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John Ronald Reul Tolkien (1892-1973) was an Oxford trained philologist, professor (don) at Oxford, noted scholar, and author of high fantasy literature. His *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (*TLOR*) has sold over 150 million copies worldwide making it the second bestselling work of fiction of all time (“The Lord of the Rings,” 2014). His popularity has resurged, though it never really waned, with Peter Jackson’s big screen adaptation of Tolkien’s most famous work *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), also in trilogy form, winning multiple Oscar Awards, and grossing over 3 billion dollars worldwide (“The Lord of the Rings,” 2014). More recently, Jackson’s three part installments of the precursor to *TLOR*, *The Hobbit* (2012-2014), have also proved highly successful in movie format.

As has been long noticed by fans and critics alike, Tolkien’s works, *TLOR*, *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion* (his legendarium of Middle-earth or Arda), and other lesser known works like *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (*TATB*) are permeated with ecological themes and tropes. According to Morgan (2010), Tolkien’s ecology is “[grounded in a] creation-centered ethic of stewardship . . . that holds the potential to re-enchant the world” (p. 383). Further, Morgan (2010) also says, that “The story . . . possesses significant pedagogical potential, albeit implicit in nature” (pp. 383-384).

Obviously, at least to many, the Earth is in a state of ecological crisis. My dissertation investigates ecology through select high fantasy works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Specifically, I intend to address what can be construed by studying the enigmatic

character of Tom Bombadil, while giving due consideration to other characters who represent or are a party to ecological concerns.

This dissertation will prove that the study of Bombadil is a boon to ecological education in the forms of autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy by showing readers how the Earth should be treated and with regard to changing our current anthropocentric mindset to one that embraces a respect and reverence for nature; that is, biophilia.

J. R. R. TOLKIEN, ECOLOGY, AND EDUCATION

by

Thad A. Burkhart

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

To my Father and Mother, and my grandparents, Papa John and  
Granny, who taught me to love and respect nature.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by THAD A. BURKHART has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## PREFACE

My reasons for choosing this dissertation's subject matter stem from my love of nature, with its myriad species, the need to find a way to co-exist peacefully with them, and my love of J. R. R. Tolkien's fantasy works which have enthralled me since I first read them long ago in my adolescence.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Prolegomena**

John Ronald Reul Tolkien (1892-1973) was an Oxford trained philologist, professor (don) at Oxford, noted scholar, and author of high fantasy literature. His *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (*TJOR*) has sold over 150 million copies worldwide making it the second bestselling work of fiction of all time (“The Lord of the Rings,” 2014). His popularity has resurged, though it never really waned, with Peter Jackson’s big screen adaptation of Tolkien’s most famous work *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003), also in trilogy form, winning multiple Oscar Awards and grossing over 3 billion dollars worldwide (“The Lord of the Rings,” 2014). More recently, Jackson’s three part installments of the precursor to *TJOR*, *The Hobbit* (2012-2014), have also proved highly successful in movie format.

As has been long noticed by fans and critics alike, Tolkien’s works, *TJOR*, *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion* (his legendarium of Middle-earth or Arda), and other lesser known works like *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (*TATB*) are permeated with ecological themes and tropes. According to Morgan (2010), Tolkien’s ecology is “[grounded in a] creation-centered ethic of stewardship . . . that holds the potential to re-enchant the world” (p. 383). Further, Morgan (2010) also says, that “The story . . . possesses significant pedagogical potential, albeit implicit in nature” (pp. 383-384).

## **A Few Opening Words on Environmentalism**

The Abrahamic faiths, the prevailing religions of humanity, initiate a discussion of the environment. All three religions revere what Christians call the Old Testament of the Bible. A well-known story in its book of *Genesis* is that of Noah and the Great Deluge. Towards the end of the story about the re-creation of the Earth is the famous, or infamous, Noadic Covenant:

God blesses Noah and his sons, and says to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the Earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you all the green plants, I give you everything.’ (*Genesis* 9:1-3)

However, despite hegemony over the Earth and its minions given to humanity by God, there is no set of instructions as to how humankind should treat the planet and all its creatures beyond not consuming other human beings. This lack of directives or environmental ethics can metaphorically be considered to be the root of the Earth’s burgeoning ecological crisis since it can be argued that it is the religious origin of humanity’s anthropocentric mindset, which as will be shown later, is so detrimental to the planet.

Moving forward a few millennia, if the flood story of *Genesis* is believed, the modern environmental movement began. Since at least the Romantic Period, going through the American Transcendentalist Period of the likes of Emerson and Thoreau, and more recently in the Post-World War II Era, modern environmentalism has been spurred forward by authors such as Aldo Leopold who wrote *Sand County Almanac* (1949) and

Rachel Carson who wrote *Silent Spring* (1962). The modern environmental movement has burgeoned and questioned/prottested humans' domination over the natural world and mistreatment of it. Ecologists such as David Orr (2011) have noted that the Earth is entering (or has entered) a state of possibly irreversible environmental decline caused by the abuse of the natural world by humanity. According to environmental authors such as Orr (2011), Manes (1990), Shiva (2005), Wilson (1992), Bowers (2013), Kahn (2010), Naess (1973), and others, the depleted, dying Earth, and its loss of species are the most pertinent problems facing humanity in the twenty-first century.

To risk choosing an exact date for the start of the modern environmental movement, the first Earth Day seems plausible. According to the Earth Day Network website (n.d.), the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, when over 20 million Americans gathered in the streets to protest the abuse of the planet and to celebrate it in all its diverse, unique wonder. Since then it has grown in scope and number of participants. Currently, it is celebrated in over 190 nations and by hundreds of millions of people from vastly different heritages (Earth Day Network, n.d.).

