"Escape from Dystopia of War and Politics"

In J.R.R. Tolkien's Trilogy The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit

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Abstract

In the processes of research focus upon J.R.R. Tolkien's *Fairy-Stories* lays out three main essential functions that all good fairy stories should fulfil: recovery, escape, and consolation. To carry out these functions, the fairy story needs to create a believable Secondary World that is separate from the Primary World in which we live. In fact, Tolkien does this on two levels: the Secondary World of Middle-earth, and the inner Secondary World of the Elves. The inner worlds of the Elves are set apart by numerous barriers, both physical and symbolic, which is most obvious in lorien.These barriers are caused largely by the Elvish desire to avoid change and recapture the past; the timeless nature of the Elves, so often seen as positive but in fact noted by Tolkien as negative, causes their homes to be cut off in varying degrees from the rest of Middle-earth. The careful separation of Elvish space aids in the effecting of Tolkien's three functions. The spatial separation, the clear differentiation of Elvish space from other spaces in Middle-earth, is useful because the heightened sense of beauty within them enables recovery for the characters and highlights need for recovery in the reader. The way in which time moves differently inside these spaces, a result of the Elvish desire to slow the passage of time and thus avoid change, enhances the opportunities for escape for the reader while at the same time warning of the danger of too much escape. Finally, Elvish immortality is contrasted with human mortality in order to bring about various forms of consolation.

Keywords:Escapism, Dystopia, Middle-earth, Recovery, Time, Consolation-Change and Longing.

Introduction

Tolkien Between Two Periods: Modernism and Postmodernism

Tolkien invented his world and wrote his trilogy in the 1940s after his inclusion in World War I and all through the mounting struggle of World War II. Tolkien completed the story in 1947 and finished his amendments by 1949 (Carpenter 203, 204). Allen and Unwin distributed the main volume of the set of three in the late spring of 1954 and the other two soon took after, sixteen years after Tolkien had begun the work .Tolkien's reality was at last accessible to the general population, an open that was achieving the edge of a present day age and rapidly moving into the considerably more subjective perfect of the postmodern. The philosophies, or the deficiency in that department, which encompassed Tolkien and his peers were characterized by independence and appropriate to decision with a recognizable absence of confidence in any characterized real, or supreme. The desire that individuals should pick their own particular convictions begun with the Enlightenment, which was set apart by the advancement of talks of objectivity and reason, a dismissal of past methods for arranging thought and the improvement of a autonomous subject. By urging individuals to utilize their own particular reason, the Enlightenment characterized a move towards more noteworthy independence. The advanced age was set apart in its beginnings by the Enlightenment, and industrialization had prompted "interminable self-reflexivity and subjective shakiness as individuals grafted life into discrete spaces that they couldn't characterize separated from history in the way the Enlightenment had guaranteed. While the Enlightenment had guaranteed that reason would prompt Truth, in reality, a cutting edge age managed that more reason just prompted more instability, and the individual ended up plainly stuck in a framework without absolutes.

Tolkien wrote during that period in which individualism of the subject was beginning to fail and individuals were understanding that they had turned out to be stuck in the post-Enlightenment system of unfulfilled promises and constant fear. Reason had prompted instability as opposed to extreme Truth. Science had prompted concoction fighting and atomic danger before the finish of World War II as opposed to a delayed and satisfying life. Religion had been swindled by science as well as not come through all alone guarantees of humanism. The reason and independence of the Enlightenment had prompted the inverse of light and elucidation as fears turned out to be more articulated and disarray was more common as opposed to less. The uncertainty of what could be known and even what should be known was in serious clash with the

individual desire for an authentic absolute total that appeared to have vanished amidst this fear "knowledge."

(Hannah, 2011, p.2)

Recovery and Escape

The Secondary Worlds of the Elves, even more than Middle-earth as a whole,encourage recovery. Garbowskiargues that Tolkien wants to "evoke themiracle of the ordinary"(2004, p.140) in *The Lord* of *the Rings:* he wants to do exactly what he says fairy stories should do. In his essay *On Fairy-Stories,* Tolkienworries that people could become world-weary, ceasing to find wonder in thekinds of things that would have evoked astonishment in children. He says thatpeople should become child-like (rather than childish) again by seeing things in a fresh way. We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but notblinded) by blue and yellow and red ... Recovery ... is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view"(Tolkien, 1964, p. 51-2).

