danced as satellites Round tapers in the moveless air; Lines 68-69</p>	<p>The days are passing. Gone like moths the nights When white wings <i>fluttering</i> danced like satellites Round tapers in the windless air. Lines 72-74</p>
<p>And <i>doomed</i> already are the radiant dawns, ... Where all the sorrel, flowers, and plumed weeds Go down before the <i>scyther's share</i>. Lines 70, 73-74</p>	<p>And <i>doomed</i> already are the radiant dawns, ... Where all the sorrel, flowers, and pluméd weeds Go down before the <i>scyther's share</i>. Lines 70, 73-74</p>	<p>At morn the <i>whetstone rang upon the blade</i>, At eve the grass and <i>golden flowers were laid To wither, and the meadows</i> bare. Now dimmed already comes the tardier dawn</p>

		Lines 67-70
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Table 7: Images of Ghosts and Death in Kortirion among the Trees (LT I: 33-43, emphasis added)

From here on, I shall begin to explore the symbolism of the poems in more depth, which will make the contrast between the versions even more striking. In the first two poems the summer trees are lush galleons sailing across sunlit seas. In the third version the verdant trees have not yet fully left the land and even then Tolkien is saying too soon, too soon. For the destination of these arboreal galleons is to go to other days beyond the sunlit seas, an image Tolkien often uses to describe death. In winter they are ghost ships or funeral barges drifting aimlessly across “opal seas” in the first two versions which become “empty seas” in the last. In the last version, the seas have lost their beauty, lost the promise of life, the bar does not even contain shadows which might point to some living thing or being close by. The ships are sailing into darkness alone. This is reinforced by Tolkien’s description of the trees. In the first poem they are simply bare but glimmering with light, sailing across plumbless, opal-like oceans. In version 2 the trees still shine but have taken on the form of a corpse whose flesh has rotted away. The last poem contains a different kind of horror. The light has gone and the trees are more ghost like than corpse like. I find the aloneness, the silence that is somehow both more terrible and more poignant than the ghoulish second poem.

This change in the trees is echoed in the rest of the landscape. The ghostly moths change from “flitting” in the first two poems, to weaker more hopeless “fluttering” in the third. The death of the plants in the field at harvest is equally bleak. In the first two versions of the poem, the plants are doomed, awaiting the blade of the harvester, but in the last version: “At eve the grass and golden flowers were laid/ To wither, and the meadows bare” (*LT I*: 41, lines 68-69). I was reminded of the “Dirge of Fidele” from William Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*: “Golden lads and girls all must/ as chimney sweepers come to dust” (Shakespeare, 1988, Act IV II: 934). Or is it the golden flowers of Lorien that are dying? The sharpening of the blade on the whetstone and the slain lying in the fields, sounds more like a battlefield than a harvest. The blighted landscape and fallen flowers hold echoes of Tolkien’s experiences in World War I. Even the status of Kortirion is fading, the magic is leaving the world. Proud Kortirion, once tower and citadel of the world, cannot now even rule the Lonely Isle but must content itself to be the Citadel of Alalminóre, the shire of Warwick alone.

Name of Flora or Fauna	Poem version	Folklore connections
Moths	1915, 1937, 1962	Cloth moths were thought to be ghosts and in Wales large winged moths were thought to contain the souls of witches. (Martin, 1994: 132)
Peacocks	1915, 1937, 1962	royal birds and their beauty symbolic of the kingdom of Heaven, later their feathers were said to be the colours of the Seven Deadly Sins and would bring disaster and death to those who brought them inside (Newell, 2008: 42-43)
Asphodels	1915, 1937	In the language of flowers means my regrets follow you to the grave. (Greenaway, 2010 [1884], p. 8) They are associated with death and renewed life and were often planted by the graves of the ancients. They were the favourite food of the dead in Greek and Roman Mythology and said to fill both Hades and the Elysian fields. (Hazel, 2006: 810)
Elms	1915, 1937, 1962	Elms are said to grieve as if you cut down an elm its neighbour will die of grief (Briggs, 1978: 74; Hatfield, 2007: 119).
Oak	1915	Oak do hate- Oaks are said to scream when cut down and whoever hears it will be dead within a year. Oaks are noted for their ability to regenerate from stumps and to enter a copse is a dangerous thing as the trees are said to seek revenge of their slayers. (Hatfield, 2007: 252)
Maple	1915	Gives longevity to children (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 431)
Poplar	1915, 1937, 1962	Associated with the Heliades, the sisters who mourned their brother Phaethon, who was killed harnessing his horses to the chariot of the sun. Also associated with the demi-god Hercules and were supposed to assist one visiting the Underworld (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 502).
Yew	1915, 1937, 1962	Complex – associated with life being an evergreen but it means sorrow in the language of the flowers (Folkard, 2012: 191). Used in pagan funeral fires (Folkard, 2012:

