FABIAN QUEVEDO DA ROCHA

THE ROAD GOES EVER ON:

J. R. R. Tolkien's Response to the Dark Days of the Twentieth Century, and After

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ORIENTADORA: SANDRA SIRANGELO MAGGIO

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BANCA EXAMINADORA:

_____

Profa. Dra. Márcia Ivana de Lima e Silva
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

_____

Profa. Dra. Luciane de Oliveira Moreira
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria

_____

Prof. Dr. Valter Henrique de Castro Fritsch
Universidade Federal de Rio Grande

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"All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

(J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)

RESUMO

O Hobbit (1937) e *O Senhor dos Anéis* (1954-1955) podem ser vistos como respostas literárias a questões recorrentes nos séculos XVIII, XIX e início do XX. O ritmo crescente da industrialização e a ascensão do secularismo foram pontos centrais para o crescente sentimento de fragmentação, alienação e deslocamento que culminou no impacto devastador da Primeira Guerra Mundial. A literatura produzida na primeira metade do século XX é marcada, em grande parte, pela imagem recorrente do mundo retratado como uma terra desolada, com seus habitantes sem fé, esperança, ou crenças para lhes dar força. Em contrapartida, as obras de J. R. R. Tolkien apresentam um universo onde o poder da fé, do altruísmo, da compaixão e de outras virtudes auxiliam seu povo a restaurar o sentimento de conexão humana, a força da união e a crença em um futuro melhor. O escopo deste trabalho reside em investigar como *O Hobbit* e *O Senhor dos Anéis* abordam e respondem aos dias sombrios do tempo do autor e como essas respostas podem ser vistas como uma forma de preservar o passado, guiar o presente, e moldar o futuro. Para tal objetivo, realizo uma análise da figura, da função e do aspecto anacrônico dos hobbits, à luz da teoria de Tolkien sobre narrativas de fantasia proposta no ensaio "Sobre Histórias de Fadas". Esta dissertação aborda, também, o conceito de estrada como uma metáfora que é relevante para o entendimento da ficção do autor e de suas crenças a respeito da importância das histórias. Como instrumentos para conduzir minha investigação, faço uso dos estudos de fantasia propostos por Tolkien, Tom Shippey, Theresa Freda Nicolay, Verlyn Flieger, entre outros. Ao aproximar os textos destes acadêmicos da forma como os romances foram escritos, argumento sobre a importância da proposta de Tolkien para a literatura de seu tempo e dos dias atuais.

Palavras-chave: Literatura Inglesa; J. R. R. Tolkien; *O Hobbit*; *O Senhor dos Anéis*; Anacronismo.

ABSTRACT

The Hobbit (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) can be seen as literary responses to recurrent issues from the 18th, 19th, and beginning of the 20th centuries. The increasing pace of industrialization and the rise of secularism were key points to the growing feelings of fragmentation, alienation, and dislocation that culminated with the devastating impact of WWI. The literature produced in the first half of the twentieth century is marked, to a great extent, by the recurring image of the world depicted as a waste land, with its inhabitants lacking in faith, hope, and beliefs to hold on to. Contrarily to that, the works of J. R. R. Tolkien portray a universe where the power of faith, selflessness, compassion, and other virtues aid its people in restoring the sense of human connection, power of community-building, and belief in a hopeful future. The scope of this work lies in investigating how Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* address and respond to the dark days of their author's time, and how these responses can be seen as a way of preserving the past, guiding the present, and shaping the future. In order to do so, I will perform an analysis of the figure of the hobbits, their function in the novels, and also their anachronistic trait under the light of Tolkien's theory concerning fantasy narratives as proposed in the essay "On Fairy Stories". This thesis also addresses the concept of the road as a metaphor, which is of great importance to a broader understanding of the author's fiction and his beliefs concerning the importance of stories. As tools to conduct my investigation, I rely on the studies of fantasy proposed by Tolkien, Tom Shippey, Theresa Freda Nicolay, Verlyn Flieger, and other prominent scholars of the field. By approaching the studies of these theorists to the way the novels were written, I argue about Tolkien's relevance to the literature of his time and the present days.

Keywords: English Literature; *The Hobbit*; *The Lord of the Rings*; J. R. R. Tolkien; Anachronism.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Dear reader, this work was carried out strictly for academic purposes. Therefore, it does not reverse profits to me, nor to my supervisor or institution. All excerpts from Tolkien's books cited are properly referenced according to the editions used. The images at the end of the work were scanned from physical copies of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and are also accompanied by the necessary references.

Concerning the footnotes, most of them are aimed to readers who are not fully acquainted with Tolkien's works and they offer brief explanations concerning the characters, regions and internal history of the books. A few of these notes, however, are used to give extra information concerning specific terminology used in the research.

I would also like to highlight that this thesis is concerned with a highly religious writer, who was instructed from his early childhood in the Catholic faith. Therefore, considerations concerning "good" and "evil", "right" and "wrong", among others, are mostly guided by Tolkien's worldview and do not necessarily represent general beliefs.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Fantasy books have always been part of my life: when I was a young boy, my attention would constantly be drawn to books of the genre, even though I was not aware of what exactly made them be labeled as such. I remember tirelessly exploring the corridors of libraries and bookstores, examining shelf after shelf in search of nice book covers with promising titles. The memory of the day I found one such book is imprinted on my mind as if it had happened yesterday: I was in my uncle's house, during a family gathering, in 2006 when I found a book called *The Lord of the Rings*, written by J. R. R. Tolkien. Even though the title did not reveal much, as I explored the cover, which portrayed an old man who was wearing a long white beard and a pointy hat, fully clad in grey robes and holding a wooden staff, with a grave look on his face which seemed to imply he was in an urgent errand I came to the conclusion that such thick and complex-looking book contained a promising story. As my imaginative young mind was prompted to formulating an array of questions, I was sure the book I was clasping could only be fantasy. Who was the old man in the cover? Where was he going with such determined urgency? Was he "the lord of the rings"? What did it mean to have such a title? These and many other questions were only answered years later, during the time I was an undergraduate student and finally felt confident enough to read Tolkien's work. During the interlude between my first contact with *The Lord of the Rings* and the day I started reading it, I read a variety of other books that, as I would learn in the future, were also labelled as fantasy: J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, Christopher Paoline's *Eragon*, C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, among many others. However, it was Tolkien's books that marked, even though I did not know it at the time, the beginning of an arduous quest: a quest for a broader and deeper understanding of fantasy. My repertoire of questions such as "who is 'the Lord of the rings'?" started, little by little, to expand as more mature doubts arose: "what makes certain books be classified as fantasy?", "what is fantasy and what makes it so appealing to some people?", "what is its function?". Such questions, as I came to learn, have no single answer. On a personal level, however, a possible answer concerning the function of fantasy and the everlasting appeal of fantasy books has to do with: (1) the ways problems are addressed in these narratives; (2) the possibilities they create; (3) their applicability; and (4) the solace most of them offer. The appeal and function of fantasy are, of course, not limited to

the items mentioned above. However, I believe these notions offer a good start to the discussions proposed in this work.

This thesis is concerned with fantasy; specifically, with the fantasy works of J. R. R. Tolkien. It discusses, to a larger extent, *The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth *LOTR*) and, to a lesser extent, *The Hobbit*. My choice for this specific author and works, on a personal level, has to do with the fact that they are profoundly dear to me: Tolkien's fictional universe and characters not only captivated me from my first reading, but they also helped me to see how literature may echo life and life may echo literature, thus aiding me to perceive order where once I saw only chaos. In other words, Tolkien's narrative showed me the value of fantasy. On the other hand, in a more academic and professional level, my choice was based mainly on the way his narratives address a number of issues of the writer's time, such as the rise of unchecked industrialism and the devastating consequences of war, which were increasingly turning a portion of the world into a wasteland, as well as how his literary responses to such dark days are at the same time similar to and different from the ones proposed by most of his contemporary fellow writers.

Burgess, while discussing the literature produced during the first half of the twentieth century argues that the writers of that period were

> [...] much concerned with finding something to believe in [...]. But whereas the first of our moderns were satisfied with their hedonism or liberalism or medievalism, the later age has demanded something deeper - it has wanted the sense of a *continuous tradition*, the sense of being involved in a civilisation. (BURGESS, 1974, p. 215).

Burgess's claims above seem to be pointing to the growing feelings of fragmentation and spiritual emptiness that can be associated with the environment of great change arising from years between the end of Queen Victoria's reign and the beginning of WWI. If on one hand, the progress in the industrial and scientific fields brought hope for a better future, it also "was to turn sour on people who experienced the First World War and found that science meant gas and guns. Where were new writers to look?". (BURGESS, 1974, 215). Theresa Freda Nicolay (2014), seems to answer Burgess's question when she argues that industrialism, secularism, and WWI were accompanied by increasing feelings of alienation, fragmentation, and dislocation, which generated two main literary responses: on one hand there were the works of writers such as T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Virginia Woolf, in which the world is commonly depicted as a wasteland with its inhabitants lacking in faith, hope, and beliefs to hold on; on the other hand, there were the works of writers such as J. R.

R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis that, similarly to the authors mentioned above, also presented a darkened world. One of the main differences between the writers in these two groups, however, has to do with the way their narratives addressed the crisis they were facing: while the first seems to choose to focus on the damage the dark times [1]caused to the world and its inhabitants, the latter tends to focus on how the power of faith, selflessness, compassion, and other virtues aid people in restoring the sense of human connection, power of community-building, and belief in a hopeful future. Nicolay explains: "There is no denying that Tolkien and the modernists[2] shared many of the same concerns for the world in their time. However, they diverged most profoundly in the possibility of hope that their imaginative constructions offer for posterity." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 6-7).

The considerable popularity and appeal of fantasy works produced in the twentieth century have led critics such as Shippey (2001) and Attebery (1992) to argue that the prevalent literary mode of that century was the fantastic[3]. Such an idea, as Shippey declares,

> may appear a surprising claim, which would not have seemed even remotely conceivable at the start of the century and which is bound to encounter fierce resistance even now. However, when the time comes to look back at the century, it seems very likely that future historians, detached from the squabbles of our present, will see as its most representative and distinctive works books like J. R. R. Tolkien *The Lord of the Rings* [...]. (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. vii).

In addition to that, the scholar claims that the authors of such century "who have spoken most powerfully to and for their contemporaries have for some reason found it necessary to use the metaphoric mode of fantasy […]. (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. viii). For Nicolay (2014), most writers of the twentieth century seemed to be concerned with finding answers to the growing chaos resulting, to a large extent, from issues raised in the previous century, such as:

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[1] By dark times, I refer to the period of time that encompasses the late eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth century, which was marked not only by two great wars, but also by great changes in the scientific, industrial, and religious fields, which had a great social and environmental impact in England and in many other countries worldwide. Though the progress derived from the technological advances of such period brought considerable benefits, it also had great negative consequences such as the increasing exploitation of natural resources, as well as the fragmentation of individuals. For a writer such as Tolkien, a Roman Catholic who was deeply concerned with Catholic traditions and who was greatly fond of nature and rural landscapes, those were dark days to live.

[2] In her work, Nicolay presents Tolkien as a writer outside the modernist movement. However, her claim is, for me, a bit inaccurate since Tolkien not only wrote during the modernistic period, but his writing also shared many characteristics used by other writers of such movement. The main difference between Tolkien and the other modernists is, to a considerable extent, the mode which they endorsed, which was often either fantasy or realism (sometimes both).

[3] According to Clute & Grant (1997), "fantastic" is a general term adopted by critics to refer to all forms of human expression that are not realistic (e.g.: fantasy, science-fiction, etc.).

> [...] The rise of industrialism and capitalism; new theories in science, the social sciences, and the arts; changing attitudes toward religion and politics; and an apparent diminution of the quality of human experience in terms of both the individual and the community. (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 2).

Burgess (1974) adds to what Nicolay proposes by stating that the literature produced at the turn of the nineteenth century is characterized, at times, by an attempt to find substitutes for a religion that is apparently dead, and at others by a desperate desire to find something to believe. In other words, the writers of the twentieth century were trying to figure out how to carry on after the several consequences arising from the so-called modern improvements, and, in order to do that, they were looking for answers that could not only help them understand what had gone amiss but also avoid repeating the mistakes of the ones living before them. As a means to make sense of the chaos they were living through, these writers, Nicolay proposes, were looking to the past; for the scholar, such claim is deeply connected to the ancient relation that human beings share with stories as well as with one of the many functions of literature since:

> The stories that we invent and pass down through generations not only describe our experiences, but the lessons and insights that literature offers teach and inspire us to live more mindfully and humanely in the present so that we may create a more hopeful future. Many storytellers, themselves immersed in the narratives that preceded them, reflect on the past and carry forward the values and wisdom that they find there, whether that place in time is near to them or as remote as ancient times. And while some writers hope to break free of old forms and create new ones, even they cannot help but to be influenced in some way by the very traditions they seek to reject. In its inevitable engagement with the past, literature invites us to consider our shared humanity with those who came before us, to hear their voices, however rich and strange or ordinary and familiar they may be. (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 1).

Considering Nicolay's propositions, one may argue that many writers of the twentieth century were trying to restore the present and shape the future by looking to the past. Even modernists, with their attempt to create a new literary tradition with new standards and forms, were not free from the influence of the ones writing before them. However, stating that these writers were looking to the past to make sense of the present, does not necessarily mean that the answers they found were the same, nor that their models and guiding principles derived from the same period in the past.

The objective of this thesis is to investigate what the function of hobbits in *LOTR* and *The Hobbit* is and how Tolkien used them as a means to address and comment not only on issues of his time but also on matters that are at the core of human existence. Tolkien's literary responses to the dark days of the twentieth century, as I intend to demonstrate, can be seen not

only as a way of preserving the past but also as a beacon to guide the present and light the future. At this point, therefore, it seems pertinent to give the term "fantasy" proper attention.

The debate concerning the definition of the term "fantasy", as Mendlesohn (2008) points out, has been long-standing; theorists such as Tzvetan Todorov, Kathryn Hume, and Rosemary Jackson tend to define fantasy in opposition to science-fiction: while the first is largely concerned with the construction of the impossible, the latter, even though it may be about the unlikely, is generally grounded in the scientifically possible. Attebery (1992), on the other hand, proposes that fantasy be viewed as a group of texts sharing, in different degrees, a set of common tropes. These tropes, the author argues, may be objects as well as narrative techniques. Clute & Grant (1997) argue that, as a term of definition, fantasy designates a structure, while Stringer describes fantasy as

> [A]n internally coherent story dealing with events and worlds which are impossible. This distinguishes fantasy from science fiction which deals with possible (though often improbable) events and worlds. It also distinguishes pure or full fantasy from most supernatural fiction (which includes ghost stories, occult romances, and tales of vampires and werewolves), because supernatural fiction also tends to claim that its subject-matter is occasioned by, or instructs, the real world. (STRINGER, 1996, p. 207)

For the purpose of this thesis, however, I will embrace the concept of fantasy as proposed by Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy Stories": a natural human activity, one's ability to render to imagined things, through artistic effort and craft, an inner consistency of reality; a literary mode that starts with the advantage over more realistic fiction of arresting strangeness in readers, and that also fulfils a series of human desires such as that of glimpsing different worlds. James & Mendlesohn (2012) regard Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" as the most valuable theoretical text for the study and understanding of fantasy as a literary genre. Therefore, my choice for this specific theoretical text has to do not only with its considerable importance to the field, but also with its close relationship to *LOTR* and, though to a lesser extent, to *The Hobbit*. "On Fairy Stories" offers an insightful view of Tolkien's understanding of fantasy as well as much of the reasoning behind his creative process and literary guiding principles.

The story of how *The Hobbit* was first conceived is known by many: in the late 1920s Tolkien was at home marking School Certificate papers, a task that he decided to undertake as a means to improve the family's income, when suddenly, among the chaos of written pages, much to his surprise and relief, he found a blank sheet; he, then, wrote on it the following sentence: "*In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit*." As the author himself declared in a letter from June 7, 1955, addressed to W. H. Auden, he did not know why he had written that

sentence and also that he did not do anything about it for a long time. However, that short sentence had an element that was fundamental to Tolkien's creative process: a name. "Names always generate a story in my mind" (CARPENTER, 2000, p.175), declared the author to Humphrey Carpenter, his authorized biographer. Thus, having "discovered" the term “hobbit”, little by little the author started to investigate what exactly hobbits were and were like, and after some years of hard work, in 1937, his first narrative about this peculiar folk was published.

The possible sources that may have inspired the author to use the term “hobbit” have been largely debated and though many believe the word was coined by Tolkien himself, as the entry in dictionaries such as Merriam Webster indicate, studies have shown that the term already existed approximately one century before the author first put it into paper. According to Shippey (2001), the term can be found in *The Denham Tracts*, a series of pamphlets and jottings on the folklore of the North of England organized by Michael Denham between the 1840s and 1850s and that was re-edited by James Hardy in the 1890s. Hobbits appear alongside with leprechauns, fairies, gnomes, and a series of other creatures, and are defined simply as “a class of spirits” (DENHAM, 1892, p. 388). Tolkien's hobbits, however, as probably everyone who has read the books (or watched the movies) know, are clearly not spirits, but rather earthbound beings. Yet, this thesis focus does not lie on tracing the origins of the term nor on investigating the possible sources that may have influenced Tolkien's choice for it, but rather on exploring the image of the hobbits inside the author's works to understand what this race represents in the narrative.

As for what hobbits *are*, Tolkien gives a brief explanation in the first chapter of *The Hobbit*:

> They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 4).

In this sense, as Shippey (2001) points out, hobbits ought to be considered people rather than spirits or animals (for some have suggested that). However, in this research I argue that more than being creatures created mainly to inhabit Middle-earth, Tolkien's fictional

universe, hobbits are also the solid ground in which readers stand on while reading the writer's narratives; they are the link between Tolkien's fantasy world and our own, thus the function they assume in the author's works are of considerable importance to a richer understanding of the narratives. In addition to that, hobbits are deeply rooted in Tolkien's time, and, as such, may be seen as representative of the modern world and its people. Shippey states that hobbits, especially Bilbo, the main character of *The Hobbit*, are fairly easy to place both socially and chronologically. To support his argument the scholar starts by comparing Bilbo's residence with one of a person of Tolkien's time; the hobbit's dwelling is: "[...] in everything except being underground (and in there being no servants), the home of a member of the Victorian upper-middle class of Tolkien's nineteenth-century youth, full of studies, parlours, cellars, pantries, wardrobes, and all the rest." (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. 5). Besides that, as the author points out, there are several other internal pieces of evidence that help to place the hobbits in time and space: they are fond of smoking tobacco in their pipes, they make use of postal service, and when their nerve break, they shriek "like the whistle of an engine coming out of a tunnel" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 21). This would be all very well, except for the fact that the word "tobacco" was not recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary before 1558, the postal service in England dates from 1837, and the first freight-and-passenger steam railway in England opened in 1825.

Interestingly enough, if on one hand, hobbits have roots in modern times, on the other hand, the world in which their narratives take place is set in a distant past, far from modernity and most of its customs and inventions, a world in which if they venture to leave the comfort of their Shire, they have to struggle not only to fit in but also to survive. In this sense, hobbits' displacement and struggles in the magical and ancient Middle-earth may be pointing at the difficulties people from Tolkien's and our time would face if they were to live in such a universe. This notion, thus, is deeply connected to the central role hobbits play in both *LOTR* and *The Hobbit*: indeed, they are not the only race that inhabits Tolkien's fictional world, there are also humans, elves, and dwarves just to mention a few. However, the origins of all of these latter, as it may be argued from reading *The Silmarillion*, is much clearer and more documented. In other words, while elves, dwarfs, and humans are deeply rooted in ancient times and with almost no connection with modernity, the case of hobbits seem to be the very opposite. Therefore, hobbits singularity lies in the fact that they "are, and always remain, highly *anachronistic* in the ancient world of Middle-earth." (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. 6). Their anachronism is not only their main function, as Shippey (2001) points out, but it is also one of the main focuses of this research. Therefore, throughout my analysis, I will pay special

attention to the figure of the hobbits and to how Tolkien uses these specific characters to bridge the gap between the real world and his fictional universe.

As hobbits made their first appearance in Tolkien's fictional universe in *The Hobbit* and this work is to a large extent connected to them, I decided to dedicate some time to the book in this introduction. However, this thesis is much more concerned with *LOTR* since it is in this work that one of the aspects I intend to analyze in this thesis appears more prominently: the notion of life as a road and we, humans, as travelers journeying through it. However commonplace this idea may be, it is at the same time, according to Markos (2012) a profound and universal truth that lies at the heart of many of the greatest works of the human imagination: from Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *The Aeneid*, to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Tolkien's *LOTR* is no exception: the image of the road and the journey it implies is present from the very beginning of the work, so much so that in the first chapter of the book Bilbo sings a song that is repeated, even though with considerable variations, at least four times throughout the narrative:

> The Road goes ever on and on Down from the door where it began. Now far ahead the Road has gone, And I must follow, if I can, Pursuing it with eager feet, Until it joins some larger way Where many paths and errands meet. And whither then? I cannot say. (TOLKIEN, 2007, pp. 46- 47).

In a summarized way, *LOTR is*, to a great extent, about the journeys the peoples of Middle-earth undertake in order to reach a common goal: destroy the One Ring and, by doing so, overthrow Sauron, the Dark Lord, creator of such dangerous craft. To face the hardships the long and shadowy road that lies before them offers, the peoples in Tolkien's narrative have not only to learn to set their racial differences and past resentments aside and work together in order to attain a higher objective, but they also have to plunge into internal journeys of self-discovery through which they realize that to endure the hardships of the road and grow, they must possess, as Markos (2012) states, virtues such as temperance, wisdom, courage, justice, charity, faith, and hope.

This thesis is structured in three parts. In part I, I follow Theresa Freda Nicolay's (2014) proposition concerning narrative patterns in the works of some writers of the first half of the twentieth century. For the scholar, authors such as Tolkien, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, frequently used their narratives to address and respond to central issues of their time. By relying on Nicolay's studies and Tom Shippey's scholarship, I highlight patterns and differences in the narratives of these twentieth-century writers that

demonstrate how they used distinct techniques to voice their anxieties concerning the consequences of the crisis of their time. This chapter also sets the tone for the discussions in part II, in which I discuss why Tolkien decided to use fantasy as a literary mode, rather than other more realistic modes

Part II addresses the concept and function of fantasy as presented by J. R. R. Tolkien in his essay “On Fairy Stories”. This section also discusses Tolkien's understanding of art as well as how the scholar sees its role in society. Finally, part two reflects on Tolkien's views concerning story-making and his conception of literature's most important lesson, his notion that the stories we make are part of a larger narrative, which he calls the “Whole Story”. As a means to enrich the discussions proposed in this section, I depend on the scholarship concerning Tolkien's theories presented by Verlyn Flieger and on the Tolkienian studies organized by Stuart D. Lee.

Part III discusses how Tolkien uses the figure of the hobbits to bridge the gap between his fictional universe and the real world. This section also aims at connecting Tolkien's propositions concerning fantasy to the way he structured his *LOTR*. In this sense, it is largely concerned with the journeys the characters in the narrative undertake and the impact their coming and goings have on their personal development and the evolution of the plot. The discussions in this section of the work are based on Joseph Campbell's and Louis Markos's understanding of the imagery of the road and the hero's journey, on Joseph Pearce's investigation of hobbits' journeys and what he believes they may represent, and also on the guide to the geography of Middle-earth presented by Karen Fonstad.

As Shippey (2001) points out, “there is an Old English proverb that says [...] 'Everyone who cries out wants to be heard!' [...] Tolkien wanted to be heard, and he was. But what was it that he had to say?” (SHIPPEY, 2001, pp. IX - X). In this thesis not only do I discuss what Tolkien has to say in his works, but I also argue that the writer's messages are important not only for their literary value but also because they show us how literature and real life are intertwined and how one can benefit of undertaking the journeys it proposes. Literature in this study is seen as the product of a period as well as a source of wisdom where the readers learn and grow with the characters. Therefore, reality and fiction merge in this work as a way to show how literature is timeless and can speak to and help us through the centuries.

2 LITERARY RESPONSES TO THE DARK DAYS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

"I will not walk with your progressive apes,
erect and sapient. Before them gapes
the dark abyss to which their progress tends"
(Tolkien, *Mythopoeia*)

In this chapter, I discuss how Tolkien and some of his contemporaries addressed central issues of their time. I intend to demonstrate how these writers engaged with the past as a means to make sense of the chaos largely generated by the environment of great cultural change, which seems to have arisen during the 18th century, with the Industrial Revolution, and culminated with World War I, almost two centuries later. To do so, I consider what these changes meant for the social, economic and environmental structures of the time and how such changes generated, motivated and are reflected in the literary responses of the writers of the first half of the 20th century. Throughout the discussions in this section, I consider Nicolay's proposition that literature, mainly during times of growing turmoil and change, "can play an especially profound role in shaping the experience of the individual as well as society." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 1).

2.1The Shadow Rises

When Frodo finally starts to realize the dimension of the crisis Middle-earth is living through, his reaction is comprehensible: "I wish it need not have happened in my time.". (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 67). Most people, I dare say, would have reacted likewise if they were before a similar situation. Tolkien, in several letters written to his son Christopher Tolkien, addresses this issue: the author recognizes that they were born in a dark age and he expresses his profound sorrows concerning the material, moral and spiritual waste of war. However, the writer also communicates his feeling that if things had been different, they would not have known or really loved what they loved. In addition to that, the writer also believed that all things happened for a reason, nothing happened at random. In a letter from 1916, addressed to his friend Geoffrey Smith, Tolkien wrote that he felt that he and the other members of the T. C., B. S.[4] were destined to "rekindle an old light in the world; that the TCBS was destined to

[4] A literary club Tolkien formed during the time he studied at King Edward's school. It was a "tea club" the author formed with his friends Christopher Wiseman, Rob Gilson, and G. B. Smith. The acronym T. C, B. S. stood for "Tea Club, Barrovian Society" (inspired in the name of a tea shop in which they usually met). The

testify for God and Truth [...].”. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 10). These feelings, as Nicolay argues, has to do with the writer's belief that the difficult times they were living through

> only strengthened their devotion to all they loved and their conviction to do their part to make the world better with their own God-given abilities. This articulation of a sense of displacement may seem pessimistic, but in fact it implies Tolkien's deeper sentiments of acceptance and hope, acceptance of his place in the flow of time and hope that his efforts as one of “God's instruments” would bring light into a dark world. [...] This sense of destiny points to Tolkien's conviction that a providential order exists within the universe and gives meaning to all lives that pass in and out of the world." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 22).

Tolkien's conviction that one should be mindful of one's role in the world and that our actions are transformative and meaningful is not only present in his letters, but also in his fictional works. Replying to Frodo's anguished remark that he would that he had not to live through such a darkened time, Gandalf asserts: “So do I [...] and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.” (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 67). But let us leave Frodo and Gandalf pondering about the evil tides in Middle-earth and let us discuss why Tolkien believed he had been born in a dark age that threatened to destroy most of what he loved dearly.

One could probably argue that the shadow Tolkien asserted loomed over his age was intrinsically connected to the two great wars of the 20th century, and one would not be at all wrong: the writer not only witnessed the wars, but he fought in one of the most tragic battles of World War I, the Battle of the Somme, in France and he lost two of his dearest friends in it. In addition to that, the letters mentioned above were written during the war’s years. However, Tolkien also lived in a time prior to the wars and the author was clever enough to understand that the wars of his century were a consequence of a series of events: the shadow had started to arise long before he had been born.

Tolkien spent most of his childhood living in Sarehole, a small village around a mile from Birmingham. The years lived there were of fundamental importance to the development of the author's character and imagination. It was a pastoral paradise for him: the effects of industrialization had hardly touched the place, so much so traffic there consisted basically of occasional farm carts and tradesmen's wagons and it was “easy to forget the city that was so near.”. (CARPENTER, 2000, p. 28). Tolkien's love of nature and all living things derives mostly from the English countryside landscapes as experienced by him in Sarehole, a place

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group was of fundamental importance to Tolkien both as a writer and man. The group remained close, corresponding and commenting on each other's literary productions until around 1916 when two of its members were killed in the war.

that proposed the author, as Carpenter argues, adventures and solace. Years later, when he was already an adult, he was grieved to realize what the effects of industrialization and its "progress" had done to the idyllic landscapes of his childhood:

> I pass over the pangs to me of passing through Hall Green - become a huge tram-ridden meaningless suburb, where I actually lost my way - and eventually down what is left of beloved lanes of childhood, and past the very gates of our cottage, now in the midst of a sea of new red-brick. [...] [T]he crossing beyond the now fenced-in pool, where the bluebell lane ran down into the mill lane, is now a dangerous crossing alive with motors and red lights. The White Ogre's house (which the children were excited to see) is become a petrol station, and most of Short Avenue and the elms between it and the crossing have gone. How I envy those whose precious early scenery has not been exposed to such violent and peculiarly hideous change. (CARPENTER, 2000, p. 129-130).

The image of the countryside of his boyhood and the love he felt for its landscapes is a central theme in Tolkien's writings and is largely represented in his depiction of the Shire and its inhabitants. In the chapter "The Shadow of the Past", what is determinant in Frodo's acceptance to leave the Shire is precisely his love of the place. He knows that as long as he remains there with the One Ring, the place is in danger. The hobbit, then, leaves his homeland in order to save it and he recognizes that "as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, [he] shall find wandering more bearable; [he] shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if [his] feet cannot stand there again." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 82). This desire to save one's homeland, however, is not exclusive to Frodo; in fact, all the three other hobbits that accompany Frodo on his journey do so not only due to their friendship but also because of their sense of duty towards the place they live and love.

In addition to the representation of the pastoral paradise of his youth, however, Tolkien was careful enough to represent the dangers of progress unchecked, as well. When the hobbits come back to the Shire after their arduous pilgrimage to the East, they find their homeland almost wholly changed:

> Many of the houses that they had known were missing. Some seemed to have been burned down. The pleasant row of old hobbit-holes in the bank on the north side of the Pool were deserted, and their little gardens that used to run down bright to the water's edge were rank with weeds. Worse, there was a whole line of the new houses all along Pool Side, where the Hobbiton Road ran close to the bank. An avenue of trees had stood there. They were all gone. And looking with dismay up the road towards Bag End they saw a tall chimney of brick in the distance. It was pouring out black smoke into the evening air. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1314).

It is not difficult to recognize the similarities between this excerpt from *LOTR* and Tolkien's anguished remark quoted above. The author was well aware of the damage to the

environment inherent to most of the technological advancements largely fomented by the Industrial Revolution, whose origins lay very distant from the author's time. It is not surprising, however, to find similar representations in the works of a considerable number of authors from the 18th to the 20th century.

As early as 1794, the poetry of William Blake already showed signs of the costs of the rise of industrialism. His collection of poems *Songs of Experience*, as Nicolay argues, is filled with images of a London burdened by "pollution, poverty, and the exploitation of laborers, especially children." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 34). Such a depiction is well represented in his poem *London*:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,/Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,/ And mark in every face I meet/ Marks of weakness, marks of woe./ In every cry of every Man,/ In every Infant's cry of fear,/ In every voice, in every ban,/ The mind-forg'd manacles I hear./ How the chimney-sweeper's cry/ Every black'ning church appals;/ And the hapless soldier's sigh/ Runs in blood down palace walls./ But most thro' midnight streets I hear/ How the youthful harlot's curse/ Blasts the new-born infant's tear,/ And blights with plagues the marriage hearse. (BLAKE, 1994, p. 88).

William Wordsworth, who was Blake's contemporary, must have felt the effects of industrialization much deeper. Having spent his boyhood and most of his adult life in the natural haven of Lake District of North-western England, the poet's love of nature became part of his character and is a central theme in his poetry, which carries in it the imagery of the simple life lived in the countryside in harmony with the natural world, as it can be seen in poems such as *We Are Seven*, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, and *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*. His poetry, which was already marked by introspection, reached a profound tone of melancholy when the poet addressed humanity's increasing lack of connection with nature, as it may be seen in his *The World is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon*:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,/ Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:/ Little we see in Nature that is ours;/ We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!/ The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;/ The winds that will be howling at all hours,/ And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;/ For this, for everything, we are out of tune;/ It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be/ A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;/ So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,/ Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;/ Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. (WORDSWORTH, 1992 p. 53).