Tolkien structures his fairy story in such a way as to attemptto encourage this recovery in his readers. *"Faerie,"* he says, "contains manythings besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, ordragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and allthings that are in it. (Tolkien, 1964, p. 15)In other words, it may well contain fantastic things, but italso contains everyday things that, with any luck and with enough skill on thepart of the author, can be seen anew because of their proximity to thefantastic.This kind of appreciation of the ordinary is one of the characteristics of hisSecondary World, and in Middle-earth, that appreciation is nowhere moreobvious than in Lothlorien, where shapes [seem] at once clearer and freshlyconceived, and indescribably ancient, tangential to extremity. (Garbowski, 2004, p. 141)

Tolkien seemsto demonstrate the process of recovery whenever his characters enter Elvishspace: they see everyday things such as trees, rivers, even, particularly in theencounter with Gildor, food like bread and fruit in new ways. The most obviousexample occurs when Frodo enters Lorien. The colours he sees are fresh andmoving even though he knows them well, and everything is perfect: aNoblemish or sickness or deformity could be seen in anything that grew upon the earth. (*FotR*, p. 461)

The absence of any blemish in Lorien is actually not a good thing because it means that the world is completely lacking in anything to challenge the beings that live there; nevertheless, Frodo's recovery is used to demonstrate to the readers how they should see this new world. The places in which the Elves live reinforce this: they do seem to create a separate space for themselves in which the -beauty of the world- is much more clearly described than most other places in the book. Their world mustbe carefully cut off from the rest of Middle-earth because without that clear difference, the recovery would be less striking, and the reader would be less able to partake of it. Something similar occurs with the Elvish attitude to time and Tolkien's idea of Escape.

Tolkien's dislike of the common understanding of the idea of escapism is made clear in On *Fairy-stories.* He believes that escape is to be encouraged, that people sometimes need to escape from the horrors of everyday life (Tolkien, 1964).As pointed out earlier, the characters in the book can escape briefly when they go to Elvish places such as L6rien or Rivendell; this reflects Tolkien's desire to help the reader escape the problems of modem life, just for a while. Like recovery,the escape demonstrated by Tolkien would have less impact if the Elves were not so set on avoiding change that they somehow manage to slow down the time that surrounds them - or at least make it seem that way.

TimeandEscape

Just as ToIkien carefully established Elvish spaces as separate from thosebelonging to the other races in Middle-earth, he shows that Elvish time functions differently as well. From the way Elves count time to the longing theyfeel for the past, which results in a kind of diluted time field surrounding Elvish spaces, this difference is shown again and again. Tolkien mentions that Faerie functions in other Time, a time that is flexible and difficult for mortals to account for. Tolkien says that fairy stories "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".(Tolklen,1964, p. 33)

Fantasy gives us the opportunity to step not only from our world to a different one, but from our time to a different one - not necessarily into the past or the future, but into a time that functions in a different way from ours. This Other Time, combined with ToIkien's Secondary World, enables what he calls "Escape". He defines this as essentially "the imaginative satisfaction of ancient desires along with the ability to leave behind, for a time, the danger and unhappiness inherent in the real world." (Tolklen, 1964, p. 60) Tolkien does this on two levels. Middle-earth is clearly a Secondary World, and it takes place in a time—that is not our own. More than this, the Elvish lands, as discussed previously, become Secondary Worlds within a Secondary World, and they function in a time that, to the inhabitants of Middle-earth, is other Time, and is thus doublyso to the reader. The entry into Elvish Other Time is emphasised by frequently dreamlike descriptions and mentions of the characters feeling as if they are in a dream state as well as the fact that these characters tend to lose track of time while inside it.

If Middle-earth allows the reader to escape the Primary World, the Elvish spaces, in a way, allow the characters and the reader to escape from that world to another, more distant Secondary World in which the problems in Middle-earth are diluted, when they are present at all. However, the Elvish Secondary World is not as perfect as it seems.As already noted, Elves tend tokeep things the way they are, but Tolkien is aware that change is both inevitable and necessary. He uses Middle-earth to provide escape for the reader, but while Elvish spaces build on this, they also demonstrate that sometimes, when used to arrest change, escape can actually be negative.

