Earthly and Heavenly Nostalgia: The Meanings of Places and Times in Literature

An Analysis of the Presence of Nostalgia in Gone with the Wind, The Leopard, and The Lord of the Rings

By Evangeline Lothian

Senior Honors Thesis, B.A. in English Literature

Supervised by Dr. A. Cuda, English Department

MODES OF *NOSTALGIA*

"And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads/ And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour..." writes T.S. Eliot in "The Rock: Chorus II." Dispersed, carrying with it a connotation of longing for what existed before, sets the mood of these lines. Eliot's formulation captures a version of cultural despair: that the old days (when, one might assume, men cared about their neighbours and communities flourished, and "all that was good" was defended and fought for) are gone and cannot be retrieved; and that this leaves a painful hole in the chest of people. That depressive, all-consuming ache for something gone appears as a theme in literature time and again, in various forms: the historical nostalgia for another time or location; the mythological nostalgia for a far-gone origin; and the supernatural nostalgia, for a greater existence, such as Paradise. These modes of nostalgia encompass one another, but they also represent three distinct emotions, which can be examined in different books.

In "The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost longingly writes, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood/And sorry I could not travel both/.../I shall be telling this with a sigh/Somewhere ages and ages hence." "Ages and ages hence," he tells us: there will be longing in his stories about the road not taken, for the rest of his life. He misses the fact that he cannot stay, or have both roads; there is nostalgia lingering in his words. "Five years have past; five summers, with the length/ Of five long winters! and again I hear/ These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs/ With a soft inland murmur," Wordsworth says in his nostalgia-tinted "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey." He mourns the five years passed and how Tintern Abbey looked at that time. It is not as he remembers it,

perfectly captured in the rosy-tinted memories he has. Nostalgia has inundated the realm of literature under different names and various shades of the concept, spanning actual history and experience and spiritual beliefs and cosmic explanations. Whereas the Israelites understood "nostalgia" as an ideal age, or as Paradise, the Britons or Welsh saw it as a historical past. This is particularly illuminated in the verbiage used by separate languages.

There are many words that describe the intense pain of wishing for something gone. In Welsh, it is "hiraeth" (meaning, literally, the longing for the pre-conquered Wales specifically); in German, "heimweh" ("home-woe") or "sehnsucht" ("longing to see again"); in Italian, it is "mancanza di casa" ("wishing for the home"); in English, it is "nostalgia." From the Greek νόστος ("nostos," homecoming) and ἄλγος ("algos," pain), the word "nostalgia" invokes a pain of homecoming, or, more accurately, the pain of returning home but its being irrevocably changed. The English term "nostalgia" was not coined until 1688, and belongs to a specific pain of needing home that soldiers felt during a war– enough longing that they became physically ill.[1] However, the concept is not new: it has evolved, in various forms, through the Mesopotamian cultures into the Greek and Roman world, and then through to the modern world. Even "nostalgia" has changed its meaning since 1688– now referring more to a wishful longing for the past– but the "idea" of illness-inducing desires for your homeland remains an understood emotion. Some of the earliest forms of literature contain forms of "nostalgia" as we might recognize them today; notably, Homer's masterpiece, *The Odyssey* and in the Bible, especially in Genesis and Exodus.

[1] https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/nostalgia-cowbells-meaning-life

The Odyssey tells the tale of Odysseus, who, for all that he might have longed to return home, is faced with a home that is no longer his own. It is in the pathos of this "disappeared" and "forgotten" home, which can never return, that we find Homer's idea of nostalgia, which looks to a historical past that can still be remembered. In Homeric terms, then "nostalgia" is not only the lack, or missing of a home, but its inevitable fading into the past– and the tight-held memory of what it used to be. It is the mode of nostalgia that refers to the existing past, though it might be colored golden by fading memory: we see the same mode in *Gone with the Wind* and *In Search of Lost Time*. Historical nostalgia can be characterized by the experience of that prior time, or some concrete connection to it. "They had an ache here, Doctor," writes Carol Ann Duffy in her poem "Nostalgia," "they pined, wept, grown men. It was killing them." Her poem speaks to the origin of the English word, to the men who died from desire of their homes. This historical mode of nostalgia becomes the mythological mode of nostalgia once the historical period wished for ceases to be concrete, and becomes legendarium, or, mythology. For, if the historical is based on the perception of the past, as is shown in *Gone with the Wind*, and typically only looks at its "goodness" or the great aspects of the past, mythological nostalgia is far more encompassing.

Historical nostalgia is a naive nostalgia, whereas mythological nostalgia becomes self-aware. It serves to explain the origins of your people, and to imbue you and yours with a sense of greatness. It steps beyond history into pre-history and into the self-conscious creation of nostalgia. For example, the

Greek myths are "mythological nostalgia:" they go one step further than concrete historicism as practiced by Thucydides, and explain the reason for existence, and the greatness of the Greeks, by alluding to a prehistoric time of demigods. These demigods may or may not have existed, as far as the Greek nostalgia for the golden age is concerned; the point is that it gives their entire race a sense of power and legitimacy, a common history for all of them. It is the fountain of their culture, this shared nostalgia. The most common form of "mythological nostalgia" is then the origin story of a family or people. We can see this concept in the King Arthur tales that hold special importance in Wales and Brittany, which long for a past where they were not invaded. Alternatively, it is present in novels like *Brideshead Revisited,* or Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn.* All of these seek to capture a past which was never experienced or felt, but still contains some bearing on the surroundings of the characters and their view of the world. We see this clearly in a novel like *The Leopard*, which takes a self-conscious look back at the history of Sicily and its aristocracy and employs the nostalgia of its characters to create a foundational story for them.

It is in this crossing of historical into mythological that we encounter the greatest pitfall of nostalgia: it can quickly become a political talking point like "we'll return to this golden age" or "bring back the old, better days." While not dangerous in and of itself, as it can be harnessed both for good as a reminder of tradition and a link to the past, it can also be harnessed for bad, when it becomes an unwillingness to examine mistakes of prior times.

It can then be argued that the mythological mode of nostalgia, taken one step further, becomes a spiritual nostalgia. Millenia of civilizations have recognized in humans an innate sense of longing. There is an existential condition in humans that is always searching for something, longing for something. It is "satisfied" by experiences like eating, drinking, or having sex, but great literature suggests that this never quells the searching instinct that humans have. They, instead, suggest there is a longing for something outside of the Earth, or beyond the Earth's ability to provide us with. Spiritual nostalgia results from this: a longing for what appears to be transcendent, beyond, what can ultimately fulfill. The historical and mythological modes of nostalgia, I argue, are symptoms of a spiritual nostalgia and its precursors. Historical nostalgia is naive, mythological nostalgia is self-aware, and spiritual nostalgia is transcendent. This argument is presented in the great novel of the 20th century, *The Lord of the Rings*, which examines the balance between a longing for physical past, or the shrouded "times of heroes," and the desire for Valinor, for the West, for what lies outside of Middle-Earth, without which one cannot ever be contented. This spiritual nostalgia is present in most major religions, but is perhaps most clear in the Abrahamic traditions.

The Bible takes this idea to nostalgia and applies it to a "grander" scale; the supernatural realm. It points out that not only does nostalgia exist for earthly spheres and places, but also for heavenly – or supernatural– ones. The Israelites are never simply longing for Jerusalem, when they become slaves of Babylon, or for the temple, when it is destroyed by the Romans: they are also longing for the heavenly realm, the domain of God, access to which they have lost due to the Fall. We see examples of this Judaic, and then Christian, concept of nostalgia in both the Old and the New Testament. "For people

who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had the opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."[2] Earthly nostalgia, or the longing for this world, is a byproduct of longing for the next world. It is an innate compass in humanity, the Bible argues, a realization we are not where we are meant to be.