With Charles Dickens, things were somehow similar: the happiest years of his childhood were spent, as Davis (2006) suggests, in Chatham, a seaport town in Kent. The

novelist lived there from 1817 to 1823 and among the most significant memories of this period are the frequent strolls with his father in the countryside surrounding the town. During one of these walks, his father even commented that young Dickens could buy a house there in the future if he worked hard enough. These happy years, however, were short-lived: when Dickens's family moved back to London, the writer was not only deprived of the education he had started in Chatham, but he also had to work to help his family that was nearing financial ruin. Young Dickens's was sent to work at a shoe polish factory in 1824 and the period he worked there was, as the writer later wrote, humiliating:

> "'No words can express the secret agony of my soul [...] as I sunk into this companionship [...]; compared these everyday associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast'" (DAVIS, 2006, p. 3).

Such a drastic change in the author's life had a profound impact on his writing, mainly in his later novels such as *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, in which he often emphasizes the destructive and dehumanizing effects of industrialism. In *Bleak House*, Dickens depicts London as a diseased and noxious city, where the image of dark smoke obscuring the natural world is present in the very first paragraph of the novel:

> London. [...] Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth [...]. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes - gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. [...] Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollution of a great (and dirty) city. (DICKENS, 2001, p. 3).

The environment of London as proposed in *Bleak House* is admittedly hostile and unfit for the characters in the novel. Passages that compare the city to a source of infections, as Tracy (2008) suggests, are abundant in the novel: churchyards are pestiferous and obscene places from where malign diseases spread, the Chancery is a source of decay that results not only in the madness of characters such as Miss Flite, but also in the deaths of Richard Carstone and of Gridley, and the city itself is a place where barbarism and civilization walk together. Similarly, in *Hard Times*, Dickens's tenth novel, the writer depicts his fictional Coketown as an industry-driven town that never seems to sleep:

> Coketown [...] was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black [...]. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which

> interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down [...]. (DICKENS, 1994, p. 19).

In addition to criticizing industrialism, in *Hard Times* Dickens extends his criticism to utilitarianism that, with its ideals of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number", seemed to deny individuality. In the novel, the combined forces of these two ideals, as Humpherys (2008) argues, not only oppresses the individuals, but it also threatens to turn them into machines. The narrator describes the inhabitants of the town as all "like one another" doing always the same things, at the same hours, day after day without a single change. The children at the town's school, in addition to being often referred to as numbers, are not allowed to be imaginative and they are supposed to be taught "nothing but facts"; everything else should be "rooted out". Regarding the teachers of the school and the workers in the town, the first were "turned out at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles [...]." (DICKENS, 1994, p. 7), while the latter are seen merely as "hands".

Curiously enough, in the same year that Dickens published *Bleak House* (1853), Herman Melville published his short story *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street* in the U. S. A. Likewise, Dickens did in *Hard Times*, in his much-acclaimed short story Melville reflects upon the effects of industrialism in the individual. In it, we are introduced to Bartleby, a recently employed copyist. At first, his employer (the narrator of the story) is impressed by the scrivener's industriousness and the extraordinary quantity of writing he did. Bartleby worked, as we are told, "as if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on [the] documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sun-light and by candle-light." (MELVILLE, 2014, p. 12). Bartleby would have been the dream-come-true of the industrial world: he produces incessantly without complaining. However, as the narrator soon finds out, there is something even stranger about his new employee: he is hardworking, but he is not cheerful; he works sullenly, palely and mechanically as if, as Nicolay suggests, "[t]here is something inhuman about Bartleby's incessant industry. While the narrator does not yet realize it, he is beginning to see one of the negative effects of industrialism: the depersonalization and instrumentality of the individual." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 36). Bartleby is so much changed by the industrial world that he seems to have lost all desire for life as if he had been deprived of his humanity: he no longer eats, nor drinks or feels; and, as the broken machine he became, he no longer produces. All that was left for him was to wait for death, which comes at the end of the narrative.

Jumping in time, we finally reach the 20th century, which was to witness the devastating consequences of all the crisis of the previous centuries. T. S. Eliot, one of the most important and influential poets of that century, wrote prolifically about the costs of the so-called advancements of the previous centuries. His poetry often puts forth images of internal and external desolation, which is the case of his *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Prufrock, as Nicolay argues, "[...] dwells in a dirty industrialized London, the origins of which reach back to the time of Blake." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 34). Such a poem is filled with images of oppressive yellow fogs and smoke that rub against window-panes and slide along the streets, as well as of soot the falls from chimneys. The people in the poem are described as "eyes" and "arms that are braceleted and white and bare" (ELIOT, 1998, p. 8) and Prufrock knows them all already. The streets in the poem are lonely, while the restaurants and hotels are dirty, which renders human connection debased rather than life-affirming. Throughout the poem, it is possible to see Prufrock trying to connect with others, but at the same time getting paralyzed by fear of such a connection. This difficulty to connect with others, as well as the feelings of alienation and fragmentation, as it will be seen in the next sections, is a common theme in the literature of the first half of that century. However, it would not be accurate to say that only industrialism and the war contributed to the internal and external devastation that may be observed in the twentieth century; secularism also had a pivotal role to play.

As mentioned in the introduction of this work, scholars have suggested that the literature produced at the beginning of the 20th century seems to carry in it a desire to find something to believe and that could somehow replace an apparently dead religion. Stringer (1996) argues that the works produced by the writers of the literary Modernism responded, to a large extent, to the extreme changes in the structures of thought and belief proposed by the works of authors such as Charles Darwin and Friedrich Nietzsche. Darwin contributed with his *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859 and his *The Descent of Man*, released in 1871. Darwin's groundbreaking theories concerning evolution and the origins of human beings put in check the creationist theory as no theory had done before. Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, published between 1883 and 1892, and its propositions of the "death of God", which meant, to a considerable extent, that the Enlightenment eliminated the possibility of belief in God, and of the *Übermensch* "[...] placed the greatest emphasis on the individual rather than society or an aspect of it, such as religion". (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 13).

It is important to consider, however, that these great and radical changes meant not only that many of the previous values and beliefs had to be reconsidered, but also that a great number of them were abandoned in favor of the new ones. In this sense, the feelings of

alienation and fragmentation that arose after World War One are understandable since many of the old beliefs and traditions that used to anchor society were cast aside. What remained was, Nicolay argues, "[...] a profound emptiness, one that left many individuals feeling as though they had been set adrift in a universe that was at best indifferent and at worst hostile to humanity, a universe in which events happened at random." [5](NICOLAY, 2014, p. 13).

Tolkien was well aware of the new dark tides; he had been long mindful of the shadow that loomed on the horizon of the 20th century. When the shadow finally arrived, the writers of that century had to decide what to do with the time that was given them. The next section compares how these authors fought the dark days of their time.

2.2 External and Internal Waste Lands

A recurrent image in the literature of the first half of the 20th century is that of the world as a wasteland.[6] It may be seen, in greater or lesser degrees, in works such as Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*[7], and, of course, in Eliot's eponym poem *The Waste Land*. This frequently used image is, as Nicolay (2014) suggests, an objective correlative[8] to express these authors' sense of desolation after World War I. In this sense, the wastelands these writers present are not only external but also internal: it is not uncommon to find in their narratives characters that lose hope and despair before the dreary reality that surrounds them. It is important to point out, however, that even though these authors were reacting to the same crisis and depicting the world in a similar way, that does not mean that their answers were the same. One of the main differences between the works of these writers lies in the "[...] possibility of hope that their imaginative constructions offer for posterity" (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 7), which has to do, to a considerable extent, with the way they engaged with the past.

Tolkien was a philologist (probably one of the best of his time), which meant that he studied how languages and words develop. In this sense, the author had a keen interest in languages, which led him to be well versed in a considerable number of them, namely Old

[5] Nicolay is referring to the post-war state of things in Europe.
[6] Again, Europe is being used as reference.
[7] Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* was published between 1954 and 1955. However, the author composed the book between 1936 and 1949. In this sense, the work emerged from the same atmosphere as did the works of Fitzgerald, Woolf, and Eliot mentioned above.
[8] A term used by T. S. Eliot in his essay *Hamlet and his Problems* (1919) to describe a mode of using things that are external to the self (e.g.: a set of objects, an event, or a chain of events) as a means to express internal states or feelings.

English, Middle English, Old Norse, Latin, Greek, Gothic, among others. While studying these languages, Tolkien often came across ancient (literary) texts which not rarely called his attention. Among such texts were the Old Norse Elder Edda and the Old English poem *Beowulf*, which had, as it will be seen, a profound impact in his works. In addition to be a philologist, Tolkien was also a Roman Catholic from his youth: he was raised in the catholic faith first by Mabel Tolkien, his mother, and then, after her death when he was only 12, the author was raised by Father Francis Xavier Morgan, a friend of the family and Mabel's appointed tutor. According to Carpenter, Tolkien's devotion to Catholicism is on one level "[...] explicable solely as a spiritual matter; on another, it was bound up very closely with his love for the mother who had made him a Catholic and who had died (he believed) for her Catholicism." (CARPENTER, 2000, p. 133). The impact of the Bible and the gospels in Tolkien's works is so profound that in a letter to Robert Murray, from 1953, the writer argued that "*The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision." (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 172). Tolkien saw in the Biblical narratives, as well as in the ancient texts he studied, timeless values that contained, as Nicolay (2014) suggests, the wisdom of the past that can guide our present actions. Among these values are faith, the ability to move beyond the self and feel pity, compassion, and forgiveness towards the ones around us, and the courage to act for the good of the community rather than to the benefit of the self. The ideals of selflessness were, for Tolkien, as is demonstrated later in this work, the foundational stones upon which the human community rests.

Curiously, Nicolay argues that even though some of Tolkien's contemporaries shared similar concerns for the European world, they "[…] followed the intellectual trajectory of the nineteenth century, creating characters that are deeply self-absorbed and addressing themes of profound loss, faithlessness, disaffection, loneliness and alienation." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 17). Such themes, Nicolay claims, are present, for example, in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, in short stories of James Joyce, and in novels of Virginia Woolf and F. Scott Fitzgerald. This is not to say, however, that Tolkien did not address these topics, nor that some of his characters were not self-absorbed, that would be far from the truth, but in the majority his characters are selfless, and his narrative embodies the values of love, kindness, and humility. The difference is, to a considerable extent, not on what these writers wrote, but rather on how they did it. With that in mind, I would like to contrast and comment on excerpts in which the works of these writers depict the external and internal wastelands of their time. Since it was Eliot's *The Waste Land* that inspired the name of this section, I will address it first.

The Waste Land, since its publishing in 1922, has become one of the most studied modernist texts in English literature courses. It is, among many other things, a poem of breakdowns: there is the breakdown of the poetical form and language, there is psychological breakdown, and there is also the breakdown of the world. The aftermath of World War I left many of the ones that had lived through it devastated. In his four hundred and thirty-four-line-long masterpiece, Eliot managed to mirror the internal and external desolation of his time. The poem opens with lines from Petronius's *Satyricon* in which boys ask the Cumaean Sybil what she wants; the Sybil, who had requested longevity to Apollo, but forgotten to ask also for eternal youth, answers "I want to die". As one reads on, they are shown a barren landscape that offers no promise of hope, as it may be argued from the first stanzas of *The Burial of the Dead*: "April is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ Memory and desire, stirring/ Dull roots with spring rain./ Winter kept us warm, covering/ Earth in forgetful snow, feeding/ A little life with dried tubers." (ELIOT, 1998, p. 32-33). Instead of bringing joy and hope, as it often does, April in Eliot's poem brings torment since it stirs feelings and memories of the damage and suffering caused by the war. It seems to be a direct reference to the Spring Offensive of March 1918, a series of German attacks along the Western front that caused the death of thousands of people from each side of the conflict. Winter, on the other hand, brings comfort since, as Nicolay (2014) suggests, it brings forgetfulness with its snow that covers the poem's speaker consciousness.

The people the speaker sees crossing London Bridge seems to him to have been undone by death. In addition to that, towards the end of the poem, in the first stanza of *What the Thunder Said*, Eliot recalls the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and his subsequent death: "He who was living is now dead/ We who were living are now dying" (ELIOT, 1998, p. 47). It seems as if Eliot was alluding not only to Jesus' death on the cross but also to the death of religion in the 20th century. The belief in Christ is dead; industrialism, science, and the war won. The ones who made through all the losses of the war are now dying. Like Petronius's Sybil, they had asked for progress and technology, but when time finally showed the consequences of their reckless desires, all they could do was ask for death.

This sense of despair and loss, recurrent in Modernist works, is present not only in poetry but also in the novel and the short story. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is an example of that. In such work, as I intend to demonstrate, Woolf masterfully depicts the

complexity of modern consciousness through the stream of consciousness[9] technique. As opposed to the novels of the Victorian writers, such as George Elliot and Charles Dickens, that often focused on external details, Woolf, in *To the Lighthouse*, tries to convey how the characters in her work perceive their surroundings and how they make them feel inside.

To the Lighthouse opens with a day in the life of the Ramsay's family. All through the lengthy first chapter of the novel, "The Window", the narrator offers a careful insight into the character's feelings and concerns. It is curious to notice that even though the characters in this chapter are all gathered in the Ramsay's summer house in Scotland for a fancy dinner, in which one would expect they would strengthen their bonds while connecting with one another and celebrating their friendship, the characters, in fact, are painfully reminded of the inadequacy of human relationships, of their own insecurities and the difficulty of trusting one another. This chapter, as well as the rest of the book, is filled with scenes that represent the potential for meaning and harmony in human existence; however, these are merely glimpses of what could have been. What predominates in the novel is the sense of despair and hopelessness as expressed by Mrs. Ramsay: "With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that." (WOOLF, 1992, p. 124).

It is interesting to notice that even though the first part of the novel is set in a pre-WWI period (1910), there is a feeling of desolation that looms over the narrative all through the chapter; such feeling grows as the work progresses. Chapter two, "Time Passes", the shortest in the novel, takes place ten years after the dinner party in the Ramsay's Summer house. Much has changed since then: Mrs. Ramsay has died as well as two of her children. Prue died due to complications of childbirth while Andrew was killed by a shell explosion during the war. The house they used to spend the Summer had also changed; the only life in it, as we are informed, is a lesser wind; apart from that

> Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dining-room or on the staircase. Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round corners and ventured indoors. (WOOLF, 1992, p. 124).

[9]A writing technique made famous by James Joyce and largely used by modernist writers. It represents, as Drabble suggests, "the 'flow' of impressions, memories, and sense-impressions through the mind by abandoning accepted forms of syntax, punctuation, and logical connection." (DRABBLE, 2000, p. 975).

The way the house is depicted in chapter II, as Nicolay argues, bears profound meaning:

> In the world of the novel, the Ramsay's house has come to stand for the literal and figurative losses as well as feelings of emptiness brought about by World War I. On a literal level, the Ramsays have precipitously lost family members [...]. This personal loss corresponds to the loss of loved ones in the real world of Woolf and her readers. On a figurative level, the disembodied "airs" that wander about the house correspond to the feelings of aimlessness and rootlessness that were part of the modernist sensibility. In other words, the desolate house can be viewed as an objective correlative for the modern waste land and its inhabitants. (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 104).

Like Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the tone of Woolf's novel is one of resignation and despair. All through the novel, there are, of course, glimpses of hope such as in chapter II when Prue Ramsay is given in marriage in the middle of Spring. People ask, the narrator declares, what could have been more fitting than being given in marriage during the Spring, the season of life, of hope, of promise and persisting dreams. What could go wrong in such a season in which nature itself seems to declare that there is order in the world, that happiness prevails and good triumphs in the end? However, soon after being offered, the feeling of hope shatters and is taken away from the readers and is replaced by the premature death of Prue. After brief moments of hope, “we are faced again with inevitable loss and a sense of despair because any vision of transcendence is so fleeting that it seems more like an illusion than a reality.” (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 105-106). For all our penitence and toil, as Woolf suggests in her novel, we deserve only glimpses and fragments of divine goodness from which we can only try but never succeed in composing a perfect whole or reading clear words of truth. Amidst the post-war chaos in Woolf's novel, not only the world is fragmented, but the human beings are also shattered. Connection is almost impossible and all one can do is, as Lilly Briscoe does at the beginning of chapter III, “The Lighthouse”, wonder about what could it mean to carry on with a sense of being adrift and without being able to express one's feelings before the internal barrenness of the self and the external wasteland that the world had been turned to.

This sense of not being able to connect is also present in Fitzgerald's 1925 novel, *The Great Gatsby*; however, the author's tone and style are considerably different from Woolf's: Fitzgerald's narrative is full of dialogue and the author does not make use of the stream of consciousness technique, so famous among the modernist writers. To demonstrate the chaotic environment of the industrialized, post-war world, the American writer calls attention to the seeming decrease in the quality of human exchanges. Throughout the narrative, Nick

Carraway, the narrator, often finds himself in social gatherings filled with people he does not know and that are often depicted as worldly. In addition to not knowing the host, most people present in these gatherings seem also not to know why or how they ended up there, and their exchanges are, as Nick Carraway soon perceives, filled with a distaste for the concrete. Jay Gatsby, around whom most of the narrative revolves, is constantly offering large parties in his house as if in an attempt to fill empty spaces inside him. Amid this atmosphere of elusive communion and happiness, the narrator cannot help to feel otherwise than lonely:

> At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others—poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner—young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life. (FITZGERALD, 2007, p.89).

The Great Gatsby is a novel of appearances and narcissism that depicts a technological, consumerist and leisure society of superficial relationships dictated by wealth and materialism. In such a society, relationships are shaped by acquisitive urges, rather than by real human connection. Two clear examples of that are the way Daisy Buchanan expresses her love for Gatsby and how the news of Gatsby's death is received by the people in the narrative. As Guy Reynolds suggests in his introduction to a 1999 Wordsworth's edition of Fitzgerald novel, "when Daisy finally makes her love for Gatsby explicit, in a confession that is overheard and understood by Tom Buchanan, she doesn't tell Gatsby that she loves him, rather she comments on his appearance." (REYNOLDS, IN: FITZGERALD, 1999, p. XIII). The comment Reynolds is referring to is a simple "you always look so cool" that Daisy utters twice during a gathering at her house. Earlier in the narrative, when Daisy is visiting Gatsby, she is so affected by the number of shirts he possesses that she cries heartily: "[s]uddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. 'They're such beautiful shirts,' she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. 'It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before.'". (FITZGERALD, 2007, p. 114). From these examples, the superficiality of her love for Gatsby seems clear, so much so that when his death appears in the newspapers, she does not even appear at the funeral to pay the condolences. In fact, no one apart from Nick Carraway, Gatsby's father, an unnamed man, four or five servants, and a postman attend the funeral. Even though the narrator makes great efforts calling Gatsby's so-called close friends insisting that they come to say farewell to the deceased, they all refuse the request by giving a series of different excuses. The superficiality of human connection in the narrative is underscored by the contrast between, on one hand,

Gatsby's full house during his lavish parties and, on the other hand, the melancholy tone that precedes his death and the few people present in his funeral; if the house had been lively and full throughout most of the novel, in its end it seems unwelcoming: "[t]here was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere, and the rooms were musty, as though they hadn't been aired for many days." (FITZGERALD, 2007, p. 152). The relationships in the novel seem to be as barren as Fitzgerald's valley of ashes, the author's objective correlative for the modern world; in it the ashes "[...] take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air." (FITZGERALD, 2007, p. 64). Just like the "ash men", human connections in *The Great Gatsby* are frail and doomed to crumble.

If, on one hand, the works of Eliot, Woolf, and Fitzgerald mentioned above tend to emphasize alienation and despair and depict characters that have turned almost completely inward, the narratives of Tolkien, on the other, calls attention to the importance of fellowship and hope during periods of great toil and pain. The internal and external wastelands are present, in greater or lesser degrees, in all his works about Middle-earth; however, the characters' actions in front of adversity and of the damage done to the world diverge most profoundly from what is proposed in the works of his contemporaries mentioned above. The state of paralysis, so common in the narratives of the first half of the 20th century, rarely makes an appearance in the Tolkienian works. Tolkien knew that change required action, mainly collective action, that is why his narratives tend to underscore the importance and power of "the role of the individual in promoting and sustaining both the human community and the natural world in the face of those forces that would make a waste land of it." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 6). I intend to demonstrate how this is so first with examples from *The Hobbit* and then with excerpts of *LOTR*.

The Hobbit, published in 1937, tells the story of how Bilbo Baggins, a peaceful hobbit, "had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 4) for one of his kind. It is the account of how Bilbo managed to unite the peoples of Middle-earth in favor of a greater good. In it, Bilbo is recruited by a group of 13 dwarfs to go on a lengthy journey from the Shire, Bilbo's homeland situated in the Western region of Middle-earth, to the Lonely Mountains, located in the uttermost East, in order to reclaim the Dwarfs' home and treasure in the mountains, that had been taken from them by the ruthless and fearsome dragon Smaug. Even prior to the beginning of the quest, all the party knows that there is little hope of success and that the consequences of their attempt may be catastrophic; however, they also know that the little chance of success they have depends on

their efforts. Nonetheless, they start their pilgrimage hoping for the best and trusting on the success of their mission. However, when after much toil they approach the final stage of their quest and are faced with the wasteland that their homeland had become, hope, as the narrator tells us, starts to vanish from their hearts:

> It was a weary journey, and a quiet and stealthy one. There was no laughter or song or sound of harps, and the pride and hopes which had stirred in their hearts at the singing of old songs by the lake died away to a plodding gloom. They knew that they were drawing near to the end of their journey, and that it might be a very horrible end. The land about them grew bleak and barren, though once, as Thorin told them, it had been green and fair. There was little grass, and before long there was neither bush nor tree, and only broken and blackened stumps to speak of ones long vanished. They were come to the Desolation of the Dragon, and they were come at the waning of the year. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 235).

It is important to notice, however, that even when hope starts to die and all the dwarfs begin to think the quest has failed, Bilbo refuses to give up; from his persistence, a solution arises and the dragon, after causing much havoc and killing many of the citizens that lived in Lake-town, a small town nearby the Lonely Mountains, is killed by Bard[10]. With Smaug slain, the dwarfs reclaimed their dwelling in the mountains and also their treasure. However, as news of the dragon's demise spread, peoples from different regions of Middle-earth, thinking the dwarfs had been killed by the dragon, set forth to the Lonely Mountain to take a share of the treasure that lay there. Among these peoples was Bard, who was hoping to use part of the treasure to rebuild his city that had been utterly destroyed by Smaug. With Bard were also the elves from Mirkwood, who had learned about the disaster that had struck their friends from Lake-town, and were willing to help as well as claim a share of the treasure. Most of the Dwarfs, however, were unwilling to share any portion of their gold, not even with the people of Lake-town that had helped them reclaim their home and had suffered a great loss. The argument concerning the division of the treasure reaches so great a proportion that the dwarfs declare war to the people from Lake-town and the elves. However, when war between them is about to break, Bilbo and Gandalf[11] manage to call their attention to an imminent danger that threatened to destroy them all: a great host of goblins was marching towards them, seeking revenge from previews grievances and lusting for gold. Putting their differences aside, the elves, the men from Lake-town and the dwarfs unite to face the hosts of goblins, enemies of

[10] A resident of Lake-town who is a descendant of Girion, the last lord of Dale, a city situated in the valley between the south-western and south-eastern arms of the Lonely Mountain and that was destroyed by Smaug when it first came to that region.

[11] A spiritual being that is sent to Middle-Earth during the third age of that world to aid the free peoples of that world in the struggles against the evil powers of Sauron. While on Middle-Earth, he took the shape of an old wise man and was perceived as a wizard.

them all. By their union they manage, after great loss, to defeat the goblins' armies and "now the northern world would be merrier for many a long day. The dragon was dead, and the goblins overthrown, and their hearts looked forward after winter to a spring of joy." (TOLKIEN, 2014, p.338). After the victory, the quarrel over the treasure is settled, the dwarfs finally agree to share part of the hoard, and Bilbo, then, returns to his home in the West. Some years after his adventures, however, Gandalf and one of the dwarfs visit him; the hobbit, then, decides to ask them how things are going in the East and, to his delight, he is informed that

> [i]t seemed they were going very well. Bard had rebuilt the town in Dale and men had gathered to him from the Lake and from South and West, and all the valley had become tilled again and rich, and the desolation was now filled with birds and blossoms in spring and fruit and feasting in autumn. And Lake-town was refounded and was more prosperous than ever, and much wealth went up and down the Running River; and there was friendship in those parts between elves and dwarves and men. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 349-350).

It is interesting to notice how the possibility of hope and prosperity diverge from Tolkien's narrative to the ones of Eliot, Woolf, and Fitzgerald: while in the first the characters are seen coming together to overcome the hardships they are faced with as a way to restore order amidst the chaos, in the narratives of the latter the failure of communication and community is often underscored as the characters turn inward and are paralyzed by feelings of despair. If the Spring in Eliot's *Waste Land* and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* seems to fail to bring joy and hope, in Tolkien's work it is a sign of forthcoming plenitude and peace. These contrasts can be seen even more prominently in *LOTR*.

The plot of *LOTR* revolves, to a great extent, around the struggles and toils of the free peoples of Middle-earth against the powers of Sauron[12] and its subordinates that threaten to turn all the land in a wasteland. It tells mainly of how Frodo Baggins, Samwise Gamgee (Sam), Meriadoc Brandybuck (Merry), and Peregrin Took (Pippin), hobbits of the Shire, went on a journey hoping to save their homeland. Living in the western regions of Middle-earth, these specific hobbits[13] dwelt peacefully and undisturbed for long years in the Shire without any extensive knowledge of the affairs of the rest of the world. In fact,

> [...] in that pleasant corner of the world they plied their well-ordered business of living, and they heeded less and less the world outside where dark things moved,

[12] A spiritual being of the same rank as Gandalf, but that was seduced by Melkor, an evil entity that longed to subdue all living beings and become the sole ruler in that fictional world. After Melkor's demise during the first age of Middle-Earth, Sauron carried the malice and dark desires of his master on. In *LOTR*, Sauron is the chief enemy of the Free Peoples of Middle-Earth and the major threat to the world.

[13] For further information on the history of the hobbits, see section 3. 3 of this work.

> until they came to think that peace and plenty were the rule in Middle-earth and the right of all sensible folk. They forgot or ignored what little they had ever known of the Guardians, and of the labours of those that made possible the long peace of the Shire. They were, in fact, sheltered, but they had ceased to remember it. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p.6-7).

In this sense, the hobbits of the Shire only became aware of the darkness that was attempting to take over Middle-earth due to a powerful and mysterious ring that Bilbo Baggins had found during his adventures with the dwarfs (as told in *The Hobbit*) and brought home. At first the ring seemed to be just a magic ring that turned its wearer invisible, however, years after Bilbo's journey to the East, the wizard Gandalf discovers that the ring, now under the cares of Frodo, was the dangerous One Ring.[14]Gandalf, then, tells Frodo that as long as the Ring remains in the Shire, all its inhabitants are in mortal danger for Sauron, aware that his weapon had been found, sent forth his nine most powerful servants to search for it. Following Gandalf's advice, Frodo, bearing the Ring, leaves the Shire accompanied by his friends Merry and Pippin, and by his loyal servant, Sam. The first part of their journey takes them to Rivendell, the house of the half-elf Elrond, lord of that forest and a great ally of the free-peoples of Middle-earth against the dark forces of Sauron. There, a great council[15] is held and a group of nine companions, called the Fellowship of the Ring, is formed. The company is formed by the four hobbits, the wizard Gandalf, the elf Legolas, the dwarf Gimli, and the men Aragorn and Boromir, and their mission is to aid Frodo in his journey to Mount Doom, the place where the One Ring was forged and also the only place it can be destroyed.

During their many journeyings across Middle-earth, the characters in the Fellowship of the Ring must struggle against the growing desolation caused by Sauron and its servants, and also against their fears; the nine companions are aware that the success of their mission depends, on one hand, on their understanding of their duty towards their people and also on their capacity to endure the hardships they are faced with, and on the other hand, on their awareness that their hopes depend not only on individual effort but also on the power of fellowship, for "[i]ndeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p.453)

One of the themes that is often underscored throughout *LOTR* is that of the importance of human connection and fellowship, mainly during times of great distress and turmoil, so

[14] An artifact created by Sauron during the Second Age of Middle-Earth which he imbued with much of his will and power. Also known as the "Ruling Ring", it answered to Sauron alone and was capable of dominating all the other nineteen rings of power that were created during that age and also of controlling its bearers.

[15] Known as "The Council of Elrond", its main purpose was to discuss what should be the destiny of the One Ring. It was composed of representatives of all the Free Peoples of Middle-Earth.

much so that the group that sets from Rivendell[16] after the Council of Elrond is named "The Fellowship of the Ring". It is interesting to notice, however, what exactly this fellowship represents: in a broader sense, it is a group of people that unite as a means to accomplish a difficult and dangerous task; but in another sense, that is often overlooked, it is also a group formed by totally different individuals belonging from different races that have different cultures, languages, beliefs, and values who have decided to set their differences aside and let go of their personal desires, to follow an appointed path, for a common greater good. Starting with the four hobbits, they are not used to the dangerous life out of the Shire; more than that, they do not seem to know what to do, nor how to behave in the world beyond the borders of their homeland, so much so that they often feel helpless and regret their decision of joining the Fellowship:

> 'I wish I had taken Elrond's advice,' muttered Pippin to Sam. 'I am no good after all. There is not enough of the breed of Bandobras the Bullroarer in me: these howls freeze my blood. I don't ever remember feeling so wretched.' 'My heart's right down in my toes, Mr. Pippin,' said Sam. 'But we aren't etten yet, and there are some stout folk here with us. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 388).

As it may be argued from the excerpt above, the hobbits believe they do not possess the necessary courage that is needed to accomplish the task they decided to accept. Passages like the aforementioned, recur all through the narrative; however, none of the hobbits turn back or give up, both because they know they are not alone and also because they are somehow aware that they have a role to play in the affairs of Middle-earth.

Probably one of the most remarkable achievements of the Fellowship of the Ring in terms of human connection was its potential of settling one of the oldest and most long-lasting enmities in the history of Middle-earth, that between Dwarves and Elves. The grievances between these two peoples date back to the First Age of Middle-earth and were, at first, connected to their lust of the Silmarils, gems of immense beauty crafted by Fëanor, a renowned elfish craftsman and warrior of that time. This conflict, which had been greatly appeased by the beginning of the Second Age, was rekindled once more by Sauron, who managed to disseminate discord in these peoples' hearts. By this point in history onwards, Dwarfs and Elves started to regard each other with growing mistrust and rivalry. Curiously enough, there is a representative of each of these races in the Fellowship of the Ring, Legolas,

[16] An elven refuge founded by Elrond, lord of that city, during the Second-Age of Middle-Earth. Located East of the Shire, the city became the main center of elfish culture in Middle-Earth.

and Gimli. At first, as it may be argued from the excerpt below, they were resentful towards each other and had difficulties in cooperating:

> ‘Well, here we are at last!’ said Gandalf. ‘Here the Elvenway from Hollin ended. Holly was the token of the people of that land, and they planted it here to mark the end of their domain; for the West-door was made chiefly for their use in their traffic with the Lords of Moria. Those were happier days, when there was still close friendship at times between folk of different race, even between Dwarves and Elves.’ ‘It was not the fault of the Dwarves that the friendship waned,’ said Gimli. ‘I have not heard that it was the fault of the Elves,’ said Legolas. ‘I have heard both,’ said Gandalf; ‘and I will not give judgement now. But I beg you two, Legolas and Gimli, at least to be friends, and to help me. I need you both. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 395).

However, along their journey, little by little the elf and the dwarf learn to set past grievances aside and start to enjoy each other's company. In fact, towards the middle of the narrative, they are already very good friends. It is interesting to notice, though, that what makes such change in their behavior possible is, to a considerable extent, their understanding of the importance of placing the well-being of the collective before personal differences and animosities; such a notion may be noticed in Gandalf's discourse in the paragraph above: the wizard is aware of the historical conflicts between elves and dwarfs, but he also knows that thee Fellowship's best chance of success resides in their uniting and working together. In the face of the growing darkness and destruction represented by Sauron, hope lies in fellowship rather than on individuality.