Reckoning of Time

The difference between Elves and other races is rooted in their very nature, immortality versus mortality, as demonstrated by the way they calculate time. Noel points out: Just as [Tolkien] used differences in languages to indicate differences in peoples, he used the differing methods of reckoning time between men and Elves to indicate their differing outlooks on time. Men reckoned time in twelve-month solar years. The Elves' solar-year calendar was based on the growth cycles of vegetation, and the named their six seasons for stages in the growth of plants. (Noel, 1977, p. 40)

Men look to the sun for their seasons, while Elves look to nature, to plants. This is completely in keeping with the fact that Tolkien continuously presents the Elves as considerably more in harmony with nature than anyone else, that humans interact with nature as a source of food more than anything where the Elves actually harness nature. Elves are not concerned with the turning of the worried, which indicates time slipping away, but with the cycles of the seasons, which indicate changes in nature. It also means, though, that they have separated themselves in

terms of time as well as space to the point that a human might not understand the way their time works, in the same way as an Elf might not quite understand how human time works.

Legolas demonstrates this disparity in a conversation after leaving L6rien, when he says: Time does not tarry ever ... but change and growth is not in all things and places alike. For 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. (*FotR,* p. 510)This is a succinct summary of the Elvish attitude to time; they wish for the world to change more slowly, or not at all, and they do not count the years, whereas humans never stop counting them. In fact, as mentioned in the introduction, when mortals, particularly hobbits, enter Elvish space, they tend to lose track of time, as though by entering thisworld, they are absorbed by it to a degree. They live by the same rules as the world in which they find themselves: they are separate from their primary world; they do not count time; and they do not change significantly while there. When the mortalcharacters in *The Lord of the Rings* escape to Elvish space, in other words, that escape is all but absolute. None of the concerns raised in Middle-earth is resolved there. In places like L6rien and Rivendell, the characters are content to let time pass them by, at least for a while.

Change and Longing

That the characters do not come to any kind of resolution in Elvish space isthe part of *The Lord of the Rings* that most contradicts Frye's green world theory, as established in the introduction: the characters do not enter EIvishspace to resolve conflicts, but to escape them. Apart from one or two uneasy references, the central concerns of the novel are essentially frozen until the characters leave their safe haven and resume living in "mortal time". The reason for this is related to the Elvish desire to hold onto the past. Because-of their long lives, they cannot help but remember the way things used to be, and they tend to want to recapture that. Tolkien indicates that the Elves are lost in "the heart-racking sense of the vanished past.

(Purtill, 1984, p.13)

The problem arises when the Elves become so lost in this desire for the past that they do not want to change: The Elvish weakness was in these terms naturally to regret the past, and to become unwilling to face change ... Hence they fell in a measure to Sauron's deceits: They desired some 'power' over things as they are... to make their particular will to preservation effective: to arrest change, and keep things always fresh and fair.(Tolkien in Flieger, 1997, p. 211)The desire to avoid change leads to the desire for the power to keep things asthey are, which is a fundamental flaw in

the nature of the Elves because torefuse change is to refuse life.Flieger notes that although Tolkien might have exalted the Elves and Elvish things in *The Lord of the Rings,* he highlights a different side of· them in his letters, saying that they "wanted to have their cake and eat it: to live in the mortal historical Middle-earth because they had become fond of it... and so tried to stop its change and history, stop its growth, keep it as a pleasance" (Flieger, 1997, p. 110).

The idea of keeping the world as a "pleasance" implies that the Elves feel a sense of ownership about their land and see it almost patronisingly; it also invokes a kind of artificiality, as though it is a "created artefact"(Tiffin, 1995, p. 26)over which the Elves have control. When the Elves have power over their surroundings, they can change them as they see fit—or, as the case may be, stop changes; they appropriate the world around them and keep it the way it is. This is ultimately negative because the world then becomes static and sterile: nothing new ever arises. They also take escape to an unhealthy level, which will be discussed later. In the book, then, the slowing of time in Elvish spaces is indicative of their desire to halt the changes brought about by time's passing.

This desire adds to the sense of separation discussed in the previous chapter;Elves are very connected, very in tune, with nature, with the world in that sense, but at the same time, they are disconnected from the outside world, from people and events that threaten to disrupt their way of life and of seeing things. While their early history, as described in *The Silmarillion,* was filled with historically significance events, by the time *The Lord* of *the Rings* takes place, very little of that kind happens to them. This is to a large extent due to their deliberate removal of themselves from the historical occurrences inMiddle-earth; Elves see themselves as part of the slow cycle of nature rather than the faster cycle of culture. Flieger says that "The most important difference [between Elves and Men] is that mankind dies and leaves the world when its comparatively short span is over, whereas Elves do not die and are bound to the world for as long as it lasts". (Flieger, 2002, p. 52)