Therefore, we both "long" for the best of this world and the places and times where we grew closest to perfection on earth; and yet, we are never satisfied by this longing. There always remains, even for those who are "in their homes," a longing for something greater: a longing for Paradise. C.S. Lewis states this idea succinctly: "Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off...is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache."[3] Spiritual, or supernatural nostalgia, also differs in where it "looks" to: rather than looking to a past, like historical or mythological nostalgia, it looks to a future. It is forward-gazing nostalgia. One could therefore consider it the culmination of "nostalgia"'s different modes, the most all-encompassing of the emotions.

This paper intends to explore the conversations of these three modes of nostalgia, through three different texts. *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell is a book about historical nostalgia: about a longing for the Old South. It demonstrates the desire for a return to the past, the earthly

[2] Bible, Hebrews 11:14-15
[3] C.S. Lewis, *The Weight Of Glory*, 41

nostalgia of what has been destroyed. In analysing Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, and the Wilkes couple, one can clearly see how historical nostalgia influences the actions of both people and places; and through exploring the locations of the novel (Tara, Charleston, Atlanta), how this nostalgia is tied to specific locations.

The Leopard represents the in-between, the mythological mode of nostalgia, as it explores the death of a family and the place they exist in, but also how this decay and destruction of their world is related to the death of faith and the "golden age" of noble Sicily. By looking at Don Fabrizio's family story and the decay of their aristocratic Sicily, it becomes clear how historical nostalgia becomes mythological; and how this mythological nostalgia expands into spiritual nostalgia.

Finally, *The Lord of the Rings*, while containing powerful scenes of mythological nostalgia, especially in Elven locations, is, at its heart, a story about spiritual nostalgia and why it is the condition of humanity to long for it. It represents the culmination of "nostalgic literature," in this sense, and captures the concept of spiritual nostalgia. In exploring Lothlorien and the character's reaction to "Elven Paradise," we see the crux of Tolkien's definition and belief about nostalgia, which pulls from all three modes. Nostalgia, in Tolkien's world, is summed up by a longing for the beautiful on Earth, and the realization that this nostalgia points to the greater longing for the perfection of Heaven, that is, the ultimate beauty.

"I will go back to my home, with the clouds and the stars above/ And the heaven I used to know, and the God of my buried youth..." writes Alfred Noyes in "The Old Sceptic." The call to return to a home that is no longer the same anymore is indeed the call of nostalgia, which beckons every man at some point in his life; and this call is clearly and masterfully shown in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*.

HISTORICAL MODES OF NOSTALGIA

Historical nostalgia is the most concrete mode of nostalgia: it looks back to a specific time and place in history and longs for its returns, or attempts to recreate it. Proponents of historical nostalgia in today's world might echo the words of artist Auguste Rodin when he wrote, "Does Orpheus preside over the birth of this new world, or only that ancient Python who always expects to triumph over the eternally youthful Apollo?"[4] They would argue that the "new world" or the present, is a degenerated, destructive, decayed version of a beautiful past: a parody, if one wills, on how society should be structured. In literature, this is most clear in a novel like *Gone with the Wind*, which presents both the beautiful and ugly sides of historical nostalgia. On one hand, Mitchell gives the readers portraits of the great people of the South, through Melanie and Ashley Wilkes; on the other hand, she presents us with their inability to change in the face of a new world. That success is given to the characters Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler, who make room for themselves in the new South.

[4]The Cathedral is Dying, Auguste Rodin, Ch. 1, pp. 27-28

Overall, the novel clearly leans more towards the positives of historical nostalgia, and challenges the reader to reshape the South into what it once was. "Throughout the South for fifty years there would be bitter-eyed women who looked backward, to dead times, to dead men, evoking memories that hurt and were futile, bearing poverty with bitter pride because they had those memories,"[5] reads the novel. These women have had their circumstances reduced and their livelihoods taken from them; but their concern is not with the poverty, which they bear with "bitter pride" (as opposed to the carpetbaggers, who are constantly, Mitchell informs the reader, committing tax evasion) but rather with their men and their communities. Mitchell throws her lot in with the back-looking characters of the story in this line; indeed, she turns *Gone with the Wind* into a nostalgic manifesto more than a novel, once she reaches this halfway point. The historical nostalgia for the Old South is a matter of identity for the characters in the story, but it is also a matter of identity for the readers, who are included in this summation: the "bitter women" are the Wilkes and Merriwethers, but also the modern readers of the story. Furthermore, the sympathies of the story clearly lie with the characters who criticize Scarlett and Rhett's behavior, for though they are the main characters, they are not the most endearing ones. Mitchell pulls on the sympathies of her audience in order to convince them that the longing for the Old South is the correct, good feeling and a worthy object of nostalgia. She praises, and promotes, the characters who remain true to the core of "Southerness."

For historical nostalgia in literature is incapable of existing independently of its audience, because it directly recalls the memories of generations. "Who then could blame the leader of that

[5] *Gone with the Wind,* Ch. 25, pp. 407-8

forlorn party which after all has climbed high enough to see the waste of the years and the perishing of the stars, if, before death stiffens his limbs...he does a little consciously raise his numbed fingers to his brow and square his shoulders, so that when the search party comes they will find him dead at his post, the fine figure of a soldier?"[6] Woolf's comment captures the nature of historical nostalgia: one wherein the glorified past is turned into hero, whether it was or not, and presented as the ideal for the current generation to aspire to, or to return to. There is an inherent longing not just for the past, but for the perceived goodness of the past. The leader in Woolf's line is creating a perception of himself that will last into the future: in a sense, he forges the historical nostalgia for the next generation. This creates an interesting dichotomy in historical nostalgia: how much of it was real? How much of it is anachronistic? There is no clear answer: historical nostalgia seems to blend the two, with an interest in both the material circumstance of the past, what one might call the archaeological past, and in the cultural and moral circumstance of the past, or the anthropological past. There is an actuality in the archaeological past that often conflicts with the perception of the past by modern people (the anthropological past). The tension that arises between these fields, and how it influences our understanding of historical nostalgia and its proper place in a community, or the psyche, are a primary focus of Mitchell's southern tale.

The Italian word "campanilismo" captures the essence of historical nostalgia well, in its conflicting elements, as demonstrated through *Gone with the Wind*. It means "loyalty to one's own cathedral bell;" that is, a reverence for your roots above all else. *Gone with the Wind* encourages this

[6] To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf, The Window, Section 6, pg. 41

feeling: the characters who embody campanilismo, or autochthony, are the best characters, the most beloved people of the novel. Mitchell paints these characters, especially Melanie Wilkes, as not simply better, but the best of a breed of people: an embodiment in the narrative of what goodness looks like.

Gone with the Wind presents through the character of Scarlett O'Hara, the tugging of this historical nostalgia against her advancement in the world. It is not until the end of the novel, after Mitchell has carefully painted, stroke by stroke, the decay of Scarlett's character, that Scarlett fully embraces the carpetbagging Northern lifestyle, which destroys her reputation and place in Southern society. Until that point, the character is caught between Rhett's cynical anti-nostalgia and Melanie Wilkes' honorable Southern reverence. Mitchell expresses through Scarlett's experience, then, clearly the struggle between actual and perceived past.