Earth Day was born from the radicalization of America's youth during the tumultuous 1960s. These youth protested against American society's manifold ills such as: American involvement in an undeclared war in Southeast Asia, issues of civil rights for minorities, the looming threat of global nuclear holocaust, repressive and corrupt government, oppressive capitalism, and an older status quo that was out of touch with the Baby Boom Generation.

Historically, starting with the rise of the Industrial Age in Western Europe and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, the environment began to suffer as never before from industries' rapacious demand for raw materials, unchecked pollution, and the unquenchable demands of imperial expansion, modernization, and consumerism. By the late 1960s, the roads of industrialized nations were glutted with large gas-guzzling automobiles spewing such toxins as carbon monoxide into the atmosphere, factories choking the air with even more toxins and pouring poisons into the ground and water, pesticides and herbicides both noxious to their quarry and man were slathered on the greenery, and recycling was almost unheard of or at least unpracticed. Despite warnings of dire environmental and human consequences as espoused by Rachel Carson in her *New York Times* 1962 bestseller *Silent Spring*, not much heed was being paid to this looming catastrophe (Earth Day Network, n.d.). This myopic apathy changed when the aforementioned disgruntled American youth and others mostly in First World Nations began shifting their concerns singularly from social ills to include those bringing ruin to the planet. This mass shift in consciousness caught the attention of then United States Senator Gaylord Nelson who incidentally had been horrified by the 1969 environmental catastrophe caused by an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Senator Nelson, with bipartisan assistance, assigned Denis Hayes to chair a national "teach in" about the environment (Earth Day Network, n.d.). As a result, Earth Day was born and has been growing in popularity ever since.

Since the advent of Earth Day, many positive measures have been taken in the United States and elsewhere to rectify environmental problems such as: the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and similar governmental entities in other nations such as the United Kingdom and Germany, global enactment of numerous anti-pollution laws as embodied by the 1998 Kyoto Accords, endangered species acts, compulsory recycling, emission controls and more efficient automobiles, and most importantly, both formal and informal education about the necessity of environmental sustainability, and changing the dominant worldview from one that is anthropocentric to one that respects the environment and other species. Despite all these positive measures, many such as Orr (2011) contend that humanity has gone too far with its killing of the planet or has far to go before engaging in true conservation. It needs to begin with a sincere global change away from our dominant anthropocentric mindset to one that holds reverence for all life in all its wondrous forms, and the realization that all life is bound up in a great web of being.

These issues of Earth's health affect all of humanity since we have yet to yield to Stephen Hawking's advice to colonize another world. According to West (2006), a *Time Magazine* poll of that year found that 85% of Americans believe in global warming, and, hence, believe in an environmental problem at some level (though more recent surveys find this contestable). Further, De Graaf, Wann, and Naylor in the second edition of *Affluenza* (2005) offer some alarming statistics that point to an ecological crisis. Several of the more shocking are listed below for evidence from De Graaf, Wann, and Naylor (2005):

- According to a United Nations' environmental program, Americans spend more for trash bags than 90 of the world's 210 countries spend on everything.
- In a lifetime, each American uses, directly or indirectly, 40 million gallons of fresh water.
- It takes 150,000 direct mail appeals to produce 1,500 memberships to an organization, meaning 148,500 will be discarded.
- 50 million animals are killed annually in America by automobiles.
- Biologists surveyed by the Museum of Natural History in New York say we have entered the fastest mass extinction of species in the planet's history.
- The World Conservation Union in 2000 reported that the Earth is losing species a thousand times faster than the normal rate of extinction.

These statistics are only from one source. However, one can "Google" on the Internet and acquire easily equally dismal findings about the Earth's state. One of the most horrifying is found in Yeager's (2010) article "Ten Shocking Facts about the World" which states that according to Global Issues.org it would take 13 billion dollars to provide decent sanitation and food to all the impoverished people on the planet, and that amount is approximately what the United States and Europe spend on cologne annually. There is something deathly amiss, which will be discussed in the section on capitalism, with nations that will allow others to live in filth, disease, and starve, so they can smell nice.

## **The Problem with Capitalism**

According to *Bing Dictionary Online* (2014), capitalism is defined as a free market system; an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, and it is characterized by an unfettered competitive market motivated by profit.

Capitalism arose as the primary global economic system at the beginning of the Early Modern Period, and it has been solidified into its dominant position by the rise of the Industrial Age in Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. Despite serious opposition from Marxist nations such as the former Soviet Union and China in the twentieth-century, it has endured, overcome its competition, and proliferated. Its proverbial “Bible” is Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). This supposedly erudite Scotsman advocated a free market economy ruled by competition and left it to manage itself devoid of government interference.

A more recent and cynical interpretation of capitalism is that it is a violent system of domination and repression in which a relative few are empowered and driven by avarice at the expense of others and the environment. Power in this account follows Giroux (2006) and other social critics who concur that it is “defined and examined primarily in the terms of its function to mediate and legitimate the relations of dominance and subordination in the economic sphere” (p. 8). Others such as Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci expand and clarify hegemony as referring not only to the process of a plutocratic ruling class exercising control through “its intellectual and moral leadership over allied classes” but also as “the dual use of force and ideology [both of which can be



construed as forms of violence] to reproduce societal relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups” (Gramsci cited in Giroux, 2006, p. 20). According to Eisler (2007), “in the *domination system* [sic] there are only two alternatives for relations: dominating or being dominated” (p. 30). In this domination system, in order for the hegemony to retain power, “caring and empathy have to be suppressed and devalued” which in its suppression itself is a violent act (Eisler, 2007, p. 30). Paulo Freire has reminded us in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998) that:

The historical, political, social, and cultural experience of men and women can never be acquired outside of the conflict between those forces that are dedicated to the prevention of the self-assumption on the part of individuals and groups and those forces that work in favor of such assumptions (p. 46).