The desire to stop the world from moving on, coupled with the inability to do so, causes significant sadness in the Elves, which, as Kevin Aldrich points out, "arises out of love for their lands and works which cannot be held on to because of the ravages of time, whether through natural changes or the injuries of their enemies. (Aldrich, 1999, p. 93)Their attempts to halt time to counter this sadness caused Tolkien to see his Elves, probably his favourite creations, as deeply flawed. He says:

They wanted the peace and bliss and perfect memory of 'The West, and yet to remain on the ordinary earth where their prestige as the highest people... was greater than at the bottom of the hierarchy of Valinor. They thus became obsessed with 'fading', the mode in which the changes of time ... [were) perceived by them. They became sad, and their art... antiquarian, and their efforts all really a kind of embalming - eventhough they also retained the old motive of their kind, the adornment of the earth, and the healing of its hurts. (Aldrich, 1999, p.94-5)

The Elves began to think of change Itself as evil, which, mostly according to his letters, Tolkien sees as wrong because it goes against the will of the god that created them. Aldrich notes that Elves do have a finite lifespan, that they end when the wor1d does, and that Eru, the head god of Middle-earth, *wants*them to fade; he has designed the wor1d that way. Change is necessary because without it, nothing can grow, and there can be no new· perceptions, no development of a civilisation or its ideas. However, Tolkien has difficulty in focusing on the negative side of the Elves, since he felt a wistful regret for the green fields of his own childhood in Oxford and thus empathised with their point of view.

Certainly, with Tolkien's description of the Elves, one is hard-pressed to find fault with them, and their dislike of change is subtle. Purtill believes, though, that the Elves are not necessarily what Tolkien favours above all else: "It is the *past,* the unknown, unrecorded past that is numinous for Tolkien".(Purtill, 1984, p. 14)Flieger agrees that Tolkien's time, a historically chaotic one, often engendered in him a reaction that was in its own way equally modem: a nostalgic longing for a return to a lost past coupled with the knowledge that this was impossible save in the realm of the imagination". (Flieger, 1997, p. 3) Flieger is referring to an idealised past of green fields and lost innocence; in *On FairyStories,*Tolkien points out his distaste for industrialisation and the lack of beauty in the modem world. Even in Tolkien's imagination, though, a return to that past is unattainable, perhaps because Tolkien recognized the futility of the desire for it. Although the Elves do manage to keep their world the same for a short while, they still eventually fade. While they exist, however, their desire to slow down the passage of time results in distorted perceptions oftime when mortals cross the boundaries of their lands.

The sense of time slowed is present even in the first meeting with the Elves, indicated by at least one of the characters entering a dreamlike state. When Gildor and his troop happen upon Frodo, Pippin and Sam, the atmosphere changes instantly from one of fear to one of anticipation, and throughout this encounter, the characters seem more and more divorced from their own world and seem to enter the world of the Elves. When the Elves join the hobbits, Pippin "soon [begins1 to feel sleepy", and "Sam [walks1 along... as if in a dream (*FotR,* p. 107)

In addition to this, the memory of time spent with the Elves is fragmented. like something half-remembered upon awakening: Pippin afterwards recalled little of either food or drink, for his mind was filled with the light upon the elf-faces, and the sound of voices so various and so beautiful that he felt in a waking dream ... Sam could never describe in words, nor picture clearly to himself, what he felt or thought that night, though it remained in his memory as one of the chief events of his life.(FotR. p. 109)

This dreamy feeling, this lack of noting events that would mark the passage of time, is consistent with Tolkien's descriptions of Fairie as a dream woven by the mind that created it; the Elves, in a sense, because of their desire to stay the passage of time in their world, use their closeness to nature to change their surroundings, to create a world more in keeping with their wishes. In keeping the company of the Elves, the hobbits have temporarily joined that World. Rivendell is a much livelier encounter with the Elves than the one with Gildorand the trip to L6rien later in the book. Because Elrond is half-elven, he and his kin are permitted to choose whether they want to remain immortal or take on the mortality of humankind, which means that they have the option of letting go of the world. Flieger says, "Men can let go of life; they be [sic]released from bondage to the world... Elves, in their deathlessness, theirbondage to life, cannot let go. The half-elven have the freedom to choose either fate". (Flieger. 2002. p. 144)