For the characters, Rhett represents an actual return to the past, focused on the material comfort, financial security, and trappings of antebellum Southern life. It is Melanie Wilkes that represents the perceived past, focused on the mores and norms of the culture prior to the war; in essence, represents the ideology before it was destroyed. And although Mitchell ultimately has Scarlett succumb to the disingenuous nostalgia of Rhett's world, and thus to the world of the North, she never has Scarlett entirely forgo that nostalgia for her mother's world.

> "Rhett was wrong when he said men fought wars for money. No, they fought for swelling acres, softly furrowed by the plow, for pastures green with stubby cropped grass, for

> lazy yellow rivers and white houses that were cool amid magnolias. These were the only things worth fighting for, the red earth which was theirs and would be their sons', the red earth which would bear cotton for their sons and their sons' sons." [7]

In this passage, Mitchell shows us a glimpse of what she is defining proper historical nostalgia to be. It still sounds material: the character is speaking about plants, plantations, and people, but Mitchell hints at the deeper significance of these items, recalling to the readers' mind an early scene in the novel, when Gerald O'Hara reprimands Scarlett and tells her that land is all that matters. These lands, plantations, plants, and houses, were proof of the civilisations that built them. Their materiality is not enough, Mitchell tells us through Scarlett's attempt at nostalgia: it is the ideas their creation embodied.

Throughout the story, although Mitchell depicts Scarlett as having a penchant for the nostalgic, it is not enough to protect her. She employs violent, "Anti-Southern" means to achieve her end of restoring Tara to what it once was: she defies every custom and tradition that made the South so dear to her, in an attempt to bring the past back. In trying to gain the nostalgic past, she loses sight of what she was actually nostalgic for: the mores of the Old South.

It is clear then, that while Mitchell certainly positively embraces nostalgia, and urges her "bitter women" readers to think of the past and desire it; she warns against the dangers of misunderstood historical nostalgia: or a focus on the materiality of it. Scarlett's demise is not that she becomes like Northern women, nor is it that she remains a Southern lady: her demise is that she

[7] Ch. 25

attempts to "achieve" a return to nostalgia through violent means. She does not recognize the meaning of nostalgia or its impact: for Scarlett does not feel nostalgia in the broad sense. She is only concerned with her own past, and own success. It is misapplied as being important only to Tara and to the O'Haras. In *Gone with the Wind,* Mitchell answers the question of whether nostalgia is always for the good and beautiful. Her answer is a resounding yes, as she continuously describes the beauty of Southern modes and manners. Mitchell argues in her novel that the true historical nostalgia is for beauty. This is most evident in the dialogue she gives to Melanie, and especially Ashley Wilkes, who represent the true understanding of historical nostalgia: one that includes not just an individual person, but a community and a culture. Historical nostalgia must by definition be community driven– for it is communities and cultures that create history to look back upon. But it must also be beauty and goodness-driven, Mitchell says through the words of her character, Ashley: "I am afraid of facing life without the slow beauty of our old world that is gone." [8]

That is the origin of historical nostalgia, Mitchell says in this novel: a fear from what will become of one's people without the beauty, or goodness, of a past time. That is what fuels the creation of historical nostalgia. This sentiment is thus repeated several times throughout the novel:

> "Everything in their old world had changed but the old forms. The old usages went on, must go on, for the forms were all that were left to them. They were holding tightly to the things they knew best and loved best in the old days, the leisured manners, the courtesy, the

[8] Ch. 31

> pleasant casualness in human contacts…The old days had gone but these people would go their ways as if the old days still existed, charming, leisurely, determined not to rush and scramble for pennies as the Yankees did, determine to part with none of the old ways." [9]

The old forms are where the beauty layed, because those forms gave shape to the outside, material "beauties." Beauty, morals, customs, can hold steadfast, the narrative suggests, even in dire poverty; but no amount of riches and prestige can give a world beauty and morals, as exemplified through the gaudy, horrible, lawbreaking, Northern affiliates of the Butlers. This sentiment, foreign to Scarlett O'Hara who does not long for the past so much as attempt to recreate it (leading into the dangerous territory of her "descent" in society, as she becomes no better than the prostitutes and carpetbaggers), is represented most clearly by Melanie Wilkes. Melanie is the embodiment of "good" historical nostalgia, in Mitchell's eyes; historical nostalgia that clings to the best of a time and refuses to compromise on the principles and traditions of ancestors. "'My dear Miss Melly, it is always a privilege and a pleasure to be in your home, for you– and ladies like you– are the heart of all of us, all that we have left…They have broken our health, uprooted our lives and unsettled our habits…But we will build back, because we have hearts like yours to build upon." [10]

There is no greater contrast in the novel than between Scarlett and Melanie, who are always together, but constantly apart. Where Scarlett is abhorred by Atlanta society by the end of the novel, Melanie is praised as one of the last-standing remnants of the Old South. For, Scarlett refuses to see

[9] Ch. 35
[10] Ch.. 41

"the past" as worth keeping for its own sake: she only believes in its worth as it applies to her success in the new world. Melanie, on the other hand, recognizes that the past, the history of her world, is worth keeping, remembering, cherishing, for the sake of what it represented and what it was: those "old days [that] had no glitter but...had a charm, a beauty, a slow-paced glamor."[11] There is no break with previous generations for Melanie Wilkes; there is only a continuation of it. The charm and beauty, contrasted with the "glitter" of the current age, is laden with connotations of morality. In the words of J.R.R. Tolkien, "all that glitters is not gold." The glitter lacks any substance behind it; for Mitchell, it lacks any morality. Rather, it is the substance of charm, glamour, beauty, that contains a moral element that makes it worth being nostalgic for.

Proper historical nostalgia operates under a "code;" an understanding of the most important parts of the lost time.

> "These women, so swift to kindness, so tender to the sorrowing, so untiring in times of stress, could be as implacable as furies to any renegade who broke one small law of their unwritten code. This code was simple. Reverence for the Confederacy, honor to the veterans, loyalty to the old forms, pride in poverty, open hands to friends and undying hatred to Yankees. Between them, Scarlett and Rhett had outraged every tenet of this code." [12]

[11] Ch. 53
[12] Ch. 47

As these lines imply, that code is moral. Nostalgia has to be, in Mitchell's world, geared towards a return to a more moral culture. Proper historical nostalgia is thus not only a longing for a time, but for specifically the customs and codes of that time; the inner workings of that society more so than the outer trappings. That is Scarlett's error, and Mitchell's point, in the novel: one cannot employ the manners of a new world to recreate, or bring back, an old one. One could never "bring back the old days" as they used to be. Rather, one must cling to the manners of the old world, even as one exists and lives in the new. For it is the traditions and customs that endure, nothing else. The etymological similarities between the Greek for "nostalgia" or "home-coming," *νόστος* (nostos) and the Greek for custom, or law, *νόμος* (nomos) also seems to point at this idea being intrinsic to the meaning of nostalgia. Amanda Adams, however, argues that "Although…there are certainly moments in which the text seems to idealize the values of the antebellum South, *Gone with the Wind* has a competing if not dominant voice that does not ultimately sentimentalize plantation life."[13] Her analysis shrewdly points to the competition between modes of nostalgia. She points to how one of the main themes of the novel is survival: survival through the Civil War and into a new era, and that the heroine is rewarded for her work ethic; Adams states even that "[t]he novel's theme is the inevitability of progress."[14] Whilst Mitchell certainly does seem focused on progress, it is through the context and worldview of nostalgia that she tackles it. The progress is not good, because it comes at the cost of high

[13] Adams, Amanda. "'painfully southern': Gone with the wind, the Agrarians, and the battle for the New South." *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1, Sept. 2007, pp. 58–75, https://doi.org/10.1353/slj.2008.0000., pg. 60

[14] pg. 61

ideals, and Mitchell illustrates the value of those ideals; for as her character abandons them, she loses everything else.