Power applies to the economic experiences of mankind too.

De Graff, Wann, and Naylor’s *Affluenza* (2005) provides humorous yet frightening examples of the excesses of capitalism, and they hammer home about how great the divide is between the dominating and dominated or rich and poor. For example, in 2000 top companies’ CEOs earned 475 times what their wage workers were earning (De Graff, Wann, and Naylor, 2005). Even after the financial downturn, or Great Recession, that began in 2008 and afforded so much media attention to income disparity, the gap between the uber-rich and the blue collar class did not change very much in America. Liberto (2011), a writer for *CNN Money*, has reported that the average CEO earns 343 times more than typical workers. What is horribly alarming, especially after 2012 American presidential hopeful Mitt Romney’s gaffe deriding America’s poor during a September 2012 campaign fundraising dinner only affordable by the monied elite, are

statistics verifying how rampant poverty is in a society as affluent as the United States. For example, even a politically conservative media outlet, *The American Thinker*, on September 24, 2012, re-ran an article by Chad Stafko (2011) attacking President Obama's economic policies stating that 47% of Americans are on some sort of government aid and 21 million rely solely on food stamps to buy sustenance.

Shapiro (2006) has said this of capitalism:

At the core of capitalism is the belief in the unfettered freedom of individuals, or corporate businesses that are treated as if they are individuals, to use their skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial acumen to gain as much profit as they possibly can (p. 145).

An extreme, but still not unique, example of the vicious excesses of capitalism at the corporate and national levels is not historically unfounded. In the Neo-Colonial Period's Opium Wars between colonial power Great Britain and Imperial China, the British government heavily pressured by the British East India Trading Company engaged in three successive wars with sovereign China to protect the Company's opium markets and growing control in China.

Capitalism as a system of oppressive domination is not limited to individuals or corporations, nor is it an occurrence unique to modern history. Though it is not monolithic, it has dominated our world economic systems for hundreds of years being victorious over failed alternative economic systems such as Marx-Leninism in places like the former U. S. S. R., and only dregs of it remain in places like Cuba, North Korea, and China which is changing over to a more capitalistic oriented system. It obviously infects governments influenced heavily by powerful individuals and businesses (see above). In

the ancient world, proto-capitalist Republican Rome engaged in three wars with economic rival Carthage that were so devastating to Carthage that the phrase “Carthaginian peace” remains in modern usage. Even those nations championing enlightened, liberal, democratic practices have been diseased by the excesses of capitalism too. The United States under the Reagan Administration (1981-1989) engaged in undeclared wars against sovereign nations in Central America allegedly to prevent “godless communists” hell bent on destroying the American way of life from swarming up the isthmus and invading the United States. The reality was that these wars were fought to protect long standing American economic interests in the area that had grown from mere corporate interests into unshakable American foreign policy. Further, the administrations of both the Bush presidents engaged in wars against Iraq largely to protect American oil reserves and according to Lerner (2006) to open up new markets for American arms manufacturers with deep ties to the American government exemplified by then Vice President Dick Cheney’s affiliation with Halliburton.

Countless wars have been fought so that the hegemons can retain their positions which involve control over scarce commodities and markets from which they derive their profits and in turn from which they derive their prevailing top social status. Of course, the antithesis of this holds true as well. Those who have been victimized have taken up arms against their oppressors, as history exemplifies well in the revolt of the colonists in the American Revolution and of the Third Estate in the French Revolution. Therefore, capitalism and its inherent violence are integral to understanding most human conflicts both ancient and modern.

It is self-evident that capitalism has its flaws with its rapacious greed at the expense of others and the environment. Many theorists have offered alternatives to capitalism or the next stages to it, notably Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto*. However, it is not in the scope of this dissertation to weigh at any length alternative theories to capitalism or their successes and failures in real world application. It is only in the scope of this paper to show in brief its major flaw, the unrelenting pursuit of avarice, and briefly address its impact upon the hegemons, the dominated, and the Earth.

#### **A Few Words on Deep Ecology, Caring for the Earth, and Fellow Humankind**

Ecosophy is a philosophy pioneered by the late Norwegian scholar Arne Naess who taught philosophy at Oslo University from 1939 to 1969 that grew into the Deep Ecology Movement (Law, 2007). His philosophy grew from his dissatisfaction with mainstream ecological movements which he felt were trivial in that they only addressed the symptoms of environmental problems and not the larger institutional and philosophical causes such as an anthropocentric weltanschauung (Luke, 2002). Naess (1973) published his theories in a popular article entitled “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movements: A Summary.” To ameliorate this deeper problem, Naess (1973) called for “biospherical egalitarianism” to create “an awareness of the equal right to live and blossom” and a “philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium” (p. 100).

The Deep Ecology Movement blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s with its main theoreticians being Warwick Fox, Bill Devall, and George Sessions (Luke, 2002). Devall and Sessions wrote *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1985) which expands upon the problem of an anthropocentric world view and domination of the Earth and its minions by humanity:

Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic industrial societies which regard humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But the view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of Nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, Western culture has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of dominance: with dominance of humans over nonhuman Nature; masculine over feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor, with the domination of the West over non-Western cultures. Deep ecological consciousness allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions. (pp. 65-66)

Their complaints have obvious links to the excesses of fiercely domineering capitalism to nature, exploitation of the poor, Western hegemony over non-Western societies, and gender and racial inequalities. Further, Deep Ecology is purported to have had profound influence upon such environmental groups as Earth First!, Greenpeace, the Sea Sheppards, and various Green political parties around the globe (Luke, 2002).