Aragorn and Boromir are the representatives of the race of men in the Fellowship of the Ring. Similarly to Gimli and Legolas, at the beginning of their journey, these two characters do not trust each other fully: Boromir, a proud man of Gondor[17], son of Denethor, the steward of that city, wishes to take the One Ring, against the advice of Gandalf and Elrond that it must be destroyed, to his city and use it as a weapon against Sauron and its allies. Aragorn, heir to the throne of Gondor, on the other hand, listens to the wisdom of Gandalf and Elrond and accepts to help Frodo on his journey to destroy the Ring. This initial divergence of opinions generates, mostly in Boromir's part, a mild conflict between Aragorn and him. Such conflict is worsened when, later on in the narrative, Aragorn is elected leader of the company; driven by his pride and ardent wish to save his city and people from the frequent attacks of Sauron's legions, Boromir is reluctant to follow Aragorn's lead as well as to allow that the Ring be destroyed. Towards the end of book II, the character yields to temptation and tries to

[17] The southern kingdom of the Númenoreans, an ancient lineage of men and women descended from the First-Age of Middle-Earth. Founded near the end of the Second-Age, it was located west of Mordor, Sauron's realm. Because of that, it was constantly one of the chief aims of Sauron's malice.

take the Ring by force from Frodo, who had been appointed its bearer. When he finally realizes and regrets his folly, Frodo has managed to escape and is determined to leave the company and undertake the rest of the journey on his own. Soon after Boromir's act, the group is attacked by a horde of orcs and he dies valiantly defending Pippin and Merry, who, after his death, are taken as captives by the orcs. Despite his foolish attempt to claim the Ring to himself, Boromir's repentance takes the form of recognition of his wrong deed and subsequent attempt to amend it; these, as it may be argued from the excerpt below, are noble and redemptive acts that make Aragorn and him depart as friends:

> A mile, maybe, from Parth Galen, in a little glade not far from the lake he found Boromir. He was sitting with his back to a great tree, as if he was resting. But Aragorn saw that he was pierced with many black-feathered arrows; his sword was still in his hand, but it was broken near the hilt; his horn cloven in two was at his side. Many Orcs lay slain, piled all about him and at his feet. Aragorn knelt beside him. Boromir opened his eyes and strove to speak. At last slow words came. 'I tried to take the Ring from Frodo,' he said. 'I am sorry. I have paid.' His glance strayed to his fallen enemies; twenty at least lay there. 'They have gone: the Halflings: the Orcs have taken them. I think they are not dead. Orcs bound them.' He paused and his eyes closed wearily. After a moment he spoke again. 'Farewell, Aragorn! Go to Minas Tirith and save my people! I have failed.' 'No!' said Aragorn, taking his hand and kissing his brow. 'You have conquered. Few have gained such a victory. Be at peace! Minas Tirith shall not fall!' Boromir smiled. Which way did they go? Was Frodo there?' said Aragorn. But Boromir did not speak again. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 538).

The ninth character forming the Fellowship of the Ring is Gandalf. Having been sent to Middle-earth during the Third-age, this character's function is, to a great extent, to guide and help the Free-Peoples of that universe in the struggles against Sauron. Despite being an extremely powerful spiritual being, Gandalf never tries to exert his powers as a means to make others follow or obey him. As Rudd (2011) points out, his chief strategies to aid his companions is his good and moral counsels as well as his encouragement; he is largely regarded by the characters in *LOTR* as one of the wisest in the narrative, and one of the reasons for that has to do with his notions of despair, wisdom, and necessity:

> 'Thus we return once more to the destroying of the Ring,' said Erestor, 'and yet we come no nearer. What strength have we for the finding of the Fire in which it was made? That is the path of despair. Of folly I would say, if the long wisdom of Elrond did not forbid me.' 'Despair, or folly?' said Gandalf. 'It is not despair, for despair is only for those who see the end beyond all doubt. We do not. It is wisdom to recognize necessity, when all other courses have been weighed, though as folly it may appear to those who cling to false hope. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 350-351).

Gandalf recognizes the importance of keeping hope alive through dark times. In fact, the character's attitudes and discourse underscore the idea that hope of success lies greatly on agency and the recognition of its importance. Thus, throughout the narrative, he propels the other characters to action for he knows that idleness would result in the triumph of the enemy. In this sense, Gandalf seems to represent a kind of outer force that urges one to action and encourages one to fight the internal and external forces that tend to paralyze and alienate the human beings in the face of chaotic times.

With the acts and individuality of the characters in the Fellowship of the Ring, Tolkien manages to depict both the importance and benefits of communion as well as the dangers of self-absorption and inwardness in times of growing turmoil and distress. The author was not blind to the dangers of dark times: he was well aware that during periods of great crisis and chaos the human beings may become alienated to the point of cutting themselves off from community and, as a consequence feel paralyzed. However, the author seems to make a much stronger case for the power of union and the importance of agency during such times, so much so that it is, to a great extent, due to these aspects that, after much toil and hardships, the characters in *LOTR* manage to restore balance and well-being to Middle-earth.

Taking the discussions proposed in this chapter regarding the similarities and differences concerning the literary responses to the growing darkness of the 20th century, it may be argued that the main difference between the works produced by Tolkien and his contemporaries mentioned in this section has to do with the mode these writers chose to convey their ideas, as well as the possibility of hope their narratives offer for posterity and the importance of fellowship in the face of difficult times. Such difference is connected, to a great extent, to one of the characteristics Tolkien believed was intrinsic to most fantasy works, which is what he called the "sudden joyous turn", or "eucatastrophe"[18], which is connected to the fact that the author "saw each individual tale as a lesser stand-in for the greater narrative of salvation. In other words, his model for the structure of fantasy was Christian myth." (ATTEBERY, 2014, p. 2). In addition to that, as Nicolay points out, the Tolkienian works often reflect values rooted in "a belief in the fundamental goodness and decency of human beings, along with a profound faith in God." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 3). It is important to notice, however, that not only from the Christian tradition do Tolkien's models derive; as many scholars argue (SHIPPEY, 2001; FLIEGER, 2017; NICOLAY, 2014; ATTEBERY, 2014),

[18] A term coined by Tolkien to designate a sudden turn of the plot, often in the form of an unexpected act of grace, which secures the happy ending of the story. More attention will be given to this concept in chapter 2 of this work.

the author's narrative present elements from the Celtic, Norse, and Finnish traditions, as well as, and probably more importantly, from the eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*.

Tolkien was one of the greatest *Beowulf*' scholars of his time (and probably of all time); not only was he responsible for a full translation of that poem, but he also published one of the most relevant scholarly works about it, his essay *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*. In it, Tolkien argues that *Beowulf* is a meaningful expression of pagan Germanic warrior culture, which centrality resides on what he calls "the theory of courage, which is the great contribution of early Northern literature." (TOLKIEN, IN: NICHOLSON, 1963, p. 70). Such theory, as Rudd (2011) suggests, is founded on the belief that true courage is connected to keep fighting even when there seems to be no more hope left. This idea of courage is present not only in *Beowulf*, but also in the Old Norse poems of the Elder Edda, which Tolkien highly appreciated, and in most of the old texts the author held dear. In addition to that,

> [i]n Tolkien's fiction, most notably in *The Lord of the Rings*, he imagines a pre-Christian society in which a version of the Germanic warrior code becomes a virtue. The last stand of the Rohirrim at Helm's Deep, the desperate assault on the Black Gate of Mordor, and Frodo and Sam's desperate struggle toward Mount Doom despite their almost certain knowledge that the task is impossible and that they cannot escape alive, all are expressions of this Northern heroic code. Tolkien's characters respond to the apparent hopelessness of Sauron's threat in one of three ways: The weaker characters despair, as Denethor does; the more devious, swayed by a desire for power, choose to become as evil as Sauron himself, as Saruman, does; but the truly virtuous characters—Gandalf, Aragorn, Frodo Sam, Faramir, Eowyn—are determined to fight on despite the likelihood of ultimate defeat. Tolkien presents this kind of courage as the proper reaction to the loss of hope. (RUDD, 2011, p. 558).

Tolkien's decision to use fantasy as a literary mode may be connected to Attebery's (2014) notion that, while all kinds of fiction are simply fictional, fantasy narratives tend to be one more degree fictional than more realistic kinds of fiction. Such a claim, the scholar argues, has to do with the idea that fiction works metonymically while fantasy works metaphorically: the events in a fantasy narrative could not have happened in the real world, whereas the ones in more realistic fiction, although unreal, are tangible. In fantasy fiction we are invited to look at the characters and the world they belong "[...] as some sort of iconic stand-in for everyday life, rather than as an extension from it." (ATTEBERY, 2014, p. 35). In this sense, as I demonstrate in the following section, Tolkien's choice to use fantasy to address the issues of his time is connected both to his belief that this specific mode allowed one to

communicate their ideas more powerfully and also to his claims that this mode, in addition to offering fantasy to its readers, it also offered escape, recovery, and consolation.

3 THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE A FAIRY TALE

> ***"Fantasy, of course, starts out with an advantage: arresting strangeness."***
>
> (Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories")

This chapter discusses Tolkien's understanding of fantasy as proposed in his essay "On Fairy Stories". It addresses key concepts of the essay which are of great importance to a broader understanding of the author's creative process and his view concerning the everlasting importance of fantasy stories for society. This chapter also addresses how Tolkien's beliefs concerning story-making are present in his narratives mainly by focusing on the image of the hobbits and their function in the writer's works. Among the concepts discussed in this section are Tolkien's ideas of sub-creation, secondary world, inner consistency of reality, as well as his views of recovery, escape, and consolation, which he believed were the main functions of fantasy, and his concept of *Fäerie*, which is, as Flieger (2017) argues, probably the most important term in the author's lexicon and key to his theory and practice.

3.1 Approaching *Fäerie*

In an attempt to discuss the significance of Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" to his creative process, I believe it is of considerable importance to start by considering the title of the essay, which means, by casting some light on the author's idea of fairy stories. One of the three questions the writer endeavors to answer in his essay, even if partially, is related to what a fairy story is. In doing so, one of the first conclusions he reaches is that, curiously enough, this kind of story is not particularly about fairies, but in fact about what the author calls *Fäerie*, which is, as he argues, the realm in which fairies have their being. *Fäerie*, as Tolkien describes, is a perilous land filled with pitfalls and dungeons as well as "[...] 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." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 9). In addition to that, when addressing the

quality of fairy stories, the author claims that most of the good stories of this kind involve the *aventures* of men in the perilous realm of *Fäerie*. It is important to call attention to the fact that rather than using the English word *adventures*, Tolkien opted for using the French term *aventure*, which, as Flieger (2017) points out, goes beyond what the term adventure proposes: the word *aventure* is similar in sound and spelling to the Old French term *avant,* which means" forward"; therefore, it may be argued that *aventure* connotes "moving into danger, the perilous unknown, the extraordinary, and ultimately the supernatural; that is to say, the secondary or otherworld called by medieval poets *la forêt des aventures* and by Tolkien the perilous realm of Fäerie." (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 34).

Taking the notion above into consideration, it is possible to argue that (1) fairy stories are stories that take place in the realm of *Fäerie* and that (2) in such realm things that in our world are seen as fantastic and extraordinary take place. In other words, fairy stories are, as Attebery (2014) and Clute (1996) point out, fantasy stories and *Fäerie*, on the other hand, is the realm in which fantastic events are made possible, it is the realm of fantasy. Fantasy, as I argued in the introduction of this work, is concerned with (but not limited to) possibility; this is not to say, of course, that fantasy occupies itself with things that are possible in the real world, but rather that it is connected with the power of giving to imagination and imagined things what is called Secondary Belief, " [...] a belief that accepts the inner reality of the story and believes in its "truth" as long as the reader's mind is there within that story's bounds." (RUUD, 2011, p. 344). Inducing such kind of belief, however, demands great skill; it demands, as Tolkien (2001) points out, that the story-makers prove themselves successful sub-creators, which means that they must create a secondary world, the world their stories take place, in which the readers' minds can enter. In such secondary worlds, the stories and events narrated, unlikely as they may be, are regarded as true, mostly because they follow the laws of such worlds. To such quality Tolkien refers as "inner consistency of reality" and concerning its relationship with Fantasy, he argues that:

> Fantasy has also an essential drawback: it is difficult to achieve. Fantasy may be, as I think, not less but more sub-creative; but at any rate it is found in practice that “the inner consistency of reality” is more difficult to produce, the more unlike are the images and the rearrangements of primary material to the actual arrangements of the Primary World. [...]Anyone inheriting the fantastic device of human language can say *the green sun.* Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough—though it may already be a more potent thing than many a “thumbnail sketch” or “transcript of life” that receives literary praise. To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. Few attempt such difficult tasks. But when they are attempted and in any

> degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 48-49).

Such rare achievement mentioned by Tolkien is connected to a quality that, according to the author, to which fantasy aspires and which he refers to as enchantment. Therefore, it may be argued that fantasy allows that imagined things are given secondary belief by an author's creation of a secondary world; such belief, however, depends on the author's ability of producing enchantment, which is intrinsically connected to the writer's skill of giving to its secondary world an inner consistency of reality. That is why Tolkien argues that we, mortal human beings, are only present in the *Fäerie* realm if we are enchanted. Our immersion in such realm is deeply connected to the power of fantasy narratives of producing enchantment, the doors to that kingdom. Such idea is connected to the derivation of the world *fäerie* itself, which, as Fliger (2017) argues, comes from the Old French *fae* or *fée* (fairy) joined by the suffix *ery*/*erie*: when one of these suffixes is added to the root noun *fae*, they extend the noun to a process or state, so we have *fay-ery* which means both the practice of enchantment and the state of being enchanted.

Tolkien believed that fantasy was a natural human activity, which has to do, to a large extent, with the idea that it offers us a kind of consolation and satisfaction to some of our old ambitions and desires, such as some people's wishes to visit the deep seas, to fly like a bird, to converse with other living things, or even what Tolkien called our oldest and deepest desire: the Escape from Death. Such wishes and desires may be accomplished through fantasy stories largely due to, as the epigraph of this section indicates, their advantage of arresting strangeness. Tolkien believed that fantasy narratives had, to a considerable extent, an advantage over more realistic texts because of their capacity, as Flieger (2017) suggests, of at the same time alienating and capturing the attention of readers. Such capacity is intrinsically connected with the potential of fantasy of presenting things different than they are or non-existing in our world and making them credible and consistent in a secondary world; in this sense, writers may, as Tolkien suggests, take green from grass and blue from the sky and make “new form”:

> We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the belly of the cold worm. But in such “fantasy,” as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 22-23).

When a writer places these imagined things, inconceivable in the real world, in the realm of *Fäerie*, they are, somehow, making them possible; such power is, as Tolkien points out, "[a]n essential power of Faerie [...] the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of 'fantasy.'" (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 23). By making these imagined things possible in a secondary world, writers are fulfilling another desire that may be fulfilled through fantasy: the desire for sub-creation. Tolkien, as mentioned before, was a Roman catholic which means that he believed that the world and all things in it were made by a Creator (i.e.: God) and that, therefore, this God was the only entity capable of creating new forms and things; the human beings, in this sense, were only capable of a lesser kind of creation, namely sub-creation. Tolkien describes this kind of creation as the process by which an artist creates an internally consistent secondary world. In addition to that, the author believed that through such process human beings could, somehow, emulate the original Creator and restore His image, in which we, human beings, were made. Tolkien expressed these ideas not only in his essay "On Fairy Stories", but also in his poem *Mythopoeia*, which he wrote in response to his contemporary writer and friend C. S. Lewis, who had claimed that myths were lies "breathed through silver". An excerpt of such poem that summarizes Tolkien's views on sub-creation goes as thus:

> The heart of man is not compound of lies,/ but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,/ and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,/ Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed./ Disgraced he may be, yet is not dethroned,/ and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned,/ his world-dominion by creative act:/ not his to worship the great Artefact,/ man, sub-creator, the refracted light/ through whom is splintered from a single White/ to many hues, and endlessly combined/ in living shapes that move from mind to mind./ Though all the crannies of the world we filled/ with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build/ Gods and their houses out of dark and light,/ and sow the seed of dragons, 'twas our right/ (used or misused). That right has not decayed./ We make still by the law in which we're made." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 87).

Fantasy, then, is a natural human activity, it starts with the advantage of arresting strangeness, and it also fulfills the human desire for sub-creation. Despite the feelings of unreality that the world "fantasy" may evoke and the idea that one of its quality is that of arresting strangeness, Tolkien claims that fantasy narratives are largely made of the real world. However, if the artist proves a good craftsman, they can (re)shape the elements present in that world so that they appear in the secondary world in a greater light:

> [b]y the forging of Gram cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; in the Trees of the Sun and Moon root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory. And actually fairy-stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these

> simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 59).

Given these ideas, it is interesting to think that one of the main claims of people who dislike fantasy concerns the idea that it is unreal. Tolkien argues that such a claim is largely connected to the arresting strangeness of the genre; in this sense, the same advantage point of that art seems to be also one of its greatest drawbacks. Largely due to that, as the author points out, there is a tendency that connects fantasy with either dreaming (in which there is no art) or mental disorders such as delusions and hallucinations, which cannot be controlled. Curiously enough, a further quality of fantasy that Tolkien underscores is its capacity of helping us seeing more clearly, which is deeply connected with part of the solace that the author believed fantasy narratives could offer: recovery and escape. Considering that these aspects will be dealt with later in this work, presently just a brief comment will be made about them. Both these qualities may be associated with what Tolkien called the "faces of fantasy stories", which are the Mystical towards the Supernatural, the Magical towards Nature, and the Mirror of scorn and pity towards Man. The author claims that while the essential face of *Fäerie* is the Magical, the other two may also appear in variable degrees according to the storyteller's choice. One of the characteristics of the Magical face, as Tolkien points out, is its ability of working as a "*Mirour de l'Omme* ", to use the author's term; through such mirror, readers may see themselves reflected on the characters in the fantasy narratives and, therefore, see aspects of themselves that they had forgotten or that they had not been aware of. In this sense, through the Magical face of *Fäerie* readers may (re)gain a clearer view of reality, which has to do with the recovery Tolkien believed fantasy stories offered. Regarding escape, many critics and scholars have argued that it implies denial; however, it would be more accurate to say that it implies distance: fantasy narratives allow that we see not only beyond ourselves, but also beyond the situation we find ourselves in. Like recovery, that helps us see more clearly, escape allows us to see further and, therefore, see perspective and hope where once we thought there was only chaos and defeat. Flieger aptly summarizes Tolkien's arguments concerning the benefits of fantasy stories and the view of critics towards them by calling attention to two points Tolkien makes in his essay "On Fairy Stories":

> That so significant a branch of modern fiction as fantasy should be so misconstrued says more about the naysayers than about the works themselves, whose visions of alternative reality [...] have been and still are read by adults and children alike.

> Although “On Fairy-stories” anticipated Wilson and Greer[19] by several decades, Tolkien's arguments show that he was well aware of the elitist intellectual high ground claimed by both. “On Fairy-stories” directly confronts such disdain with such arguments: first pointing out that the distinction between those who appreciate imaginative literature and those who do not is more a difference of taste than of age [...], and second refuting the equally unexamined assumption that escape implies denial rather than distance and instead asserting that the latter can offer perspective and foster new perception. Far from avoiding reality, Tolkien declares, fantasy works to let us see it more clearly. (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 33).

By working metaphorically, fantasy narratives aid writers to convey their messages more powerfully and readers to internalize them more easily. In other words, as Attebery (2014) believes, fantasy has the potential of creating metaphors that communicate truths which the conscious mind either cannot comprehend or fears to face. Attebery's claims concerning fantasy are similar to Tolkien's, who believes, as it was already mentioned, that fantasy is a form of art that is, at the same time, difficult to achieve and starts with an advantage over more realistic narratives; thus, when such art is achieved, it is, the author argues, the most potent. In addition to that, the writer felt that fantasy narratives had an essential role to play in society, mainly during times of great distress, so much so that, on a personal level, the author stated that his taste for fantasy stories was quickened to full life by war. Among all the qualities of fantasy narratives, the author called attention to their value as a form of art capable of offering four things: fantasy, which was discussed in this section, as well as escape, recovery, and consolation, which will be the focus of the next.

3.2 Recovery, Escape, and Consolation

In the introduction of this work I argued that the functions of fantasy as well as the appeal of fantasy narratives are connected to the way fantasy may be used to address problems in real life, the possibilities fantasy narratives create, their applicability, and the solace offered by most of them. The first of these was addressed mostly in section one, while the second and the third were given attention in the previous section. The present section is concerned mostly with the fourth item, the solace offered by fantasy narratives, namely, as Tolkien believed, escape, recovery, and consolation. However, before addressing these three items which Tolkien argued were the central functions of fantasy stories, I would like to go back to my claim that fantasy relates to possibility and contrast it with what Tolkien says about fantasy stories and desirability.

[19] Two intellectuals of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century that claimed that Tolkien’s fiction had no literary value due to its use of fantasy and popularity.

In the essay "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien argues that fantasy stories were primarily concerned with desirability, rather than with possibility. Before such a claim, it seems pertinent that my idea of possibility and Tolkien's be discussed. The author's affirmation is deeply connected with Andrew Lang[20]'s assertion that the great question children ask when they are read a fantasy story is "is it true?". Tolkien, who had read Lang's "Fairy Books" as a child and as an adult, challenged the writer's proposition by declaring that the enjoyment of a story was not connected to the possibility that it could happen in the real world:

> I had no special "wish to believe." I wanted to know. Belief depended on the way in which stories were presented to me, by older people, or by the authors, or on the inherent tone and quality of the tale. But at no time can I remember that the enjoyment of a story was dependent on belief that such things could happen, or had happened, in "real life." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 40).

Therefore, as it may be argued from the excerpt above, Tolkien's idea of possibility was intrinsically connected to the suggestion that the events in fantasy stories could happen in real life. My idea of possibility, on the other hand, is related to the power fantasy has of giving to imagined things a sense of reality through the creation of an internally consistent secondary world. Such idea seems to me to relate to Tolkien's concept of desirability, which, as he claims, is connected to the potential of fantasy stories of at the same time awakening and satisfying some of the human beings' desires, such as the ones mentioned in the previous section (i.e.: the desire of conversing with other living things) as well as the desire for a glimpse of "Other-worlds" which was, according to the writer, at the heart of the desire of *Fäerie*. Tolkien, as a child (and probably as an adult, too) did not wish or long to see dragons in real life, nor did he want them "[…] intruding into [his] relatively safe world, in which it was, for instance, possible to read stories in peace of mind, free from fear." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 41-42). However, the author felt that the secondary worlds in which dragons were possible, even though full of peril, were much richer and more beautiful, thus waking a desire for the glimpsing of such worlds. In other words, "[t]he dweller in the quiet and fertile plains may hear of the tormented hills and the unharvested sea and long for them in his heart. For the heart is hard though the body be soft." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 42)

The matter of the different meanings the term "possibility" being settled, I would like to turn now to the main focus of this section: the solace fantasy and fantasy narratives offer. Tolkien spends around one-third of his "On Fairy Stories" discussing what he calls the values

[20] A Scottish evolutionary anthropologist, folklorist and writer of the nineteenth century known for the works *Custom and Myth* (1884), *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (1887) as well as the 12 colored Fairy Books (1889-1910).

and functions of fantasy stories, which he argues to be the most important consideration regarding this kind of narrative.[21]The author concludes, then, that among all the riches these stories may offer, three central elements should be considered: escape, recovery, and consolation. The reasons the author may have had to highlight these three functions are worth considering.

Tolkien was a war veteran and, at the time he wrote the essay "On Fairy Stories", he had fought in one of the bloodiest battles of WWI, the battle of the Somme and he lived to see the devastating consequences of such conflicts to both humanity and the natural world. During the pre, inter, and post-war years, the writer saw much of what he loved and cherished destroyed: not only was the natural world immeasurably stained and harmed, but the war also took the lives of two of Tolkien's best friends, Rob Gilson and G. B. Smith, who were both members of the T. C., B. S., the literary group Tolkien formed in the days of his youth. Considering the growing chaos and fragmentation that reached their apexes with the breaking of the War, it is understandable why the author decided to turn to fantasy narratives, not only as a reader but also to a larger extent as a writer, as a means to find some comfort and reassurance. In a letter from 1944, written as a response to his son, Christopher Tolkien, who was undergoing pilot training in South Africa during the WWII, Tolkien somehow explains the reasoning behind his decision to turn to fantasy writing in the face of the dark times he was living through:

> I think if you could begin to *write* [...] you would find it a great relief. I sense amongst all your pains (some merely physical) the desire to express *your feeling* about good, evil, fair, foul in some way: to rationalize it, and prevent it just festering. In my case it generated Morgoth and the History of the Gnomes[22]. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 78)

Tolkien advised his son to do exactly what he had done during WWI: write as a means not only of regaining perspective amidst the chaos he found himself in but also of preventing himself from becoming alienated by it. As Flieger points out,

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[21] At the beginning of "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien states that throughout the essay he will address three questions that he believes that anyone who ventures to talk about fantasy stories should attempt to answer, namely (1) what are fantasy stories?; (2) what is their origin?; and (3) what is their function? Towards the end of the essay, when he starts addressing the third question, he points out that it is the most important of the three.

[22] Tolkien was referring to his still unpublished *The Silmarillion*, which was at the foundation of all his other works about Middle-Earth and which was an account of the early days of Tolkien's fictional universe. The seeds of this vast work started to flourish during the WWI years, being some pieces of it written, as the author claims, "in dugouts under shell fire". Even though it was published posthumously, in 1977, after both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, it is concerned with events in Tolkien's secondary world that took place prior to the adventures of the other two books.

> [...] the Silmarillion and its offshoot, *The Lord of the Rings*, do indeed express his feeling about some very big issues of "good and evil, fair and foul," and his writing probably did much to prevent them festering. Among other things, Tolkien's war experience helped to sharpen his developing interest in what might seem the opposite of the gritty world of war, the world of imagination. (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 49).

Therefore, Tolkien decided to use the world of imagination, the world of fantasy, as a road to reaching a clearer understanding of the ongoing events of the twentieth century. It is interesting to notice, as Flieger (2017) argues, that the word "rationalize" which Tolkien uses in his letter, when its meaning is taken literally, means "to bring into accord with reason or cause something to seem reasonable". Fantasy, the mode chosen by Tolkien to convey his ideas, is seldom associated with rationality; however, the author believed that fantasy is largely made out of the real world and, in addition to that, that through the glimpsing of things present, similar, or even different from the ones in the primary world, in a secondary world, helps us regain a clearer view of things as "we are (or were) meant to see them - as things apart from ourselves." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 58). Such claims lead to the first function of fantasy stories as suggested by the author: Recovery.

In the first chapter of this work, I argued that one of the many consequences of the growing industrialism and secularism, as well as the breaking of WWI, was the strong impact they had on people's capacity of forming connections. In this environment of great changes and losses, things were perceived differently; driven by a lust for whatever advances the industrial, technological, and scientific fields proposed, human relationships with their fellow beings and with the natural world became estranged. In addition to that, the devastation resulting from these advances as well as from the first Great War, to a large extent, frequently alienated people and made them turn inward. Such a state of things needed a kind of renewal; not the kind of renewal proposed by science or the industry, though; but rather the renewal which Tolkien believed was proposed by fantasy stories: the world needed recovery. Such recovery proposed by fantasy narratives, the author argued, included both a return and renewal of health, as well as a (re)gaining of a clear view. "We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses - and wolves." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 57). By seeing how things are organized in a secondary world, how people relate to one another and with nature in such a universe, one is prompted to realize how these things are in the real world and, then, maybe, return to a prior, healthier, state. One reads, for example, about how hobbits and elves live in

harmony with the natural world and how beneficial such a relationship may be, and then realizes how alienated from nature one has become and how much one is missing because of that; one follows the adventures and dangers of the nine companions of the Fellowship of the Ring, and then becomes aware of the importance of human communion in the face of adversity. Such metaphorical face of fantasy narratives also calls our attention to the dangers of certain attitudes and behavior; the lust for power of Saruman and the consequences of the wars waged by Sauron may be seen as a warning to the dangers of uncontrolled progress and industrialization unchecked and also of the devastating effects of war. The excerpt below, from the chapter "The Road to Isengard" of *LOTR*, illustrates the desolation of the characters as they journey through the once green Wizard's Vale, the land inhabited by Saruman, and witness the wasteland it has become:

> Dimly through the mists they could descry the long arm of the mountains rising on their left. They had passed into Nan Curunir, the Wizard's Vale. That was a sheltered valley, open only to the South. Once it had been fair and green, and through it the Isen flowed, already deep and strong before it found the plains; for it was fed by many springs and lesser streams among the rain-washed hills. and all about it there had lain a pleasant, fertile land. It was not so now. Beneath the walls of Isengard there still were acres tilled by the slaves of Saruman; but most of the valley had become a wilderness of weeds and thorns. Brambles trailed upon the ground, or clambering over bush and bank, made shaggy caves where small beasts housed. No trees grew there; but among the rank grasses could still be seen the burned and axe-hewn stumps of ancient groves. It was a sad country, silent now but for the stony noise of quick waters. Smokes and steams drifted in sullen clouds and lurked in the hollows. The riders did not speak. Many doubted in their hearts, wondering to what dismal end their journey led. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 722)

Saruman, a wizard of the same order as Gandalf, once cared for the natural world and all the living things. However, his desire for power and progress drove him away from his main purpose in Middle-earth, that of aiding the free peoples of that land in the battles against the forces of Sauron that threatened to enslave them and turn the natural world into a dismal waste. In an age that had witnessed the devastating effects of technological advances in the fields of science and industry used to ill purposes, Tolkien's depiction of these dangers in his narrative may have helped his contemporaries recover a clearer view of the problems of their time and help them become mindful of the consequences of certain attitudes and behavior. In addition to addressing issues such as the ones mentioned above, Tolkien's narratives also discuss the impact of wars, which in his works derive mainly from the desire of dominance over others and greed for gold and power. The "Battle of the Five Armies", which takes place in *The Hobbit* is caused mostly due to the dwarves lust for riches, while the wars in *LOTR* are the result of Sauron's desire to rule over all other living things and exert his will over them. In

both narratives, the aftermath of the conflicts results in what Tolkien (2000) referred to as spiritual, moral, and material wastes. The view Frodo and Sam have when they finally approach the lands that lay before Mordor offers an interesting depiction of Tolkien's argument above:

> Before them dark in the dawn the great mountains reached up to roofs of smoke and cloud. Out from their feet were flung huge buttresses and broken hills that were now at the nearest scarce a dozen miles away. Frodo looked round in horror. Dreadful as the Dead Marshes had been, and the arid moors of the Noman-lands, more loathsome far was the country that the crawling day now slowly unveiled to his shrinking eyes. Even to the Mere of Dead Faces some haggard phantom of green spring would come; but here neither spring nor summer would ever come again. Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and grey, as if the mountains had vomited the filth of their entrails upon the lands about. High mounds of crushed and powdered rock, great cones of earth fire-blasted and poison-stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows, slowly revealed in the reluctant light. They had come to the desolation that lay before Mordor: the lasting monument to the dark labour of its slaves that should endure when all their purposes were made void; a land defiled, diseased beyond all healing [...]. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 825).

Martha C. Sammons argues that secondary worlds may work as mirrors or metaphors for our own; therefore, things that happen in a fantasy universe often have some applicability in the primary world. The scholar believes that by placing things in a different setting, secondary worlds help us see the primary world from a different perspective. “By showing us things in a different way, the other world sheds light on our world and helps us return to it with renewed vision.” (SAMMONS, 2010, p. 166). So is the Recovery proposed by fantasy narratives. However, if on one hand Recovery is concerned with regaining a clearer view of things, Escape, on the other hand, is deeply connected with, but not limited to, reaction.