Mitchell rewards Scarlett in the short term for her "progress," or devaluation of the ethics of the South. She marries Rhett, she becomes financially stable and successful. However, Mitchell has Scarlett lose her children, her husband leave her; Mitchell has everyone in her life abandon her. Scarlett herself recognizes that for all she has "gained" by becoming Northern, she has lost all that mattered by abandoning the South. If Mitchell's novel is about progress, it is a warning about embracing it and leaving behind all that nostalgia treasures. Her Old South novel decries the end of the Old South, not in its specific economic or political sphere, but in its ethos, which is the root of how historical nostalgia is correctly embraced.

It is not until the end of the narrative that Mitchell lets Scarlett realize the mistake she made in her understanding of the importance of nostalgia. Alone and abandoned by everyone, she "understood why when two ex-Confederates met, they talked of the war with so much relish, with pride, with *nostalgia*. Those had been days that tried their hearts but they had come through them. They were veterans." [15] Mitchell gives Scarlett the line that is the heart of the narrative: the summation of the themes of the story. The ex-Confederates, perfectly content to remain in poverty, indeed, even proud of their poverty, talk of the war with nostalgia because their ideals were put to the test, and they passed it. They remained loyal to what they believed the South embodied. For historical nostalgia never arises

[15] Ch. 60, emphasis added

out of success: it always comes at a loss, for it always mourns something gone; it needs to have those ideas tested and have them survived a horror. Whether that is a physical loss like that of the South to the North in the Civil War, or a metaphorical one such as the loss of one's culture to foreign influence, historical nostalgia is bred in defeats and destruction– the decimation of empires. For that reason, there is never a proper return, even in the most ideal of situations. There are only ashes left of the longed-for civilisation; all that is left to keep alive are the norms and nobilities of the time, the way in which people behave and are raised.

When historical nostalgia thus steps out of the confines of tradition and custom, and attempts to restore physical realities of the past, it quickly devolves into a dangerous mindset and destructive behavior, as we witness in Scarlett's slow surrender to "everything disgraceful," culminating in the stealing of her sister's beau, her near-death from a Black man, her role in the death of her husband, and her complete and utter loneliness by the end of the novel. Scarlett is the picturesque example of historical nostalgia *gone wrong.* So, Mitchell makes an important distinction in her nostalgic novel: historical nostalgia is not a desire for what there used to be, but how people used to behave. That is what the "bitter women" miss; they miss their men as they once were and their societies as they used to be structured.

Gone With the Wind does not exist in a literary vacuum. Rather, its release in 1936 is perfectly timed to align with the Great Depression, where the hard-hit South would have felt even greater despair and straits, and a greater longing for the charming past. It also aligned with the Agrarian

movement that sought to return to the farming lifestyles of the past. "This prologue [of *Gone With the Wind*] merges romantic nostalgia with a rural version of Southern identity established by the Agrarians in their 1930 manifesto, *I'll Take my Stand*."[16] Historical nostalgia thrives in moments when the present seems like the worst situation possible: the 1930s were the breeding ground for Southern nostalgia. As some critics point out, however, the novel seems to have a dark, anti-Southern tinge to it: "Throughout the novel, the anti-paternalist, anti-nostalgic revolutions unravel in ceaseless cyclicality, upending, inverting, and restoring, as the novel throws nearly every conceivable trauma at the anti-heroine…And yet..only Scarlett will be left standing at the end, a "woman to whom nothing was left from the wreckage except the indestructible red earth on which she stood (460)." [17] What they fail to take into consideration is the consequence of this anti-nostalgic revolution. Scarlett is not "left standing;" she is left abandoned. Scarlett O'Hara tellingly has surrendered her last name, O'Hara, for the hated Butler name. Her identity as a Southerner is revoked. Her family turns its back on her, even the disillusioned Rhett. Once a belle and a Robillard descended, it is only first-name Scarlett that remains at the end of the story. Nor does the earth of Tara hold anything for her anymore; she has destroyed what Tara *meant* to the O'Haras and to their neighbours, and the Southern communities at large.

Margaret Mitchell leaves questions for her critics: she is a Southern writer, nostalgically looking back on the Old South, and pointing the finger at those she claims destroyed: those who abandoned

[16] Artuso, Kathryn Stelmach. "Irish maternalism and motherland in gone with the wind." *Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2012, pp. 199–230, https://doi.org/10.1353/mss.2012.0022., pg.200
[17] Artuso, Kathryn Stelmach. "Irish maternalism and motherland in gone with the wind." *Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2012, pp. 199–230, https://doi.org/10.1353/mss.2012.0022., pg.205

the ideals of the South for the riches of the North. Her novel, as rife with tension between progress and nostalgia as it is, gives nostalgia the crown. It takes a firm stance of what the meaning of nostalgia is, and how it is properly felt: Mitchell advocates for the intrinsic need of beauty and morality in nostalgia. However, another author, Giuseppe di Lampedusa, takes a different stance in his novel, *The Leopard,* which, while more of a mythological nostalgia, proffers the argument that nostalgia is not only based on past beauty, or past morality: but sometimes personal interest.

MYTHOLOGICAL MODES OF NOSTALGIA

If historical nostalgia is understood to be a naive longing for the past; that is, what is perceived as good and beautiful from the past needs to be revived and continued in the present, then mythological nostalgia is a self-aware creation of a shared past. If historical nostalgia, as Margaret Mitchell suggests, ought to inform not the outward trappings of a people, but the customs and laws of a civilisation– the ideals and values of a land– then mythological nostalgia is primarily interested in the power that the past can lend to a group of people. An excellent example of this can be seen in *The Leopard* by Giuseppe di Lampedusa. *The Leopard* is a quintessential lapsarian novel. "Its focus is the decay of this aristocratic family from within (the Prince's nephew, Tancredi, marries into a "lesser family" for the sake of money) as well as its decay from the outside (the joining of Sicily to the rest of Italy and the establishment of a senate that strips the aristocrats of their power)," I wrote in a previous

article entitled *Lapsarian Literature: Lampedusa's Leopard*[18]. The double lapse of the Houses of Salina is that of the individual and that of civilisation: and, Lampedusa argues in his novel, that lapse is because the younger characters have none of the mythological nostalgia necessary to sustain the power of their family name.

I argued further in my article that,

> "Without a class of honour, society must essentially devolve into pettiness and money-grabbing. Without a group of people who represent the virtuous and best of us, there is no standard for anyone to reach towards. Like when the emperors of Rome stopped being gods apart from their people and thus killed the Roman empire, when the aristocrats of *The Leopard* stop standing apart, they kill Sicily, and then Italy."[19]

This argument, that a civilisation must rest on the shoulders of a noble class lest it lose itself entirely to debauchery, is what defines mythological nostalgia in opposition to historical nostalgia. Historical nostalgia calls for everyone to follow the good, beautiful customs of the past: mythological nostalgia says that power has been given into certain hands for a reason, to a certain "in-group" of people, and that the good and the bad of this must be taken together, for the good of our world. It is not a nostalgia divorced from that of *Gone with the Wind,* but it looks one step forward: to the rights of a people, to the power they inherited from the past. Lampedusa expresses this clearly in the book, "For the

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[18] Lothian, Evangeline. "Lapsarian Literature: Lampedusa's Leopard." *Albertus Magnus Institute*, 28 Apr. 2024, magnusinstitute.org/magnus-articles/lapsarian-literature-lampedusas-leopard/#:~:text=The%20Leopard%20follows%20the%20story,unification%20in%20Sicily%20and%20Italy.