Central to discussing an environmental ethic is seguing between the myriad issues of environmentalism caused by capitalism to the healing ethos of such movements as Deep Ecology with its Gandhian/Jain reverence and respect for all life. Deep Ecology reveres all life as being equal and should be treated as being worthy of existence for its own sake without regard to its utility to humanity. Gandhian/Jain tenets center around the notion of “ahimsa,” originally a Hindu term meaning non-violence to all living things.

According to this concept, all living things have a spark of divinity in them stemming from creation and to injure them is to commit a sin, as well as to injure one's self.

As has been briefly addressed, the environmental crisis was long in coming through the control of finite resources and markets by economic hegemony over the dominated masses, or in Marxist terms the bourgeoisie's control and often historically violent subjugation of the proletariat. Prime examples of this viciousness from American history are embodied by the Haymarket Riots, the Pullman Car Strike, and the Homestead Steel Strike of the late nineteenth-century. In all three examples, the dominated masses were ruthlessly and violently attended to by corporate leadership and complicit government individuals and agencies.

Regardless of the terminology, little empathy or caring for the politically weaker and economically poorer has ever been shown by those in control, excepting generally trite gestures towards egalitarianism driven by moral conundrum or religious influence by weakly embracing the virtue of charity. For example, the wealthy often donate unwanted clothing to Goodwill or some affluent Christians tithe to their respective churches (but in return they get breaks on their income taxes). And, until recently in human history at least among industrialized nations, even less concern has been given towards other species, both plant and animal, with which we co-inhabit the Earth because they are considered but a means to continue the existing control by the economic elite.

As the late Paulo Freire has so eruditely pointed out in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998), this capitalist status quo that promotes human inequality and violence, and the

related sin of environmental devastation to promulgate economic and social dominance does not have to be:

Mass hunger and unemployment, side by side, with opulence, are not the result of destiny, as some reactionary circles would have us believe, claiming that people suffer because they can do nothing about the situation. The question here is not 'destiny.' It is immorality . . . . The advance of science or technology cannot legitimate 'class' and call it order so that a minority who holds power may use and squander the fruits of the Earth while the vast majority are hard pressed even to survive and often justify their own misery as the will of God. (p. 93)

Before an environmental ethos can become viable, humanity must first realize that domination and the destruction of the environment is inextricably intertwined with human power relations in the form of socio-economic structures of domination.

Next, humanity has to realize the necessity of a less violent, less dominating, and reverential approach to nature as embodied the ecosophy of Naess, Devall, Sessions, and other like-minded individuals and groups (Luke, 2002). Their Deep Ecology sweeps away the violent Noadic and anthropocentric weltanschauung towards the Earth and the living creatures, both flora and fauna, with whom we share the planet and to whom our human-centeredness has proven to be so detrimental by allowing us to believe that the rest of nature is ours for the taking. With Deep Ecology, and similar life-embracing philosophies, all life becomes sacred, and a hierarchy of worth is reduced if not eradicated (Luke, 2002). The aloe of plant life and the blood of animals become as holy as the blood of humans: "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed" (*Genesis* 9:6) is transformed to being applicable to every living thing, for in a sense all life is created in God's image and God is in everything. The

Gnostic, non-canonical *Book of Thomas*, which is regarded by some biblical scholars such as Bart Ehrman as the text closest to containing what Jesus actually said, states, “From me did all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Spilt a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up a stone, and you will find me there” (Jesus cited in Ehrman, 2003, p. 64). To see and embrace the organic connection between all life, and how it is intertwined in a complex web of biodiversity is what it means to have an environmental ethos. As Shapiro (2006) has observed, allowing the prevalent attitude toward the environment to go unchecked would mean “the destruction of our natural home, the Earth, as it is irresponsibly plundered for profit and the culture of unrestricted consumption” (p. 204).

The Principles of Deep Ecology are as follows, and they are paraphrased in form (Naess; Devall and Sessions cited in Luke, 2002):

- The well-being of human and non-human life has values unto themselves and those values are independent of the utilitarianism of the non-human world for human interests.
- The richness and diversity of life contribute to these values.
- Humans have no right to reduce this richness to satisfy their own needs.
- The flourishing of human life is based on a need for the decrease in the human population.
- Human interference with non-human life is worsening.
- Policies must be changed that affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures of human society.



- Ideological change is mainly centered on the need of appreciating life quality rather than increasing standards of living.
- Those who subscribe to these points have an obligation to change these things.

That being said, let us move forward to a survey of the literature utilized in this dissertation.

### **Literature Review**

The following is a brief survey and review of the literature. This Literature Review is divided into several sections: Primary Sources from Tolkien, Secondary Sources from Tolkien, Environmental works, and Educational works.

#### **Primary Tolkien Sources**

The primary sources from Tolkien that I use in my dissertation are as follows: *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1994 edition),<sup>1</sup> *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (1994 edition), *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1990 edition), the posthumously published work *The Silmarillion* (1999 edition), Tolkien and Carpenter's (Ed.) *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981), and Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" (2004).

In précis, *TLOR* (1994) is the epic tale of the War of the Ring of Power at the end of the Third Age of Arda (Middle-earth) fictionally drawn from *The Red Book of Westmarch* written by Hobbits Bilbo and Frodo Baggins (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). It is the Manichean story, in the form of three books, of the forces of good (comprised by various races such as Hobbits, Men, Wizards, Elves, Ents, Dwarves,

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<sup>1</sup> When applicable for clarification purposes, specific books of Tolkien's high fantasy works will be mentioned in citations.