They are capable of leaving the world, even if they choose not to. Because of this, and because Rivendell is open to visitors and is not quite as separate from the rest of Middle-earth as other places such as L6rien, it is not entirely its own Secondary World in isolation and is less resistant to change. This translates into an attitude to time that, while still different from mortals, is slightly less rigidly in favour of return to the past than is found in Lorien.In Rivendell, the hobbits actually have entered into Elvish space rather than joining a band of Elves who carry their own space around with them. Not surprisingly, then, the feeling of time diluted is stronger in this meeting. When Frodo first goes to explore Rivendell, for example, it seems to be lagging behind the seasons. "The air was warm. The sound of running and falling water was loud, and the evening was filled with a faint scent of trees and flowers, as if summer still lingered in Elrond's gardens". (*Fotr,* p. 296)

Summer is clinging to Rivendell - or Rivendell is clinging to summer. Bilbo, too, reinforces the concept of Rivendell as a place in which time acts differently: "Time doesn't seem to pass here: it just is".(*Fotr,* p. 303)The Hall of Fire in particular evokes the dreamlike feeling of enchantment

that indicates entrance into Faerie, where time slows. Rivendell, then, is the first clear example of Elvish space that attempts to stop the passing of time in order to avoid change. Although the different flow of time in Rivendell is clearer than it was with the Elves earlier in the book, there is little sense of melancholy. In fact, Rivende" appears to impart a cheerful air on its visitors: "It seems impossible," saysPippin, "to feel gloomy or depressed in this place. I feel I could sing, if I knewthe right song for the occasion".

(*FotR*, p. 296)

Because Elrond and his family are allowed to choose whether they want to become mortal, even if they do not take this opportunity, they are not bound to the world to the extent of other Elves. They are still reluctant to change and they still grieve for the past, but the effect is diluted· because of that possibility of moving on: they remember and perhaps regret the past rather than wanting to return to it. They are willing to take part in the world to some extent, since Elrond does take part in human affairs, putting the Fellowship together and setting them on their path. He also eventually gives up his daughter to the human World. Overall, then, Rivendell does hold part of the timelessness of the Elves, but to a much lesser extent than Lorien. This is driven home when, in L6rien, Frodo reflects that Rivendell holds the memory of the past, while in Lorien, the past lives on.

Because L6rien is the place in Middle-earth where the Elves are the most Elvish, it is· perhaps not surprising that it is the place where the time difference is most obvious. Like the other Secondary Worlds of the Elves, L6rien offers respite to the Company by making the external world seem distant: Sam makes the connection between slowed time and reluctance to change quite clearly when he says, "Irs wonderfully quiet here. Nothing seems to be going on, and no one seems to want it to".(117) Sam phrases this in a positive way, and in that it contributes to a kind of escape, it is. However, the fact that nothing is going on is actually an indication of the negative side of the Etves:yet again, there is a suggestion of their resistance to change. There is also animplied contrast to Rivendell; while time there "just is", there are certainlythings going on.

In this extract, the present and the past are constantly tied together, the two different worlds connected by a bridge of time. Even the seasons are a mix of times: "The air was cool and soft, as if it were early spring, yet they felt about them the deep and thoughtful quiet of winter". Everything, all around, hearkens back to days long gone by, but in such a way that they seem inescapably *present.* Morse says that "Tolkien's Elves are continually recalling the past through memory".In Lorien, this goes further: their memories of the past are so strong that, to a degree, it is still alive.

This blending of past and present results in a time that is as close to frozen as is possible, which, while a bad thing in that it denies change, does enable a kind of escape that might otherwise not be possible - and which is *not* possible in Rivendell, where Elrond engages with the outside world.

As well as the timelessness of the dream, Sam's observation indicates that the Company has entered a Secondary World. Here, the song Sam mentions is a form of sub-creation on the part of the Elves, who create their world as one apart from the world of the other races. This first display of the Elvish Secondary Worlds as timeless is quickly followed by others. Flieger points out that "[ilt is notable that -none of the Fellowship is described as having dreams... Rather, it would seem that the experience of being pnlorien] is itself the dream". In addition, the Fellowship's recollections about how long they spent in l6rien are fuzzy: "They remained some days in loth6rien, so far as they could tell or remember",(*FotR,* p. 470) says Tolkien. This, again, reflects Tolkien's description of entry into Faerie as a kind of dream, yet again setting off l6rien as a place apart from everywhere outside its borders. Because l6rien is-so clearly differentiated, it is easier to see that the inhabitants of this place, through their longing for the past, tend to reject change.