		195). Along with willow used in the garland of unfortunate lovers (Folkard, 2012: 197).
Willow	1937, 1962	Funereal tree. An emblem of grief. Used on biers of maidens who had died for love. Under the dominion of the moon (Rohde, 1935: 29)
Beech	1937, 1962	Protection from lightening. Minerva and Apollo were said to watch the battle for Troy in the form of two vultures perched on two beech trees (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 249). But never used as firewood or it would cause difficult childbirth and miserable death (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 111, 250).
Harebell	1915	Known as the witch's thimble (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 358-359)
Sorrell	1915, 1937	Associated in Irish folklore with graves and blood (Folkard, 2012 [1884]: 549)
Pleiades	1915	The Pleiades were said to herald the return of Spring, "rolling away the gravestone of snow and ice" (408). Associated with the fall of the year, these stars were often associated with ceremonies surrounding the dead and created a link between "the remote past and the ever living present (414). (Olcott, 1911: 407-427)

Table 8: Folkloric Elements in Kortirion Among the Trees (LT I: 33-43, emphasis added)

The theme of death and dying is reinforced when looking at the folklore surrounding the plants and animals Tolkien is using in the poem (see Table 4). The poem chimes with tree folklore as recorded later in the Somerset rhyme "Ellum do grieve/ Oaks do hate/ Willows do walk/ if you travel late"⁷⁸(Hatfield, 2007: 119). The tradition comes from the beliefs that oaks screamed when they were cut down and whoever heard that scream would be dead within the year. They were also noted for their ability to regenerate from their stumps and oak copses were very dangerous places to enter at night as they were said to try to take revenge on those who cut them down (Briggs, 1978: 74). Elms were associated with fairies and elves and used as coffin wood (Barker, 1971: 26). They were said to die of grief if a neighbouring elm was cut down (Briggs, 1978: 74). Willows, in the

⁷⁸ This folksong was first recorded by Ruth Tongue in 1953, though she claimed to have first heard it much earlier, in 1917 (Tongue, 1967: 48-49; Hatfield, 2007: 118),

best tradition of Old Man Willow, would follow unwary travellers at dusk muttering threateningly (Briggs, 1978: 74). Willows were also in the garlands of those unfortunate lovers who died for love (Rohde, 1935: 29). Similarly, yews, though they are evergreen, mean sorrow in the language of flowers and were included in garlands of jilted lovers. They were also used in pagan funeral fires. In the first version of the poem, Tolkien uses the more hopeful trees such as the maple with its association with longevity in children, but in the second and third poem he replaces it with the more sorrowful poplar. He also replaces the hating oak with the misery of the beech. Trees are frequently represented as images of resurrection and rebirth due to their seasonal cycles, longevity, and great height which seems to connect heaven and earth. The tradition of the dying god is reflected in many religions including Odin and Christ and often includes trees or wood in its beliefs. Christ shows a remarkable number of references to wood in his lifetime. He was born in a wooden stable, Christ and his father Joseph were carpenters, he was crowned with a crown of thorns, and like Odin, he was hung on a tree albeit modified into a wooden cross (Varner, 2006: 18). Yet over these three versions, Tolkien moves ever more clearly away from language that suggests woods are a symbol of rebirth to a one-way journey into death.

The elves that inhabit the forest echo the change into grief and death, becoming holier, wise, even angelic, over the three poems, mimicking the fading of the trees and land. They go from secret, to silent, to unseen and their music diminished from mellow sounds to waning music to echoing voices. Although Tolkien has merely changed the order of the words, the effect of these changes from “waning music/ winding with echoed sadness” to “With echoing voices ... Winding with waning music” is to make the people of Faerie seem more and more remote. In 1915 the fairies call to men attempting to contact them but in the final version of the poem they become mere “shimmering shadows in the wind” barely seen let alone heard by men. The identity of the fay people also changes quite markedly. In the early version of his poem the inhabitants of the forest are said to be fairies and elves, holy and immortal. This is in keeping with his early poetry where he has not yet rejected the inclusion of fairies in his work. Still Tolkien is giving them a greater dignity than the rather insipid flower fairies of the early 20th century. In the second they become the immortal Elves, the holy people of the elder days. Tolkien is beginning to draw this poem more closely into his Middle-earth legendarium. The process is complete in the third version of the poem where Tolkien identifies the elves of the wood as Edain, calling them The Fair and the first born of the Elder days. This has quite a marked impact on the nature of the fays. Like the trees they sing laments, and in the first two poems they have hair like asphodels, which mean “my regrets follow you to your grave.” In the last version this is