[19] idem.

significance of a noble family lies entirely in its traditions, that is in its vital memories."[20] These vital memories are the nostalgia of his family name and where the House of Salina comes from. No one remembers a time before these traditions existed: they have always been the way of the aristocracy. The point of this passage suggests a key difference between historical and mythological nostalgia: whereas historical nostalgia attempts to recreate the past by an adoption of their principles and morals, mythological nostalgia suggests an innate quality that is dying out and must be preserved. The tone of *Gone with the Wind* is a tone of grief: the tone of *The Leopard* is one of determination. These nobles of Sicily have not simply been holding onto to past mores; there is a belief that they are inculcated with "the best of the past" by the virtue of their blood. The origin of their existence has persisted through their bloodline and they are nostalgic for it, because the blood– their origin– is under attack by poor marriages and changes in power dynamics in Sicily.

Unlike historical nostalgia, where there is an acceptance that they are endeavoring to bring back something long gone[21]mythological nostalgia does not begin with this premise. It does not believe anything has been lost: only that it is under attack and must be protected. For it is intrinsic to people, in the mind of mythological nostalgia, and a soul certainly cannot be surrendered. We can understand that through the most common "mythology"; that of the Greco-Roman empire. The creation of mythology by the Greeks is an act of nostalgia, meant to forge a civilisational basis for these various

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[20] *The Leopard,* pg. 248

[21] None of the characters in *Gone with the Wind* are unaware of the nostalgia they are enacting. Mitchell makes it clear through Scarlett's thoughts and actions that she is consciously recreating a past life, but most especially, Mitchell uses Melanie Wilkes to demonstrate how historical nostalgia involves an acknowledgement of what is gone (illustrated through Melanie's surrender of her wedding ring) and an effort to bring it back (illustrated through the returning of the ring by Rhett Butler). In contrast, in *The Leopard,* Lampedusa makes it clear that none of the characters are aware of the decay of Sicily or of their family in any meaningful sense, only in the superficial sense: rather, he writes the characters so assured in their names and titles that they don't notice the destruction of their mythology until it is far too late.

tribes of people: to define themselves, all together, as one Greek people. This mythology persisted through invasions by Persia and Rome: that the Greek world had been diminished, and that the Greeks were no longer preeminent in the Mediterranean, never occurred to its people. For their mythological nostalgia was too strong: they understood their glorious beginnings as being untouchable, and therefore themselves as being untouchably like the Greeks of the past. This same characteristic can be observed in Roman mythology. Even at the end of its empire, during its collapse, Rome never separated itself from the Romuluses and Remuses of its history: they were necessary to what being Roman was and could not be divorced even from the decadent Christian Romans whom Romulus would never have recognized.

The same phenomenon occurs in *The Leopard*. "But there exists a deity who is the protector of princes. He is called Courtesy."[22] If one considered Courtesy as the Hercules or the Romulus of 18th century Sicily, then we see that the exact same principles of nostalgia apply: how could the Princes of Salina ever fall, when they hail from such a line as they do? Lampedusa answers the question for us: his characters are so self-aware of their mythology and nostalgia that they fail to recognise it is fast fading and changing.

However, it would be important to note that mythological nostalgia, unlike historical nostalgia, is not averse to change, especially if it fulfills a goal of restoring previous dynamics. Indeed if historical nostalgia might be considered a movement of conservation, then mythological nostalgia might be considered a movement of progress, for it uses "new methods" in order to solidify itself. Mythological nostalgia, in some sense, is the persistence of a nostalgia through death. As Richard

[22] Ch. 3, 123

Kuhns points out in "Modernity and Death: The Leopard by Giuseppe di Lampedusa," "it is extraordinary in this day to find a novel about dying. Art...can readily depict the contortions of death; it can only through much greater effort and with a more delicate hand present the living of life as a preparation for death."[23] Here we see an interesting element of mythological nostalgia, which is far more survival-oriented than historical nostalgia. As I suggested when speaking about *Gone with the Wind,* historical nostalgia is the nostalgia that belongs to the losers, to the destroyed– or, in the case of the Civil War, the Lost Cause. However, mythological nostalgia is the nostalgia of winners, or, at least, of survivors. Death is not enough to destroy nostalgia, Lampedusa tells us in his novel; it actually gives it a stronger staying power.

The Roman Empire was a drastic departure from the monarchy and republic that formed the "mythology of Rome" but it nevertheless is a continuation of that mythology. In *The Leopard*, Lampedusa, through Tancredi, reminds the Prince and the reader: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."[24] In these words, we have an excellent view into the point of mythological nostalgia. Because there is no concrete time that the nostalgia refers to, it is constantly being modified by each generation (it is being "changed") to match with how they view their own mythology: it is a nostalgia that is constantly in flux. The Prince, in the novel, has a mythological nostalgia that is centered around the pure blood of his family and the Church: Tancredi, his nephew, has a more politically-minded nostalgia that is centered around his ruling class and the avoidance of a republic. If historical nostalgia relies on some concrete memory of the past, mythological nostalgia is

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[23] Kuhns, Richard F. "Modernity and death: The leopard by Giuseppe Di Lampedusa." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, vol. 5, no. 2, Apr. 1969, pp. 95–119, https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1969.10745149., pg. 95

[24] *The Leopard,* Ch. 1

more on an inward perception of identity that must be preserved throughout the ages. Lampedusa suggests that this inward perception is cultivated by generations of that same mythology: and when a character like Tancredi forgets this taught mythology, then we witness the destruction of that mythology.

For that reason we see in today's world such identity descriptions as Irish or Italian-Americans: peoples whose families have been Americans for generations and whose ties to "the motherland" are far removed. But their mythology is based on their heritage from these countries, and so they reinvent themselves and reinvent what "Italian" means: in this case, New York pizza and large families. "...[E]ven fixed stars are so only in appearance," the Prince muses at the end of the novel[25], encapsulating the movement of mythological nostalgia in the novel. All of the characters are aware of the ever-changing nature of their longing, of their nostalgia: it progresses with time and adapts to new situations. As such, it is often a far more practical type of nostalgia than the historical. It tends to action more than thought. Whilst in *Gone with the Wind*, the characters are constantly musing on or speaking together about "the glorious Old South;" in *The Leopard,* the characters are constantly acting to hold onto what they perceive to be their past and importance. Compared to Tancredi, Ashley Wilkes is an incredibly naive character: he bemoans a loss of beauty in his world, but, Mitchell kindly reminds her readers over and over, he can't farm for nothing and only ever feels at home as a leisured gentleman with no work to do. Mitchell ensures that Ashley Wilkes constantly feels the nostalgia, but never does anything about it. Conversely, Tancredi sets himself up in the new world without giving up on his nostalgic plans for continuing to live in luxury. He is an active character in his own destiny and the

[25] Ch. 6

preservation of his familial mythology. The practical instinct described above, however, is counterintuitive to how one might imagine "mythological nostalgia".

For mythological nostalgia is separated from the concreteness of historical nostalgia: it becomes far more encompassing in scope and passes from the known into the unknown past. Truly, this is how mythologies function. They are stories created to explain origins and time periods so far back that there is no record: as I said in my introduction, they serve to lend legitimacy and power to a people, by giving them some innate, inherent right to what they have. But it is important to note that this is far from impractical. Indeed, this manipulation of history into legendarium is ultimately practical, especially socio-politically. For it can give the illusion of rights, innate "betterness," or moral and blood superiority of one group of people over another. This of course becomes one of the big pitfalls of mythological nostalgia: it can be easily co opted to serve a specific group's interest, often to the detriment of other groups. Take, for example, the Roman conquest of the world, which was enacted in part because they believed that, as the chosen people of the gods, they had the right to every land they could overtake. Or consider the book of Exodus in the Old Testament: it is because of a promise given to their ancestor Abraham, that the Israelites decide to settle the land of Cana and claim it as their own.