While the Elves' curious relationship to time makes l6rien all the moremysterious, it also alerts the reader to the way the Elves live in the past rather than embracing the present. In fact, Purtill callsElvish possessiveness of their surroundings and resistance to change a -form of avarice". (Puriill, 1984, p. 104) They appropriate their surroundings and want to hold onto what they have ratherthan allowing themselves to change with the world around them. Galadriel may well take the place of a fertility goddess in Frye's theories, but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, she keeps things from fading rather than enabling renewal - forcing L6rien to remain static rather than allowing it to embrace anything new.

One of ToIkien's desires was to use the "timeless beauty" of the Elves to show that "immortality is a prison, that a timeless world is a frozen world, that beauty preserved is beauty embalmed".(Flieger, 2002, 120) That Tolkien named death the "gift of lIuvatar" is no accident: because the Elves were doomed to live on in a changing world, always regretting and reaching for the past, they stopped facing the inevitability of change. Beauty without vitality is poinUess; without change, there can be no new perceptions.This actually recalls Tolkien's views on recovery. Recovery is seeing the world anew - altering perceptions in order to increase appreciation of the world, to help see the world as it is and not as we *think* it is. While the Elvish spaces can aid in the recovery of a reader and of the characters, the Elves are unable to undergo it themselves.

As the Company move downriver, this impression is cemented: As they passed her they turned and their eyes watched her slowly floating away from them. For so it seemed to them: L6rien was slipping backward. . . sailing on to forgotten shores, while they sat helpless upon the margin of the grey and leafless world. *(FotR.* p. 495)Not only has L6rien stopped moving forward through time, it has now started to move backward. Though the Fellowship regrets leaving L6rien to enter a world that is "grey and leafless·, the manner in which the Elves seem to move backward while they stay still is indicative of a clear rejection of the future. This is unsurprising, since in his note on "Elvish Time·, Tolkien observes: In Elvish sentiment the *futul9* was not one of hope or desire, but a decay and retrogression from former bliss and power. Though inevitably it lay *ahead,* as of one on a journey, 'looking forward' did not imply anticipation of delight... Their position, as of latter day sentiment, was one of exiles driven forward (against their will) who were in mind or actual posture forever looking backward(Ftieger, 1997, p. 70).

Escape, Secondary Worlds and Other Time

The longing for the past is a characteristic that Tolkien shares with his -Elves, although he is aware enough of the dangers inherent in it to allow for change. This longing comes through most strongly in his work when he writes aboutthe Elves, and the separation of Elvish lands that results from this longing enables the second of Totkien's stated functions of fairy-stories: escape. Although the Secondary World of the Elves and Frye's green world are similar, as discussed in the previous chapter, their function differs. While the characters in Frye's theory enter the green world to resolve conflict and become their "true selves", in *The Lord* of *the Rings,* no resolution takes place in the green world of Elvish space. Instead, the characters move to those spaces to escape the dire situations in the "real" world for a brief time before going back to face them. Elvish space is used as an escape from the trials and tribulations of the "real" world of Middle-earth, and legitimately so; it acts as a space in which the characters are healed and recharged, strengthened to continue their quest. This is demonstrated by the fact that every venture into Elvish space is preceded by a frightening and usually violent ordeal – theBlack Riders before the encounter with Gildor, the Nazgul at the River beforeRivendell, Moria and the loss of Gandalf before L6rien, and destroying the ring for Frodo and Sam and going into battle vastly outnumbered for Aragorn and the others before the second visit to Rivendell.