Eagles and others) pitted against the forces of evil (Sauron the evil Maiar, Saruman, Orcs, Goblins, evil Men, demons, the genetically-engineered Uruk-Hai, and monstrous creatures like Trolls). Plot-wise, a Hobbit, Frodo Baggins, inherits an enigmatic ring from his uncle, Bilbo. Upon discovery by the wizard Gandalf that it is the evil One Ring of Power, Frodo with the aid of many others, notably his faithful servant Sam Gamgee, set out on a quest to destroy the Ring in the volcanic fires of Mount Doom in Sauron's bleak and ruined fortress land of Mordor before it can be recaptured by its creator Sauron and used by him to dominate Middle-earth under a shadow of darkness. Only in the first book of the trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1994), does the character Tom Bombadil make an appearance or is referred to by others. Bombadil is central to this dissertation because he provides an example for others to follow of how the environment should be treated; that is, it should be cared for, respected, and revered for its own sake and not exploited for the benefit of humankind.

*The Hobbit* (1994) is the precursor to *TLOR* allegedly and fictionally written by its protagonist the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins. Bilbo, a complacent and somewhat neurotic homebody (possibly a thinly veiled allusion to a stereo-typical Englishman), has his underground home invaded by Dwarves. After they eat him out of house and home, the wizard Gandalf the Grey arrives and convinces Bilbo to go questing for the treasure of the malevolent dragon Smaug which he stole from the Dwarf people, and who has decimated a far off land around the Long Lake. Tolkien calls this area the Desolation of Smaug (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 1994). In the course of their adventures, Bilbo becomes lost in a gloomy cave inhabited by the strange, duplicitous but pitiful creature Gollum who

possesses the One Ring of Power (his “precious”) which was found by accident and acquired by him through murder and with which he spends his days gloating. Bilbo wins the Ring from Gollum via a game of chance not knowing the power it holds. After this, the band’s adventure continues culminating with the killing of Smaug, the taking of his massive hoard of treasure, and a near calamitous battle between five armies. This work is important for this dissertation’s purpose because it sets the stage for the War of the Ring in which Tom Bombadil appears.

Tolkien’s *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1990 edition) is a short collection of generally light poems about the character Tom Bombadil and/or other related tales relevant to understanding such problems as greed and domination of others. According to Tolkien’s legendarium, the poems are also from *The Red Book of Westmarch* (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). They are diverse in scope, not unified by theme, but they do provide insight into Bombadil’s demeanor and his relationship with nature, both flora and fauna. The opening poem provides a good physical description of him:

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow;  
Bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow,  
Green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;  
He wore in his tall hat a swan-wing feather.  
He lived up under Hill, where the Withywindle  
Ran from a grassy well down into the dingle. (Tolkien, 1990, p. 1)

Next of Tolkien’s works to be considered is his posthumously published work *The Silmarillion* (1999). This highly complex book is his complete legendarium of Middle-earth including pre-creation from the Void, through the creation of Arda by the Valar (high angels) of Ilúvatar (God), and to the end of the Third Age in which *The Hobbit* and

*TLOR* is set. It is a fascinating look into the mind of Tolkien and his genius. Further, it has a very useful index of character names, places, creatures, and even offers a translation of terms from Quenya and Sindarin (Tolkien's highly developed Elven languages that he has used extensively in his fantasy) into English (Tolkien, 1999). It is an essential work to understand the intricacies of Tolkien's *TLOR*.

The next primary source to be considered is *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981). This is a diverse work in subject matter via a collection of Tolkien's correspondence to various people. Of greatest importance for this dissertation's purposes are the letters that mention Bombadil, Tolkien's views on ecological concerns, matters of his sources, and motivations. It provides a direct link to his thoughts to matters in this dissertation.

Finally, there is Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" (2004 edition). This essay is derived from his Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of Saint Andrews given on March 8, 1939 (Thomas, 2007). In this speech/essay Tolkien discusses three main subjects: First, what are fairy stories? Second, what is their origin? Third, and of greatest importance for the purposes of part of my dissertation, what is their purpose and/or value? (Thomas, 2007). The third question will be discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter.

### **Secondary Sources on Tolkien and his High Fantasy**

Dickerson and Evan's *Ents, Elves, and Eriador* (2006) is a pioneering work in Tolkien Studies because it is the first full-length tome devoted specifically to Tolkien and his environmental themes, and it utilizes an ecocritical methodology. Ecocriticism is the study of literary works using the methods of source criticism and from the perspective of environmental concerns. It will be discussed in more detail later. Their thesis is that

Tolkien's environmental ethos is rooted in his profound Catholicism. He was a proto-environmentalist. His Catholicism is not at odds with nature, as some claim all Abrahamic faiths are; and, in fact, "This tradition sees the necessity of the right relationship between the Creator and humankind and between humankind and the rest of creation" (Dickerson and Evans, 2006, p. xxii). Like Dickerson and Evan's work, Campbell's *The Ecological Augury in the Works of J. R. R. Tolkien* (2011) investigates Tolkien's ecological themes and tropes from an ecocritical standpoint. It has a very good discussion of Tom Bombadil that contrasts him with his direct opposite, the power-corrupted Wizard and secondary antagonist Saruman the White (a.k.a. Sharkey).

Next is Veldman's *Fantasy, the Bomb, and the Greening of Britain* (1994) which provides biographical information about Tolkien, studies his motivation for engaging in high fantasy writing (which was, in précis, to create a mythology for the English since he was of the opinion the existent myths and legends were to inadequate and/or to influenced by other traditions), and he discusses the sources that Tolkien drew from to create his Middle-earth.

Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth* (1983) and his *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (2001) also have excellent discussions about Tolkien's sources and influences. He has utilized and pioneered the application of source criticism to Tolkien Studies (Fisher, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to note that Tolkien abhorred the application of source criticism to his works of high fantasy, though he used it in his own scholarly pursuits. He has written,

Similar to Veldman and Carpenter is Morgan's "*The Lord of the Rings---A Mythos Applicable in Unsustainable Times?*" (2010). Morgan (2010) provides much biographical and source data about Tolkien.