But *The Leopard* serves as an example of how this practical, oft political, type of nostalgia is more commonly (and better) used within the family and small-scale societal structures to maintain hierarchies and traditional values. There is an inextricable link between family value and societal value, which mythological nostalgia illuminates well, because it attempts to preserve both. One of the main sources of conflict in the novel is Tancredi's marriage to a woman of lower status than he is. It causes the Prince great heartrend, though he ultimately is forced to assent. While this may seem like a foreign

concept to the modern reader, as we do not have the same understanding of class and aristocracy as readers at the time, it was a common view of the time. The aristocracy played an important role in the preservation of their towns and cities, the running of the governments, the checking of monarchical power, and the patronage of the arts, and in return, were rewarded with status, power, and wealth. It was not an abusive, dictatorial system: rather, it benefited the lower classes, who were taken care of through the charity, efforts, and city-enrichment provided by the aristocrats, as well as the upper classes, who were able to pursue beautiful activities and enrich the lives of their societies. It was considered a normal part of life to have an untouchable upper class. And with this in mind, one can see how a mythological nostalgia for a family's aristocratic roots would inform everything they chose to do. So, we see that the Prince's feelings of nostalgia for "the old aristocracy" of former generations affects how he perceives Tancredi's decisions and the political changes occuring in Sicily that threaten to undermine the aristocracy.

Guiseppe di Lampedusa's "mythological nostalgia," standing apart from that of his characters, is also very clear in the novel. It is not simply the Prince trying to hold onto his ideas of aristocracy, the way the aristocracy used to maintain itself and the blood that makes up his family; it is also Lampedusa pointing to the current Sicilian world and reminding his readers that they came from something greater and have been sunk into bloodshed and revolutions and decay by their destruction of the upper classes. "I belong to an unfortunate generation, caught between the old world and the new, and I find myself ill at ease in both."[26]. Lampedusa puts the words in the mouth of Don Fabrizio, but the sentiment is echoed throughout the novel: the author points to the vast changes that occurred during

[26] Ch. 4

his own life, and how they have created an especially strong sense of alienation and mythological nostalgia in the people who grew up during the shifting of the world order.

However, much like in *Gone with the Wind*, the subject of nostalgia and the characters' relationship to it are not simple. There is not simply a mythological nostalgia that all the characters feel and act upon in perfect harmony. The main character, the most nostalgic of them all, the Prince of the House of Salina, suffers clearly from the pulls of the present and future, just as much as he is tied by his mythological nostalgia to the past of his family. We see this clearly in Chapter 3: "...[H]e was envying the chances open to a Fabrizio Salina and Tancredi Falconeri of three centuries before, who would have rid themselves of urges to bed down with the Angelicas of their day without ever going before a priest, or giving a thought to the dowries of such local girls...". In this passage, the Prince reckons with a "modern" custom which he follows (his confessions to the priest of all his extra-marital affairs). He feels compelled to follow this unwritten law, while he also acknowledges that in the past (in the mythological, nostalgic past that may or may not have truly existed), he never would have confessed to a priest, and would have just enjoyed the sex and gone on with his day.

This interplay of the present mores and the past lineage's mores renders mythological nostalgia again far more practical than historical nostalgia, which seeks to solely confine oneself to the mores of the past. If historical nostalgia is focused primarily on "Beauty" as its defending ideal, the "slow beauty" that Margaret Mitchell describes in her novel; then mythological nostalgia is focused primarily on "Goodness" as its defending ideal; that is to say, virtuousness, or morality. There is a "goodness" in the customs, systems, and stories of "our people" that give us a set of rights and expectations for the present. The mythological nostalgia of the Romans– their descendancy from Venus (through Aeneas)

and Mars (through Romulus)-- informed their "civilised warrior" culture, and the morality that sprang from that culture. And while modern people might scoff or disagree with much of what was considered "moral" or "good" in Ancient Rome– such as crucifixion, gladiator games, child marriages, etc.-- they were seen as not just the rights of a godly people, but of a people descended of the gods, of a people whose mythological nostalgia put them on equal footing with the great demigods of Greek legend.

Robert Kuhns, however, argues that *The Leopard* is not actually a novel about nostalgia. He says in his paper that, in the novel, "the present is therefore isolated; neither a future of expectation, nor a past of comforting recollection has any reality and as such any real causal relationship to the present." [27]This ignores, though, the difference between nostalgias. Kuhns is correct in pointing out that Lampedusa did not write about historical nostalgia, not like Margaret Mitchell did. But mythological nostalgia is not searching for comfort in the past, nor is it completely forward-looking like spiritual nostalgia might be considered. Rather, it exists in the present, as a perception of oneself and one's people that will propel one through one's life with strength.

One could then consider that mythological nostalgia is the first step towards a forwards-looking type of nostalgia: a nostalgia that it not solely focused on recreation of the past world; indeed, is not at all interested in the past: a nostalgia that is not concrete like historical nostalgia, or generational or cultural like mythological nostalgia. Rather, a third type of nostalgia that looks ahead to a universal, spiritual future that people long for.

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[27] Kuhns, Richard F. "Modernity and death: The leopard by Giuseppe Di Lampedusa." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, vol. 5, no. 2, Apr. 1969, pp. 95–119, https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1969.10745149., pg. 96

SPIRITUAL MODES OF NOSTALGIA

J.R.R. Tolkien, in his seminal work *The Lord of the Rings*, brings together the three types of nostalgia: the historical nostalgia, most visible through the men of Gondor and Rohan, the mythological nostalgia, most visible through the Elves, and spiritual nostalgia, which defines the novel's quest and the actions of the characters. In commentaries and academic work, Tolkien refers to the quest of the Ring as a "eucatastrophe;" that is, an event that is truly catastrophic but ultimately turns for the good. In Tolkien's own words: "[eucatastrophe] produces [joy at the turn of a Happy Ending] because it is a sudden glimpse of Truth, your whole nature chained in material cause and effect, the chain of death, feels a sudden relief as if a major limb out of joint had suddenly snapped back."[28] Spiritual nostalgia, while not identical to, is intrinsically linked to eucatastrophe. If eucatastrophe is the event as it occurs, then spiritual nostalgia is the recognition of the inevitability of it and the nostalgic feeling that arises from not yet being in that Tolkenian "Happy Ending." That is not to say that spiritual nostalgia is a hope for the future: for though it is forward-facing, its nostalgia does not lie with the future. C.S. Lewis explains this difference clearly in his *Screwtape Letters*: "The Future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity. It is the most completely temporal part of time—for the Past is frozen and no longer flows, and the Present is all lit up with its eternal rays."[29] Because men do not think of "vices" unless he plans to commit them[30] The Future, in some sense, is a liar: it promises much

[28] J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter 89

[29] C. S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943), p. xv.