changed from a living flower, albeit with sad connotations, to the faded and inanimate “sunlight long ago” (*LT I*: 41, 1962 version, line 53). Fairies, according to one theory, were souls of the dead, particularly those who had died suddenly or violently, and, in many cases, it was difficult to distinguish them from ghosts. Tolkien appears to be drawing on this tradition in his 1967 version of *Kortirion*, moving away from the fairies as dryads to the elves as the dead. The waxing and the waning of the fairies in the *Kortirion* poems, particularly their changing in daylight and the increasing ghostliness of the trees, would be in keeping with this. Tolkien uses more motifs of death drawn from the First World War. He speaks of going West – a term for dying in World War I (Seal, 2013: 196).

1915	1937	1962
One <i>year</i> and then another to the sea; And slowly thither have a many gone Lines 9-10	One <i>day</i> and then another to the Sea; And slowly thither <i>many</i> <i>years</i> have gone, Lines 9-10	<i>One day</i> and then another to the Sea; And slowly thither many <i>days</i> have gone Lines 9-10
And murmured many centuries in the breeze Line 20	And murmured many centuries in the breeze Line 20	Of silver rain, where still year-laden stand In <i>unforgetful earth the</i> <i>rooted trees</i> That cast long shadows in the <i>bygone noon</i> , And whispered in the <i>swiftly</i> passing breeze, <i>Once long ago</i> , Queen of the Land of Elms, Lines 17-20

Table 9: *Time in Faërie (LT I: 33-43, emphasis added)*

To date I have discussed time in context of the seasons and Tolkien’s lifetime, but there is one more element of time in this poem, that is time in Faërie itself. In the first version of the poem, time appears to follow the linear course though on a scale more appropriate for trees and fairies than humans; seasons become years which become centuries. In 1937, Tolkien is more expansive. One day becomes more than one day, which becomes many years, then centuries, in an almost logarithmic pattern, a span one that now

includes a human lifetime as well as that of trees and fairies. When young, days can seem to last an eternity, but as we age, time passes more and more swiftly, till all at once, our life is done. But in the final version of the poem, it appears that Tolkien is deliberately distorting time. In his early lines, it appears that time is monotonously slow; one day follows another, which become many days, which become years. Tolkien then adds an immensity of years by referring to a bygone noon and long ago, yet at the same time the breeze is passing swiftly. Coupled with this is the seeming changelessness of the forest against the crumbling of the human world, a motif that is repeated in *The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun* [1930s] (see Chapter 4). Time appears unstable, somehow, it is passing both fast and slow at the same time. Humans might sometimes experience this telescoping of time with time passing swiftly or slowly depending on the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the activity. (Hooker, 2006: 143). But this experience of time is most closely associated with the Faerie. As Legolas notes in *The Lord of the Rings* [1954-1955]:

For the Elves the world moves, and it moves both very swift and very slow. Swift, because they themselves change little, and all else fleets by: it is a grief to them. Slow, because they do not count the running years, not for themselves. The passing seasons are but ripples ever repeated in the long, long stream. (*FR*: 388)

It also relates to the human experience of time in Faerie. Visits to Faerie in folklore and legend were fraught with danger, not only from the perils that such a land contained, but also the risk that a person attempting to return to the mortal realm from Faerie might find himself displaced significantly in time and sometimes so aged that they would crumple into dust the minute they ate mortal food, heard scripture, or merely touched the soil of the mortal realm (Flieger, 1997: 251). Like the cycles of the seasons, the distortions of time in Faerie classically followed specific cycles, usually involving some kind of odd number. A year and a day was a typical Faërie term reflecting the lunar rather than the solar calendar. A more sinister cycle was the use of humans, captured by fairies, as tithes to the devil every seven years (Wilby, 2013: 102). The cycles of a year and a day and the tithing requirements add a further dimension to the rhythm of nature to which fairies are so closely associated. In this way the fairies and elves are both timeless, because they do not die and time has no meaning to them, yet they are forced to live within a recurring cyclic pattern of time which is inherent in nature itself.