Following the topics examined in Veldman and Morgan is Curry's *Defending Middle-earth* (1997). However, this work concentrates heavily on the significance of characters and places in Tolkien's fantasy literature, and it has been written from a postmodern angle. Of postmodernity, and harkening to Berman (1981), Bauman (1992) has said the following:

[Postmodernity] can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a re-enchantment of the world that modernity had tried hard to disenchant . . . it is against such as the disenchant world that postmodern re-enchantment is aimed. (pp. x-xi)<sup>3</sup>

An anthological work which is singularly devoted to source criticism is Fisher's (Ed.) *Tolkien and the Study of his Sources* (2011). Essays in the collection such as Fisher's "Preface," Shippey's "Introduction: Why Source Criticism?," Ridsen's "Source Criticism: Background and Application," and Fisher's "Tolkien and Source Criticism," offer explanations about the benefits of applying source criticism to Tolkien and/or

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I remain puzzled, and indeed sometimes irritated, by many of the guesses at the 'sources' of the nomenclature, and theories or fancies concerning hidden meanings. These seem to me no more than private amusements, and as such I have no right or power to object to them, though they are, I think, valueless for the elucidation or interpretation of my fiction. (Tolkien, 1981, pp. 379-380)

However, that being said, it does not make source criticism any less useful a tool for scholarly investigations of his fantasy works.

<sup>3</sup> I will discuss this notion of re-enchantment in some detail in a later chapter.

provide divergent, scholarly opinions about the sources Tolkien used (or may have used) to create his mythopoeia.

The next secondary source on Tolkien is Drout's (Ed.) *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* (2007). This tome is not hemmed together neatly by theme except, of course, all of it is relevant to Tolkien Studies. Its contributing authors are all well-respected Tolkien scholars. Many articles are of special importance to my study, and whose subject matter is explained by their pithy titles such as Hargrove's "Tom Bombadil," and Curry's article "Nature." Other articles from Drout (2007) that bear relevance on various sub-genres of Tolkien Studies are as follows: Kreglinger's "George MacDonald," Nagy's "Fictionality," Thomas's "On Fairy Stoires," Evan's "Dragons," Jellema's "Auden: W. H. Influence of Tolkien," Stanton's "Wizards," Curry's "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism," and Fry's "Oxford." The same lack of a binding theme applies for Chance and Siewer's (Eds.) *Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages* (2005), generally speaking. However, one essay in the compilation is Siewer's "Tolkien's Cosmic-Christian Ecology" that is akin to Dickerson and Evans (2006), Campbell (2011), and Veldman (1994) in that it utilizes ecocriticism and discusses his Catholicism as pertains to environmental concerns. Siewers (2005) has stated:

Tolkien's major work stands out for its ability to engage people of all political and religious stripes with its anti-modernist and essentially 'Green' environmental perspective . . . . [His works] impacting a mass audience with an ecological message of valuing life above global consumerism. (p. 140)

Finally, there is Carpenter's definitive biography, *Tolkien: A Biography* (1977), which singularly studies Tolkien's life and is an invaluable source for details about him.

It is in its own category due to its importance as the most respected source for material about Tolkien, especially his bildungsroman.

### **Environmental Sources**

Several well-known authors' works bear brunt on my research. The first is Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). This highly popular work that was once on the *New York Times* bestseller list is considered by many to be ground-breaking for the modern environmental movement. In it, Carson exposes the hazards of chemicals and pesticides to man, flora, and fauna. Another well-known and pioneering work is Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* (1949) which laments the destruction of the ecosystems around his beloved Wisconsin farm, and he extends a "land ethic" to ameliorate such degradation:

A land ethic, then reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity. (p. 221)

Less-known in the popular media, but exceptional in nature, is the work of David Orr. In his work, *Hope is an Imperative* (2011), Orr, like Carson and Leopold, calls for environmental conservation, but he includes problems discovered more recently such as global warming. In his series of essays on various ecological issues, he pleads for increased and effective ecoliteracy and ecological design if it is still possible to avert an environmental meltdown (Orr, 2011).

Manes's *Green Rage* (1990) is almost in a category of its own. It is a sympathetic historical investigation of Earth First! and other radical environmental groups. Manes's sympathy for radical environmental groups is similar to Kahn's (2010), which will be



discussed later. Manes (1990) advocates a Deep Ecology akin to Arno Naess's (1973) "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movements" and Devall and Sessions (1985) *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, which have been discussed earlier. Manes, however, with a bit of neo-Luddite disdain for modernity, approves of the use of ecotage (use of sabotage to disrupt ecologically pernicious practices).

Manes's extremism, as some neo-conservatives may think of it, is countered by Shiva's more coolly written, but no less effective, *Earth Democracy* (2005). Shiva (2005) discusses the problems caused by globalization and cultural/economic imperialism of the North (Western Europe and America) over the South (mostly developing nations located on or near the Southern Hemisphere). He points out the brutality of this economic and social colonization of the South, "biopiracy," or the stealing of natural resources from developing nations by multi-national corporations and Northern governments, and extols the virtues of indigenous sustainable practices (Shiva, 2005, p. 146). As with other authors, Shiva (2005) believes the key to ending such pernicious practices is education, especially cultural education and ecoliteracy, and a move away from anthropocentrism.

Next is Wilson's *The Diversity of Life* (1992). This work is more scientific in its scope and nature. However, like all other sources utilized in this dissertation mention or imply, he has noted humanity is causing severe environmental disruptions via its abuse of nature. In fact, he has noted that we are moving into the Sixth Great Extinction on our planet due to the rapid loss of species (Wilson, 1992).

Finally, among the major environmental sources is Taylor's *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (1986). In his work, Taylor argues that we need to move

from our current anthropocentric mindset to one more akin to the ecosophy of Naess, and value nature for itself and not its utility.

