A Deliberate Construction Of Mythology In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

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Abstract

This essay explores John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's mythmaking and his purposeful creation of a mythology that functions as a feigned history of England in his *The Silmarillion* regarding mythical imagination. The text is the result of Tolkien's lifelong endeavour to develop a comprehensive mythology that includes both religious and cosmic elements. It includes accounts of a diverse pantheon of gods and goddesses, eschatological beliefs, creation myths, and epic stories that show how mythical, historical, and fantastical aspects can coexist. One can distinguish between good and evil based on how they interact with and respect nature. This is demonstrated in the text by the dichotomy of chaos and order in nature, which is depicted in mythical terms through the interplay of many elements that stand for good and evil. The fundamental myths of Tolkien's secondary realm are entwined with nature. The stories about the races and particular individuals grow alongside the myths about the land, and the place itself, Middle-earth, emerges as a major figure in the legendarium's overall plot. Tolkien's mastery of sub-creative mythmaking is evident throughout his legendarium. The many stories that cover his mythopoeic realm are incredibly intricate and meticulous. This intricacy is evident at both the thematic and narrative levels. Tolkien's work retains a sense of familiarity despite the complex and deep mythic framework, which adds to its popularity. By using well-known fantasy and mythic fiction patterns and tropes and bringing them to life with his own unique creative vision, he becomes one of the genre's leading proponents.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was a renowned philologist and university professor in addition to being one of the most adored and significant authors of fantasy literature. Over the course of his multi-decade literary career, he painstakingly wrote and developed the complex and interrelated body of work that would eventually be referred to as his legendarium in its entirety. His mythopoeic sub-creation, a creative and imaginative process that resulted in the development of a secondary world that lives within his fictitious universe and functions as a setting for his stories, is the source of his legendarium. He has interwoven his parallel world together using mythical language and themes. The historical consciousness that permeates his fictional creation realises his goal of creating a mythology that is typical of and derived from English culture. Tolkien's portrayal of nature in relation to its position within the material and ideological society of his mythopoeia is among the most significant themes in his stories. Tolkien's interest in philology led him to want to develop a fictional mythology.

Myths have been an element of human culture and imagination Since prehistoric times. Thus, the creation of a mythical system is an organic process that gathers disparate stories throughout time and blends them into a single, diverse story. Tolkien was a strong proponent of myth's power. He thought that myths revealed the fundamental character of human nature and civilisation, even though the manner may be fantastical. Therefore, it is not surprising that he used the genre to convey his main idea of good versus evil. His methodology of developing a fictional world to use as the backdrop for his works was careful and methodical. Because of this consideration, his mythology differs from mythologies found in the real world in that it is more artificial than natural. His ability to give the appearance of distinct stories when they originate from the same source - the one author, the self-declared sub-creator - is what makes his work so exceptional.

Other than Arthurian legends, Tolkien was aware that England lacked a complete mythology, in contrast to Greek, Norse, Celtic, Finnish, and other mythical traditions. Despite being associated with British customs, the Arthurian romances lacked the elements of a fully developed mythology, such as creation myths and a celestial pantheon, and instead depended on the Christian Genesis to serve these functions. To bridge this gap, Tolkien imagined a story that would function as an English mythology, provide a fantastical foundation for English history and culture, and imbue them with an air of ancient mystique. Tolkien constructed this fictitious world long before he filled it with the well-known figures from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. He created and manufactured a whole legendarium, complete with a sophisticated mythology of creation, locations, languages, and people, through the process of mythopoeic creation, also known as myth-making.

The Silmarillion was the result of what started out as a personal endeavour motivated by a passion for philology. Many of the stories in *The Silmarillion* date back to 1914, despite the book being released posthumously in 1977. Christopher Tolkien, Tolkien's son, edited the text, which was published four years after his father's death. As Tolkien worked on the mythical framework well into his senior years, most of the stories that eventually made it into the text were penned in old notebooks

decades earlier and were constantly changing and evolving. The narrative's internal consistency was frequently contradicted by new additions. Christopher had to carefully iron out the contradictions and inconsistencies to create a single text that would make up a thorough story. But unlike *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*, which are both classic works with a clear internal chronology and structure, *The Silmarillion* should not be regarded as a single story. This is since *The Silmarillion* was conceived over a period of over fifty years, which is like how real-world mythology evolve over time and are adorned by a variety of sources. This lends the text's stories a sense of authenticity and mythical taste, which strengthens the idea that the mythology is natural rather than artificial.