[30] I am not a psychologist, but there seems to be a general effect among people, where when they are committing some bad or evil action, they rarely are planning to do it as they do it; rather, it is premeditated, if thought of at all with any seriousness. Thus, we see that vices act in the future, but not in an eternal or spiritual context. Spiritual nostalgia, therefore, must take place outside of a temporal future-bound sense of existence.

and often delivers little. That is the root of hope. This makes it antithetical to forward-looking spiritual nostalgia, for it is primarily focused on the Truth. As we have previously discussed, historical nostalgia can be understood as being a longing for "Beauty" and mythological nostalgia is a longing for "Goodness." Completing this trio, we find that spiritual nostalgia is a longing for the "True," no longer hidden in the hazy future, but present in an eternal, out-of-time aspect. Both historical and mythological nostalgia encompass some kind of change: *Gone with the Wind* is a reaction against change, *The Leopard* is a flowing with the change. Spiritual nostalgia does not involve change, but some kind of stability. Thus, there is a clear, definitive difference between an emotion like hope and an emotion like spiritual nostalgia. Hope involves some desire for change, albeit for the better; but spiritual nostalgia seeks an unchanging Truth. "Almost it seemed that the words took shape, and visions of far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined opened out before him; and the firelit hall became like a golden mist above seas of foam that sighed upon the margins of the world," Tolkien writes.[31] In these words, Tolkien links his creation mythology (a beginning) with the current Middle-earth and the Middle-earth to come, unchanged from its original created form. There is a continuity present in the music; and if one were to examine Tolkien's creation writings, one would find the idea of a longed-for eternal form of Middle-earth painfully present. The idea of nostalgia is ingrained into the very fabric of his work. Those "far lands and bright things that he had never yet imagined" become something that Frodo longs for in the rest of the novel and his quest truly sets out in order to retrieve it.

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[31] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Fellowship of the Rings: Being the First Part of the Lord of the Rings*. Large Print Press, 2003., Bk. II, Ch. I

Of all three types of nostalgia discussed, spiritual nostalgia is the most difficult to grasp at: it can only be reached obliquely, because its name "spiritual" inherently suggests a certain mysticism, an unapproachability. Still, some idea of its nostalgic component can be understood, especially through the lens of a novel like *The Lord of the Rings.* If we look specifically at the scene in Lothlorien, when Galadriel shows Frodo and Sam the future through her magic mirror, we see the threads of spiritual nostalgia; and then again, in the scene when they are marching to Mordor and pass by the king's broken head, illuminated by a ray of the sun, we see a true glimpse of what spiritual nostalgia *is*. For, as Anthony Esolen eloquently states as the premise of his book, *Nostalgia,* it is the longing for a home that defines the feeling[32]; with historical nostalgia, it is a longing for the home that was once possessed; with mythological nostalgia, it is a longing for the home of one's inner people; with spiritual nostalgia, it is longing for the home one has not yet attained.

"... Remember that the Mirror shows many things, and not all have yet come to pass. Some never come to be, unless those that behold the visions turn aside from their path to prevent them. The Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds," Galadriel tells Sam once he looks into her mirror and is horrified by what he sees.[33] As counterintuitive as these lines seem to be to the idea of "spiritual nostalgia," they represent the crux of what this type of nostalgia does, and illustrate an important distinction between it and hope. It is a despairing image that Sam is treated to– one of the destruction of the Shire– and his immediate reaction is to want to turn back and prevent it. His response, in short,

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[32]Esolen, Anthony M. *Nostalgia: Going Home in a Homeless World*. Regnery Gateway, 2018.

[33] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Fellowship of the Rings: Being the First Part of the Lord of the Rings*. Large Print Press, 2003., Ch. 7

is one of hope: Sam hopes that by abandoning the Quest of the Ring and focusing his efforts on his home, he might keep it from being overrun and destroyed. But as Galadriel points out in her response, this has not happened yet– and might not even. "The Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds," she says. The words "the mirror" might be replaced with the words "hope." Hope is dangerous as a guide of deeds, because it has a lack of rationality, or of self-awareness. Like mythological nostalgia, spiritual nostalgia is self-perceptive, acknowledging its own existence. Rather than purely emotional, it contains an element of rationale to it: as evidenced by Galadriel's warnings, which Tolkien uses to remind the readers, and the characters of the greater Quest at hand, but also how the eucatastrophic moment– of the deliverance of Middle-Earth– can only occur if hope is set aside, and instead, the characters look forward, with a spiritual nostalgia, to an eternity when the Ring no longer controls the world. One might suggest, then, that spiritual nostalgia does not exist alongside hope, for all its superficial similarity, but rather must supersede it. Furthermore, spiritual nostalgia, like other types of nostalgia, seeks something specific: it longs for the True, much as the others long for Beauty and Goodness. This scene plays with the idea of truth to illuminate the concept of spiritual nostalgia. Tolkien gives Sam a "false vision" of a destroyed Shire, which "has not yet come to pass" and never does in the novel. It would be antithetical to spiritual nostalgia for him to rush back home to rescue his beloved land. And Tolkien makes it clear that Sam desires this, because he confuses hope with spiritual nostalgia: but hope is always tinged with a fear of failure or loss, whereas spiritual nostalgia is untempered in its faith. Galadriel thus has to lead Sam to the correct conclusion, to overcome the momentary lapse in his nostalgia, so that he might be reminded that their quest is for the True, not for hope.

With this consideration, we should then look at the scene of the decapitated statue of the king, illuminated by sunlight.

> The brief glow fell upon a huge sitting figure, still and solemn as the great stone kings of Argonath. The years had gnawed it, and violent hands had maimed it. Its head was gone, and in its place was set in mockery a round rough-hewn stone, rudely painted by savage hands in the likeness of a grinning face with one large red eye in the midst of its forehead... "Look, Sam!' he [Frodo] cried, startled into speech. `Look! The king has got a crown again!'. The eyes were hollow and the carven beard was broken, but about the high stern forehead there was a coronal of silver and gold.[34]

In juxtaposition to the dour scene of Galadriel's mirror, here, Tolkien paints a picture of spiritual nostalgia that is far brighter; in a sense, bittersweet. Once again, there is no hope in this scene: neither Frodo nor Sam expect this king's statue to be restored, or for the kings to be as great as they once were. But the "king has got a crown again" echoes rather a nostalgia for what was and will be again. While this statue marks a moment of historicity, the emotion Tolkien is describing, of the sunlight restoring a crown to its head, looks ahead to the restoration of the throne of Gondor and the return of the King. The description following Frodo's exclamation highlights the duality of this moment: the king's eyes "were hollow and the carven beard were broken," shows that this is not historical nostalgia; there is no returning to the past day of this king. But "about the high stern forehead there was a coronal of silver

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[34] Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of the Lord of the Rings*. Large Print Press, 2003., Ch. 7

and gold" suggests that there will be some kind of renewal. This scene does not promise a restoration of the past, but the "eu" in eucatastrophe: it promises the eternal ending that the characters desire, the destruction of the Ring and the defeat of Evil. Philosophically, it is the triumph of the True that spiritual nostalgia desires, and this scene captures it. For the statue has been decapitated by orcs, it has been scrawled over with graffiti, it has been broken, weeds grow over it: but still its True nature shines through, with its crown of flowers and the persistent sunlight's rays.

In the famous epithet given to King Arthur, we find a summation of this idea of spiritual nostalgia, as shown in this passage of *The Lord of the Rings:* "the once and future king." That is, spiritual nostalgia, while forward-looking, is not divorced from the past or the present. It was, it is, it will be. Conversely, hope is always futuristic, and either bears fruit or withers and dies. It is not "always" as spiritual nostalgia is until its alleged moment of completion, which Tolkien suggests will inevitably occur.