### **Educational Sources**

First, though not an educational source per se, is Morris Berman's *The Re-enchantment of the World* (1981) which deals with the loss and recovery of the fantastic on a metaphysical level to resuscitate a sense of magic or awe in the world which has been lost to science but can be regained by reading fantasy literature such as works by Tolkien. Freeman (2009) in "The Uses of Re-enchantment" continues in this vein of literature as a means for social change. Specifically, he addresses the power of re-infusing the world with the "magic" of literature while castigating cold science, as started in the Scientific Revolution by Descartes with his subject/object dichotomy and Bacon's "natura vexata" (Freeman, 2009). Also in this vein is Cart's (2007) article "The Impossibility of the Impossible" which also deals with fantasy and re-enchantment of the world.

Three other works that do not fit neatly into this Education section are De Graff, Wann, and Naylor's *Affluenza* (2005), Eisler's *The Real Wealth of Nations* (2007), and Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973). De Graff, Wann, and Naylor's (2005) work is somewhat of a laundry list of the excesses of capitalism and ensuing environmental abuse, while Eisler's (2007) work claims most of the world's ills are the result of capitalism and that there needs to be a reformulation of the system to create a more caring economics. Williams (1973) on the divergent life ways of the rural and the cosmopolitan lifestyles brings insight in to the diverse views on these two locales, and through

analyzing his work, much can be applied to Tolkien's perspective on them and related topics.

In a more traditional educational vein is the late Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998) which extends his earlier works and calls for more and better education, ethics for both humankind and the world, and an extension of democracy. bell hooks's *All About Love* (2000) is a discourse about expanding the notion of love from a feminist perspective.

Kahn's work *Critical Pedagogy, Ecoliteracy, and Planetary Crisis* (2010) bears heavily in my work. He calls for the need for ecoliteracy and ecopedagogy to deconstruct environmentally detrimental practices and attitudes towards nature, globalization, anthropocentrism, and a lack of sustainable practices, but in a severe and drastic manner. Kahn's radicalism segues into Bower's *In the Grip of the Past* (2013) which also critiques ecologically destructive practices blaming market liberals, an anthropocentric mindset, over-reliance on technological media that alienates people among its many problems, globalization, and lack of respect among the Western hegemony for non-Western cultures, especially their traditional environmental knowledge. In his work, he also calls for more and better environmental education. This leads to Li's (2006) article "Re-thinking Terrestrial Pedagogy: Nature, Cultures, and Ethics" in which she has noted that all ecological problems are social problems. We need to examine conflicting cultural and ethical ideas about the environment, and all education, both formal and informal, in transforming education into true environmental education.

Other authors such as Bonnet (2003) and Smith (2008) in their respective works on the environment and education also call for reform in environmental education and a move away from the dominant mindset to an ecocentric philosophy. Colwell (1985) investigates the ecology of famous pedagogue John Dewey and his stance against anthropocentrism.

Gardner's *Intelligence Reframed* (1999) is also a valuable source. His expansion of his theory of multiple intelligences is integral to understanding the protagonist of this dissertation, Tom Bombadil. Likewise, Wong's "Beyond Control and Rationality" (2007) is utilitarian, among other things, in explaining what it means to be educative.

## **Methodology**

The methodology I employ in my dissertation is essentially source/textual criticism with a particular philosophical bent. Generally, I intend to take a philosophical approach underpinned by Naess's Deep Ecology (a. k. a. biocentrism) as has been discussed earlier. This is a non-hierarchical, reverential approach to all life forms. Deep Ecology seeks to replace the current anthropocentric mindset with biocentrism or ecocentrism (Manes, 1990)<sup>4</sup>. It harkens back to a pre-industrial human sentiment toward our relationship with nature. Similar to Leopold's (1949) notion of "land ethic," it advocates letting nature live for its own sake, and its utility to humans should not be a question in evaluating its worth. This links it to both the writings of Heidegger and

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<sup>4</sup> Both Bonnet (2003) and Taylor (1986) have pointed out that with biocentrism there is no great divide between human and nature. There are no privileged species. We are morally linked to nature through the "Gaia hypothesis" (Bonnet, 2003, p. 660). The Earth is a living organism with global feedback mechanisms to create life's conditions, and it is this that comes to constitute the primary object of morality (Bonnet, 2003).

Foucault. It is Heideggerian in that it recognizes humans reduced the world to an object allegedly beneath them and to something utilitarian. Further, its Heideggerian aspects embrace the notion that there is nothing more to our current anthropocentric mindset than a superficial way of understanding nature as exemplified by the way we treat it to satisfy our own needs; we fail to see nature's intrinsic value. Deep Ecology rejects this exploitative, shallow understanding of nature (Manes, 1990). It is Foucaultian in that it rejects humans' privileged status and claims that humanism is not the pinnacle of human achievement; it is just another way of enforcing institutional power over nature (Manes, 1990).

Deep Ecology has been called a New Age fad (Manes, 1990). However, it is not New Age because New Age still presents humans as superior to all other life forms. Nor does it place animal rights on a pedestal because animal rights only gives value to sentient beings (like animals) and not flora (Manes, 1990). It brings human relations with nature more in step with Naess's idea of the "ecological self" where "Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in constitutive relations" (Seed, Macy, Fleming and Naess, 1988, p. 20). These relations are not only associations we have with humans and the human community, but with the "larger community of all living beings" (Seed, Macy, Fleming and Naess, 1988, p. 20). Its *weltanschauung* is that of the *Isho Upanishad*:

The universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefits of [all] creation. Each individual life form must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not one species encroach upon others' rights. (*Isho Upanishad* cited in Shiva, 2005, p. 116)

As with most studies to varying degrees, I will employ source criticism; that is, I will give due attention to the works that influenced Tolkien and his creation of Middle-earth via a methodology that combines elements of historicism, biographical criticism, textual criticism, critical pedagogy, and philology, but with a concern for the environment to evaluate their utility towards lessening the environmental crisis that stems from Naessian philosophy that propagates life (Naess, 1973; Ridsen, 2011; Morgan, 2010). Source criticism, with all of its influences, is especially valuable as a methodological tool because of the strength it draws from other forms of critical inquiry. Ridsen (2011) says of it:

Documenting sources provides readers with a powerful tool to gain insight into authors, how they thought and worked, and to use in interpretation of texts, so we may find, enjoy and appreciate, and teach better and fuller . . . readings (p. 24).