The cosmogonic is the focus of *The Silmarillion*, which serves as the "backcloths" for the more well-known stories from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In terms of structure, *The Silmarillion* published in 1977, includes four more works in addition to the "Quenta Silmarillion." Most Tolkien's tales are found in the "Ainulindalë" and the "Valaquenta," which come before the "Quenta Silmarillion" and exclusively discuss the Middle-earth pantheon. The "Valaquenta" describes the characteristics of the Ainur, or the gods and goddesses, while the "Ainulindalë" gives the fundamental cosmogonic myth of the universe's genesis. When combined, they offer a mythical framework from which all subsequent stories are derived. The First Age events, the creation of the three jewels, the Silmarils, and the ensuing chaos and conflict following their theft by Morgoth are all recounted in the "Quenta Silmarillion." "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age" and "Akallabêth" are the next two stories. Tolkien's adaptation of the Atlantis myth, known as the "Akallabêth," tells the tale of the Men who reside on the island of Númenor. The Fall of Númenor sets the stage for later Third Age events involving Sauron's ascent and the creation of the Rings of Power. This story is told in passing in "Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age," the final chapter of *The Silmarillion*, but it is significantly developed in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

One of the main influences on Tolkien's creation of myths is Christianity. Christianity provides the spirit and the fundamental morals of Tolkien's mythopoeic universe, even though Greek, Norse, Finnish, and other myths and legends can be observed as having a noticeable effect. The "Ainulindalë" is remarkably like the Christian Genesis, and Tolkien's creation tales include similarities to central Christian concepts of God, Satan, and the Fall of Man. Tolkien gradually develops his pantheon into a complex hierarchical framework of cosmic powers in the "Valaquenta." The Fall of Elves and Men, respectively, marks the conclusion of both the Quenta Silmarillion and the Akallabêth. Although Tolkien's religious tale is fundamentally pagan in structure, it is strongly rooted in Christian philosophy and thought, particularly in the idea of Christian Stewardship. When contrasted with Tolkien's environmental perspective, this becomes most noticeable. The study of land and its creation is central to Tolkien's mythopoeia from the very beginning. It cares just as much about the universe as it does about the organisms that live there.

Eru Ilúvatar is the only Supreme Creator who governs all of creation in Tolkien's monotheistic universe, or Eä. Like the God of Christianity, Eru just "Is." "There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar" is the first line of the "Ainulindalë" (3). The Ainur are angelic creatures created by Ilúvatar who have their own creative abilities but are nonetheless obedient to Ilúvatar. Music is a manifestation of this power. The process of creating is identical with the performance of musical themes. Power is given to the Ainur, each of whom learns a distinct theme from Ilúvatar and understands their own portion, although Ilúvatar alone possesses all knowledge. Melkor, one of the Ainur, plants the first seed of discord because he desires power for himself and control over creation apart from Ilúvatar's. Melkor's wish to "interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accordance with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself" (4) is the root cause of this dispute.

A significant theme that runs across Tolkien's whole body of writing is power. When deliberately sought, it is viewed as a source of corruption. Those who are tempted by worldly wealth and power succumb to its wickedness. According to Tolkien, it is consequently most appropriate for lowly, even hesitant, hands, as the hobbits' function subsequently demonstrates. Like Satan's initial revolt against the Biblical God, this first instance of Melkor's corruption via power serves as the foundation for all future evil that will exist in the universe. It serves as a kind of prophecy about what to anticipate in the future: an endless cycle of peace and strife.

To visualise the Great Music, Tolkien conjures up the image of a cosmic orchestra. It features several Ainur musicians with voices "like unto harps and lutes, and pipes and trumpets, and viols and organs, and like unto countless choirs singing with words," under the direction of Ilúvatar, who introduces the theme (3). If other musicians pick up Melkor's beat and deviate from the original, it disrupts their focus, making his discord as chaotic as a musician playing off-key and to a different beat. As Melkor's discord is countered by Ilúvatar, the two themes compete with one another and differ greatly. One is "loud, and vain, and endlessly repeated; and it had little harmony, but rather a clamorous unison as of many trumpets braying upon a few notes" (5), while the other is "at first soft and sweet, a mere rippling of gentle sounds in delicate melodies; but it could not be quenched, and it took to itself power and profundity" (5). Because each theme has characteristics that correspond to the essence of both good and evil, they reflect the opposing powers of good and evil. Despite its subtlety, good remains and is imbued with the creative power. The music serves as a conduit for the imagination of the real world.

It is comparable to Tolkien's own use of language and imagination to sub-create a secondary universe. Evil, on the other hand, is uncreative and aims to obtain power by violently suppressing good and corrupting its artistic attempts. Ilúvatar shows the Ainur the Vision of Eä, which is a physical representation of the Great Music. The Vision is a kind of montage of everything that will happen in the world. Ilúvatar highlights in the Vision how Melkor's discord affects many facets of the real world.