Tolkien starts his considerations about Escape by pointing out that for him the term has a different meaning from the one literary critics of the author's time, such as Edmund Wilson, Germaine Greer, and Philip Toynbee, often used to justify their belief that fantasy narratives were inferior to other kinds of fiction. The literary critics of Tolkien's time frequently connected fantasy narratives with escapism, which, to a considerable extent, as Sammons (2010) argues, implies, on one hand, refusal to recognize certain things, such as death and sorrow, and, on the other hand, an escape from one's duties and responsibilities. Tolkien, on the other hand, viewed the escape fantasy narratives propose as a form of longing for change. To illustrate his claims concerning escape and escapism, Tolkien compares the first with the “Escape of the Prisoner” and the latter with the “Flight of the Deserter”. For the writer, a person who is imprisoned should not be scorned for trying to get out and go home,

nor for thinking and talking about things other than jailers and prison walls. Such non-conformity with the state of things and the desire for change, as the author argues, do not make the world outside the prison less real. Likewise, a person that finds themselves in a state of things that is not favorable or desirable, should not be blamed for trying to make things better nor for reading narratives, such as *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, that prompt readers to action with messages of hope and courage that demonstrate that things may change for the better even in the face of great adversity. In this sense, the escape fantasy narratives propose provides an escape from the ugliness of the dark days and times one may find themselves in. As the author proposes, the twentieth century was an age of

> [...] 'improved means to deteriorated ends'. It is part of the essential 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. [...] But there are also other and more profound "escapisms" that have always appeared in fairy tale and legend. There are other things more grim and terrible to fly from than the noise, stench, ruthlessness, and extravagance of the internal-combustion engine. There are hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 65-66).

If on one hand, then, the "Escape of the Prisoner" may be associated with longing and reaction, an escape back into the reality of things, the "Flight of the Deserter", on the other hand, is largely connected with denial to accept the state of things, an escape out of reality. Therefore, this latter kind of escape, since it does not prompt one to action (apart from desertion in itself), it does not promote change. It seems to me that this second and not so desirable kind of escape is largely related to despair, a reaction that often precedes desertion: during times of great crisis, the ones who lose hope are often unable to see beyond the dark moments; then, instead of working towards a solution, they often despair and flee. An example of the "Flight of the Deserter", may be seen in the figure of Denethor, father of Boromir and the steward of Gondor: in the face of the force in arms of the hosts of Sauron, who march from Mordor to assail Gondor, Denethor, instead of gathering the remaining strength of his own army as a means to resist the enemy's attacks, he opts for abandoning all hope and his people and committing suicide, thus escaping from his duties and responsibilities as a steward. Gandalf, who believes despair is only for the ones that see the end beyond all doubt and that wisdom is connected to recognizing necessity, prompts Denethor to action:

> 'Come!' said Gandalf. 'We are needed. There is much that you can yet do.' Then suddenly Denethor laughed. [...] 'Pride and despair!' he cried. 'Didst thou think that the eyes of the White Tower were blind? Nay, I have seen more than thou knowest, Grey Fool. For thy hope is but ignorance. Go then and labour in healing. Go forth

> and fight! Vanity. For a little space you may triumph on the field, for a day. But against the Power that now arises there is no victory. To this City only the first finger of its hand has yet been stretched. All the East is moving. And even now the wind of thy hope cheats thee and wafts up Anduin a fleet with black sails. The West has failed. It is time for all to depart who would not be slaves.' 'Such counsels will make the Enemy's victory certain indeed.' Cried Gandalf. 'Hope on then!' laughed Denethor. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1117-1118).

Considering the arguments above, it may be argued that the escape Tolkien believes fantasy narratives provide helps one keeping hope alive and acting even in the face of imminent defeat. Concerning the longing this kind of story awakens, in addition to being connected with a desire for change, it is also connected with what C. S. Lewis calls our desire for a far off country, a glimpse of other-worlds: "[...] a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience." (LEWIS, 2001, p. 30). Such longing, as Sammons (2010) believes, is not simply for something that does not exist, but rather for a transcendent world. Therefore, the escape provided by fantasy narratives is also a form of wish fulfillment. Such quality is connected with the last of the three items Tolkien regarded as the essential virtues of fantasy narratives: consolation.

Towards the end of "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien argues that if on one hand, escape and consolation are naturally closely connected, on the other hand, there is a central distinction between them: while the consolation provided by the first is largely linked to the imaginative satisfaction of ancient desires (e.g.: the desire for a glimpse of other-worlds or of conversing with other living things), the second is deeply concerned with what the author calls "the Consolation of the Happy Ending", which he ventures to claim that all complete fantasy stories must have. For such a kind of consolation, the author coins a specific name: *Eucatastrophe*[23], the "sudden joyous turn" or the joy of the happy ending. For Tolkien, this consolation, which is characterized by a sudden and miraculous grace that is bestowed upon the characters in the narrative in the face of imminent defeat, is the highest function of fantasy narratives. *Eucatastrophe*, however,

> […] does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*[24], of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 69).

[23] As Flieger (2017) points out, Tolkien's *Eucatastrophe* is derived from the Greek word *katastrephein*, *kata* (down) and *strephein* (turn). By adding the prefix "*eu*-" (good), Tolkien changed the negative meaning of the original word to a positive one: the "good catastrophe".

[24] Also coined by Tolkien and derived from the Greek word *katastrephein*, it means the opposite of *Eucatastrophe*; it is the "bad catastrophe".

In *LOTR*, the most marked example of both *dyscatastrophe* and *Eucatastrophe* occurs in the chapter "Mount Doom" when Frodo and Sam finally reach the mouth of Orodruin, the volcano located in Mordor in which the One Ring was forged and the only place it can be destroyed, and Frodo, succumbing to the power and influence of the Ring, is not able to cast it into the fire:

> The light sprang up again, and there on the brink of the chasm, at the very Crack of Doom, stood Frodo, black against the glare, tense, erect, but still as if he had been turned to stone. 'Master!' cried Sam. Then Frodo stirred and spoke with a clear voice, indeed with a voice clearer and more powerful than Sam had ever heard him use, and it rose above the throb and turmoil of Mount Doom, ringing in the roof and walls. 'I have come,' he said. 'But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1237).

In the passage above, the *dycatastrophe* is characterized by Frodo, the Ring-bearer, being prevented from destroying the Ring by its influence: Frodo and Sam had come on foot from the Westernmost portion of Middle-earth, to the lands of Mordor, that lay in the far East, under much toil and grief in a journey that lasted one hundred and eighty-two days [25](they literally journeyed from one side to the other of the map presented in *LOTR*). From the moment they leave the Shire, on September 23, to the day they reach Mount Doom, March 25, readers witness the hobbits' burdens as they journey across Middle-earth: Frodo and Sam suffer from hunger, thirst, physical and mental distress, and also with a series of injuries. Theirs is a loathsome and weary journey, with little hope of success, but which they endure with all their courage and resilience. When they finally reach the cracks of Mount Doom, ragged, famished and thirsty, readers are likely to feel relieved, thinking that the hobbits' mission has finally come to an end. However, at this precise moment the sorrow and failure deriving from the *dycatastrophe* hits the readers (and also Sam), making their hearts fall, but only to make the joy of the happy ending more poignant, for soon after Frodo succumbs to the power of the Ring, Gollum[26] struggles with him and manages to seize it; as he does so, however, he falls into the fire, taking the Ring with him, which is finally destroyed. At the brink of imminent defeat, the *Eucatastrophe* arises, corroborating Tolkien's assumption that

[25] Considering the fact that all months in the Shire calendar have thirty days.

[26] A hobbit of Stoor kind that obtained the One Ring around the year 2463 of the Third Age and kept it for over four hundred years, until he lost it in the tunnels of the Misty Mountains. The power and influence of the Ring not only corrupted and transfigured him but also gave him an incredibly long lifespan. After losing the artifact, the creature spends the rest of his life trying to recover it, which results in his tragical death at the end of *LOTR*. Prior to his obtaining of the Ring, Gollum was called Sméagol and lived a peaceful life with his extended family in the central region of Middle-Earth, on the banks of the Anduin, the Great River of Middle-Earth. He obtained the Ring by killing his close relative Déagol, who had found it during a fishing expedition the two characters had gone together. After such an incident, Sméagol is banned by his people and spends most of his life in seclusion in the depths of the Misty Mountains.

the mark of a good fantasy story, of the higher or more complete kind, is that “[...] however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the 'turn' comes, a catch of breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears [...].” (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 69).

There is only one more consideration concerning the consolation Tolkien believed fantasy stories provide which I would like to make, and such remark is connected with the author's idea that all successful fantasies, when the *Eucatastrophe* arises, tend to rend the web of story and let a glimpse of the underlying truth they contain come through. The joy derived from the *Eucatastrophe*, as the author points out, is not only a consolation for the sorrows of the primary world but also (and maybe more importantly) a satisfaction and answer to the question “Is it true?”. Such an assumption, however, deserves some consideration.

In the section “Fantasy” of “On Fairy Stories”, Tolkien argues that children asking the question "Is it true?" when they are read a story, are often wanting to know what kind of literature they are hearing (e.g.: a fairy story, an anecdote, etc.), rather than asking about whether that story could have happened in the primary world or not. The author argues that even though children often have difficulties in discerning fact from fiction, they are often aware that some sort of stories, such as fantasy stories, deal mostly with events that could not have happened. Thus, a child asking "Is it true?", in this sense, is often seeking help to classify the story, rather than wanting to know if the events were true or not. Towards the end of the essay, however, Tolkien proposes that the *Eucatastrophe* of fantasy stories is a kind of satisfaction to that question. Although the question is the same, the sense is different: the *Eucatastrophe* in a fantasy narrative, as it was argued above, is the "sudden joyous turn" that grants a happy ending to the story in the face of imminent defeat; such turn, as the author proposes, provides a glimpse of the underlying through contained in the narrative. Therefore, I believe that the satisfaction Tolkien argues the *Eucatastrophe* provides is connected to one's wish to know whether such a happy ending, such grace that denies "universal final defeat", is also possible in the primary world. As the writer proposes, “[...] in the 'eucatastrophe' we see in a brief vision that the answer [to the question 'Is it true?'] may be greater—it may be a far off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world.” The word “*evangelium*” in this passage is of great importance to a broader understanding of Tolkien's idea of consolation and *Eucatastrophe*. Such word, which is the Late Latin form of the Greek term “*euangélion*”, means “good news” and is strongly connected to Christianity, specifically with the four Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible. The word gospel in itself is a translation of the Late Latin “*evangelium*”, thus it also means “good news”. Interesting enough, the four

Gospels in the Bible are the books which tell the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whose death, as Christians believe, removed from all human beings their sins and whose Resurrection in the third day meant victory over Satan, which had, through its cunning and malice, persuaded Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Wisdom, which resulted in their expelling from the Garden of Eden and in their mortality. Jesus' resurrection, in this sense, means the joy of deliverance, since it denies death, the universal final defeat Tolkien talks about in his essay.

Tolkien, as a Roman Catholic, was well aware of the arguments above, so much so that he discusses them in "On Fairy Stories":

> The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: "mythical" in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the "inner consistency of reality." There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits. For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath. (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 72)

Therefore, when the author argues that the *Eucatastrophe* of fantasy stories may be a gleam or echo of *evangelium* (good news) in the primary world, he is corroborating with his own assumption that this type of narrative provides their readers with a kind of a consolation, or, to use Nicolay's (2014) words, to give readers a sense that life and all our actions are meaningful. Such ideas, however, do not ignore that "[t]he Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope, and die; but he may now perceive that all his bents and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 73). The Consolation of fantasy stories, thus, is largely connected with the fostering of hope, mainly in difficult times, such as the ones the author lived.

I would like to finish this section by considering one more aspect of fantasy narratives, which is only briefly discussed in "On Fairy Stories", but that is largely exemplified in *LOTR*. Such consideration has to do with the idea that all beings, in stories or the primary world, are part of a larger and continuous narrative. Each being has a role to play in this narrative and, since all roles come to an end sooner or later, every single creature leaves the narrative when they have played their part. However, since such narrative goes ever on and our role in it will eventually come to an end, it is essential that we use our time well. Such is Gandalf's

wisdom, as he expresses it in at least two passages in *LOTR*, being the first during his already mentioned exchange with Frodo in the chapter "The Shadow of the Past", when the hobbit expresses his wish that the finding of the One Ring and all its gruesome consequences had not happened during his time. Before such a remark, Gandalf tells him (most correctly) that one's time to enter or leave the narrative is not theirs to decide, but that one should make sure that they do the best they can with the time they are given. Such notion is reinforced by the wizard in the chapter "The Last Debate" when he is discussing what should be the next move in the war against Sauron:

> [...] it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1150).

As Gandalf points out, one cannot aid in all the problems of the world, however, it is of great importance that every being does their part so that the burdens of their times are lessened and that the ones living after them may have the prospect of a better future. Such notion is a central one not only in *LOTR* but also in *The Hobbit*, and it is understandable that an author that lived through the terrors of the two Great Wars and saw their devastating impact be concerned with the idea that in the face of such dark times it is fundamental that action be taken, no matter how small. The next sections of this thesis discuss the function of the hobbits in Tolkien's works and how their actions in the narratives are decisive to the *Eucatastrophe* of the tale they are in. In other words, I intend to discuss how the part played by the hobbits in the narrative they found themselves in shaped the history of Middle-earth and ruled the fate of many.

3.3 Bridging the Gap: Tracking the Elusive Hobbits

Ronald Kyrmse, in his book *Explicando Tolkien*, proposes that the inner consistency of reality of Tolkien's secondary world is deeply connected to the idea that that author's fictional universe has three dimensions. These dimensions, as Kyrmse (2003), points out are *diversity*, *profundity*, and *time*. *Diversity* is largely connected to the riches of details that gives Middle-earth credibility; the Tolkienian universe is not just a background to the development of the stories; all the details of that fictional universe were carefully planned and are important to the narrative: the different languages, the geography, and all its specificities, the beliefs and

traditions of the peoples, among other things, are all connected and, as Kyrmse states, Tolkien seems to have something to say about every detail of his mythology even though he may not say everything he knows about them. *Profundity*, on the other hand, is concerned with the ability the author has of explaining and connecting the details in his narrative; whatever aspect regarding Middle-earth one may want to learn more about, one will be able to find detailed information about it in the narrative itself, in its appendixes, or even in other works of the author. Finally, *Time* is connected to the history of Middle-earth, which can be followed from the very beginning of its creation. Every mountain, river, war, drama, and other things have their history recorded if not in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*, in other of the author's works, such as *The Silmarillion* or the volumes of *The History of Middle-earth*. The table below illustrates how the dimensions of Tolkien's secondary world dialogue.

Table 1 – The three dimensions dialoguing in Tolkien's narratives

Diversity	**Profundity**	**Time**
Peoples: hobbits, beornings, dwarves, ents, orcs…	Cultural aspects; Political aspects; Language aspects.	History; Genealogy.
Geography: Cities, mountains, rivers, "The sea" …	Inhabited or wild; Peoples; weather; Vegetation; architecture…	Events; Ancient architecture and ruins.
Language: Quenya, Sindarin, Dwarvish…	Spoken by whom; Formalization; Genealogy; Pragmatics…	Structure; ancient scripts; variation…

Source: Rocha and Martinez, 2018

To further illustrate Kyrmse's ideas, I will analyze a single aspect of the Tolkienian universe considering the dimensions Kyrmse proposes. For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on the peoples of Tolkien's Middle-earth. Even though I will address all the prominent races featuring in the author's narratives, I will pay special attention to the hobbits as a means to discuss their function in the works taking into consideration Shippey's claim that hobbits "are, and always remain, highly *anachronistic* in the ancient world of Middle-earth" (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. 6).

As indicated in *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien's posthumous work that narrates the history of Middle-earth from its creation to the end of the Second Age, the first races to appear in the author's secondary world were the races of the elves and men. Both appeared during the First

Age of that universe and were created by Ilúvatar[27]. The dwarves, who also appeared during the First Age, were imagined and idealized by Aulë [28]and brought to full life by Ilúvatar, while the Ents, at first common trees, were woken up by the elves during the First Age, as it is stated in *LOTR*: "Elves began it, of course, waking trees up and teaching them to speak and learning their tree-talk. They always wished to talk to everything, the old Elves did." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 610). Trolls, also deriving from the First Age, on the other hand "are only counterfeits, made by the Enemy in the Great Darkness, in mockery of Ents, as Orcs were of Elves." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 633). All these six races, in addition to having their origin well recorded in the narratives, have also their distinctive characteristics concerning, for example, language, traditions, as well as racial sub-divisions. Elves speak Sindarin and Quenya, dwell mainly in forests and are divided into light elves and dark elves, while dwarves speak Khuzdul, make their homes inside mountains and are divided into Firebeards, Broadbeams, Longbeards, Ironfists, Stiffbeards, Blacklocks, and Stonefoots. The race of men, on the other hand, speak Westron, dwell mainly in houses, and are separated in three peoples: the Folk of Bëor, the Folk of Hador, and the Folk of Haleth. Orcs have no language of their own, communicating mainly through Westron or a series of dialects that derive from a range of other languages, which, as presented in appendix F of *LOTR*, they perverted to their liking. These specific creatures are divided according to the many settlements of their race, having no specific names for their division, rather than indications concerning the place where they dwell (*e.g.*: the Orcs of Mordor, the Orcs of Barad-dur, the Orcs of Isengard, etc). Through Tolkien's narratives, it is possible to expand the details concerning these peoples much further, offering examples about their cultural, historical and political habits, as well as a more clarifying view of their linguistic differences. As an attempt to illustrate the riches of details concerning the peoples of Middle-earth concerning the dimensions proposed by Kyrmse, I developed the following table:

Table 2 – Further aspects of the peoples of Middle-earth

People	Origin	Main Divisions	Primary languages		Other known languages
Dwarves	First Age. Idealized by	Seven groups named after the	Khuz-dul		Westron, Sindarin

[27] The divine being responsible for the creation of the entire fictional universe in which *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *LOTR* take place. In Tolkien's narratives, Ilúvatar is the only being capable of creation; all other beings in the narrative are only capable of emulation.

[28] Created by Ilúvatar, Aulë was one of the powers of the world, the Valar (sing. Vala), spiritual beings that took physical form and were responsible for defending Tolkien's fictional universe against the forces that threatened to destroy it. Also known as the Master of Crafts, this specific Vala was responsible for shaping the materials out of which the world was formed.

	Aulë and granted full life by Ilúvatar.	Seven Ancestors			
Elves	First Age. Created by Ilúvatar.	Light Elves and Dark Elves	Quenya, Sindarin, Silvan		Westron
Ents	First Age. Created by Ilúvatar at the request of Yavanna.[29]	Ents and Entwives	Entish		Westron, Quenya
Men	First Age. Created by Ilúvatar	Three groups named after their chieftains of old.	Westron		Adûnaic, Sindarin, Rohirric, Quenya, etc.
Orcs	First Age. A mockery of the Elves emulated by Melkor.	Numerous settlements across Middle-earth	No language of their own, but a number of dialects derived from languages of other peoples.		Black Speech, Westron
Trolls	First Age. A mockery of the Ents emulated by Melkor.	Cave-trolls, Hill-trolls, Mountain-trolls, Olog-hai, etc.	Black Speech		Various Westron dialects

Source: Made by the author

I have made no allusion to hobbits under the light of Kyrmse's theory not because there is little information about them in Tolkien's narratives, but rather because, curiously enough, very little is told concerning this people's origins in the author's works about Middle-earth. Readers learn that hobbits are akin to human beings, but at the same time distinguished from them by their short stature (being normally around two and four feet tall), as well as by other physical characteristics, such as possessing large and hairy feet with leathery soles that made it unnecessary for them to wear shoes. In addition to that, hobbits have a considerably long lifespan, which means that they often live to be more than a hundred years old in the Tolkienian narratives. Concerning language, they speak Westron, however, the more literate can also speak Sindarin. Concerning their dwelling, hobbits generally live in large and comfortable homes dug into hillsides. In fact, it seems to be more information on *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* about hobbits, than about any of the other races, so much so that in the first paragraph of the prologue of *LOTR*, whose title is "*Concerning Hobbits*", is written that such book is

[29] Like Aulë, Yavanna was also a Vala. Also known as the Queen of the Earth, Yavanna was the Vala responsible for the living things, specially plants. A lover and guardian of the natural world, Yavanna was responsible for planting the original seeds of all the plants in Tolkien's secondary world.

> [...] largely concerned with Hobbits, and from its pages a reader may discover much of their character and a little of their history. Further information will also be found in the selection from the Red Book of Westmarch that has already been published, under the title of *The Hobbit*. (TOLKIEN, 2007 p. 1).

Indeed, as promised in the excerpt below, much is learned in *LOTR* and *The Hobbit* about hobbits' character, but their origin remains elusive through all the narrative. Tolkien seems to be keen to offer detailed information regarding several specificities concerning hobbits, from their eating habits to their relationship with nature and their dislike of machines, so much so that the writer spends the twenty-one pages of the prologue informing the readers that

> Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools. Even in ancient days they were, as a rule, shy of 'the Big Folk', as they call us, and now they avoid us with dismay and are becoming hard to find. They are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and though they are inclined to be fat and do not hurry unnecessarily, they are nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements. [...] [T]heir elusiveness is due solely to a professional skill that heredity and practice, and a close friendship with the earth, have rendered inimitable by bigger and clumsier races. As for the Hobbits of the Shire, with whom these tales are concerned, in the days of their peace and prosperity they were a merry folk. They dressed in bright colours, being notably fond of yellow and green; [...] Their faces were as a rule good-natured rather than beautiful, broad, bright-eyed, red-cheeked, with mouths apt to laughter, and to eating and drinking. And laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1-2).

Concerning hobbits' origins, readers are informed that though they are related to human beings, the exact relationship between them and us can no longer be discovered since their origin lies far back in the First Age of Middle-earth and is, presently, lost and forgotten. Taking such claims into consideration, it is interesting to notice that, even though there is mention in the prologue that hobbits derive from the old days of Middle-earth, just as all the other races, there is no mention of them in *The Silmarillion*, which tells about how the Tolkienian fictional universe and all creatures in it came into being. If, on one hand, it is true that Tolkien started the first sketches of *The Silmarillion* around 1914, while the famous sentence "[i]n a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p.3) which opens the first chapter of *The Hobbit* and was scrawled in a blank sheet of a school certificate paper

he was correcting is known to have been written only between 1925 and 1930[30], on the other hand, *The Hobbit*, as well as *LOTR*, were published prior to *The Silmarillion*, on which the author was still working during his final years, in the early 1970s. In this sense, it may be argued that if the writer wanted, he could have written detailed references concerning the precise origin of hobbits. Given the fact that the author did not do it, it may be proposed that he must have had specific reasons for it, which I believe are intrinsically connected with the function the hobbits assume inside *LOTR* and *The Hobbit*, as well as with what Tolkien called "[t]he peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy [which can] be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth." (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 71) and with what Attebery (1992) refers to as the mimetic quality of fantasy narratives.

In the essay "On Fairy Stories" Tolkien argues that writers making a secondary world probably wish they are drawing on reality, that part, or the whole of their fantasy worlds derive from reality or, at least, flow in that direction. In addition to that, the author proposes that the inner consistency of reality of a secondary world is hardly achieved if the work of a fantasy writer does not partake of reality. Like what Tolkien proposes, Attebery believes that the effectiveness of fantasy depends on mimesis: "[w]e must have some solid ground to stand on, some point of contact, if only with the language in which the story is communicated." (ATTEBERY, 1992, p. 4). Therefore, I argue that the operative link between the fantasy universe of *LOTR* and *The Hobbit* and the real world are the hobbits.

In the prologue of *LOTR* it is stated that even though hobbits had been living for long years in Middle-earth before the other peoples became aware of them, this specific folk only started keeping records of their own history in the Third Age, after the settlement of the Shire[31]. Prior to their settlement, however, the hobbits had already become divided into three "breeds": the Harfoots, the Stoors, and the Fallohides. Considering the information provided in the prologue of *LOTR* concerning the differences between these three hobbit groups, the following table could be arranged:

[30] Though Tolkien, in a 1955 letter to W. H. Auden, a reviewer of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, confessed not remembering exactly when the opening sentence of *The Hobbit* was written, he did remember that it was after he had already started working as an Oxford Professor of Anglo-Saxon and living in Northmoor Road, which was in 1925, and before the early 1930s, when he actually started working on the story regularly.

[31] Situated in the Northwestern region of Middle-Earth, between the Brandywine River and the Far Downs, this was the home of most of the hobbits in the Third Age. Divided into four parts ("farthings"), it was founded in the one thousand six hundred and first year of the Third Age by the hobbit brothers Marcho and Blanco, who led a group of their people across the river Brandywine. Such act marked the beginning of the hobbits' calendar, the *Shire Reckoning*.

Table 3 – Hobbit breeds characteristics dialoguing

Breed	Physical traits	Other characteristics	Preferred Landscapes
Harfoots	Brown skin, beardless, smaller and shorter than the other two breeds.	The most numerous and most representative hobbit variety.	Highlands and hillsides
Stoors	Broader and heavier in build than the other breeds.	Less shy of Men than the other breeds. Had an affinity for water.	Flatlands and riversides
Fallohides	Fair skin and hair, taller and slimmer than the other breeds.	Bolder and more adventurous, were the least numerous breed.	Woodlands

Source: Made by the author

Even though hobbits are said to have lived in Middle-earth since the First Age, characters in *LOTR* are often surprised to see this folk, saying either they had no knowledge of the existence of such people or that they had only heard of them in legends. When Treebeard, the Ent, finds Pippin and Merry in Fangorn forest, he wonders what kind of creatures they may be, while the hobbits, apparently not surprised to hear that Ents, too, do not know about the existence of their people, propose a solution for his dilemma:

> What are you, I wonder? I cannot place you. You do not seem to come in the old lists that I learned when I was young. But that was a long, long time ago, and they may have made new lists. Let me see! Let me see! How did it go? [...] It was a long list. But anyway you do not seem to fit in anywhere!' 'We always seem to have got left out of the old lists, and the old stories,' said Merry. 'Yet we've been about for quite a long time. We're hobbits .' 'Why not make a new line?' said Pippin. *'Half-grown hobbits, the hole-dwellers*. Put us in amongst the four, next to Man (the Big People) and you've got it.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 604-605)

Conversely, it is important to note that much of what exists beyond the borders of the Shire, is regarded by them similarly as themselves are regarded outside their homeland: as legends or as unknown. Evidence concerning hobbits' lack of awareness concerning the lands and the affairs that lay beyond the borders of their homeland is given already in the prologue, which mentions that, through the years, they ended up forgetting or ignoring the little they knew concerning the events outside the Shire. Further examples are also present in chapter 2, "The Shadow of the Past", in which readers learn that all hobbits know about the Land of Mordor, the dominion of the Dark Lord Sauron in the south-eastern portion of Middle-earth, comes from "[...] legends of the dark past, like a shadow in the background of their memories; but it was ominous and disquieting." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 57), as well as in chapter 8, "Fog

on the Barrow-Downs", in which it is said that the lands beyond the borders of their homeland are "[...] wholly strange to them, and beyond all but the most vague and distant legends of the Shire [...]." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 192). Examples like these are often present in the narrative, which makes room to argue that there seem to be at least two distinct universes inside the Tolkienian narrative: the undisturbed, pastoral land of the Shire where hobbits live their peaceful and quiet life, minding their own business, and the wild and perilous realm beyond the frontiers of the hobbits' land.

It is important to note, however, that the moment the hobbits live the Shire marks the beginning of a major change in the narrative, a turn of the tide, as Gandalf would say: legend becomes history, and its whole course is changed; Bilbo's finding of the One Ring in *The Hobbit* and its consequent chain of events that leads to Frodo and Sam's arduous task to destroy it in Mount Doom in *LOTR* results, among many other things, in their inclusion in the history of Middle-earth. The deeds not only of Bilbo and Frodo, but also of Sam, Pippin, and Merry, made them suddenly, "[...] by no wish of their own, both important and renowned, and troubled the counsels of the Wise and the Great." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 3). The idea that hobbits became important and renowned by no wish of their own says much about their nature and even more about their function in the narrative; it is probable that if Bilbo and Frodo had not been urged to leave the Shire, they would have continued living their peaceful life, not heeding the business outside their borders. Bilbo's exchange with Gandalf at the beginning of *The Hobbit* is a clear example of that:

> "Very pretty!" said Gandalf. "But I have no time to blow smoke-rings this morning. I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone." "I should think so - in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them," said our Mr. Baggins, and stuck one thumb behind his braces, and blew out another even bigger smoke-ring. [...] "Good morning!" he said at last. "We don't want any adventures here, thank you! You might try over The Hill or across The Water." By this he meant that the conversation was at an end. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 7).

What makes Bilbo change his mind and join in the adventure Gandalf was arranging, is never plainly revealed; all that is said about the matter is that, to the end of his days, the hobbit could not remember how he had found himself in the middle of it. The case of Frodo, on the other hand, as it was mentioned in section 1.1, is considerably clearer and different: he does not want to leave the Shire, but, at the same time, he knows that if he refuses to do so, he will be endangering the land and the friends he so much loves. Thus, with a heavy heart, but determined to save his homeland, he sets off to the unknown lands and dangers outside the

borders of the Shire. It is not difficult to understand Bilbo and Frodo's reluctance to leave their land behind: they clearly do not belong in the wild and perilous world beyond their homeland; they are not used to adventures, nor to the kind of dangers they offer. Hobbits are not warriors, nor fighters, and often through *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* they feel hopeless and lost away from their homes; Bilbo regrets having left the comfort of his home at least thrice during *The Hobbit*, while it is not rare to find sentences such as Pippin's, below, in *LOTR*:

> 'I wish Gandalf had never persuaded Elrond to let us come,' he thought. 'What good have I been? Just a nuisance: a passenger, a piece of luggage. And now I have been stolen and I am just a piece of luggage for the Orcs. I hope Strider or someone will come and claim us! (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 579).

Given the facts above, it is possible to argue about the reasons Tolkien had to include such a peculiar and seemingly unprepared folk in a narrative full of hardships and perils from which they are very unlikely to survive. A possible answer for that is connected to what, or better, whom the hobbits represent. It was argued above that Tolkien believed that in all successful fantasy narratives there should be an operative link between the author's secondary world and the readers' world. It was also argued that such a link, both in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, are the hobbits. Such a claim is connected with Shippey's proposition that hobbits are anachronistic creatures in Middle-earth and that such anachronism is their main function:

> That indeed is their main function, for one might note that by their anachronism they engage a problem faced and solved in not dissimilar ways by several writers of historical novels. In setting a work in some distant time, an author may well find that the gap between that time and the reader's modern awareness is too wide to be easily bridged; and accordingly a figure essentially modern in attitudes and sentiment is important into the historical world, to guide the reader's reactions, to help the reader feel 'what it would be like' to be there. [...] Bilbo, even more than his successor-hobbits from *The Lord of the Rings*, takes up this role as 'reflector'. His failings are those which the child reader, and indeed the adult reader, would have if transported magically to Middle-earth. (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. 6-7).

Shippey's arguments concerning hobbits being the “essentially modern” figures of the ancient world of Middle-earth is well-founded; both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* present a variety of both cultural and linguistic indications that this people seems to have come from a different world than the other races of that fantasy universe. Culturally speaking, for example, the residence of Bilbo Baggins, Bag-End, as presented in one of the illustrations Tolkien made for *The Hobbit*, has clocks (only invented in the 17th century) on the walls, electric lamps (which first appeared in the 19th century) hanging from the ceiling, and also a few umbrellas (made popular in England only in the 17th century) in a corner near the front door. Concerning eating

habits, Bilbo mentions in *The Hobbit* that he drinks tea at four; in addition to that, frequently during the narrative there is allusion to tea-time, especially when Bilbo is in his adventure outside the Shire and cannot engage in his habitual ritual: "[i]t was after tea-time; it was pouring with rain, and had been all day; [...] 'And I'm sure the rain has got into the dry clothes and into the food-bags,' thought Bilbo. [...] 'I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!'" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 38). In *LOTR*, there is also mention of hobbits' eating habits; in chapter four of book two, "Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit", during a conversation Sam is having with Sméagol while he is cooking, he mentions that one day he would prepare fish and chips, a typically English dish made popular only in the nineteenth century, to him.