The most complete experience of spiritual nostalgia is that of Aragorn's character arc, as Tolkien takes him from the mere unfounded hopeful king (whom Tolkien names Elessar, "hope") to a king led by spiritual nostalgia. The crucial moment of decision that Tolkien gives his character is also in Lothlorien, which as a place, is infused with the idea of spiritual nostalgia. As it operates outside of the regular bounds of time, with an eternal people living in it, Tolkien points out how things move both faster and slower. The decay of Lothlorien is imminent, for when the Ring is destroyed, the Elves will all leave for the West and land will wither without them. But at the same time, spiritual nostalgia demands that the Elves support the quest of the Ring, because, Tolkien points out, there is something that overrules their hope for themselves: there is a nostalgia for Middle-earth as it was meant to be: a

spiritual nostalgia for what the destruction of the Ring entails. "[T]he elves' doom is partly brought about by their pathological nostalgia, which induces them to fight change in order to heal the earth's wounds and prevent its slow progress towards final destruction," writes Koch[35], astutely pointing to the inherence of nostalgia in the land of Lothlorien. Unlike most other depictions of nostalgia, such as in *Gone with the Wind,* where the land of Tara is an object of nostalgia, Lothlorien seems to radiate nostalgia in the very ground and air. However, Koch fails to differentiate between a mythological nostalgia that the Elves feel for their time amongst the Valar and the spiritual nostalgia of their promised return and the safety of Middle-earth. The Elves, contrary to what Koch suggests, are not "doomed" because of their fight to destroy the Ring: rather, they are saved by it. Tolkien is clear that Galadriel, once a rebellious elf, has only earned the right to sail into the West through her work to destroy the Ring. Just as Frodo's spiritual nostalgia demands he carry the ring, her spiritual nostalgia demands that she refuse it, and help Frodo. It may be said that spiritual nostalgia, insofar that it looks towards some kind of perfected time, requires a cleansing, or sanctification, of those involved in it.

It is in this land, where Tolkien seems to give each character their decisive moment that will inform how the rest of the novel plays out, that Aragorn is faced with the moniker of King of Gondor, a title that he has never fully accepted. Tolkien tells us that Galadriel presents him with the Evenstar jewel, the jewel worn by his beloved Arwen Undomiel, the daughter of Elrond. By accepting it, Aragorn accepts his role as the returning king (the once and future king, one could argue), a destiny

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[35] Koch, Anna Barbara. *Opus 4 | of Loss and Longing - Nostalgia, Utopian Vision, and the Pastoral in J.R.R. Tolkien's "the Lord of the Rings" and "the Hobbit,"* ubt.opus.hbz-nrw.de/frontdoor/index/index/year/2018/docId/828. Accessed 20 Aug. 2024., Section 6.1.1.1

that inextricably ties him to the spiritual nostalgia of the Ring quest. He can only fulfill his role if the quest is also fulfilled. All of his actions thus become infused with the idea of spiritual nostalgia and by the end of the first book, when the Fellowship breaks, Aragorn makes an ultimate decision, clearly guided not by hope (which would have led him back to Frodo and Sam and the hope of helping in that quest) but by spiritual nostalgia (leading him on to Gondor, where he feels he is called). One of the messages of Tolkien's work, therefore, is that unlike historical and mythological nostalgia, where one "nostalgia" unites a group of people, spiritual nostalgia is both universal (tying together many types of people, for the release of Middle-earth from the Ring) but also intimately personal, where each person's actions regarding this spiritual nostalgia are determined by their own purpose in what Tolkien might term the "Great Story."

NOSTALGIA AS A WHOLE

While this paper has focused on the distinctions between these three different types of nostalgia and attempted to differentiate their origins and influences, as well as demonstrate how they appear differently in literature and what effects they create in the stories, these are not three discrete emotions. Types of nostalgia often bleed into each other: there is historical nostalgia, but also moments of mythological nostalgia, present in *Gone with the Wind*; there is mythological, but also spiritual and historical nostalgia, present in *The Leopard*. And *The Lord of the Rings*, as previously discussed, perfectly encapsulates all three variations of nostalgia. Certainly, they all play different roles and are often based on the feelings of the authors themselves. Thus, in an effort to illuminate the specificity of

different novels' uses of nostalgia, this paper has erred on the side of creating clean lines of distinction: this is not often the case. However, it is certainly a useful tool in analyzing how nostalgia changes based on where its feelings are centered.

Nostalgia is a large emotion, with many sweeping implications, especially because it is visible in even the earliest forms of literature, beginning with the Bible, and stretching to the landmarks in modernist writing like *In Search of Lost Time*, in whose very title Proust seems to capture the essence of nostalgia, or *The Waste Land*, an example of spiritual nostalgia for a healed land; "Shall I at least set my lands in order?/These fragments I have shored against my ruins."[36] So, Eliot asks the question that all nostalgia-driven works ask. How do we put our lands in order? How do we find, or preserve, or await the Good, the Beautiful, and the True? If nostalgia is the keeper of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, as this essay attempted to argue, then what is one's proper relationship to nostalgia? In *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell illustrated how nostalgia can be taken out of its context and used as a destructive force. In the case of her character Scarlett O'Hara, it ruins her relationship with her family and society at large, and ends in her abandonment even by the other anti-nostalgia character, Rhett Butler. However, in the same novel, we see the inverse: how properly applied nostalgia can protect and reestablish the beautiful customs of old, as in the case of Melanie and Ashley Wilkes, who became the center of good society in Atlanta and who preserved the best of their customs. Lampedusa, in *The Leopard*, takes a different view. Rather than contrasting proper and improper nostalgic feelings, he looks at what happens when a person doesn't feel nostalgia at all. To do so, he pits the Prince (a deeply nostalgic character) against his nephew, Tancredi, who lacks the same vein of nostalgic feeling. We

[36] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land,* Section V

observe how this lack of nostalgia leads to the biggest mistake in Tancredi's life: his loveless and terrible marriage to Angelica, a woman of lowlier status than he, despite the Prince's warnings and admonitions. At least in Lampedusa's view, we see what occurs with a surrender of nostalgia, especially for the Good, the moral customs that have been upheld for generations: what happens is decay and dissent. Finally, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien explores how nostalgia can be both a good and bad motivating force for one's actions. With a specific focus on spiritual nostalgia, the scene at Galadriel's mirror exemplified how nostalgia provided the impetus for the characters to continue on the correct path– to follow the True quest they had been assigned, and not to become sidetracked by lesser quests that had not yet been realized. However, this paper also explored how Boromir's attempt to take the ring is a misguided type of spiritual nostalgia, where the promise of the eternity for Gondor that he desired, overruled the promise of Middle-Earth's freedom from the Ring and created a mis-hierarchy of nostalgias. When considered as both a tool and a weapon, nostalgia takes on an especially interesting meaning in literature, because the question continues to arise: is this nostalgia good? What is it serving to protect or promote?

This essay has argued that nostalgia is, despite its uses for wrong ends, is generally a good feeling and one that serves the best interest of both individuals and groups. While other pieces of literature might offer different conclusions, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Leopard*, and *The Lord of the Rings*, are all novels deeply rooted in forms of nostalgia and their importance in influencing the trajectories of societies. "The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the

human condition," writes Svetlana Boym.[37] All three modes of nostalgia operate in this fashion, but with different end goals in mind: still, the desire to "obliterate history" is present in all of them, whether that be an unwillingness to confront the loss of one's time and place, or the change of history overall. Literature is rife with the exploration of this topic and though the novels explored here are wonderful examples, they by no means encompass the entirety of the discussion of nostalgia's place and purpose in literature.

[37] Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia* Basic Books, 2001., Ch. XV

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