This makes the contrasting peace and quiet of Elvish lands all the more clear, enabling them to serve even better as Secondary Worlds in which the characters can rest and recover. Aldrich says, "L6rien is a sanctuary in the midst of the transient world where there is not only no evil, but time itself seems to have halted,(Aldrich, 1999, p. 94)taking "escape" a step forward from Rivendell, where time is a factor. The word "sanctuary" is important: the characters aresafe in L6rien and in Rivendell. In Rivendell, Frodo reflects that "[m]erely to be there [is] a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness",(*FatR*, p. 295)and the Company is able to rest in L6rien as well. However, in L6rien, they are out of the "transient world", in a place where time does not seem to pass. There is no evil - "On the land of L6rien there was no stain,(*FatR*, p. 460)but that means that the characters cannot complete any of their tasks or resolve any problems, although they can discuss what comes next and make plans. They do not leave the spaces wholly unchanged, but for the most part, the changes that occur are set off by an event *before* they enter Elvish space and are solidified by the time spent there - not because of where they are, exactly, but because they have time to consider these events and respond to them. The loss of Gandalf, for example. has a profound effect on the Company that they only have time to process once they are in L6rien. Once they leaveElvish space. They must resume facing the challenges that arose before they entered it. Perhaps slightly better armed but without any clear resolutions and. sometimes. With more questions than before. The escape is useful. since the characters do leave feeling more rested and regenerated. It is not only the characters that can use Elvish space to escape from their worries for a time. Tolkien sets up Middle-earth and Elvish spaces as Secondary Worlds that the readers can use to escape from their own lives. "Escape" might bring to mind the idea of fleeing something unpleasant, and while that is a part of Tolkien's definition, he does go further. The cynicism that makes recovery necessary also makes people dubious about the relevance of escape, but Tolkien insists: In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic ... Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? (Tolkien, 1964, p. 54)

To desire a brief interlude away from the horrors of modem life is not something to be ashamed of. Reilly agrees that "this kind of solace or respite is necessary ... it is a time needed to regroup one's forces for the next day's battle".(Reilly, 2004, p. 101)This time, as Reilly notes, allows fortification through the rest allowed and through the perspective gained from moving away from this battle for a while; Escape is thus more important than most people realise. For Tolkien, modem time is simply *ugly*.Ugly architecture, ugly fadories, ugly clothing. He says, -It is part of the malady of such days - producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present

time and self-made misery - that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil" (Tolkien, 1964, p. 57).

It is this ugliness from which the reader needs to escape. A parallel could be drawn between the human desire to escape from present time and the Elvish desire to recapture the past. However, the Elves are not escaping the present as much as they are reaching for the past, longing for days in which they were more powerful, more esteemed, more relevant. Humans, on the other hand, want to escape particularly unsavoury aspects of present time, whether that escape is into a time parallel to ours or somewhere in the past or future. This involves a retreat into a kind of idealised time, a "Golden Age" of innocence and beauty. Escapism does not end there, of course. "There are also other and more profound 'escapisms' that have always appeared in fairy-tale and legend-: people need to escape from all the bad things in the world, "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, -sorrow, injustice, death".(Tolkien, 1964, p. 58)Middle-earth is not a -perfect world.

Any reader expecting not to encounter death, pain, sorrow, and ugliness in *The Lord* of *the Rings* is bound to be disappointed. Flieger says that "[Tolkien] played hide and seek with [his] own time. [He] looked at the world around [him}, found It wanting in many respects, and. . . dodged into imaginary worlds that turned out to be not much better'.(Flieger, 1997. p. 26)The Elvish spaces in the book, though, in their bubble of time-past, are probably as close to idyllic as Tolkien could imagine. More importantly, the inner Secondary World is able to provide the respite the characters need to face the evil present in Middle-earth, and in a similar way provides the reader with the fortitude needed to face another day in the modem world.

While the Elves themselves are waning as a race and their creation of Secondary Worlds and Other Time contribute to that waning, they alsoprovide a place that is set apart from the turmoil in Middle-earth, where, unlike in *The Lord of the Rings* as a whole, hunger, thirst, poverty, and so on reallydo not exist. Sorrow exists, but it is a distant kind of sorrow that humans cannot fully understand. Although Middle earth is no less tumultuous than Tolkien's own time, the Elvish spaces offer respite from that tumult; Elvish time and space are two removes from the time present in the Primary World, allowing at least part of the book to offer an escape from any unhappiness present in the world of the reader, and in the Secondary World in the form of Sauron and Saruman, even though permanently underlying that escape is th, knowledge that, like the Elves' own escape from the movement of time, it can be only temporary.

While Elvish space offers a temporary, near-complete escape, Middle-earth as a whole offers escape of a different kind. We can move from our imperfect world to one that is also imperfect, but less so. It is an idealised world in which beauty can be found almost everywhere and good wins the day. The characters in Middle-earth are able to triumph over evil because, unlike most of the Elves, they are willing to face change, to be part of the world as it moves on. If the Fellowship had given in to the desire to stay in the timeless ~and of l6rien, Sauron would never have been overthrown, the Shire would never have been saved, and Aragom would never have become king. That the mortals are the ones that drive change toward the good in Middle-earth is indicative of the Elves' greatest flaw: they would rather wrap themselves in their own world than take part in the world around them. According to Flieger, one of the ideas crucial to Tolkien's philosophy is the "inevitability and absolute necessity of change ... From change ... comes growth and development. Out of change comes new perception" (Flieger, 2002, p. 167).