Concerning the linguistic aspect, Shippey suggests that hobbits use a social code of speaking that is typical of the Victorian and Edwardian middle-class citizens of Tolkien's time. To justify his point, the scholar uses examples from chapter one, "An Unexpected Party", of *The Hobbit* in which Gandalf and the dwarfs seem to fail to grasp the annoyed tone in Bilbo's speech:

> [...] [Bilbo] tries to get rid of Gandalf, whom he has decided is 'not quite his sort' by ignoring him. He goes on, with entirely insincere politeness, to try to send Gandalf away by repeating 'Good morning!' as a parting not a greeting, to try 'thank you!' in the same spirit, twice (it means, when said in clipped English tones, '*no* thank you'), and eventually to invite him to tea - but not now. It is obvious that much of what Bilbo says is socially coded to mean its opposite, as when a few pages later he says to the dwarves, 'in his politest unpressing tones', 'I suppose you will all stay to supper?' (which means, to those who know the code, 'you have overstayed your welcome, go away'). None of this is unfamiliar at all to the English reader, and of course it is comic to find Gandalf repeatedly ignoring the social code, and acting, as only someone foreign to it would, as if Bilbo meant what he said by phrases like 'I beg your pardon'. (SHIPPEY, 2001, p. 9).

The scholar goes on to say that hobbits are essentially English, middle class (with exception of some families, like Samwise Gamgee's, which are working-class), and also roughly Victorian to Edwardian. It is based on such claims that Shippey suggests that hobbits are marked as anachronisms in Middle-earth and that they do not fit in that world, which is typically the world of elves, dwarves, dragons and other fantastic creatures. However, I believe that the function of the hobbits in Tolkien's narrative is more than simply serving as the solid ground on which the modern reader steps while appreciating the books; the hobbits are characters in a book which was written by an author who not only lived during the pre, inter, and post-war period, but that also fought in one of the Great Wars. Therefore, it is not difficult to argue that he knew that such periods are marked by great distress, desolation, and

hopelessness, and also that war deeds result inevitably in losses for all sides. As it was mentioned in section 2.1, above, Tolkien felt that wars resulted mostly in spiritual, moral, and material waste and that in the face of such dark times, even small actions are transformative, meaningful and may help one endure difficult times and maintain hope in a better future. In other words, the author believed that change required action and that even the smallest of deeds could change the course of things.

The majority of the deeds of Bilbo in *The Hobbit* and of Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin in *LOTR*, are not derived from strength in arms, nor from great feats on the battlefield, as is the case with Aragorn, Boromir, Gimli, and Legolas. Hobbits, as it is proposed in the prologue of *LOTR*, had at no time "[...] been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves. In olden days they had, of course, been often obliged to fight to maintain themselves in a hard world; but in Bilbo's time that was very ancient history." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 7). The renown they win and the strength they offer inside the narratives are from a different kind; hobbits, who were mostly deemed as legends prior to the Third Age of Middle-earth, trouble the counsels of the "Wise and the Great", enter the history of that world and change its course by their courage, endurance, and most importantly, by their friendship, which are discussed in the next section.

4 THE ROAD GOES EVER ON

> ***I know we are going to take a very long road, into darkness; but I know I can't turn back. [...] I have something to do before the end, and it lies ahead, not in the Shire. I must see it through, sir, if you understand me.***
>
> (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)

This chapter discusses the journeys of the hobbits in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. In it, I connect issues raised in the previous chapter, such as the hobbits' anachronistic aspect and Tolkien's understanding of the function and value of fantasy stories, to the virtues the hobbits employ during their journeys across Middle-earth and their significance to the outcomes of the adventures they participate in Tolkien's works. As the title of this section suggests, this chapter also discusses the image of the Road and the recurrent idea presented in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* that it "goes ever on". Such notion will be contrasted to the idea presented in *LOTR* and "On Fairy Stories" that all tales are part of a larger and continuous narrative. In this sense,

for the purpose of this chapter, the Road (capitalized, as it appears in *LOTR*) will be seen as a metaphor for this larger and everlasting narrative, in which one enters, plays their part, and leaves it when such part is over.

Since the plot of these works consist, to a large extent, of the journeys the hobbits and their companions and undertake across Middle-earth in order to accomplish a series of tasks, the discussions in this chapter will be frequently guided by Louis Markos' (2012) assumption that to endure their journeys and the series of difficulties the characters encounter in the road, the characters must employ, to a larger or lesser degree, eight virtues: temperance, wisdom, courage, and justice (the classical virtues), as well as faith, hope, and charity (the theological virtues), and friendship (which Markos calls the "Tolkienian virtue"). In addition to that, this chapter also touches once more on Tolkien's (2001) confabulations regarding secondary worlds, and on Joseph Campbell's consideration concerning the heroes' regress from their adventures, as well as its significance not only for the characters but also to the place to which they return.

4.1 Classical Virtues on Tolkien's Narratives

Before any consideration concerning the classical virtues, with which this chapter is mostly concerned, I would like to discuss the significance of the Road mainly in *LOTR*, but also in *The Hobbit*. In the last chapter of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo presents to the reader the first version of his "old walking song"[32]. In it, the hobbit argues that "Roads go ever ever on,/ Over rock and under tree,/ By caves where never sun has shone,/ By streams that never find the sea;/ Over snow by winter sown,/ And through the merry flowers of June,/ Over grass and over stone,/ And under mountains in the moon." (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 346). Such song, though slightly modified, appears four times in *LOTR*. It is interesting to notice, however, that all through *The Hobbit* whenever the word "road" is used, it appears with no capital letters, as one would expect (except when it appears in the song quoted above), while in *LOTR*, such word appears at times capitalized (the Road) and at others, without capital letters (the road). Such distinction is largely connected with the different meanings the word assumes in Tolkien's narratives: when it appears with no capitals, it assumes the common dictionary meaning (e.g.: a path that leads to somewhere); however, when it appears capitalized, it means something else.

[32] For the full version of the song, see Annex D at the end of this work.

The expression “the Road” first appears in *LOTR* in the first chapter of the book, when Bilbo is expressing his happiness to Gandalf concerning his plans:

> It was a fine night, and the black sky was dotted with stars. [Bilbo] looked up, sniffing the air. ‘What fun! What fun to be off again, off on the Road with dwarves! This is what I have really been longing for, for years! Good-bye!’ he said, looking at his old home and bowing to the door. ‘Good-bye, Gandalf!’ ‘Good-bye, for the present, Bilbo. Take care of yourself! You are old enough, and perhaps wise enough.’ ‘Take care! I don’t care. Don’t you worry about me! I am as happy now as I have ever been, and that is saying a great deal. But the time has come. I am being swept off my feet at last,’ he added, and then in a low voice, as if to himself, he sang softly in the dark: *The Road goes ever on and on/ Down from the door where it began./ Now far ahead the Road has gone,/ And I must follow, if I can,/ Pursuing it with eager feet,/ Until it joins some larger way/ Where many paths and errands meet./ And whither then? I cannot say.* (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 46-47, emphasis in the original).

At the time such exchange takes place, Bilbo is getting ready to leave the Shire once more, as he had done years ago, as it is told in *The Hobbit*. Bilbo argues that he is happy as he had never been, happy for being off on the Road once more. The Road the hobbit is about to take, as he argues, goes ever on and he must, if he can, do as it does. There will be a time, however, that such Road will join some larger way, which the hobbit does not know where it leads. For Markos (2012), the Road in *LOTR* is not simply a path, but a character. The scholar justifies his argument by using an excerpt from the chapter “Three is Company” of *LOTR*. In such chapter, Frodo tells Pippin that Bilbo used to say that “there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary.” (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 96). After quoting such passage, Markos goes on arguing that through the narrative, the hobbits learn that the Road has a life of its own, that it is always ready to trap or mislead careless adventurers, and also that, given the idea that it is akin to a living thing, travelers must “relate, struggle, and negotiate [with it]. It draws and lures you, tests and challenges you, either punishing or rewarding you for your troubles.” (MARKOS, 2012, p. 42). However, even though Markos's argument be a valid one, I do not totally agree with it. Differently from the scholar, I perceive the Road as a metaphor for Tolkien's idea that all stories are part of a greater and continuous narrative. In this sense, using the same passage from *LOTR* Markos used to justify his point, I argue that this unique, river-like Road is that great and everlasting narrative proposed by Tolkien; the springs that feed such river are the characters' individual narratives, which join the main story at different points and leave it when the characters' parts in it are over. If such analogy is taken into consideration, it is

possible to argue, then, that this great narrative, the Road, goes on forever and that every single story contributes to shaping it.

The hobbits in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, start to both make part and shape such greater narrative when they decide to leave the Shire. However, in order to accomplish their task in such narrative, to play their part successfully, to endure the Road, they must show specific qualities, the seven virtues Markos (2012) addresses in his study concerning hobbits. As it was argued in the previous chapter, the hobbits are anachronistic creatures in Middle-earth which feel estranged when they are outside their homeland. Flieger argues that such estrangement is connected to the idea that there are multiple secondary worlds inside Tolkien's works. From the readers' perspective, Middle-earth, as a whole, is already a secondary world, in which we enter

> by way of the famous sentence: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" [...] At once we know that we are out of this world and into another marked (indeed, almost created) by the unfamiliar word *hobbit*, and the succeeding paragraphs lead us deeper into that world. It is an otherworld, a secondary world, but one so firmly grounded in the primary one that we can recognize the links. It is a world where imaginary creatures called Hobbits live dull boring lives, get letters in the mail, enjoy pipe-smoking but neglect the washing-up. (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 38).

On the other hand, for the hobbits from the Shire who live in almost complete isolation from the rest of Middle-earth, the regions beyond the borders of their homeland are, it may be argued, perceived by them as a secondary world. Life in the Shire, as Flieger (2017) points out, is filled with recognizable elements from our primary world[33]: domestic chores, such as collecting the morning letters and tending to gardens, as well as everyday activities, such as drinking tea at four in the afternoon and smoking a pipe, are common in the hobbits' lives. Therefore, hobbits may be seen as unfamiliar creatures living in a familiar environment: when readers start reading *The Hobbit* or *LOTR* they are immediately transported to the secondary world of Middle-earth through the arresting strangeness of hobbits; however, as they read on, they realize that not only the place hobbits live in is a familiar one, grounded in the primary world, but also their customs and traditions are recognizable. Thus, when Bilbo, in *The Hobbit*, and Frodo, Sam, Pippin, and Merry, in *LOTR*, leave the Shire, readers enter another secondary world with them. This second secondary world, however, comes with a different effect: since it is seen as unfamiliar by both readers and hobbits, it is perceived with double strangeness. Such transition from a less unfamiliar world to a highly different environment is

[33] Mainly from Tolkien's Victorian childhood world.

well marked in the narrative, and it happens at the beginning of the chapter “The Old Forest” from *LOTR*:

> ‘Good-bye!’ they cried, and rode down the slope and disappeared from Fredegar’s sight into the tunnel. It was dark and damp. At the far end it was closed by a gate of thick-set iron bars. Merry got down and unlocked the gate, and when they had all passed through he pushed it to again. It shut with a clang, and the lock clicked. The sound was ominous. ‘There!’ said Merry. ‘You have left the Shire, and are now outside, and on the edge of the Old Forest.’ ‘Are the stories about it true?’ asked Pippin. ‘I don’t know what stories you mean,’ Merry answered. ‘If you mean the old bogey-stories Fatty’s nurses used to tell him, about goblins and wolves and things of that sort, I should say no. At any rate I don’t believe them. But the Forest *is* queer. Everything in it is very much more alive, more aware of what is going on, so to speak, than things are in the Shire. And the trees do not like strangers. They watch you. They are usually content merely to watch you, as long as daylight lasts, and don’t do much. Occasionally the most unfriendly ones may drop a branch, or stick a root out, or grasp at you with a long trailer. But at night things can be most alarming, or so I am told. I have only once or twice been in here after dark, and then only near the hedge. I thought all the trees were whispering to each other, passing news and plots along in an unintelligible language; and the branches swayed and groped without any wind. They do say the trees do actually move, and can surround strangers and hem them in. In fact long ago they attacked the Hedge: they came and planted themselves right by it, and leaned over it. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 144-145)

The transition from the peaceful Shire to the unknown lands outside its borders, besides being ominous, is marked by a gloomy atmosphere, filled with uncertainty and warnings. The little the adventurers know about the Old Forest comes either from nursery stories or from accounts of old times. Whatever they may infer from such accounts, it probably indicates that this new environment they find themselves in differs greatly from what they are used to encounter in their homeland. The supernatural description given by Merry warns his fellow hobbits and the readers as well that advancing beyond the gate means setting foot in a perilous realm, filled with unknown pitfalls and dungeons. In fact, Merry's considerations concerning the Old Forest are notably similar to Tolkien's description of *Fäerie* in the essay “On Fairy Stories”, in which the scholar argues that “[m]ost good fairy-stories are about the *aventures* of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches” (TOLKIEN, 2001, p. 9-10). As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the word *aventures* in the excerpt above means more than the English word “adventure”, it means also moving into dangers and the perilous unknown. In this sense, when Frodo and his three companions leave the Shire, they are venturing into the unfamiliar, the strange, and the new; and as they do so, they take us with them, for they are the operative link between Middle-earth and the primary world. Therefore, the hobbits' perception of this second secondary world somehow guides the readers' own perception of it; the hobbits' awkwardness in the world beyond the borders of the Shire as well as their feelings of helplessness and

outsiderness in that universe is relatable since such feelings are very likely to be similar to the ones experienced by readers if they were to take part in the adventures of the heroes from the Shire.

Given the arguments above, that hobbits are strangers in the world beyond the borders of their homeland, it is possible to argue that their function in the narrative, as well as their acts of heroism, differ greatly from those of other characters, such as Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas, who are deeply rooted in Middle-earth. The heroism of the hobbits, rather than being shown through great deeds in the war field, is demonstrated through the valor they show during their arduous journeys through Middle-earth; Markos (2012) describes such valor as the essential virtues one must possess to endure the Road. The first set of virtues Markos discusses in his book is the set of the Classical virtues, which are Courage, Temperance, Wisdom, and Justice. These four virtues, also known as Cardinal virtues, are, as Lewis (2001a) points out, the ones recognized by all civilized people. To justify his point, the scholar calls attention to the fact that the word "cardinal" derives from a late Latin word, *Cardinalis,* which means basically something that serves as a hinge. Based on such argument, Lewis says that the Cardinal virtues, such as the hinges of a door, are pivotal to the well-functioning of a society; that is why the scholar argues that all civilized people recognize them. Markos adds to Lewis's argument by saying that "[r]eaders of the *Republic* will immediately recognize these four virtues as the ones, so Plato argues, that constitute the enlightened soul and that must operate in society if the just state is to survive and thrive." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 64). Expanding on these two scholars' ideas, I believe that it would be more suitable to say that all civilized peoples and nations recognize (or should recognize) these virtues, for not only are they of seminal importance to the maintenance of a healthy society, but they are also at its foundations. Markos dedicates one entire chapter for each of these virtues and, as he does so, he argues for their importance and significance in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. In this section, however, I discuss only three of these four virtues, namely Courage, Temperance, and Wisdom. My decision of leaving Justice out is based on the premise that from the four Cardinal virtues, this is the one that is shown less prominently in the hobbits, being more marked in other characters, such as Aragorn.

The first virtue discussed by Markos is Courage, which, as he points out, is also known as Fortitude. Even though the scholar opts for using the term Courage throughout his discussion, I believe that when it comes to Tolkien's narratives, especially *LOTR*, the term Fortitude is more appropriate because "[...] Fortitude includes both kinds of courage—the kind that faces danger as well as the kind that 'sticks it' under pain." (LEWIS, 2001a, p. 79).

In addition to that, Lewis argues that people would not be able to practice any of the other virtues without Fortitude. Therefore, it may be argued that the Fortitude presented in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* are connected to both resilience and endurance. In this sense, for the purpose of this section, the discussions concerning Courage will be in constant dialogue with the concepts of Fortitude, endurance, and resilience.

In both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, the hobbits from the Shire do not start the adventure of their narratives on their own account, but they are rather invited into it.[34]Such feature, as Joseph Campbell (2004) points out, is common in narratives such as Tolkien's. The scholar names such narrative pattern "the call to adventure" and it consists, basically, of the arising of a crisis, often brought to the knowledge of the hero by an herald and which presses them to take action, which often means to leave their homeland and start a long and difficult journey through unknown lands. The herald in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* is Gandalf, who appoints Bilbo as the fourteenth member of Thorin's company and that also urges Frodo to take the One Ring out of the Shire. Such argument is corroborated by Faramir's[35] view of Gandalf, as expressed by himself to Frodo, in the chapter "The Window on the West": "[...] [Gandalf] was, now I guess, more than a lore-master: a great mover of the deeds that are done in our time." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p.876). On the other hand, the crisis in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* are, respectively, it may be argued, the Dwarves arriving at Bilbo's residence at beginning of the story, and Gandalf's discovery that the ring Bilbo had found in his first adventure is, in fact, the One Ring of Sauron. The herald's summons, Campbell argues,

> [...] may be to live, as in the present instance, or, at a later moment of the biography, to die. It may sound the call to some high historical undertaking. Or it may mark the dawn of religious illumination. As apprehended by the mystic, it marks what has been termed "the awakening of the self." [...] whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration —a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. (CAMPBELL, 2004, p. 47).

Therefore, the call to adventure in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* may be seen as the awakening of their selves, their recognition of their role in the narrative of Middle-earth; their consequent leaving the Shire, on the other hand, represents the passage of a threshold, from a familiar world into an unknown horizon of discovery, often accompanied not only by personal

[34] With the exception of Merry and Pippin who choose to follow Frodo in respect of their long-term friendship. Their specific case will be explored in section 3.2.
[35] Boromir's younger brother.

growth but also by countless perils. In order to endure the Road they are to tread, as well as to fulfill their appointed tasks, the hobbits need courage.

It was argued in the previous chapter that Frodo and Sam's journey to Mordor, to destroy the One Ring, is not only lengthy, but it is also wearisome. Under toil and grief, the hobbits cross Middle-earth from West to East on a mission that has little hope of success. Such narrative arrangement, as Markos (2012) believes, is central in Tolkien's narrative. According to the scholar, the real courage of the hobbits consists mainly of their endurance, their ability to be resilient and keep moving forward, no matter the pain or adversity. In addition to that, the author also calls attention to the fact that the characters, mainly the hobbits, are given countless chances of abandoning the task they set out to do; however, they press on, march after tiring march, enduring with brave and quiet determination all the dangers of the Road. At this point, it seems relevant to call attention that Frodo's task was, at first, only to take the One Ring from the Shire to Rivendell; such task being accomplished, the hobbit, as well as his three companions, could, if it were their wish, return to their homeland. Curiously enough, during the Council of Elrond, which was held mainly to discuss who should be the ones to take the One Ring to Mordor, when all the great and valiant warriors taking part in the council fail to seize the challenge, it is Bilbo who asks the great question and Frodo who makes a surprising decision:

> ‘Exactly! And who are they to be? That seems to me what this Council has to decide, and all that it has to decide. [...] Can’t we think of some names now? [...] No one answered. The noon-bell rang. Still no one spoke. Frodo glanced at all the faces, but they were not turned to him. All the Council sat with downcast eyes, as if in deep thought. A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo’s side in Rivendell filled all his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. ‘I will take the Ring,’ he said, ‘though I do not know the way.’ Elrond raised his eyes and looked at him, and Frodo felt his heart pierced by the sudden keenness of the glance. ‘If I understand aright all that I have heard,’ he said, ‘I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will. This is the hour of the Shire-folk, when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the Great. Who of all the Wise could have foreseen it? Or, if they are wise, why should they expect to know it, until the hour has struck? ‘But it is a heavy burden. So heavy that none could lay it on another. I do not lay it on you. But if you take it freely, I will say that your choice is right; and though all the mighty Elf-friends of old, Hador, and Húrin, and Túrin, and Beren himself were assembled together, your seat should be among them.’ (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 352-353).

Therefore, as it may be argued from the excerpt above, Frodo does not seize the challenge because he believed he was the fittest to accomplish it, nor because he wanted to gain renown or have further adventures; he, as well as his three companions, had taken the

One Ring from the Shire to Rivendell, which lays a long way from their homeland, under great peril, risking their lives and almost perishing several times along the path. They had learned that the lands beyond the Shire are most unfit for their kind and that adventures are not something "[...] the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of a sport, as you might say" (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 931). The first part of their journey had shown them that adventures, rather than being something people looked for, are often about doing what is right over what is easy or desirable, about choosing the greater good over one's own well-being, and also about often unrewarded self-sacrifice. Frodo's decision of volunteering for the task is intrinsically connected to the already mentioned theory of courage, in which true virtue resides to a great extent in taking action in the face of dark times and imminent defeat. Such kind of courage Tolkien presents through the hobbits in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* is, as Ruud (2011) points out, the proper reaction to hopeless situations. Such fortitude, according to Markos, is only possessed by the ones who are strong enough to have "[...] their desires mortified for a higher cause; only the truly courageous can endure the loss (permanent or temporary) of [the] things they consider their right and their due." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 67).

Taking Markos's consideration above into account, it may be argued that Frodo is a prominent example of such courage: not only does he sacrifice his desires several times throughout *LOTR*, but he also sacrifices himself so that others may have a more hopeful future. Such notion is strongly marked in the passage below, from the chapter "The Grey Havens", in which Frodo explains to Sam why after all his efforts to save the Shire, he has to leave Middle-earth:

> 'But,' said Sam, and tears started in his eyes, 'I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years, after all you have done.' 'So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1346-1347).

Frodo, who was permanently hurt (physically and mentally) during his journey to destroy the One Ring, has to leave Middle-earth and take the elvish ship that will take him to the Undying Lands, a territory that is beyond the reach of any race in Tolkien's narrative, except for the elves and a few characters, like Frodo and Bilbo, who are granted passage to it due to their having been Ring bearers. In such lands, Frodo and Bilbo (and later also Sam),

spend the rest of their days. Such is their unlooked-for reward for their deeds of selfless courage that ensured that others could live more prosperous lives in Middle-earth.

The next Cardinal virtue discussed by Markos is Temperance. The scholar starts the discussion about this virtue by distinguishing its Hellenic concept from what he calls its modern understanding: for the Greeks, the author argues, Temperance is largely concerned with one's ability of finding the mean between the extremes; the modern notion, on the other hand, seems to be deeply connected with the idea that one should try everything once. For the purposes of this work, Temperance will assume the Hellenic notion, not the modern. To illustrate how such virtue works, Markos describes what would be a temperate attitude by contrasting two concepts, namely those of rashness and cowardice, and the middle state between these two, which is, he believes, “true courage”.

Rashness would be an excess of courage, largely associated with reckless and irresponsible attitudes. Such excess is problematic mainly because it makes it difficult for the ones that show it to endure the Road for long. There are at least two classic examples of characters that portray rash behavior in Tolkien's narratives: Thorin Oakenshield, in *The Hobbit*, and Boromir, in *LOTR*. Both these characters indeed show valiant and noble behavior through most of the narrative they take part in; however, it is exactly when they fail in doing so, when they are rash, that they find their undoing: Thorin, succumbing to his greed and lust for gold, realizes almost too late that there are great hosts of enemies marching to assail his homeland. In fact, the character probably would not notice the danger his people and him were in if it were not for Gandalf urging him to the fact that war was at hand. The conflict, which almost ends in total disaster, results in numerous deaths, including the ones of Fili and Kili, Thorin's cousins, and Thorin's own. In addition to that, it is interesting to point out Thorin's last words to Bilbo, in which the dwarf recognizes that one of the hobbit's greatest virtues is his temperate behavior:

> Bilbo knelt on one knee filled with sorrow. "Farewell, King under the Mountain!" he said. "This is a bitter adventure, if it must end so; and not a mountain of gold can amend it. Yet I am glad that I have shared in your perils -- that has been more than any Baggins deserves." "No!" said Thorin. "There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world. But sad or merry, I must leave it now. Farewell!" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 333).

In opposition to Thorin's rashness, which is largely connected to his desire to keep all the gold in the Lonely Mountain to his own people, Boromir's reckless attitude is intrinsically

connected with his wish to save his city and people, that had been long suffering under the malice of Sauron. The character is aware that the One Ring cannot be wielded by no one other than his master, Sauron; nonetheless, succumbing to his not unjustified wish to help his people, the warrior attempts to seize the Ring from Frodo, which results not only on the breaking of the Fellowship, but also on Merry and Pippin's being captured by Saruman's uruk-hay, and his own premature death. Boromir, likewise Thorin, also realizes only too late his own folly, as it may be argued from the excerpt below, from the chapter "The Breaking of the Fellowship":

> 'Why are you so unfriendly?' said Boromir. 'I am a true man, neither thief nor tracker. I need your Ring: that you know now; but I give you my word that I do not desire to keep it. Will you not at least let me make trial of my plan? Lend me the Ring!' 'No! no!' cried Frodo. 'The Council laid it upon me to bear it.' 'It is by our own folly that the Enemy will defeat us,' cried Boromir. 'How it angers me! Fool! Obstinate fool! Running wilfully to death and ruining our cause. If any mortals have claim to the Ring, it is the men of Númenor, and not Halflings. It is not yours save by unhappy chance. It might have been mine. It should be mine. Give it to me!'[...] Curse you and all halflings to death and darkness!' Then, catching his foot on a stone, he fell sprawling and lay upon his face. For a while he was as still as if his own curse had struck him down; then suddenly he wept. He rose and passed his hand over his eyes, dashing away the tears. 'What have I said?' he cried. 'What have I done? Frodo, Frodo!' he called. 'Come back! A madness took me, but it has passed. Come back!' There was no answer. Frodo did not even hear his cries. He was already far away, leaping blindly up the path to the hill-top. Terror and grief shook him, seeing in his thought the mad fierce face of Boromir, and his burning eyes. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 520-521).

The closest example of cowardice in Tolkien's narrative (if one excludes Gríma, King Théoden's counselor) comes probably from Denethor, the steward of Gondor. In his youth a valiant warrior, the character is arguably destitute of any courage in *LOTR*. As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, Denethor refuses to both fight and command his warriors into the war against Sauron, which he believes is already lost. In the face of what he sees as imminent defeat, rather than defend his city and his people, as most characters are doing, taken by madness and despair, and unwilling to follow Gandalf's advice, the steward commits suicide by burning himself alive. The character's defeatist attitude, it may be argued, is clear in the passage below from the chapter "The Pyre of Denethor", in which he tells Gandalf the reasoning behind his suicidal wish:

> 'Battle is vain. Why should we wish to live longer? Why should we not go to death side by side?' 'Authority is not given to you, Steward of Gondor, to order the hour of your death,' answered Gandalf. 'And only the heathen kings, under the domination of the Dark Power, did thus, slaying themselves in pride and despair, murdering their kin to ease their own death.' [...] I am Steward of the House of Anárion. I will not step down to be the dotard chamberlain of an upstart. Even were his claim proved to

> me, still he comes but of the line of Isildur. I will not bow to such a one, last of a ragged house long bereft of lordship and dignity.' 'What then would you have,' said Gandalf, 'if your will could have its way?' 'I would have things as they were in all the days of my life,' answered Denethor, 'and in the days of my longfathers before me: to be the Lord of this City in peace, and leave my chair to a son after me, who would be his own master and no wizard's pupil. But if doom denies this to me, then I will have *naught*: neither life diminished, nor love halved, nor honour abated.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1117-1118).

Therefore, Thórin in *The Hobbit*, as well as Boromir and Denethor in *LOTR* are representations of the excess of courage (rashness) and its lack (cowardice). The kind of courage that lies between these two extremes is, as Markos (2012) argues, wise, just and temperate. Such ideal courage, that is essential to endure the challenges and dangers that are met along the Road, is depicted in characters such as Bilbo and Frodo.[36] It is important to point out, however, that the virtue of Temperance is not limited only to the hobbits' courage; temperate behavior and attitudes seem to be a standard characteristic of this people, or at least this is what may be inferred from their description in the prologue of *LOTR*, as well as from the way they behave and act throughout Tolkien's narratives.

The first adjective used to describe the hobbits in the prologue to *LOTR* is "unobtrusive". The ones possessing such characteristic, it may be argued, are probably not prone to excesses since unobtrusiveness is connected with not attracting attention, which is the opposite of what excessive behavior tends to do. In addition to that, still during the prologue, the narrator informs the readers that "[a]t no time had Hobbits of any kind been warlike, and they had never fought among themselves. [...] [However,] though slow to quarrel, and for sport killing nothing that lived, they were doughty at bay, and at need could still handle arms." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 7). Therefore, as the excerpt above indicates, hobbits are peaceful and good-natured creatures, which does not mean that they cannot show valor and endurance at need. It is exactly this temperate behavior that helps them endure the adventures they take part in. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo is never the one that starts a battle, or that first draws a sword. In fact, the only moment he is seen fighting is during the chapter "Flies and Spiders", in which he is obliged to fight for his life and to rescue his companions that had been trapped. In addition to that, earlier in the narrative, in the chapter "Riddles in the Dark", the hobbit spares the life of Sméagol even though the creature intended to kill him. At the end of the narrative, in the chapter "The Clouds Burst", Bilbo decides that he will only take part in the fierce and bloody battle that is taking place if there is utmost need. Rather than being

[36] There is no denying that such courage is also present in non-hobbit characters, such as Faramir and Aragorn. However, for the purposes of this work, whose focus lies on the hobbits, such non-hobbit characters will not be deeply explored.

reckless and quick to engage into combat, the hobbit opts for adopting a mild and dependable attitude, which basically means that while he is not likely to show a rash behavior, he will not fail to act and do the deeds he is appointed to do.

As well as Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, Frodo, Sam, and Merry present similar attitudes in *LOTR*.[37] These three hobbits, to different extents, possess a temperate nature that makes them face and endure the Road in a light-hearted-as-possible fashion. Through most of the narrative, sometimes even in the dreariest of times and places, they rarely fail to show a cheerful behavior, frequently engaging into song and merry-making. Probably, one of the most evident depictions of such characteristic takes place in the chapter "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol", while Frodo and Sam are discussing, already in Sauron's dominions, whether their deeds and they would ever be put into songs or tales. In the middle of such exchange, Frodo suddenly

> [...] laughed, a long clear laugh from his heart. Such a sound had not been heard in those places since Sauron came to Middle-earth. To Sam suddenly it seemed as if all the stones were listening and the tall rocks leaning over them. But Frodo did not heed them; he laughed again. 'Why, Sam,' he said, 'to hear you somehow makes me as merry as if the story was already written. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 932-933).

When it comes to battle, the hobbits tend to fight only when there is no other alternative, or to defend their friends and the ones to whom they swore allegiance. Merry and Sam offer interesting examples of such behavior: Merry, towards the end of the story, driven by his loyalty to King Théoden and a desire to play some important part in the narrative, rides to battle even though the King had dismissed him from his services and had also warned him that a battlefield was no place for a hobbit. When the King falls during the battle against the captain of Sauron's army, it is Pippin, together with Éowyn (the King's niece), who defends the fallen warrior. Even though the hobbit is not able to save Théoden's life, his valiant attitudes are central to the slaying of the captain of the enemy. Apart from such moment, there are only two other instances in which Merry engages into battle, being one of them during an ambush he and the rest of the Fellowship are caught in, in the chapter "The Bridge of Khazad-dûm", and the other during the chapter "The Scouring of the Shire", in which he, along with Sam, Frodo, and Pippin, has to fight to restore the order in his homeland.

[37] The hobbit Pippin, who also takes part in the adventures of *LOTR*, has impulsiveness as one of his main characteristics. Such impulsive personality, at times, endangers not only himself but also his companions. Even though the hobbit matures through the narrative and learns to overcome such flaw, I decided not to include the character in the discussions concerning the virtue Temperance.