Humankind used to experience the cycles of time both seasonal and lunar evident in the first two versions of the poem. The closeness of our ancestors to natural time can be seen in traditions like the Green Man, a fertility spirit associated with forests and

vegetation who appears in medieval cathedrals and secular buildings, but whose origins are much older (Varner, 2006: 18). Echoes of his continual death and resurrection can be seen in mummer's plays, the sword dances of the Morris dancers, and even in the literature that influenced Tolkien's own mythology (Varner, 2006: 127-128). *Beowulf* starts and ends with the funeral of a hero, in *Sir Orfeo*, the main character passes from life through the land of the dead a.k.a. Faerie and back to life again. Even *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a tale told from winter to winter and involves a sacrifice and kind of rebirth of firstly the Green Knight and then Gawain himself (Varner, 2006: 133). These tales suggest that the people of earlier times were more closely connected to nature and its inherent cycles and expressed these in their traditions and folklore. However, in this poem, particularly in the second and third versions it is apparent that man is no longer following this cyclic pattern. In Tolkien's representation of the human world, the castle is crumbling, their towns and their memories fading. The world of men is not renewed, an indication that modern man is now locked in linear time.

And Tolkien is all too human. The final line of the third set of verses changes with each version. As a young man, Tolkien desires that: "I never need depart from here" (*LT I*: 35, line 128); in middle age, he longs that "When winter comes, I would meet winter here" (*LT I*: 39, line 126), but in his old age Tolkien writes "Kortirion, I will meet my winter here" (*LT I*: 43, line 126). Yet, as previously noted, Tolkien is no longer content, to sail into the West. When the trees are most soldier like, the triumph of Winter most complete, Tolkien appears to be looking back. In the first two versions the elves sing of the past and future things that were and could yet be, but in the third version Tolkien writes:

Immortal Elves, who singing on their way
Of bliss of old and grief, *though men forget*,
Pass like wind among the rustling trees,
A wave of bowing grass, *and men forget*.
(*LT I*: 41, lines 48-51, emphasis added)

It is the 1960s and the much of the western world is once again plunged into war, this time in Vietnam. It is moving on, now with its own dead and its destructive weapons. The sacrifices of World War I, the friends he lost, might have seemed to Tolkien increasingly meaningless as "men forget" the lessons that should have been learned in 1914. Tolkien in the second half of this poem has dropped the references to the Edain and returned to the use of Elves or even Folk Immortal. He finishes with these lines:

Here on the stones and trees there lies a spell
Of unforgotten loss, of memory more blest
Than mortal wealth. Here undefeated dwell
The Folk Immortal under withered elms,
Alalminóre once in ancient realms.
(*LT I*: 43, lines 133-137)

Men live in linear time. For Tolkien, his time in this world is nearing its end. He will not be reborn, or not at least in this world. In this poem of grieving trees, lamenting elves, and impending doom, I cannot help but wonder if his mind goes back to those young men who were lost, the young men of 1915. Again, Tolkien's final lines echo the sentiments of another poet, in this case Robert Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen",

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.
(Binyon, 1914)

So, in conclusion, though these poems contain the same elements and are often treated by scholars as being a single poem, the three versions of the poem vary significantly in their outlook. The first is a bright and vigorous young man's poem at the beginning of his life; the second version is a steadier, softer, more mature version from a time when days slide into years; and the final version is the poem of an old man, his time on earth nearly spent, remembering those he has lost. The folklore of the trees, the imagery used, and the cycles of the elves, reinforce this vision, through motifs of grief and death. Though these elements might be seen without the use of Faërie folklore, Tolkien's use of folklore augments his vision and the emotions the poem conveys. My analysis shows that, although these are superficially the same poem, the energy, the mood, and by the last poem, the whole meaning of the poem has changed. This can only be seen when there is close attention not only to the imagery and its folkloric meaning, but also to the words themselves. Tolkien, after all, was a philologist, which gave him a unique perspective on the nuanced meanings of words. The aim of my thesis is to try and drill down into these subtle changes to more fully understand how Tolkien saw Faërie and how this vision changed over his lifetime.

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