He says to Ulmo-Seest thou not how here in this little realm in the Deeps of Time Melkor hath made war upon thy province? He hath bethought him of bitter cold immoderate, and yet hath not destroyed the beauty of thy fountains, nor of my clear pools. Behold the snow, and the cunning work of frost! Melkor hath devised heats and fire without restraint, and hath not dried up thy desire nor utterly quelled the music of the sea. (8)

Because of the interaction between good and evil, the extremes and flaws of the real world are therefore described in legendary terms. Like the creation myth in the Bible, the creation of Arda is an example of a "ex nihilo (out of nothing) creation myth." It emerges spontaneously from the creator's thoughts, in this case as music. It could also be considered a myth of "creation from chaos," since the Music only creates the universe's vision; the Valar are credited with creating the world physically, using the harmony and discord that the Vision foretells. It's interesting to note that the idea of the Void, which existed before the physical universe or Arda, is consistent with contemporary theoretical physics ideas. Since time in the Void flows differently than it does in the Vision and is metaphorically non-existent, the term "before" is misleading because this is effectively the Universe prior to the cosmic Big Bang. "At the beginning of Time: and it was their task to achieve it, and by their labours to fulfil the vision which they had seen" (10). This is how the Ainur join the world. Thus, at the beginning of the universe, time itself was created.

The Valar are the Ainur who entered Eä and transformed it into Arda, a proper home, in preparation for the arrival of the Children of Ilúvatar, Elves and Men. One of the most extensive parts of *The Silmarillion* is the "Valaquenta," which outlines the many kingdoms and abilities of the Valar. The pantheon's division of abilities and attributes is a taxonomy of the natural universe, just like most mythical systems. The Valar, who control various facets of nature, are thus the earliest caretakers of Arda. In addition to creating the world, they are also responsible for its upkeep and care. They must take care of Arda's well-being till the end of time because their presence there is essential to its survival. This is where Tolkien's environmental ethic starts. The preservation of the natural environment is just as important as its appreciation and celebration. The Valar's obligation to protect Arda and its people under Ilúvatar's command reflects the Christian belief that it is humanity's duty to honour and protect nature as God's creation.

The Valar's mythical Arda gradually transforms into a landmass with a distinct geography and culture. The appearance of Elves and the creation of Adam in Abrahamic mythology are comparable. The awakening of the Elves fulfils the prophesy of the Vision of Ilúvatar, and the purpose of creation is realised, just like the Abrahamic God created the world for Man to live in. Adam is taught the names of everything that will exist in the world in Islamic mythology. As a result, learning a language is viewed as the first step towards developing a sentient awareness of the world, which in turn opens the door for the growth of civilisation and culture. Though this change would only be fully realised in the stories of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the mythical narrative of *The Silmarillion* becomes increasingly folkloric. The history of Elves, like their existence, is a blend of the ethereal and the unethereal, as they walk the boundary between the mortal Men and the celestial Valar.

Tolkien's naming of different stars and comparisons to their real-world counterparts indicate his attempt to create myths and use mythology to interpret the natural world. Valacirca, described as "the crown of seven mighty stars … the Sickle of the Valar" (45), is unmistakably the Big Dipper or Ursa Major constellation. By fusing real-world environmental aspects into his legendary story, Tolkien strengthens the idea that his mythopoeia is a mythical description of the prehistoric world.

According to *The Silmarillion*, the early history of the Elvish race is a tale of migration. The different Elves' tribes and subraces are formed by migration, as they dwell in some places or stay for a while in others, leaving behind members of their group. This results in offshoots and tribes that are distinguished by the circumstances and outcomes of their voyage. The Elves' voyage and their racial and regional identities can be compared to the prevalent anthropological notion that modern people and their predecessors originated in Africa and then moved in waves to the other landmasses of the world. Ethnic variety and unique cultural identities were gained by humans as they expanded throughout Eurasia and beyond. The Elves in Tolkien's myth are also not fantastical beings whose existence is explained by magic. Anthropological concepts are used to describe their evolution. In addition to fostering ethnic diversity, migration and settlement processes also establish social hierarchy and class.

Tolkien explains the world's geographical aspects using the language of myth, just like most of the real-world mythology do. By attributing his mythology to old, rediscovered documents, he purposefully presents it as historical truth. By doing this, he

effectively creates a link between the real world and the cosmos of his imagined world. This bridge connects the world's geographical features as well as the cultural and social facets of civilisation. Interestingly, Tolkien had a holistic worldview despite the divides and sub-divisions he made in the social structure of his mythical universe. Tolkien was a man of the modern world, in contrast to the creators of real-world mythology, who drew their inspiration from ancient religious ideas. His realisation was that the development of human civilisation could never be adequately predicted by mythical writings. If one were to take the old myths' predictions about humanity's future seriously in the modern era, they would appear absurd and fanciful. In keeping with the contemporary belief in free choice, Tolkien might have aimed to make his legendarium's story as logical as feasible within the constraints of mythical language.

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