Like the way Merry fights to protect Théoden, Sam's actions are guided by his desire not only to defend his friend and master Frodo but also to make sure that he keep firm on the Road even during the most hopeless and difficult times. When Frodo leaves the Shire, Gandalf appoints Sam to be his fellow hobbit's companion. From that moment on, Sam's actions are guided by a sense of duty towards Frodo: he is the one who abandons the Fellowship of the Ring to follow Frodo when the hobbit decides to leave the group and set to Mordor to destroy the One Ring. Sam knows, as it is pointed in the epigraph of this chapter, that he has a role to play in the affairs of Middle-earth and he is determined to make sure that it is fulfilled adequately. In this sense, it may be argued that the hobbit believes that his part in the narrative is, to a great extent, to aid his master in the task he was appointed to do, mainly by making the dreary journey he has to face more bearable. Sam's temperate and cheerful behavior is fundamental to the accomplishment of the task Frodo set out to do. From the moment Frodo and he leave the rest of their companions behind, Sam becomes responsible for administrating their provisions, making sure that they never eat, or drink more than they should if they want to have enough to last until their mission is accomplished. In addition to that, even though their task depends greatly of their haste, Sam is aware of that it is important that they rest and sleep as much as possible during the intervals of their marches; the hobbit recognizes that in order to endure the Road they need balance as much as they need courage, as it may be argued from the excerpt below, from the chapter "The Land of Shadow", in which the hobbits find themselves struggling to find their way to Mount Doom:

> 'We have come to a dead end, Sam,' said Frodo. 'If we go on, we shall only come up to that orc-tower, but the only road to take is that road that comes down from it – unless we go back. We can't climb up westward, or climb down eastward.' 'Then we must take the road, Mr. Frodo,' said Sam. 'We must take it and chance our luck, if there is any luck in Mordor. We might as well give ourselves up as wander about any more, or try to go back. Our food won't last. We've got to make a dash for it!' 'All right, Sam,' said Frodo. 'Lead me! As long as you've got any hope left. Mine is gone. But I can't dash, Sam. I'll just plod along after you.' 'Before you start any more plodding, you need sleep and food, Mr. Frodo. Come and take what you can get of them!' He gave Frodo water and an additional wafer of the waybread, and he made a pillow of his cloak for his master's head. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1214-1215).

As it may be argued from the discussions on Courage and Temperance above, the Cardinal virtue not only are interconnected, but they also complement one another: if on one hand, it is necessary Courage to endure the hardships and losses one has to face on the Road, as well as to act upon necessity, on the other hand, Temperance is fundamental to help one keep alive, strong, and cheerful along the way. It is, to a considerable extent, Courage that puts one on the Road and helps one keep firm on it, but it is them that possess a temperate

behavior that will probably reach the end of the journey. The third virtue discussed in this section, Wisdom, is also linked to the latter two in a complementary way, for it is this third virtue that helps to guide the decisions of the travelers on the Road.

Markos defines the virtue of Wisdom by arguing that it is directly connected with discernment; for the scholar, the truly wise are the ones possessing the ability to "[...] perceive and weigh the subtle distinctions between good and evil, virtue and vice, discretion and folly." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 84). Such Wisdom, the author declares, mixes common sense with insight, intelligence, and righteousness. In other words, this virtue can be understood as, but not limited to, one's ability to ponder over what is easy and what is right, what is difficult, but necessary, and what seems to be wrong, but that is, in fact, the correct thing to be done under the given circumstances. There are two main situations that I believe illustrate such concept of Wisdom in Tolkien's narratives; one takes place in *The Hobbit* and involves Bilbo, while the other is part of *LOTR* and is deeply concerned with the hobbit Samwise Gamgee.

Towards the end of the narrative of *The Hobbit*, Bilbo finds himself in a rather difficult situation: he had been traveling with Thorin and his company since the beginning of the narrative and the hobbit had been promised one-fourteenth of the total profits of the adventure in case they were successful in their mission, which consisted basically in reclaiming their home in the Lonely Mountain, which had been invaded by the dragon Smaug, and retrieving their vast treasure. When, in the chapter "Inside Information", Smaug leaves the Lonely Mountain seeking revenge on whoever had helped Bilbo invade his lair, the hobbit and Thorin's company manage to sneak in and explore the dwarves long-lost home. During their searching, Bilbo encounters a magnificent jewel, the Arkenstone, also known as "the Heart of the Mountain". Such gem, as the hobbit learns from one conversation he had overheard, is the item the dwarves treasure the most among all the hoard that lies stored in the halls of the Lonely Mountain. Since he had been told that he could choose his one-fourteenth part of the treasure as he pleased, he decides, then, to keep the Arkenstone to himself. However, at the exact moment he seizes the jewel, the hobbit thinks to himself:

> "Now I am a burglar indeed!" thought he."But I suppose I must tell the dwarves about it-some time. They did say I could pick and choose my own share; and I think I would choose this, if they took all the rest!" All the same he had an uncomfortable feeling that the picking and choosing had not really been meant to include this marvellous gem, and that trouble would yet come of it. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 275).

What seems to be at the time a foolish action turns to be, as it is narrated in the chapter "A Thief in the Night" an important, selfless and wise decision. As it was already mentioned,

there is a moment in *The Hobbit* in which Thorin, succumbing to lust and greed over the gold in The Lonely Mountain, refuses to aid the people from Lake Town who not only had helped him in his reclaiming his homeland, but that also had suffered greatly for having done so. Seeing so sad a change in Thorin and worried with the possible catastrophic outcomes of an imminent conflict between dwarves, men, and elves, Bilbo decides to leave The Lonely Mountain furtively and discuss the situation with the leaders of the armies that had been besieging the mountain, and also to propose a plan.

> [...] "things are impossible. Personally I am tired of the whole affair. I wish I was back in the West in my own home, where folk are more reasonable. But I have an interest in this matter-one fourteenth share, to be precise, according to a letter, which fortunately I believe I have kept. [...] A share in the profits, mind you," he went on. "I am aware of that. Personally I am only too ready to consider all your claims carefully, and deduct what is right from the total before putting in my own claim. However you don't know Thorin Oakenshield as well as I do now. I assure you, he is quite ready to sit on a heap of gold and starve, as long as you sit here. [...] At the same time winter is coming on fast. Before long you will be having snow and what not, and supplies will be difficult -- even for elves I imagine. Also there will be other difficulties. You have not heard of Dain and the dwarves of the Iron Hills? [...] Dain, I may tell you, is now less than two days' march off, and has at least five hundred grim dwarves with him[...]. When they arrive there may be serious trouble." "Why do you tell us this? Are you betraying your friends, or are you threatening us?" asked Bard grimly. "My dear Bard!" squeaked Bilbo. "Don't be so hasty! I never met such suspicious folk! I am merely trying to avoid trouble for all concerned. Now I will make you an offer!!" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 313-314).

The offer Bilbo has to make is handing the Arkenstone he has in his possession to Bard so that he can use the jewel to negotiate with Thorin. The hobbit knows that the dwarf values the Arkenstone above all the vast treasure that is stored in the Lonely Mountain, and he believes that it is possible that the dwarf accepts, even if unwillingly, to trade the gem for the gold Bard needs to rebuild his town and aid his people. On the other hand, Bilbo is also aware that Thorin is no longer his former self, that the dwarf, driven by greed and ambition, has lost the capacity to distinguish between wisdom and folly. Therefore, the hobbit's action can either be of great help, or make matters even worse not only as a whole but also (and mainly) for himself: if Thorin misjudges the hobbit's intentions, the chances of a war being kindled is multiplied manifold and Bilbo will probably be considered as a traitor and his life will be in an even greater danger. However, the hero is willing to risk his friendship with Thorin and also his own life if there is even a small chance of avoiding a war. The character does not understand why there must be such bickering over gold, mainly because it is evident that there is plenty of it to share with everyone. In addition to that, Bilbo knows that if there is a war, immeasurable losses will result: it is probable that a number of the dwarfs, whom the hero

sees as friends, will succumb in the battle; it is also likely that many of the elves, which Bilbo greatly esteems and considers a fair people, and Bard and his men will also die. With so much at stake, the character relies on his wisdom to decide what to do, and it is the discernment derived from such virtue that help him realize that there will be moments in which it will be necessary to resort to options that are seemingly bad (such as betraying one's friends trust and putting one's own life in danger) for a greater cause, such as trying to avoid a war that would destroy much of what one loves and the ones they care about.

The second instance concerning the virtue of Wisdom that I would like to address takes place in *LOTR* and concerns mostly the hobbit Samwise Gamgee. However, before commenting on the instance itself, I would like to make some considerations regarding the character that is involved in it. When one compares the four hobbits that are part of The Fellowship of the Ring, the hobbit Sam easily stands out: first of all, differently from the other three hobbits, Sam is not from a well-to-do family; Frodo, Merry, and Pippin, as it can be seen in the family trees in appendix C of *LOTR*, are all descendants from the well-off Took family. The social standard of this family is, as Shippey (2001) points out, equivalent to what would be termed as middle class during the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods in which Tolkien lived; the Gamgee's, on the other hand, belong to what would be considered as working class during the author's time. More importantly, Sam, as well as his predecessors and successors, only start to have their own family tree after the hobbit comes back from his adventures outside the Shire; it is only then that the Gardner family, founded by Sam himself, begins to be considered somewhat renowned and influential. At the beginning of *LOTR*, what is known from Sam is that he is a servant to Bilbo, working as a gardener like did his father, Ham Gamgee, before him. The descriptions given in the chapter "A Long-Expected Party" concerning the relationship between the Gamgee's and Bilbo and Frodo is worth considering: "[...] [Ham Gamgee] had tended the garden at Bag End for forty years [...]. Now that he was himself growing old and stiff in the joints, the job was mainly carried on by his youngest son, Sam Gamgee. Both father and son were on very friendly terms with Bilbo and Frodo." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 28). It is interesting to notice that the expression "in friendly terms" does not necessarily imply that the Gamgee's and the Baggins were friends, but rather that they had a good master-servant relationship. Such idea is reinforced several times at the beginning of the narrative. In the chapter "The Shadow of the Past", Pippin and Merry earn the title of Frodo's closest friends and Folco Boffin and Fredegar Bolger (both secondary characters) are described as some of the hobbit's many good friends; however, there is no mention of Sam, who remains, it may be argued, in the category of servant. In addition to that,

in the chapter “A Long-Expected Party”, Sam's father comments on his son's interaction with the Baggins seem to make sure that the Gamgee’s stand in a more subordinate position:

> He’s in and out of Bag End. Crazy about stories of the old days, he is, and he listens to all Mr. Bilbo’s tales. Mr. Bilbo has learned him his letters – meaning no harm, mark you, and I hope no harm will come of it. ‘*Elves and Dragons!* I says to him. *Cabbages and potatoes are better for me and you. Don’t go getting mixed up in the business of your betters, or you’ll land in trouble too big for you*, I says to him. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 31).

Taking into consideration the excerpts above, it may be argued that not only do the Gamgee’s belong to a different social standing but also that they are aware of that. They have great respect and regard for their masters, but they know they belong to different spheres. Another evidence of such difference is linguistic: both Sam's father (as it can be seen in the quoted passage above) and Sam himself speak in a non-standard manner (e.g.: they use the third person singular form “says” with the first person singular, rather than the standard form “say”, that is common among literate people). In addition to that, they often use the title “Mr.” or “Mrs.” when addressing the ones they believe belong to a superior standing.

Notwithstanding, it is Sam, a simple and common hobbit, that takes one of the most important and complex decisions in the entire narrative, a decision that demonstrates that not only the great are possessed with wisdom and discernment. Before I discuss the character’s wisdom further, however, I would like to pose some considerations regarding the hobbit’s name. As Flieger (2017) points out, the name “Samwise” derives from the Anglo-Saxon word compound “sám”, which may be translated as “half”, and “wís”, which means “wise”; “Samwise”, therefore, means literally “half-wise” or “simple”. When referring to the hobbit, I believe that the term “simple” may be understood as “practical” or “uncomplex”, which is precisely the way the character thinks, in a practical and uncomplex way. It may be argued, then, that Sam earns the title of “half-wise” not because he is simple-minded, but rather because he is pragmatic. “Unlike Saruman or Denethor, who are both divided, both complicated mixtures of pride, ambition, and knowledge, Sam is ‘simple’. He has no pride (…) and his intellect is not vexed by subtle distinctions, such as ‘the end justifies the means’.” (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 116). In this sense, when, in the chapter “The Choices of Master Samwise”, he finds himself facing a complex situation which requires that he make a difficult choice in a moment that he has no one to guide him, the hobbit, as Flieger argues, thinks in terms of possibilities, rather than in terms of principles.

When, towards the end of the narrative, Sam finds his master, Frodo, lying on the ground, pale, wounded, and unconscious, he thinks his companion is dead. At that exact moment, the character, who is on the brink of despair, is confronted with a hard question: what should he do now that his master is dead, and he is all alone in a desolate place? Frodo had undertaken the mission of destroying the One Ring and Sam had pledged to follow and aid him. What is he to do now, without Frodo and with the mission still unfinished? Having not much time to decide, the hobbit considers four options: (1) go back to the Shire, leaving his master behind and the task unfulfilled; (2) avenge Frodo by pursuing Sméagol, who had plotted his death; (3) commit suicide; or (4) continue the journey alone and complete the mission by taking the Ring to Mount Doom and destroying it. After a moment's deliberation, the hobbit decides that he has to carry the task started by his master on; such decision proves to be arguably wise, mainly because it is decisive to the outcomes of the narrative. As Flieger states, Sam's choice is

> guided by duty, not morality. It is his duty to "*see it through*. [...]" This is a public rather than a private choice, putting Sam's obligation to the quest ahead of his loyalty to Frodo [...]. And then Tolkien engineers an abrupt about-face, pulling a total surprise on the reader, who by this time is with Sam, mourning for the dead Frodo. With no narrative warning either to him or the reader, Sam finds out from overhearing the orc soldiers that Frodo is alive. This changes his whole outlook, introducing for the first time the terms *right* and *wrong*, and causing him to completely reverse his judgement. "'I got it all wrong!' he cried. 'I knew I would.'" Sam's use of the word here is not moral, it is practical. He is not so much guilty of wrongdoing as of having made a mistake, committed a blunder. He goes on. "'Now they've got him, the devils! The filth! Never leave your master, never, never: that was my right rule. And I knew it in my heart. May I be forgiven'" [...] The word "right" is introduced here to companion "wrong". He now asks for forgiveness because in his own eyes he has committed a sin. He has violated his "right rule", his own standard of morality. Having made the mistake of leaving Frodo, his "right rule" tells him to do the right thing and go back to Frodo. (FLIEGER, 2017, p. 117).

Sam goes, then, back to Frodo and rescues him from the orcs. However, if he had not decided to take the Ring from his companion when he thought he was dead, their whole mission would have been ruined, for when the orcs captured Frodo while he was unconscious, they searched the hobbit and took all his belongings to Sauron, for these were his orders. When Sam finally manages to find his master, the latter is stripped from all his possessions; the hobbit is found, literally naked, by his faithful companion. Frodo is, indeed, happy to see him and also to have been rescued from the torment of the orcs; however, when he realizes that all he had with him had been taken by his captives, the hobbit despairs: "'[t]hey've taken everything, Sam,' said Frodo.'Everything I had. Do you understand? *Everything!*' He cowered on the floor again with bowed head, as his own words brought home to him the fullness of the

disaster, and despair overwhelmed him. 'The quest has failed Sam.'" (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1192). It is only then that Sam reveals to his master that the Ring had not been taken by the orcs because he had decided to seize it himself and, alone, fulfill the task his master had started. With Frodo rescued and the Ring in safety, their journey goes on thanks to Sam's actions. Sam's choices, like Bilbo's in *The Hobbit*, show that true Wisdom involves, to a great extent, having the discernment to make seemingly wrong, but necessary, choices. However, as it was already argued in this section, the Cardinal virtues are all interconnected: Sam had the Wisdom to choose what to do, but he also needed Courage to make the decision he made, as well as Temperance not to succumb to the temptation of resorting to suicide or vengeance. The virtues of Faith, Hope, Love, and Friendship, which are discussed in the next section, are also complementary.

4.2 The Theological Virtues and Friendship on Tolkien's Narratives

The Theological virtues are deeply concerned with Christianity and Christian philosophy. For the practitioners and believers of such doctrine, these virtues are directly associated with moral characteristics that are fundamental to what Christians refer to as the salvation which comes from the Grace of God. In another sense, much broader than the first, the Theological virtues may be seen as beacons that help people live their lives more meaningfully and aware of their role in the continuous narrative of life. Tolkien, as a devoted Roman Catholic, was aware of such virtues and the impact they have in one's life. As I discuss their connections and presence in *The Hobbit* and the *LOTR*, however, I will be much more focused on commenting on how they help the characters in these narratives endure the Road and fulfill their tasks, than on their religious meaning. At first, I will address the virtues of Faith and Hope together in order to highlight how they work together; then, my focus will turn to the third Theological virtue, Love, and I will conclude the section by discussing the importance of Friendship that, though is listed as neither a Cardinal nor a Theological virtue, is of central importance in Tolkien's works.

To define "Faith", Markos (2012) starts by quoting a Biblical passage (Hebrews 11.1, to be more precise). Such passage connects Faith and Hope by saying that the first is the substance of the latter, the evidence of things unseen. The scholar adds to the passage by arguing that rather than believing in irrational and illogical things, Faith is characterized by the belief and trust in promises coming from an authority in whom you have confidence. Such

authority, it may be argued, in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* is frequently represented by Gandalf. Such character, as was previously argued, is a spiritual being sent to Middle-earth to help the free peoples of such place in the struggles against the Dark Lord, Sauron. Even though the other characters in the narrative perceive him as a wizard, Rudd argues that

> [...] Tolkien has de-emphasized the wizard figure's character as powerful magician and stressed instead the traditional role as teacher and counsellor. [...] Thus, Gandalf is an authority figure embodying qualities such as wisdom, morality, and a willingness to help the hero. (RUDD, 2011, p. 300).

In both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* there are several passages in which the characters are seen trusting Gandalf's words even though the wizard does not give them any clear explanation of his plans or of what his words mean. For the purposes of this work, I will only discuss passages in which the hobbits are involved. The first event I would like to address is concerned with Bilbo and how he found himself joining a perilous adventure: in the first exchange the character and Gandalf have in the narrative, the wizard tells him things that he does not fully comprehend and that also puts him in an uneasy mood:

> Indeed for your old grand-father Took's sake, and for the sake of poor Belladonna, I will give you what you asked for." "I beg your pardon, I haven't asked for anything!" "Yes, you have! Twice now. My pardon. I give it you. In fact I will go so far as to send you on this adventure. Very amusing for me, very good for you and profitable too, very likely, if you ever get over it." "Sorry! I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today. Good morning! [...]" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 8-9).

The hobbit only starts to understand Gandalf's words the next day, when he is getting ready for tea and his doorbell rings. When the character opens the door, much to his surprise, there is a dwarf standing at the threshold and that enters Bilbo's residence without even an introduction. Not knowing what to do and neither wanting to be impolite, the hobbit invites him to join him in the afternoon tea. To make matters worse, twelve other dwarves soon arrive and behave similarly as the first. Luckily, Gandalf also joins them and partially explains the situation to Bilbo: the dwarves needed someone to aid them in their quest and the wizard believed the hobbit was suitable for the task; he, then, informed the dwarves that he had found the companion they needed and directed them to Bilbo's house. Neither of the parties is, at first, satisfied with Gandalf's choices and intentions: Bilbo is unwilling to take part in the dwarves' quest, and these do not consider the hobbit capable of aiding them in their mission. When the mood of doubt starts to arise, however, the wizard intervenes:

> You asked me to find the fourteenth man for your expedition, and I chose Mr. Baggins. Just let anyone say I chose the wrong man or the wrong house, and you can stop at thirteen and have all the bad luck you like, or go back to digging coal." He scowled so angrily at Gloin that the dwarf huddled back in his chair; and when Bilbo tried to open his mouth to ask a question, he turned and frowned at him and stuck out his bushy eyebrows, till Bilbo shut his mouth tight with a snap. "That's right," said Gandalf. "Let's have no more argument. I have chosen Mr. Baggins and that ought to be enough for all of you. If I say he is a Burglar, a Burglar he is, or will be when the time comes. There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself. You may (possibly) all live to thank me yet. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 23-24).

The wizard speaks in a mysterious and not totally clear tone. In spite of that, both Bilbo and the dwarves decide to trust the wizard words, and, in the following day, they start the long journey to the Lonely Mountain, to reclaim their homeland. It is important to add that their following Gandalf's plan, even though they did not know his purposes, was fundamental to the fulfilling of their task. Bilbo, as it was already argued in the previous sections, had a central role to play in the dwarves' quest; he, alone, rescued his companions twice during their journey: first in the chapter “Flies and Spiders” when the dwarves had all been caught in the webs of giant spiders and were about to be eaten by the monsters, and then in the chapter “Barrels out of Bond”, in which the hobbit's thirteen companions are made prisoners by the king of the wood-elves of Mirkwood. If it were not for Bilbo's intervention in such situations, the quest would have failed. In addition to that, it is the hobbit who first enters the Lonely Mountain and holds a conversation with the dragon Smaug, which leads to the creature's leaving the place and consequent death. At the end of the adventure, the readers, the dwarves and, more importantly, Bilbo, finally come to a fuller understanding of Gandalf's words in the beginning of the story: there is much more in the hobbit than any had imagined and it is, to a great extent, thanks to that the story has a happy-as-possible ending. In *LOTR*, the hobbits' trusting in Gandalf's words is also fundamental to the outcomes of the story.

Concerning the virtue of Faith in *LOTR*, there are two instances that I would like to discuss in this section. The first involves mainly Frodo and Sam and takes place at the beginning of the narrative, in the chapter “The Shadow of the Past”. In such chapter, Gandalf explains to Frodo what he has discovered about the One Ring, as well as the dangers connected to such artifact. After hearing the wizard’s account, as a means to protect his homeland and the ones he loves, Frodo decides to leave the Shire. The hobbit’s plans, which were supposed to remain secret, however, are overheard by Sam; when Gandalf discovers that Frodo’s servant has learned about what they had discussed, the wizard decides to appoint Sam as his master’s companion. Even though he does not know much about the objectives of Frodo’s journey, the hobbit obeys Gandalf’s orders without complaining. In addition to that, it

is important to note that even Frodo does not know much about what he has to do: all he knows is that he ought to leave the Shire and that he must do so secretly; however, the hobbit does not know where he has to go:

> ‘As for where I am going,’ said Frodo, ‘it would be difficult to give that away, for I have no clear idea myself, yet.’ ‘Don’t be absurd!’ said Gandalf. ‘I am not warning you against leaving an address at the post-office! But you are leaving the Shire – and that should not be known, until you are far away. And you must go, or at least set out, either North, South, West or East – and the direction should certainly not be known.’ ‘I have been so taken up with the thoughts of leaving Bag End, and of saying farewell, that I have never even considered the direction,’ said Frodo. ‘For where am I to go? And by what shall I steer? What is to be my quest? Bilbo went to find a treasure, there and back again; but I go to lose one, and not return, as far as I can see.’ ‘But you cannot see very far,’ said Gandalf. ‘Neither can I. It may be your task to find the Cracks of Doom; but that quest may be for others: I do not know. At any rate you are not ready for that long road yet.’ ‘No indeed!’ said Frodo. ‘But in the meantime what course am I to take?’ ‘Towards danger; but not too rashly, nor too straight,’ answered the wizard. ‘If you want my advice, make for Rivendell. That journey should not prove too perilous, though the Road is less easy than it was, and it will grow worse as the year fails.’ (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 86).

Like what happens in *The Hobbit*, Gandalf’s words to Frodo in the passage above are not too enlightening. Notwithstanding, the hobbit decides to trust the wizard and follow the path appointed by him and do things as Gandalf advised. After around one month, the hobbit reaches Rivendell and it is only there, during the Council of Elrond, that the character learns more about what he is to do next. The second instance I would like to address is connected to the outcomes of such event.

During the council that is held at Rivendell, as it was mentioned earlier in this work, Frodo volunteers to attempt to destroy the One Ring in the fires of Mount Doom. As a means to aid him in his arduous task, the Fellowship of the Ring is formed. In the beginning, no hobbit other than Frodo was supposed to be part of such group; Sam, who had accompanied his master in the first part of the journey, however, refuses to be left behind and receives permission to aid Frodo in the new task. When Merry and Pippin, who had also followed Frodo from the Shire to Rivendell, learn that Sam was granted permission to keep accompanying his master, they grow indignant and, not willing to be left behind, request the consent of Elrond to do the same. The character, in spite of that, is not willing to allow that they go:

> ‘There remain two more to be found,’ said Elrond. ‘These I will consider. Of my household I may find some that it seems good to me to send.’ ‘But that will leave no place for us!’ cried Pippin in dismay. ‘We don’t want to be left behind. We want to go with Frodo.’ ‘That is because you do not understand and cannot imagine what lies ahead,’ said Elrond. ‘Neither does Frodo,’ said Gandalf, unexpectedly

> supporting Pippin. 'Nor do any of us see clearly. It is true that if these hobbits understood the danger, they would not dare to go. But they would still wish to go, or wish that they dared, and be shamed and unhappy. I think, Elrond, that in this matter it would be well to trust rather to their friendship than to great wisdom. (…) 'You speak gravely,' said Elrond, 'but I am in doubt. (…) In any case, I judge that the younger of these two, Peregrin Took, should remain. My heart is against his going.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 359).

Even though he is in doubt, Elrond decides to trust Gandalf's judgment and allows Pippin and Merry to be part of the Fellowship. Therefore, considering the excerpts above, it may be argued that the four hobbits' adventure takes place, to a considerable extent, due to their own or someone else's faith and trust in the wizard's wisdom and judgment. It is also important to highlight that it is thanks to such faith in the character that many decisive events in *LOTR* take place, for Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin all play central roles in them. Some of these events were already discussed previously in this work, yet others are going to be addressed along with the discussion of the virtues of Hope, Love, and Friendship.

Markos differentiates faith from hope by arguing that while the first is like a transcendent vision, the latter is an imminent expectation: "the former gives us new eyes with which to see the unseen; the second gives us a new heart that cannot be defeated by present pain or darkness." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 124). I would argue, however, that instead of being two distinguished things, they are rather facets of the same thing: while faith is, as it was already argued, associated with believing and trusting in a trust-worthy authority, hope is not dependent of the words or actions of another individual or entity, it is not projected onto someone else; hope, I believe, is an internal state that helps us keep positive and strong even during the most difficult times. Possessing the virtue of Hope is, in this sense, "to know for a certainty, to know with one's whole being, that good will come out of evil, that there will be a happy ending. And not some forced, arbitrary, tagged-on happy ending, but one that is both natural and necessary, that rises up out of the evil itself." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 124). Such ending is often one that could hardly be guessed; however, when such unlooked-for ending comes, it strikes us with a sense of wonder, a sense that makes us feel that it is the right kind of ending. Therefore, it is possible to connect the virtue of Hope with Tolkien's concept of *Eucatastrophe*, which is the sudden joyous turn in the face of imminent defeat, the Consolation of the happy ending which the author believes is the highest function of fantasy stories.

Inside the narrative of both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, it is possible to see the characters struggling to keep their hope and belief in a happy ending alive during their journey even during the most difficult moments. In the first chapter of this work, I discussed (even that

briefly) how such notion is present in *The Hobbit*; therefore, presently I will address only instances concerning *LOTR*. Arguably, two of the most poignant moments in *LOTR* take place during the chapters "The Tower of Cirith Ungol" and "Mount Doom", which describe the final toils of the hobbits Frodo and Sam in their journey to destroy the One Ring. In the chapter "The Tower of Cirith Ungol", when Frodo is captured by the servants of Sauron, Sam invades the tower in which his master is being kept prisoner in an attempt to rescue him. However, his mission is no easy task: the character has to discover where exactly Frodo is locked and also to defeat the orcs that are guarding the tower. Sam is already weary, hungry, and thirsty from his previous struggles, therefore, after searching what he believes to be the entire place, despair starts to take the hobbit over:

> At last, weary and feeling finally defeated, he sat on a step below the level of the passage-floor and bowed his head into his hands. It was quiet, horribly quiet. The torch, that was already burning low when he arrived, sputtered and went out; and he felt the darkness cover him like a tide. And then softly, to his own surprise, there at the vain end of his long journey and his grief, moved by what thought in his heart he could not tell, Sam began to sing. [...] *In western lands beneath the Sun/ the flowers may rise in Spring,/ the trees may bud, the waters run,/ the merry finches sing./ Or there maybe 'tis cloudless night/ and swaying beeches bear/ the Elven-stars as jewels white/ amid their branching hair./ Though here at journey's end I lie/ in darkness buried deep,/ beyond all towers strong and high,/ beyond all mountains steep,/ above all shadows rides the Sun/ and Stars for ever dwell:/ I will not say the Day is done,/ nor bid the Stars farewell.* (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1188).

In such dark hour, Sam remembers that even though there may exist moments of great distress when everything seems to be covered with shadows, there is no darkness that lasts forever; the Sun will, eventually, shine again. Such recognition gives the hobbit new strength and hope to keep searching for his master, and soon after he stops singing, he hears a faint voice that seems to be answering him and moments later he manages to discover where Frodo is being kept captive. Hearing Sam's voice, Frodo, who is only half-conscious and that had been locked in a secret room, tries to answer and, largely because of that, is soon found by his servant. Now reunited once more, the hobbits escape the tower of Cirith Ungol and resume their journey, which is finally coming to its end.

Before they can reach Mount Doom, however, the hobbits still have to walk a considerable distance in the wasteland of Mordor: from the moment they exit Cirith Ungol to the day they finally reach the volcano and destroy the One Ring, ten days go by. During these days, the characters face a long and weary journey, under foul weather and desolate landscape and with a low supply of water and food. Before such dreary and seemingly hopeless situation, Frodo, whose suffering due to the influence of the One Ring becomes more difficult

to bear the closer he gets to Mount Doom, manages to carry on mostly because of his sense of duty and the help of Sam, for he has practically abandoned hope. Even Sam, who often shows a hopeful and light-hearted attitude through all the narrative, almost surrenders to despair during the journey through the land of Mordor, as it can be noticed in the following excerpt from the chapter "Mount Doom":

> Sam tried to guess the distances and to decide what way they ought to take. 'It looks every step of fifty miles,' he muttered gloomily staring at the threatening mountain, 'and that'll take a week, if it takes a day, with Mr. Frodo as he is.' He shook his head, and as he worked things out, slowly a new dark thought grew in his mind. Never for long had hope died in his staunch heart, and always until now he had taken some thought for their return. But the bitter truth came home to him at last: at best their provision would take them to their goal; and when the task was done, there they would come to an end, alone, houseless, foodless in the midst of a terrible desert. There could be no return. 'So that was the job I felt I had to do when I started,' thought Sam: 'to help Mr. Frodo to the last step and then die with him? Well, if that is the job then I must do it. [...] I can't think somehow that Gandalf would have sent Mr. Frodo on this errand if there hadn't a' been any hope of his ever coming back at all. [...] But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1221).

The passage above accurately summarizes the essence of the virtue Hope: a feeling that stills in one a sense of courage, strength, and resilience renewed, a feeling that makes one strong and daring even though they stand on the brink of despair and doom. Such is the feeling that takes Sam over in the quoted excerpt, a feeling that reminds him that "the Shadow [is] only a small and passing thing: there [is] light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1206). According to Markos, it is precisely in the moment that Sam reaches such understanding that he perceives the true essence of the virtue of Hope: "[...] the deep, heartfelt understanding that though we may fail in our mission, and though we may perish alone in the dark, the Shadow *will* pass away and goodness *will* triumph." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 128). The darkness cannot, as Frodo recognizes in the chapter "Journey to the Cross-roads", conquer forever; and it is such recognition that gives the hobbits new heart to complete the final stage of their journey in the land of Mordor.

The third and final Theological virtue, Love, plays a central role in Tolkien's narratives; such importance is intrinsically connected to the close relationship between the given virtue and the *Eucatastrophe* in *LOTR*. However, before discussing such connection, I would like to address the virtue itself. C.S. Lewis (1960) distinguishes between four kinds of love: (1) Affection, which, the scholar argues, is the love involved in, but that is not limited

to, the parents-children relationship. Such love is deeply concerned with caring for the well-being of the loved on; (2) Friendship, which Lewis describes as the happiest and most fully human of all loves, but that is at the same time the least natural one;[38] (3) Eros, which may be roughly defined as "lovers" love or simply as the state to which one may refer as "being in love"; and finally, (4) Charity, the love for the unlovable, or, in other words, the love that pities and forgives. In this thesis, I will address only Charity and Friendship, for, amongst the different types of love proposed by Lewis, they are the ones that stand out in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*.