Though he recognises and, to some extent, succumbs to the allure of thetimelessness of the Elves, ultimately, Tolkien knows that this is escape in the negative sense, the avoidance of the necessity of getting on with life. By rejecting change, Elves are rejecting the possibility of renewing themselves. As Fliegerremarks: Desire to preserve a present good inevitably becomes desire to keep it from passing, but this leads to stagnation. The process of change is part of the design, and must continue if the design is to be fulfilled (Flieger, 2002, p. 170).

The Elves withdraw from the world into their spaces in which they can avoid the effects of time moving. Relentlessly onward, and by doing so, they give up their chance of contributing to the world and of moving with it. They must inevitably decline because of their desire to escape.There is one kind of escape that Tolkien mentions in On *Fairy stories* that he classes among the "old ambitions and desires" and about which the Elves are uniquely suited to teach a lesson. In fact, he calls it "the oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death". His aim is to depict immortality itself as something negative that impedes the progress of a society and offer instead ·life eternal" - the afterlife offered by Christian mythology. Because mortals can die, they can let go of life and the world; because theycan letgo,they can change and thrive. Immortals, as has been discussed, are unable to let go.

In *On Fairy-Stories,* Tolkien makes a compelling argument for the necessity of sub-creation. Secondary Worlds created by fantasy are uniquely suited to performing the three functions upon which he places so much importance: recovery, escape, and consolation. These cannot be encouraged, or if they can, they can certainly not be brought about with the same effectiveness or

on the same level, without those Secondary Worlds. More than necessary, in an act, sub-creation is inevitable; Tolkien argues that it is inherent in language.

People who can understand that things exist will want to name them; oncethose things have been named, it is only a matter of time until stories arecreated around them.In *On Fairie Stories,* Tolkien discusses at length the tendency of modern critics to see the ideas of fantasy and escape in a negative light and disagrees with the inclination to dismiss fantasy as a matter for children. He believes that it is just as legitimate a form of literature as the more highly regarded realist fiction and that it should not be disregarded merely because it focuses on different things: much that [many people] would call serious.

Literature is no more than play under a glass roof by the side of a municipal swimming-bath. Fairy-stories may invent monsters that fly in the air or dwell in the deep, but at least they do not try to escape from heaven or the sea. Inother words, fantasy is valuable as *literature* in the same way that othergenres are valuable, as well as in its ability to perform recovery, escape, andconsolation.

Conclusion

Tolkien can enact his three functions on two levels in *The Lord of the Rings and the hobbit*in the "normal" Secondary World of Middle-earth and in the magical realms of the Elves. Middle-earth as a whole is far enough from the Primary world to effect recovery, to allow escape, and to enable consolation - one could hardly deny that Sam and Frodo's rescue and the destruction of Sauron as Aragorn's army was facing defeat elicit the joy of the happy ending that Tolkien refers to in *On Fairy-Stories.* However, through the Elves, Tolkien is able to add another layer of depth to

those functions. As discussed, the way the Elves delineate the borders of their space and the way they approach time creates a kind of Secondary World inside a Secondary World that contains a distilled form of Other Time. While this removal from Middle-earth as a whole is ultimately negative for the Elves themselves, it can have a positive effect on the reader.

Something different happens with escape, however. The Elves have a distilled version of the human desire for escape: Tolkien describes this desire as wanting to "fly from" negative aspects of the world such as pain and sorrow and of wanting to converse with all living things Elves almost embody these desires. Treebeard says that they always wished to talk to everything-, and their desire to escape the sorrow of remaining the same as the world changes and dies around them is what drives their acts of separation because they want a way to stop the passing of time, at least in some small areas; they want to avoid change. This, then, leads to the warning about the creative sterility that results from this: the Elvish civilisation is not open to new experiences and as such cannot really stay relevant in a changing world. Because of this, while Tolkien is able to use L6rien as a locus of escape for the characters and for the reader, a welcome rest from the harrowing experiences in the book, he is also able to use it as a warning. Escape to some degree is good, but, as indicated by the main characters always leaving Elvish space and time and returning to mortal space and time, where changes important to Middle-earth take place, that escape should only be temporary.

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