Among the four facets of love proposed by Lewis, the one that represents the Theological virtue of Love is that of Charity. Interestingly enough, the equivalence between Love and Charity is such that while some versions of the Bible, such as the New International Version, refer to the third Theological virtue as "Love", others, such as the King James Bible, use the term Charity when addressing it. Therefore, in order to reach a broader understanding of what such virtue represents, I believe that it is pertinent to discuss the meaning of the term "charity". According to Markos, the word "charity" derives from the Latin "caritas", which is, in its turn, a translation of the Greek word *agape*, which is one of the Greek words for "love". Both "caritas" and *agape*, the scholar argues,

> point to a higher kind of love, a more spiritual, self-sacrificing love that gives of itself. Charity, in its older sense, has all the qualities that St. Paul ascribes to it in his great "love chapter" - it is patient, kind, does not envy or boast, does not seek evil for others nor keep a record of wrongs, rejoices in goodness and not in iniquity. [...] It is the most active of the three virtues, for while faith and hope can transform the one who possesses them, love can transform not only us but the world around us. (MARKOS, 2012, p. 133-134).

It is based on such understanding of the term "charity" that I intend to address and discuss how the virtue of Love is present in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. I decided to consider Love only after approaching Faith and Hope, mostly because of its close relationship with Tolkien's idea of *Eucatastrophe*, which is, the author argues, intrinsically connected with the "happy ending" of fantasy narratives; the "sudden joyous turn in the face of imminent defeat" takes place in Tolkien's narratives, it may be argued, mostly because three specific characters are capable of charity, the love that pities and forgives, which not only transforms them but also aids them in fulfilling their role in the narratives they are inserted. Such characters are the hobbits Bilbo, Frodo, and Sam.

[38] Such love is given more attention further in this work.

It is important to note, however, that the first character to call attention to the importance of such virtue is neither of the three aforementioned, but Gandalf when he is discussing the importance of Bilbo's attitudes when the hobbit first acquired the One Ring. Such exchange takes place in the chapter “The Shadow of the Past” of *LOTR* and it is triggered mostly because of Frodo's reckless wishing that Bilbo had killed Gollum when he had the chance:

> ‘But this is terrible!’ [...] O Gandalf, best of friends, what am I to do? [...] What a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature, when he had a chance!’ ‘Pity? It was Pity that stayed his hand. Pity, and Mercy: not to strike without need. And he has been well rewarded, Frodo. Be sure that he took so little hurt from the evil, and escaped in the end, because he began his ownership of the Ring so. With Pity.’ ‘I am sorry,’ said Frodo. ‘But I am frightened; and I do not feel any pity for Gollum.’ ‘You have not seen him,’ Gandalf broke in. ‘No, and I don’t want to,’ said Frodo. ‘I can’t understand you. Do you mean to say that you, and the Elves, have let him live on after all those horrible deeds? Now at any rate he is as bad as an Orc, and just an enemy. He deserves death.’ ‘Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many – yours not least. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 78).

Frodo and Gandalf are referring to a decisive moment in Bilbo's life, one that takes place in *The Hobbit*, when Bilbo was still young and Frodo had not been born yet, the moment when the character finds the One Ring and first meets Gollum. The hobbit finds the Ring when he is struggling to find his way out of the Misty Mountains, and he is not aware of its powers at the time. Soon after that, still in the mountains, Bilbo meets Gollum who challenges him for a game of riddles: if the hobbit wins, Gollum must show him the way out of the cave; however, if he loses, Gollum kills him and eats him. The game proves difficult and rather dangerous, and Bilbo only wins it accidentally by asking Gollum a question which he had not intended to ask: “'What have I got in my pocket?' he said aloud. He was talking to himself, but Gollum thought it was a riddle, and he was frightfully upset. 'Not fair! not fair!' he hissed. 'It isn't fair, my precious, is it, to ask us what it's got in its nassty little pocketses?'” (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 92-93). Gollum, as one would expect, cannot find the answer to Bilbo's “riddle” and, consequently, loses the game. However, feeling that Bilbo had cheated him, the creature plans to kill him. The hobbit, on the other hand, senses Gollum’s malice and runs for his life; yet, Gollum pursues through the mountain tunnels. It is only while he is being chased that Bilbo discovers the power of the One Ring: it turns its wearer invisible. Learning that, the character, then, manages to evade his pursuer; Gollum, however, unable to see the hobbit and

yet not wanting to let him escape, decides to stand guard near the mountain exit. It is at this precise moment that Bilbo is faced with a difficult decision:

> Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed in a flash of a second. (TOLKIEN, 2014, p. 101-102)

Rather than stabbing Gollum when he had the chance, as Frodo would wish years later, Bilbo is moved by the creature's situation and opts for sparing him. Bilbo pities him; in other words, he shows he is capable of loving the unlovable, that he is capable of charity. The hobbit's attitude plays a central role in Frodo's life as it is narrated in the chapter "The Taming of Sméagol", from *LOTR*. In such chapter, Frodo and Sam, who had been lost for days in the Emyn Muil[39], meet Gollum for the first time. Interestingly enough, if at the beginning of the narrative Frodo tells Gandalf that he does not feel any pity for the creature, his attitude when the hobbit first sees him is quite the opposite: on placing his eyes on Gollum, Frodo declares, much to Sam's surprise, that on seeing how miserable the creature is, he cannot avoid but pitying him. In addition to that, just as Bilbo had done, Frodo decides not to kill Gollum, but rather to make him swear on the one thing that he loves, the One Ring, that he will aid them in finding their way to Mordor. Frodo's pity proves crucial to the completion of his task, mainly because it is thanks to Gollum that the hobbits can find their way out of the Emyn Muil and towards Mordor. Frodo is aware that the character is capable of great mischief and treachery, but nonetheless, he decides to risk trusting him. Markos (2012), argues that the pity Frodo demonstrates from the moment he meets Gollum on is based primarily on his capacity of sympathizing with the creature's fate: Gollum, as Gandalf tells Frodo at the beginning of the narrative, once belonged to a people of hobbit-kind. On seeing how wretched a creature so similar to himself had become under the influence of the Ring, Frodo seems to realize how easily he could also be corrupted by its power. Much due to such recognition, the hobbit decides to treat Gollum kindly and also to address him by his original name (Sméagol). Such kindness, Markos points out, "is not equivalent to blindness […]; his is a 'bold love' that is fully aware of the untrustworthy nature of Gollum. He loves but also

[39] A range of hills situated in the Southeastern region of Middle-Earth.

keeps his guard […].” (MARKOS, 2012, p. 138). In addition to that, as it can be noticed in the excerpt below from the chapter “The Taming of Sméagol”, the love Frodo shows for Gollum proves to have the transformative power Markos argues even though it seems to be only momentarily:

> From that moment a change, which lasted for some time, came over him. He spoke with less hissing and whining, and he spoke to his companions direct, not to his precious self. He would cringe and flinch, if they stepped near him or made any sudden movement, and he avoided the touch of their elven-cloaks; but he was friendly, and indeed pitifully anxious to please. He would cackle with laughter and caper, if any jest was made, or even if Frodo spoke kindly to him, and weep if Frodo rebuked him. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 808).

It is important to point out, however, that if Frodo quickly changes his opinion concerning Gollum as soon as he meets the creature, Sam, on the other hand, reacts likewise his Master did at the beginning of the narrative: he does not feel any pity for Gollum and neither does he trust the character. In addition to that, the hobbit often mistreats him, which means, it may be argued, that at the moment of their first encounter, Sam is still unable to feel any sympathy for him. The hobbit's behavior towards Gollum only begins to change towards the end of the narrative, in the chapter “Mount Doom”, after he had felt the burden of carrying the One Ring himself. In such chapter, Sam is faced with a similar, but arguably harder, decision: Gollum, who had deceived and attempted to kill Frodo and him, is lying, defenseless, in front of him. The hobbit, who is filled with anger brought by the creature's malice, is determined to kill him; however, when the moment comes to commit the deed, Sam wavers and opts for letting his enemy live:

> 'Now!' said Sam. 'At last I can deal with you!' He leaped forward with drawn blade ready for battle. But Gollum did not spring. He fell flat upon the ground and whimpered. 'Don't kill us,' he wept. 'Don't hurt us with nassty cruel steel! Let us live, yes, live just a little longer. Lost, lost! We're lost. And when Precious goes we'll die, yes, die into the dust.' He clawed up the ashes of the path with his long fleshless fingers. 'Dusst!' he hissed. Sam's hand wavered. His mind was hot with wrath and the memory of evil. It would be just to slay this treacherous, murderous creature, just and many times deserved; and also it seemed the only safe thing to do. But deep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust, forlorn, ruinous, utterly wretched. He himself, though only for a little while, had borne the Ring, and now dimly he guessed the agony of Gollum's shrivelled mind and body, enslaved to that Ring, unable to find peace or relief ever in life again. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1235).

Only after having carried the Ring does Sam understand Gollum's burden; only then can the hobbit be charitable towards the creature and love the unlovable. It is at that moment

that he finally learns to practice the virtue that his master had been showing through most of the narrative. However, it is only moments after the events in the excerpt above that both Sam and Frodo fully realize the weight and importance of their decisions: at the end of the chapter, it is due to Gollum's actions that the *Eucatastrophe* in the *LOTR* is enacted, for it is thanks to him, as it was already argued in the previous chapter, that the One Ring is destroyed. Therefore, in addition to realizing the importance of being charitable, at their journey's end, both hobbits also learn one of Gandalf's most important lessons, which speaks of everybody's importance in that greater and continuous narrative that is life:

> '[...] [Gollum] is gone now beyond recall, gone for ever.' 'Yes,' said Frodo. 'But do you remember Gandalf's words: *Even Gollum may have something yet to do?* But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him! For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over. I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1239-1240).

Taking the excerpt above in consideration and connecting it to what has been discussed regarding Love, it may be argued that this specific virtue comprises not only charity, pity, and being able to love the unlovable, but also forgiveness and the recognition that every form of life has its reason of being and a role to play during its existence; recognizing such aspects may instill in one a sense of connectedness and the belief that things do not happen at random, but that they are rather part of a greater picture. Such sense may help one see life from a different perspective and, consequently, give new meaning to their actions and live more mindfully. In both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, the hobbits' understanding such theological virtue transforms not only themselves but also the world around them, for the *Eucatastrophe* in these narratives are intrinsically connected to it.

I would like to conclude this chapter by addressing the presence and impact of Friendship in Tolkien's fictional universe, mainly on what the events in *LOTR* are concerned. My decision to shift the focus of the discussion from *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* to just the latter does not mean that Friendship does not play a significant role in the former, but rather that such aspect is more prominent in *LOTR*. Concerning Friendship itself, it is important to notice that it appears neither among the cardinal virtues nor among the theological ones; however, as Markos argues, Tolkien "[...] sought to revive and rehabilitate friendship as a virtue worthy of respect." (MARKOS, 2012, p. 105). Therefore, for the purposes of this work Friendship will be addressed as a virtue.

Much has been said about the importance of Friendship in Tolkien's life, and it is difficult not to notice its impact in the author's works; Carpenter (1979, 2000), Duriez (2003), Shippey (2001, 2005), and a number of other scholars have published quality scholarship regarding the topic. My intention here, then, is not to deeply discuss a matter that has already been overly debated, but rather to pinpoint a few specific aspects of the virtue in the author's life and then discuss their importance in the writer's narrative, mainly the role in the journeys of Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin. To start the discussion, I would like to go back to Lewis's (1960) claim that Friendship can be seen as one facet of Love.

As it has been previously argued, Lewis, in his work *The Four Loves*, proposes that there are four different kinds of Love: Affection, Eros, Charity, and Friendship. Charity, as it has already been discussed, is the facet of Love that represents the theological virtue. The "Friendship" facet, on the other hand, as the author affirms, is often dismissed as a form of love in the modern times[40]. However, the scholar claims,

> To the Ancients[41], Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. [...] [F]ew value it because few experience it. And the possibility of going through life without the experience is rooted in that fact which separates Friendship so sharply from both the other loves. Friendship is - in a sense not at all derogatory to it - the least *natural* of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. It has least commerce with our nerves; there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale. It is essentially between individuals; the moment two men are friends they have in some degree drawn apart together from the herd. (LEWIS, 1960, p. 87-88).

As it may be argued from the excerpt above, at some point in history there seems to have been a shift regarding the importance and value of Friendship: once regarded as "the school of virtue", it has become something easily overlooked as a valuable aspect of life. Friendship is, indeed, less natural than Affection and Eros: differently from these latter, it does not share the biological factor intrinsic to them. The fact that it is the least natural, however, should not mean that it is the least important. Charity, as well as Friendship, has arguably not any biological elements tied to it; however, as it has been already discussed, it has a transformative power capable not only of changing its practitioners, but also the world around them. Most of the power and importance of Friendship, likewise Charity, resides precisely in the fact that it "less natural": while Eros and Affection are biologically driven,

[40] Lewis writes from the perspective of a person that was born in the late nineteenth century and that lived through all the first half of the twentieth century and part of its second half.
[41] The author is referring to people living in the time of the great philosophers such as Aristotle, etc.

Friendship, Lewis argues, is more rational; one often chooses their friends and such choices are normally based on shared interests:

> Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). (LEWIS, 1960, p. 96).

In this sense, Friendship is, to a great extent, as the scholar argues, also arbitrary: despite our non-obligation of being anyone's friend and vice-versa, friendship bonds are still created. Such idea is intrinsically connected to Lewis's argument that even though Friendship is unnecessary, in the sense that it has no survival value, it gives value to survival, mainly during times of great crisis such as the ones Tolkien (and also Lewis) lived through; not only does it make adversity more bearable, but it also makes prosperous times merrier: the burden of a difficult situation, when shared, becomes lighter and, similarly, life's moments of joy are multiplied when partaken with friends. Early in his life, Tolkien learned to recognize the value and importance of Friendship, for it was it (as well as his Catholic faith) that helped the writer live through the difficult times of his life.

Tolkien became an orphan at a young age; by the time he was twelve, both his father and mother had already died. After his mother's death, the writer lived under the tutelage of Father Francis Xavier Morgan, which meant, to a great extent, that most of the author's time was spent in his duties towards school and towards Father Francis's oratory. From 1903 on, Tolkien studied at King Edward's school [42]and, while there, as Carpenter (2000) argues, Tolkien made a number of friends, so much so that by the time he reached his late teenage-hood, the school environment had become the center of his life, for there he found not only good company, but also friendship; male friendship, to be more specific. Much for this reason, Carpenter claims, the years the author spent there not only were vital to his development, but also made him come to associate male company, to a great extent, with much of what was good in life. It was at King Edward's that Tolkien made three of his most important friends: Christopher Wiseman, Rob Gilson, and Geoffrey B. Smith. Together, as it was argued in the first chapter, the four boys formed the T. C., B. S., a literary and social group that, as Rudd points out, crystallized for the author "[...] many of the guiding principles of his intellectual life." (RUDD, 2011, p. 590). The group and friendship had such an impact

[42] A school for boys aged from 11 to 18, situated in Birmingham.

in the author's life that, as he declares in a letter from 1916 to Geoffrey, much of his inspiration and confidence to start writing derived from their fellowship:

> That Council [43]was as you know followed in my own case with my finding a voice for all kinds of pent up things and a tremendous opening up of everything for me:— 1 have always laid that to the credit of the inspiration that even a few hours with the four always brought to all of us. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 10).

Even after the deaths of Gilson and Wiseman, who were both killed in the WWI, in 1916, which resulted in the dissolution of the T. C., B. S., Tolkien kept believing that the group "[...] had been granted some spark of fire – certainly as a body if not singly – that was destined to kindle a new light, or, what is the same thing, rekindle an old light in the world [...]" (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 10). The group itself had, as Rudd argues, a set of well-established ideals, among which there was their desire to use their art as a means to generate a change in the artistic environment of England, which the four friends believed had become corrupted and deteriorated. In other words, "[t]hey wanted to seek to raise the tastes of British society from interest in the unpleasant or seedy side of life to a love of true beauty." (RUDD, 2011, p. 588). Thus, so great was the impact and importance of the T. C., B. S. and its members in Tolkien's life that the author felt he had to honor their memory, which he did mostly through literary works such as *LOTR* that, among many other things, largely celebrates the importance of close fellowship.

Another friendship that had a prominent influence in Tolkien's life was that of C. S. Lewis. The writers met in 1926, while attending a meeting of the English Faculty at Merton College, in Oxford, where both scholars were currently working[44]. Not long after they met, the authors discovered that they had a variety of common interests, among them their love of literature, as well as their keen interest in Norse mythology and sagas. What might have made little difference in the lives of many people, for Tolkien and Lewis meant the flourishing of a long, important and influential friendship. As Lewis points out, "[t]he typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, 'What? You too? I thought I was the only one.'" (LEWIS, 1960, p. 96). The writers remained friends for over twenty years, having formed and been part of literary clubs similar to the T. C., B. S., such as "The Coalbiters", founded by Tolkien, and the "Inklings", firstly founded by an undergraduate student at Oxford, but that was later chiefly coordinated by Lewis. Interestingly enough, in 1965 Tolkien wrote a letter to

[43] Tolkien is referring to the "Council of London", a meeting the four friends held in London over the Christmas holidays of 1914.

[44] Tolkien worked at Pembroke College, while Lewis served at Magdalen College. Both institutions, as well as Merton College, are part of the University of Oxford.

Richard Plotz, co-founder of the Tolkien Society of America, commenting on the importance of Lewis's friendship in his life:

> The unpayable debt that I owe to him was not 'influence' as it is ordinarily understood, but sheer encouragement. He was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my 'stuff' could be more than a private hobby. But for his interest and unceasing eagerness for more I should never have brought The L. of the R. to a conclusion. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 362).

Tolkien also wrote about his relationship with Lewis in his private diary as it can be seen in the excerpt below, taken from Carpenter's authorized biography of him:

> 'Friendship with Lewis compensates for much, and besides giving constant pleasure and comfort has done me much good from the contact with a man at once honest, brave, intellectual – a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher – and a lover, at least after a long pilgrimage, of Our Lord.' (TOLKIEN, IN: CARPENTER, 2000, p. 152)

What exactly the friendship with Lewis compensates for, Tolkien does not mention; however, taking the two excerpts above into consideration, it is possible to argue that their friendship had that characteristic proposed by Lewis (1960) of giving "value to survival", which was something Tolkien needed after the terrors he had lived during the WWI: by the time the two writers met, Tolkien had already lost two of his teenage best friends; in addition to that, as Carpenter (2000) argues, at his returning to Oxford, after having fought in the war, Tolkien felt there was something missing from his life: that something was a kind of friendship that he had not enjoyed since the breaking of the T. C., B. S. Friendship with Lewis, in this sense, helped Tolkien, to a great extent, fill the empty spaces the war had left in his life; helped him fulfill the role he believed he had to play in his lifetime: that of rekindling "an old light" in the world through his art.

The sense that friendship is something fundamental in one's life, something that gives "value to survival" and that aids one carry on in the face of adversity, is strongly present in *LOTR*, mainly on what the hobbits are concerned. The first evidence of that is present in the chapter "A Conspiracy Unmasked", in which the hobbits discuss what it means to be someone's friend. When Frodo decides to leave the Shire, in the chapter "The Shadow of the Past", Gandalf and he agree that the hobbit should do so in secrecy. However, since the wizard appoints Sam to go with Frodo, the hobbit is informed about the plans Gandalf and his master had made. Then, thinking that he is acting secretly, Frodo starts to arrange his departure: he sells his property and spreads the rumor that he plans to buy a small house at the Eastern borders of the Shire, where he will settle and live his life on the proceeds of the sale.

His story is not wholly untrue, for he does indeed buy a small property at the said region and moves there; however, he does not plan to settle but to take all his belongings to the place and then set out at once with Sam to Rivendell. When the time to move comes, it is his friends Pippin, Merry, Folco, and Fredegar, as well as his servant Sam, that help him taking his possessions to the new place. After all the effort his friends had put in helping him organize his new residence, Frodo feels bad about having to tell them that he will have to leave it right after having moved; nonetheless, upon the very night of his arrival at his new house, Frodo reveals to his friends [45]his real plan. However, much to his surprise, the hobbit learns that they were already aware of it. As the character wonders how they had all learned his secret, Merry tells him:

> '[...] if you want to be introduced to our chief investigator, I can produce him.' 'Where is he?' said Frodo, looking round, as if he expected a masked and sinister figure to come out of a cupboard. 'Step forward, Sam!' said Merry; and Sam stood up with a face scarlet up to the ears. 'Here's our collector of information! And he collected a lot [...].' 'Sam!' cried Frodo, feeling that amazement could go no further, and quite unable to decide whether he felt angry, amused, relieved, or merely foolish. 'Yes, sir!' said Sam. 'Begging your pardon, sir! But I meant no wrong to you, Mr. Frodo, nor to Mr. Gandalf for that matter. *He* has some sense, mind you; and when you said *go alone*, he said *no! take someone as you can trust*.' 'But it does not seem that I can trust anyone,' said Frodo. Sam looked at him unhappily. 'It all depends on what you want,' put in Merry. 'You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin – to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours – closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone, and go off without a word. We are your friends, Frodo. Anyway: there it is. We know most of what Gandalf has told you. We know a good deal about the Ring. We are horribly afraid – but we are coming with you; or following you like hounds.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 137-138).

The hobbits, as it can be noticed in the passage above, are aware of Frodo's task and, besides that, they probably can imagine the dangers and difficulties their friend may face along his journey; notwithstanding, though they are afraid, they decide to go with him[46], for this is, as Merry declares, the role of a friend: to be with you even during the darkest moments. Earlier, at the same chapter, Pippin tells Frodo that it is their duty to follow him, mainly because the dangers of his adventure requires that they stick together; in other words, the hobbit believes that their best strategy in the face of such dreary situation is to unite, rather than being apart. Frodo's friends' attitude at such difficult moment shows him that even though he must go in a journey replete with unknown dangers, he must not despair because he is not alone nor must he endure the dark times all on his own. So relieved is he at learning

[45] Only Pippin, Merry, Sam, and Fredegar are present at this moment.
[46] Fredegar does not go with them. He stays at Frodo's new house to take care of it.

that, that towards the end of the chapter he admits that he “[...] cannot help feeling happy; happier than [he] have felt for a long time.” (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 138). Frodo's happiness at that moment, it may be argued, is probably due to his fully realizing that his friendship with Pippin and Merry (and also with Sam), compensates for much, as for example having to live through such crisis; more than that, their friendship makes such difficult times more bearable, it gives “value to survival”, for not only does it add pleasure to the happy moments, but it also adds comfort to the turbulent ones. The character that seems to understand the power and importance of the hobbits' friendship the most is Gandalf, and he expresses his conviction in the chapter “The Ring Goes South”, when Elrond is deciding who should accompany Frodo in his journey, as quoted earlier in this section during the discussion concerning the virtue of Faith. As Gandalf points out in such passage, the strength needed for their mission accomplishment is not simply strength in arms, but rather a different kind of power, which comes chiefly from their capacity of staying together, from their friendship. Markos (2012), explains why the hobbits' bounds have such a decisive role in *LOTR* by arguing that their friendship is powerful to so great an extent that it endures even when courage runs out, it remains firm even when all the other virtues are expended. It is, the scholar believes, “[...] precisely this spirit of unswerving loyalty and devotion, this binding together of separate lives and wills, that gives the Hobbits their staying power - that makes them a fellowship, even when they are apart.” (MARKOS, 2012, p. 108). It is due to such virtue that Merry and Pippin decide to leave the Shire along with Frodo and Sam, even though they are horribly afraid; it is such force that impels Sam, alone, to invade the Tower of Cirith Ungol, which is filled with enemies, and rescue Frodo; it is their strong connection that makes them keep fighting to their last breath even when they are apart; finally, it is much due to their friendship that Frodo tells Sam, at the end of the chapter “Mount Doom”, when the Ring is finally destroyed and both hobbits are certain that they will perish, that he is glad to have his friend with him there “at the end of all things”. Frodo knows they are going to die: they are injured, worn, famished, thirsty and caught in the middle of Orodruin's eruption; yet, he is glad and in peace: their mission is over, the strain is over, his burden, the Ring, is gone and, more importantly, he has his loyal friend with him, and that compensates for everything else.

It is, to a considerable extent, understandable why Tolkien decided to highlight the importance of Friendship, as well as of the theological virtues of Hope, Faith, and Love, in his narratives: on one hand, it may be argued, it has to do with the author's belief that the main function of fantasy stories is to provide, along with escape and recovery, consolation. The consolation of fantasy stories is, as the writer proposes, intrinsically connected to the presence

of a happy ending, which is characterized by the arising of the *Eucatastrophe*, the "sudden joyous turn" in the face of imminent defeat in these narratives. Such turn is made possible mostly due to the characters in these narratives, often the hobbits, possessing and practicing the four virtues discussed in this section: starting with Bilbo's Faith in Gandalf, which resulted in his going in the adventure with Thorin's company and, consequently, finding the One Ring; upon the hobbit's finding of the Ring, his Love, that makes him feel pity towards Gollum, results in his sparing the creature's life; years later, when the Ring finally comes to Frodo, Bilbo's action proves fundamental, for it is due to Gollum's aid that Frodo and Sam reach Mordor. Apart from Gollum's help, it is arguably because of the hobbits' Friendship and Hope that they are able to endure their journey from the Shire to Mount Doom: the first is essential to their gathering courage to leave their homeland and endure the dangers of the Road, while the latter gives them that strength proposed by Markos (2012) which is not abashed by present pain or darkness and which reminds them that there is no shadow or evil that last forever.

On the other hand, there is also the fact that Tolkien felt, as it can be inferred from his (previously quoted) letters, that he was destined to revive an old light in the world through his art. Such old light can be seen as the virtues, both theological and classical, that the author thought were lost, or, at best, slowly disappearing from the modern world. The writer believed that through virtue there was a way to endure and overcome the increasingly dark times that loomed over most of the twentieth century; such notion is present in a letter Tolkien wrote in 1944 to his son, Christopher, in which the author comments on the immense misery and suffering arising from WWII:

> I sometimes feel appalled at the thought of the sum total of human misery all over the world at the present moment: the millions parted, fretting, wasting in unprofitable days – quite apart from torture, pain, death, bereavement, injustice. If anguish were visible, almost the whole of this benighted planet would be enveloped in a dense dark vapour, shrouded from the amazed vision of the heavens! And the products of it all will be mainly evil – historically considered. But the historical version is, of course, not the only one. All things and deeds have a value in themselves, apart from their 'causes' and 'effects'. No man can estimate what is really happening at the present sub specie aeternitaris. All we do know, and that to a large extent by direct experience, is that evil labours with vast power and perpetual success – in vain: preparing always only the soil for unexpected good to sprout in. So it is in general, and so it is in our own lives. .... But there is still some hope that things may be better for us, even on the temporal plane, in the mercy of God. And though we need all our natural human courage and guts (the vast sum of human courage and endurance is stupendous, isn't it?) and all our religious faith to face the evil that may befall us (as it befalls others, if God wills) still we may pray and hope. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 76).

The point Tolkien makes in the excerpt above, that in order to endure times of crisis and turmoil one needs to rely on virtues such as Courage, Faith, and Hope is central to his personal life, which is not surprising due to the upbringing he had and the dark times he lived through. He had to turn to something if he were to find strength to carry on and keep believing things would eventually improve, thus he opted (whether consciously or unconsciously) for turning to what he had learned from an early age to value the most: his Catholic faith, which taught him the importance of the theological virtues; stories, which put him in contact with the value of the classical virtues; and friendship, which showed him the power and relevance of fellowship. The presence of these virtues in the author's narratives can be seen, then, not only as a reflex of what aided him during his own personal narrative but also as a way the author found to revive and raise awareness of their importance to restore the present and shape a more prosperous future.

5 SOME (FURTHER) CONSIDERATIONS

Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?
(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)

There was a time when my greatest delight was to go on adventures. I still remember the days when my cousin (now long deceased), my best friend (now living in a different continent) and I would go on trekking expeditions in the countryside, where my parents live. We were no older than twelve and the moments the three of us were together were rare. During the few occasions we managed to meet, however, our chief pastime was to go on those expeditions. We would go deep into the woods, across small rivers and up a green mound, where we would sit, talk, and appreciate the landscape while the Sun set. On our way back to my parents' home, we would stop at my best friend's grandmother's country house and she would help us get rid of the mud in our clothes while our shoes dried by the fireplace. During our brief stop there, we would tell her everything about our adventure and, together, we would all rejoice. When we finally arrived at my parents' house, we were so clean and dry that they never suspected where we had been. Those were good times. When I look back now, I often wonder about our behavior: why did we like those expeditions that much? What made us think they were adventures? I do not know if I will ever have a definite answer for these questions, but what comes to my mind now, as I reach the end of this thesis, is that our journeys taught me significant lessons not only about the value of simple things, such as being in communion with nature but also about how powerful our bounds were. I believe our desire to go on those trips is intrinsically connected with our desire to do something different, something that, for us, was great and heroic. We did not know about greatness or heroism at the time, and I believe I still do not know; however, to our young minds these things meant simply exploring new places and conquering our fear of the unknown (for we never knew what we would find during our expeditions, and at times we even felt afraid). Overcoming our limitations and learning that our being together brought the best in us really felt great and heroic; it shaped us.

Time went by, my cousin passed away, my best friend moved to China and, consequently, our adventures together ceased. I remained in the countryside and often wondered about the meaning of it all. Then, suddenly, fantasy came: there was Narnia, Hogwarts and, more

importantly, there was Middle-earth. The adventures the characters in these secondary worlds lived filled, somehow, the empty space inside me; they provided me with the sense of wonder and of meaning that I so much missed, they also helped me growing up and maturing. This is part of the importance and function of fantasy: to help people go through life while impressing on them, through the use of the fantastic, the feeling that things are not arbitrary. It restores meaning, order, and purpose where one once felt there was only chaos.

When I read *LOTR* for the first time, it was wonderful to see how Tolkien had apparently unheroic characters such as the hobbits assume decisive roles in the narrative. Such element in the work made me connect with it because through the adventures of Frodo and his companions I realized that not only the great and powerful are capable of deeds of courage. In addition to that, Tolkien's work raised my awareness of the relevance and impact (whether good or bad) of one's actions, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant they are. Upon such realization, I understood that my own daily actions and choices were meaningful and capable of changing the course of things, of transforming, to some extent, the world around me. In addition to that, Tolkien's work showed me that periods of crisis and turmoil require that action be taken and that all members of a society be aware of their role: as a teacher, I have the duty to inspire my pupils to think critically, not only emotionally; as a student, I am in charge of developing research in my field of study, as a means of raising awareness of the importance of literature and the humanities; as a citizen, I must be conscious of my responsibility towards society, doing whatever is in my reach to contribute to the promotion of equity and social responsibility.

In the introduction to this thesis, some questions were posed concerning the function and importance of fantasy narratives. Here I proposed that possible answers to such questions were connected to (1) the way problems are addressed in these stories; (2) the possibilities fantasy creates; (3) the applicability of these stories; and (4) the solace most fantasy works offer. As a mean to discuss proposition 1, I argue that *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* can be seen as responses to central issues of Tolkien's time, such as the problems arising from industrialism unchecked and the growing feelings of fragmentation and alienation connected with WWI. I contrast Tolkien's productions with the ones of authors such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and F. Scott Fitzgerald and call attention to the fact that their narratives were, at the same time, similar and different: all of them, directly or indirectly, depict the world as a waste land and discuss the devastating impact of war and its consequences upon nature and people; on the other hand, while the works of the latter tend to underscore the failure of communication and community and the damage caused by those issues, Tolkien, through his fantasy, strives

to demonstrate "[...] the possibilities of human connection and community that could be achieved through the values of sympathy, compassion, selflessness, and a sense of stewardship regarding other people as well as the natural world." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 3). Both Tolkien and his contemporaries are, to a great extent, using their art to comment on important matters of their time; however, to do so, they use distinct literary modes.

Tolkien's choice of using fantasy while most of his contemporaries cling to realism as a literary mode is intrinsically connected with the advantage Attebery (2014) and Lewis (2018) argue fantasy has over realistic fiction: for Attebery, the metaphorical quality of fantasy allows the writers to deliver their messages more powerfully since, "[b]y renouncing claims to report directly on reality, fantasy acquires the potential (not always realized) to generate powerful symbols. Like dream or myth, it uses symbols to tell the truths that the conscious mind cannot grasp or fears to face." (ATTEBERY, 2014, p. 35) For Lewis, the main advantage of fantasy lies in its capacity to make readers undergo experiences they never had; thus, rather than simply commenting on life, it can enrich it. Tolkien, as a great *connoisseur* of the mode, was well aware of such claims and expressed them in his essay "On Fairy Stories". The author argued that, through its capacity of arresting strangeness, fantasy stories have the potential of, somehow, recreating reality and presenting it to readers under a new light, thus making them regain a clearer view of things in the primary world. In this sense, the arresting strangeness of fantasy is linked with three functions the scholar believes this kind of narrative has: providing Recovery, Escape, and Consolation.

According to Tolkien's theory on fantasy stories, when a writer manages to create a secondary-world with an inner consistency of reality, he produces what the scholar calls Enchantment, which allows readers to enter the narrated fictional universe and perceive the events in it as if they are real, for such is one of the aspects of fantasy: to give to imagined things a sense of consistent reality. However, all fantasy, Tolkien argues, must be grounded on reality, and this is a further element of this type of narrative: it is built out of the primary-world and it deals largely and mainly with simple and fundamental things of this world; yet, the author believes, these things are made more numinous when placed in a fantasy setting. Therefore, another function of fantasy is that of restoring and expanding perspective: the stories mirror reality and make us perceive aspects of it that were, thus far, unnoticed or forgotten. In other words, fantasy helps us reach a clearer understanding of the world around us by providing Recovery. Due to their metaphorical aspect, the messages fantasy narratives communicate often have applicability in the primary world.

As for the solace fantasy stories provide, it is linked with their offering Escape and Consolation. Both aspects are connected with wish-fulfilling, which means that fantasy may proportionate reassurance to our doubts and fears and also satisfaction to some of our ambitions and desires. Among these is our desire to commune with other beings, such as animals and trees, our wish to explore new places and undergo transformative experiences, our need to feel that life has meaning, that all things happen for a reason, our necessity to feel the comfort of knowing that no matter how difficult and dark life may sometimes be, these moments will pass and everything will come to a solution. This is what Tolkien calls the consolation of the "happy ending", the *Eucatastrophe* or the "sudden-joyous turn" in the face of imminent defeat. This is, for the author, the highest function of fantasy narratives. Tolkien manages to include examples of all these kinds of consolation in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. When Bilbo talks to the eagles, he is fulfilling our wish to converse with animals; likewise, when Pippin, and Merry talk to the ents, our wish to talk to trees is granted. Concerning our longing to explore and visit different places, it is represented in Sam's having his desire to see the elves satisfied or Bilbo's leaving the Shire for the second time to see the mountains. As for having transformative experiences, this is represented in Tolkien's narratives as an outcome of the adventures the characters go on: the hobbits in the writer's fiction all come back from their journeys wholly changed. At the end of *The Hobbit*, when Bilbo is on his way home, Gandalf tells him: "'My dear Bilbo!' he said. 'Something is the matter with you! You are not the hobbit that you were.'" (TOLKIEN, 2014, p.347). The adventure made him learn that the deeds of the very wise and great are not the only ones that matter; the actions of a common hobbit, who had never any meddling with adventures of any sort, can also make a difference and change the course of things. Bilbo feels glad about this realization that he can do more than just having a passive role in the narrative he is inserted, and upon such recognition, he becomes an agent of change.

Such transformative power of adventures is even more apparent in *LOTR*, as it can be argued from the chapter "The Scouring of the Shire", in which Frodo, Sam, Pippin and Merry, upon their return to their homeland, discover that it has been invaded by Saruman (who now goes by the name of Sharkey) and a number of half-orcs and ruffians. Saruman and his allies had destroyed much of the natural beauty of the Shire by cutting down trees, burning houses, and building something that seems to be a small factory. It looks as if Saruman is attempting to turn the rural Shire into an industrialized center. As can be noticed in the following passage, most of the inhabitants of the place are unhappy with the changes, but, driven by fear, they are unable to unite and react: "'If we all got angry together something might be

done. But it's these Men, Sam, the Chief's Men. He sends them round everywhere, and if any of us small folk stand up for our rights, they drag him off to the Lockholes[47].'" (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1311-1312). This is what Sam leans from a fellow hobbit who had been living under Saruman's tyranny. Seeing their homeland being destroyed and their folk suffering, the hobbits manage to raise their fellows and, together, they expel first Saruman's allies and, next, the Wizard himself. The first glimpse of the change the hobbits undergo in their journey is seen during the first intercourse the characters have with the ruffians who invaded their land, precisely at the moment one of the ruffians insults Frodo:

> 'For one thing, [said Frodo,] I see that you're behind the times and the news here. Much has happened since you left the South. Your day is over, and all other ruffians'. The Dark Tower has fallen, and there is a King in Gondor. And Isengard has been destroyed, and your precious master is a beggar in the wilderness. I passed him on the road. The King's messengers will ride up the Greenway now not bullies from Isengard.' The man stared at him and smiled. [...] 'Swagger it, swagger it, my little cock-a-whoop. But that won't stop us living in this fat little country where you have lazed long enough. And' – he snapped his fingers in Frodo's face – 'King's messengers! That for them! When I see one, I'll take notice, perhaps.' This was too much for Pippin. [...] He cast back his cloak, flashed out his sword, and the silver and sable of Gondor gleamed on him as he rode forward. 'I am a messenger of the King,' he said. 'You are speaking to the King's friend, and one of the most renowned in all the lands of the West. You are a ruffian and a fool. Down on your knees in the road and ask pardon, or I will set this troll's bane in you!' The sword glinted in the westering sun. Merry and Sam drew their swords also and rode up to support Pippin; but Frodo did not move. The ruffians gave back. Scaring Breeland peasants, and bullying bewildered hobbits, had been their work. Fearless hobbits with bright swords and grim faces were a great surprise. And there was a note in the voices of these newcomers that they had not heard before. It chilled them with fear. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1315-1316).

The note the ruffians notice in the hobbits' voices is the tone of someone who had learned his place and role in the world and who is aware that change requires action. It is exactly such awareness that the four companions attempt to raise in their fellow hobbits – that if they are unhappy with the course of things, they must unite, stand up for their rights and show others that their voice matters. Campbell (2004) points out that the return of the heroes from their adventures often brings benefits to their people and to the place where they live. In this sense, Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin leave the Shire, face several challenges, learn and grow with them, and, finally, return to their homeland wholly changed and capable of transforming the world around them.

Finally, there is the consolation of the happy ending, which is, as Nicolay points out, intrinsically connected with Tolkien's Christian faith, which instilled in him the belief in "a

[47] A type of prison disobedient hobbits were sent to and in which they were often beaten.

providential order overseen by a being greater than ourselves, whose love for humanity offered ultimate hope." (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 3). Consequently, one of the most emphasized ideas in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* is that evil often mars itself and that goodness prevails in the end. The most relevant example of such notion is in that already quoted passage from the chapter "Mount Doom", in which Frodo is subdued by the corrupting power of the One Ring and instead of casting it into the fire, wears it and becomes invisible. Gollum, who wants the Ring for himself, attacks Frodo and bites his ring finger off, and then falls into the volcano chasm: "[…] Gollum, dancing like a mad thing, held aloft the ring […]. 'Precious, precious, precious!' Gollum cried. […] And with that, even as his eyes were lifted up to gloat on his prize, he stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell." (TOLKIEN, 2007, p.1238) It is curious to notice the unlikely way in which the Ring is destroyed, almost as if by mere chance. The meaning the word "chance" in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, as Shippey observes, is worth considering. To illustrate his point, the scholar calls attention to two instances in which the word is used in the narratives. The first takes place in the chapter "In the House of Tom Bombadil", from *LOTR*. In the previous chapter, Frodo and his companions, who had lost themselves in the Old Forest, are rescued from great danger by Bombadil. Since they are curious to know how the character managed to find them in such an isolated place, Frodo asks him if he had heard him call for help. The answer he gets is an interesting one: "'Eh, what?' said he. 'Did I hear you calling? Nay, I did not hear: I was busy singing. Just chance brought me then, if chance you call it. […]'". (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 164-165). The second instance is presented in appendix A (III) of *LOTR*, as Gandalf explains that further ruin did not come to then in the Northlands because he had "'[…] met Thorin Oakenshield one evening on the edge of spring in Bree. A chance-meeting, as we say in Middle-earth.'" (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 1417) In both excerpts, it seems that there is extra information in what the characters say: Bombadil's saying implies that he is not sure whether he had met the hobbits by chance or not, while Gandalf's statement leaves room for the assumption that the word is used in that fictional world to mean something else. The riddling words of Bombadil and Gandalf, it may be argued, refer to that providential order that is overseen by a greater being, which Nicolay proposes is central to Tolkien's life and literary works.

It is important to notice, however, that such providential being is never named or directly alluded to in *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. We may perceive glimpses of it through some very specific narrative choices made by the author, such as the use of passive voice. I would like to call attention to two passages in which such choices may be seen. The first one takes

place in the already quoted passage from the chapter “The Shadow of the Past”, in which Gandalf tells Frodo that one cannot choose in which time he will live, and that the only thing one has to decide is what to do with the time he is given. Exactly by whom they are given this time is left unsaid. The second instance is present in the chapter “The White Rider”, in which Gandalf tells Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas what happened after he fell from the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, while he was fighting a Balrog:

> I threw down my enemy, and he fell from the high place and broke the mountain-side where he smote it in his ruin. Then darkness took me, and I strayed out of thought and time, and I wandered far on roads that I will not tell. ‘Naked I was sent back – for a brief time, until my task is done. (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 655)

After defeating his enemy, Gandalf, as it may be argued from the excerpt above, presumably died. However, someone sent the wizard back, brought him back to life. Even though the agent is not mentioned, it may be inferred that the action was performed by a powerful being that oversees the comings and goings of Middle-earth and aids the characters in their moments of need. In this sense, it may be assumed that the “accidental” destruction of the Ring by Gollum, Bombadil’s rescuing the hobbits in the Old Forest, and also Gandalf’s “chance-meeting” with Thórin were all designed by such being. Therefore, *Eucatastrophe*, or the consolation of the happy ending in Tolkien’s narrative is, on one hand, tied to providential help. On the other, such aspect of Tolkienian narratives is also intrinsically connected to the values the author believes reside in ancient narratives, such as the Old English *Beowulf* and the Old Norse *Eddas*.

The key to this second aspect of the *Eucatastrophe* is found in Tolkien's 1936 lecture on *Beowulf*, more specifically in his definition of what he calls the “theory of courage”. This theory, which is central in *Beowulf* and also largely incorporated in *LOTR*, deals mainly with the assumption that true courage resides in fighting and offering resistance even when there is no more hope. Tolkien's “theory of courage” is about doomed heroism and the recognition that happy endings depend not only on providential help but also on the self-sacrifice of hero for a greater cause. When Beowulf, even in advanced age, goes to battle against the dragon that is devastating his land, he is aware of two things: that it is his duty, as king, to defend his people; and that he will not come back from such confrontation. Notwithstanding, the hero is determined to go: “Beowulf spake, for the last time proud words he uttered: 'In youth many a deed of war I dared and still I will, aged protector of my people, seek strife and achieve renown, if the worker of evil and ruin comes forth from his house of earth to find me.'”

(TOLKIEN, 2015, p. 158) Beowulf slays the dragon and frees his people from its malice, but the hero pays with his own life. In *LOTR*, such facet of doomed heroism is represented mostly in the deeds of Frodo.

Frodo leaves the Shire at the beginning of the narrative with the sole intention of saving his homeland. The character is aware, as expressed in the passage from the chapter "The Shadow of the Past" quoted below, that his staying there would put not only the place but also its inhabitants in great danger; more than that, he knows that the task he is about to start is much bigger than he is and that his returning alive from it is very improbable:

> [...] it seems that I am a danger, a danger to all that live near me. I cannot keep the Ring and stay here. I ought to leave Bag End, leave the Shire, leave everything and go away.' He sighed. 'I should like to save the Shire, if I could – though there have been times when I thought the inhabitants too stupid and dull for words, and have felt that an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them. But I don't feel like that now. I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again. 'Of course, I have sometimes thought of going away, but I imagined that as a kind of holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace. But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me. And I suppose I must go alone, if I am to do that and save the Shire. But I feel very small, and very uprooted, and well – desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 81-82).

Despite all his fears and uncertainties, Frodo leaves the Shire behind and walks into dangers unknown. The character does so, as it may be argued from the passage above, mostly because of his sense of duty towards his people and his land; he is not seeking reward or renown, even because the task he has undertaken offers none. His sole motivation is the feeling that his actions may spare his land and people from the malice of the One Ring and its owner, the Dark Lord. Frodo fully expresses a crucial aspect of the "theory of courage" at the end of the narrative, when he tells Sam that one has often to abdicate of what they love the most so that others may keep it, which is what he did: his actions were decisive to save the Shire, but he was so deeply hurt, physically and mentally during the process, that he will not be able to partake of the joy resulting from his efforts. The hobbit leaves Middle-earth and sets to the Undying Lands, where he spends the rest of his days, having as his sole, though unlooked-for, reward the feeling that he has done what he believed was right.

Shippey (2000), Nicolay (2014) and Flieger (2017), argue that the double facet of the *Eucatastrophe* in Tolkien's narratives is largely associated with the way the author felt towards both the ancient and Biblical narratives. Nicolay suggests that through his works, Tolkien sought to revive virtues that, for him, were fundamental to the building of a society

that could thrive in the face of great adversity. The scholar proposes that by putting his characters against entities that represent the most potent evil imaginable and then having them rise above their differences and weaknesses as a means to cast such evil down, Tolkien is underscoring the importance of fellowship, courage, hope and a set of other virtues. Shippey points out that this confrontation between the forces of "good" and "evil" is present not only in the Biblical narratives but also in the ancient ones. The main difference between these narratives relates to the aftermath of what the scholar calls their "Day of Doom": in the Bible, for example, such day is represented by the Apocalypse, in which the "good" forces, represented mainly by the Christian God and his angels, overthrow "evil" (Satan and his followers). If, on one hand, the forces of "good" prevail in the Bible, in ancient narratives the opposite is often true: in the Norse "Day of Doom", the Ragnarök, for example, it is the Gods who perish in the battle against the monsters; similarly, Beowulf dies after his confrontation with the dragon. Tolkien embraces these two facets in his narratives: there is the (veiled) presence of the providential help of a greater invisible force, which helps the heroes reach the happy ending, but such ending is mostly possible because of the struggles and sacrifice of a hero, Frodo. Therefore, since the *Eucatastrophe* in Tolkien's works depends on both providential help and human struggle, Shippey draws the conclusion that in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*

> [...] people can avert the intentions of Providence, and obeying them (in so far as they can be detected) brings no guarantee of success or safety. The most one can say is that luck may turn better than one expects, as in the case of Gollum in the Samath Naur: but your courage has to hold [...], you have to seize your opportunity with both hands [...], and being 'too eager to deal death out of judgment', and more generally knowingly doing wrong to improve your chances, will probably be counter-productive [...]. (SHIPPEY, 2000, p. 147).

In other words, it is important to have hope and faith, but it is also fundamental to take action; the happy ending in Tolkien's works has to be earned. It is important to notice, however, as Flieger points out, that such ending is, at times, earned by a hero that will not directly benefit from it, as is the case with Frodo. The hero, as the scholar argues, pays the price for everyone else's happiness; the *Eucatastrophe* that his actions help to bring about benefit Middle-earth in general and also the hobbit's friends and companions, but rather than enjoying what he earned, Frodo leaves that world to heal from all the damage inflicted on him by the task he had set out to do.

Tolkien's stories are filled with elements of the two kinds of narrative he valued the most. It is, to a great extent, for this reason, that both the classical virtues of Courage,

Wisdom, Temperance and Justice (present in *Beowulf* and the *Eddas*, for example), and the theological virtues of Love, Hope, and Faith (central in Biblical texts) play an equal role in the adventures of the characters in the author's fictional universe. The writer feels, as Nicolay proposes, that both the Biblical and ancient works contain values that

> [...] would offer meaning and worth to current and future generations [...]. In his imaginative construction of a world in which individuals rise above their various differences as well as their own weaknesses in order to confront and cast down the incarnation of evil in the world, Tolkien shows his readers the dignity and nobility of the human spirit, which transcends time and thus speaks to us even today. (NICOLAY, 2014, p. 4)

In this sense, through his works, Tolkien manages to rekindle "the old light" (the classical and theological virtues) that he believes is slowly disappearing from the Western world. However, rather than just producing a narrative in which the characters embody these values, the writer makes sure that his works impress the importance of such virtues not only to his fantasy universe but also to the primary world. As a means to accomplish such task, the writer creates the hobbits, the protagonists in both *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, who serve as the operative link between his secondary world and the readers' own world. Such link, as Tolkien points out in "On Fairy Stories", is of great importance in successful fantasy texts, mainly because it is one of the elements that grant a story its inner consistency of reality. The hobbits in Tolkien's works provide readers with what Attebery (1992) refers to as the solid ground we stand on while reading a fantasy text, and also with the feeling of "what it would be like" to be in a fantasy world, to guide our reactions in it (Shippey, 2000). They bridge the gap between the ancient world of Middle-earth and our own. Therefore, by making these characters who feel as outsiders in the perilous world beyond the borders of their homeland, the Shire, the protagonists of these narratives and making their actions and deeds crucial to the *Eucatastrophe*, Tolkien underscores his belief, present both in his letters and in his fictional works, that all actions have meaning and may have a profound impact in the course of history. In a letter to his editors, probably dated from 1951, the author points out the relevance of the hobbits:

> But as the earliest Tales [presented in *The Silmarillion*] are seen through Elvish eyes, as it were, this last great Tale [*LOTR*], coming down from myth and legend to the earth, is seen mainly through the eyes of Hobbits: it thus becomes in fact anthropocentric. But through Hobbits, not Men so-called, because the last Tale is to exemplify most clearly a recurrent theme: the place in 'world polities' of the unforeseen and unforeseeable acts of will, and deeds of virtue of the apparently small, ungreat, forgotten in the places of the Wise and Great (good as well as evil). A moral of the whole [...] is the obvious one that without the high and noble the

> simple and vulgar is utterly mean; and without the simple and ordinary the noble and heroic is meaningless. (TOLKIEN, 2000, p. 160)

In *LOTR*, such belief is voiced by Elrond's affirmation in the chapter "The Council of Elrond", in which the character argues that most of the deeds that really matter are done by the most unlikely people: "' [...] such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.'" (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 351) Rather than doing these deeds out of obligation, I believe that the "small hands" do them, most of the time, because they are aware of their duty towards the society they are part of, out of a sense of responsibility towards their fellows and recognition that their actions are meaningful.

All things considered, through his scholarship and his literary works Tolkien emphasized a fact that was constantly overlooked during his lifetime: fantasy is necessary. In times of crisis, fantasy narratives offer us, through their metaphoric and mimetic trait and the imaginative constructs of their authors, a new perspective through which to see the difficult moments we are forced to go through, thus aiding one regain a clear view of the world around them and, consequently, giving one extra strength to face things with a new heart. In a period such as Tolkien's, marked by the Wars and a number of social, spiritual, technological and economic changes that resulted, in the author's perspective, not so much in advance as in spiritual loss and in a degraded condition of human beings and the environment, a literary work that not only calls attention to the dangers of reckless behavior, but that also underscores the importance of virtue and fellowship, ought to have an impressive appeal to the public, as *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* did. In periods of stability, conversely, fantasy stories remind us that all our deeds are meaningful and raise our awareness to the often-disregarded notion that our actions and decisions may have a profound impact in the course of history. The major example of such points is expressed in Sam' and Frodo's consideration concerning the value, interconnectedness and continuous flow of stories, in the chapter "The Stairs of Cirith Ungol":

> [...]I suppose it's often that way[said Sam]. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of a sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually - their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on - and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it

> call a good end. [...] I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into? ''I wonder,' said Frodo. 'But I don't know. And that's the way of a real tale. Take any one that you're fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don't know. And you don't want them to. "No, sir, of course not. Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course, and goes on past the happiness and into grief and beyond it - and the Silmaril went on and came to Earendil.[48] And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got - you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end? "No, they never end as tales,' said Frodo. `But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended. Our part will end later - or sooner.' (TOLKIEN, 2007, p. 931-932).

The excerpt above summarizes many of Tolkien's views on stories, mainly his belief, expressed in "On Fairy Stories", that there is no real end to any fairy-tale; just as roads, stories, and also history, go ever on. The events in fantasy stories and the primary world are interconnected, for the latter helps shape the first, and the first is often filled with a wisdom that can guide the actions of the latter. The objective of this thesis was to discuss how Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *LOTR* demonstrate the connection between literature and life, and how the first can give (new) meaning to the latter. Having approached the matter through the author's own understanding of the value and importance of fantasy stories allowed me to reach a broader comprehension of the writer's fiction and its connection with his context. More than that, this research has helped me fathom the timelessness of literature and how it can be a source of transformative wisdom that can benefit and aid us through our own individual journeys. Fantasy stories remind us that life, that great and continuous narrative, in itself can be a real adventure, filled with wonder, grief, and joy, and that we all have a part to play in it. Therefore, since our part is bound to end sooner or later and our actions have a transformative power, we need to make sure that we decide wisely what to do with the time that is given us.

[48] Sam is referring to events that take place in the First Age of Middle-earth. Their full account can be found in *The Silmarillion*, one of Tolkien's posthumously published works.

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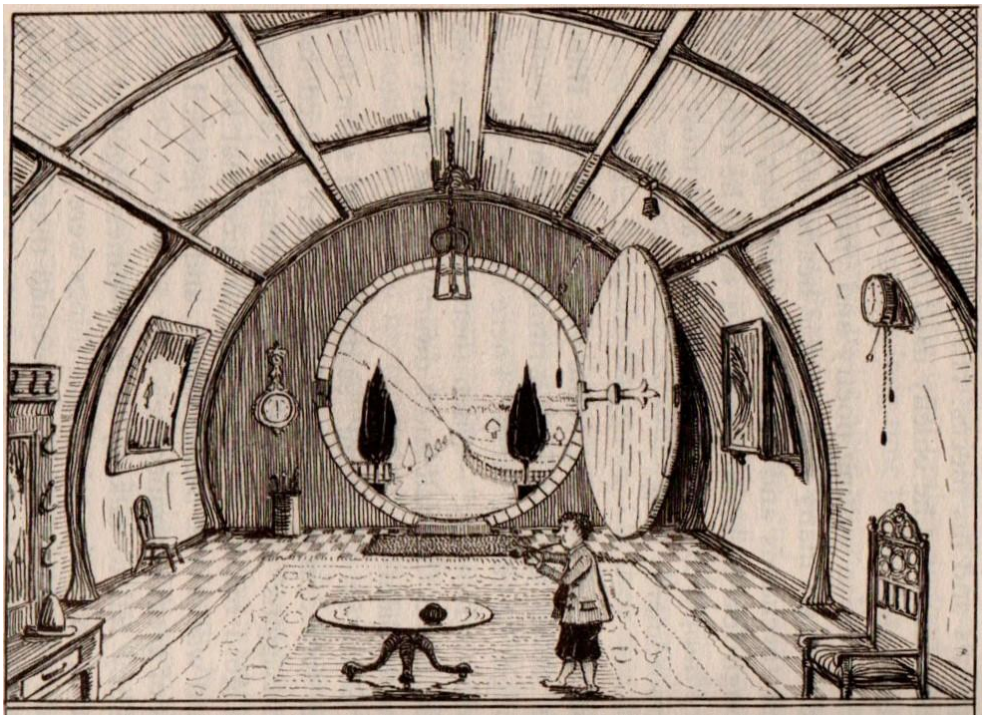
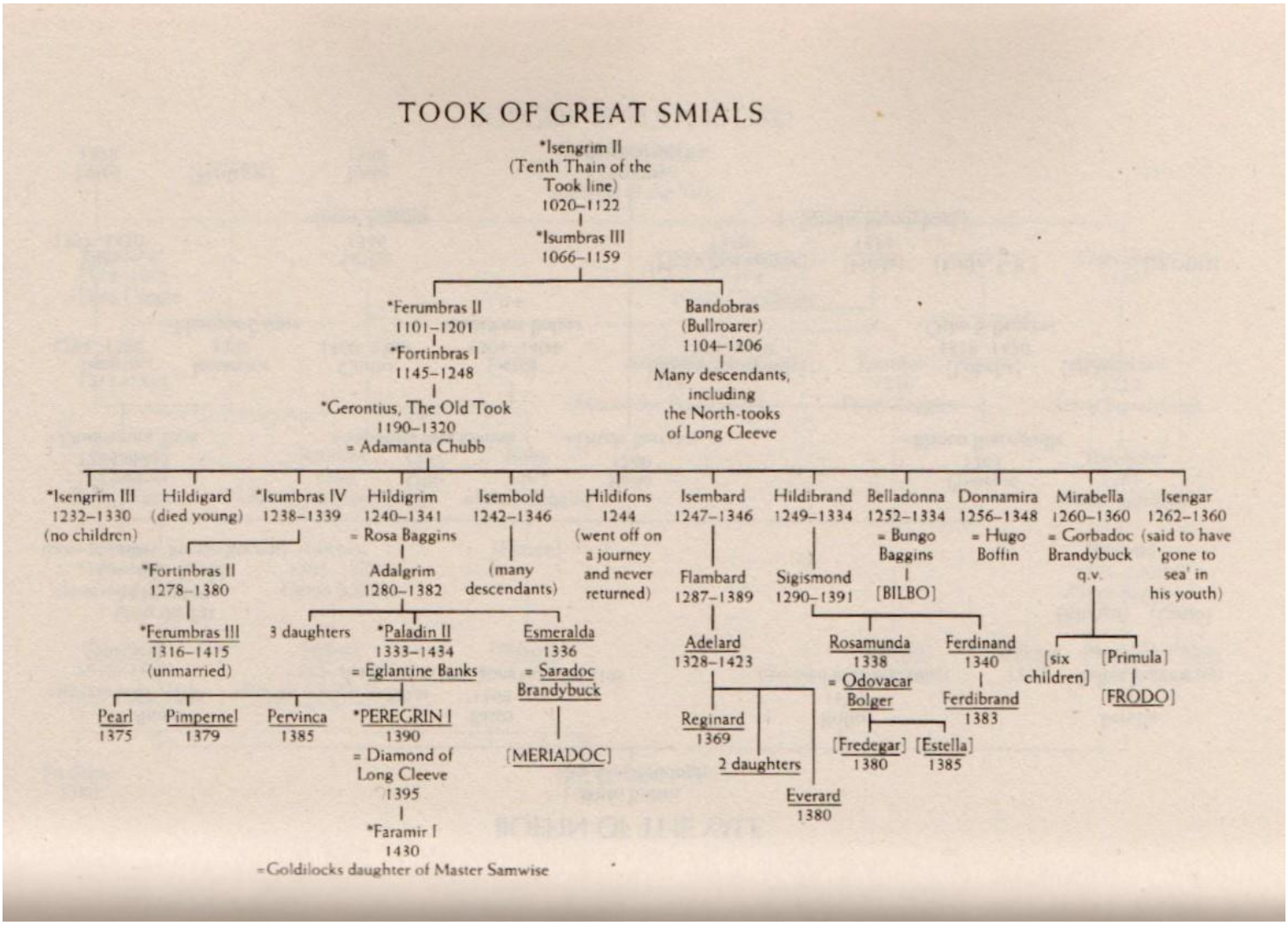
ANNEX A – The Hall at Bag-End



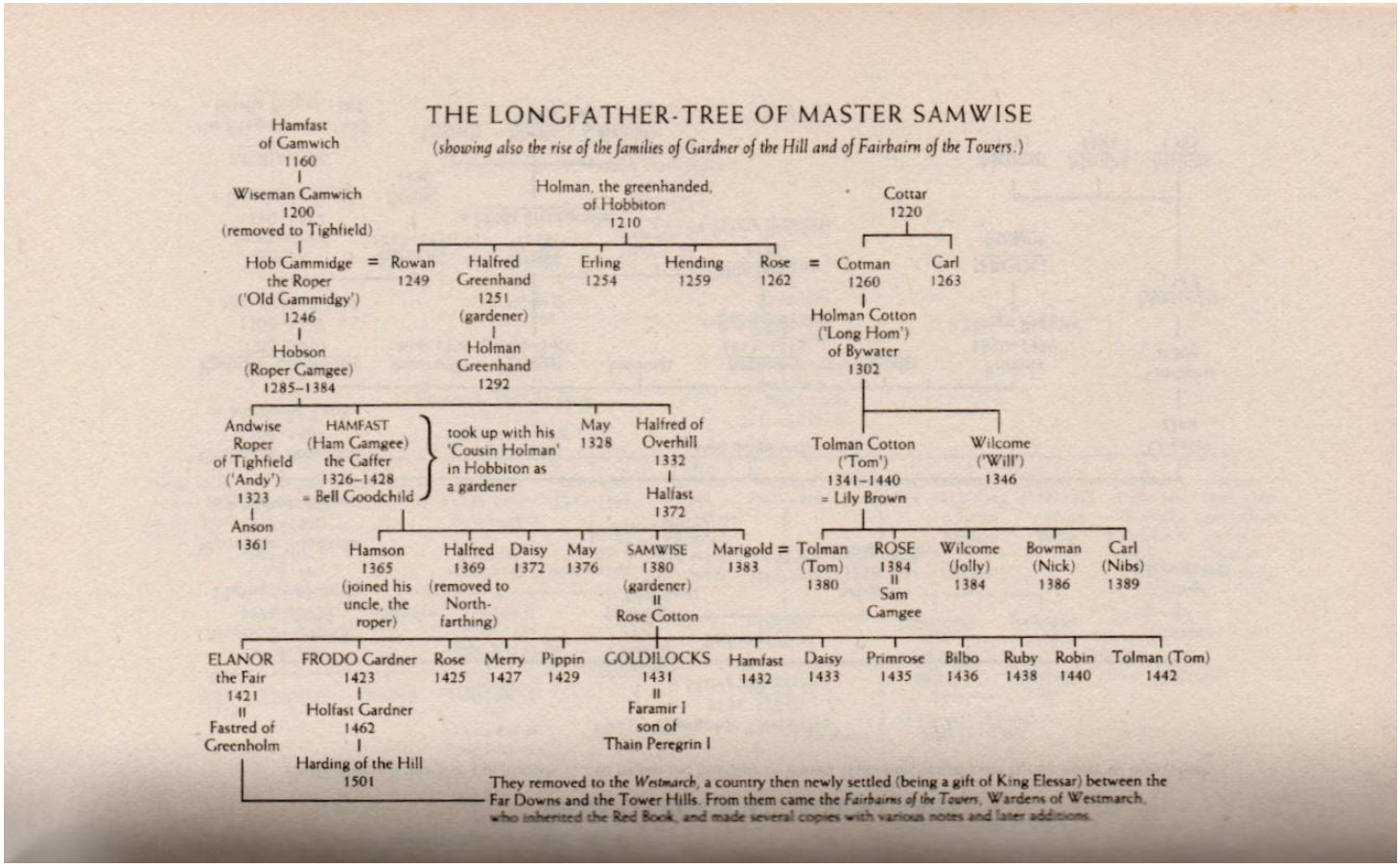
Source: Tolkien (2014, p. 350)

ANNEX B –Took of Great Smials



Source: Tolkien (2007, p. 1448)

ANNEX C – The Longfather-Tree of Master Samwise



Source: Tolkien (2007, p. 1450)

ANNEX D – Old Walking Song

Roads go ever ever on,
Over rock and under tree,
By caves where never sun has shone,
By streams that never find the sea;
Over snow by winter sown,
And through the merry flowers of June,
Over grass and over stone,
And under mountains of the moon.

Roads go ever ever on
Under cloud and under star,
Yet feet that wandering have gone
Turn at last to home afar.
Eyes that fire and sword have seen
And horror in the halls of stone
Look at last on meadows green
And trees and hills they long have known

Source: Tolkien (2014, p. 346-7g)