In regard to Tolkien and source criticism specifically, Ridsen (2011) has said:

Many of those methods have significant implications for Tolkien criticism, though the chief sources for Tolkien's work lie *in his own work* [sic], either his philological scholarship or the myths of *The Silmarillion* and the posthumous volumes of 'lost tales' . . . He continually mined his earlier work, concepts, and languages for new steps in his fiction and poetry. (pp. 24-25)

That being said from Ridsen (2011), Tolkien (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) had his own ideas about others' interpretations of his fantasy work, notably allegory, as his works have often been accused of being highly allegorical. Below I re-state a quote from Tolkien (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) that appears in an earlier footnote below for emphasis:

But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse ‘applicability’ with ‘allegory’; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.

An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the processes are at best guesses from evidence; this is inadequate and ambiguous. It is also false, though naturally attractive, when the lives of an author and critic have overlapped, to suppose that the movements of thought or events of the times common to both were necessarily the most powerful influences. (pp. x-xi)

Tolkien (1981) has further stated that *TLOR* is not an allegory of World War II, the most common misperception. He has stated, however, that the country he grew up in as a child has been destroyed showing his disdain for modernity and industry in near neo-Luddite fashion.

### **Problem Statement**

Obviously, at least to many, the Earth is in a state of ecological crisis. My dissertation investigates ecology through select high fantasy works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Specifically, I intend to address what can be construed, if anything, by studying the enigmatic character of Tom Bombadil, while giving due consideration to some other characters who represent or are a party to ecological concerns.

Bombadil is an understudied character in Tolkien’s pantheon of Middle-earth. He is featured in *TLOR* (1994) and *TATB* (1990), but he was left out of Jackson’s cinematic re-creation of *TLOR* due to temporal and budgetary constraints of already rather long films. According to the few scholars who have given more than cursory attention to

Bombadil and his demeanor, he could be many things such as: an Earth spirit, the geist of the fading early twentieth-century English countryside,<sup>5</sup> a Valar (angelic creatures or Gnostic Aeons who created Arda under the aegis of their leader Manwë, who is reminiscent of the Metatron), a Maiar (lesser angels than the Valar), an Istari (a race of Wizards like Gandalf the Grey and Saruman the White), some sort of Elven creature, a prehistoric Green Man,<sup>6</sup> or even an avatar of Illúvatar (God), or something totally unique and unclassifiable in terms of Tolkien's mythopoeia (Campbell, 2011; Dickerson and Evans, 2006; Curry, 1997; Tolkien, 1981). One of the more plausible definitions of Bombadil's onto-morphology for my purposes is provided by Campbell (2011):

[Bombadil] represents the harmony of nature itself---the spirit of humanity as it was meant to be: in complicit union with the natural world, seeking understanding without control. Indeed his refusal to exploit or to rule the world about him casts him as 'an exemplar' of environmental ethics. Perhaps, more than any other character in Tolkien's fiction, Tom Bombadil is an ideal--- a 'pacifist' expression of environmental harmony. (p. 80)

Whatever Bombadil is remains to be explored in my dissertation, as does the example he provides for environmental harmony via his treatment of nature, and how this can be used to educate for environmental sustainability. Further, despite Bombadil being a male character, I am critically approaching Tolkien's work from a non-gendered approach to

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<sup>5</sup> In Tolkien's *Letters* (1981), he has referred to Bombadil as the spirit of the disappearance of the Oxford and Berkshire countryside as it gave way to industry and urban sprawl. However, his statement does not end the question of whom or what Bombadil is--- authorial intent or not.

<sup>6</sup> The Green Man theory is intriguing in itself since one of Tolkien's better known scholarly works is a translation and commentary on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which he co-authored with friend E. V. Gordon, and, which of course, features an enigmatic Green Man who enjoys playing deadly games.



show how education can help us become more in harmony with nature. That in itself makes this project worthwhile given the state of our dying planet.

## CHAPTER II

### TOLKIEN'S LIFE AND INFLUENCES

#### **Early Years**

John Ronald Reul Tolkien was born to Arthur Tolkien and Mabel Tolkien, née Suffield, on January 3, 1892, in the Orange Free State of Great Britain's colony of South Africa where his father worked for the Bank of Africa. There, at least one occurrence of importance, as pertains to influencing his works of fantasy, happened. As young child, Tolkien was bitten by a large tarantula (Carpenter, 1977); hence, his lifelong hatred of spiders. This hatred is exemplified by their negative portrayal in *The Hobbit*, *TLOR*, and *The Silmarillion*, and as embodied specifically by the giant, demonic Shelob, last child of Ungoliant the evil spider who aided Melkor in destroying the Trees of Valinor with their magical light, eventually becoming the Sun and Moon, early in Arda's existence (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 1999). Also, there are the equally huge and malicious Spiders of Mirkwood Forest who like other evil characters in Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature are bent on death and destruction.

Two years later his brother Hilary was born, and in 1895 Mabel and the children returned to England due to her dislike of Africa and her homesickness for Great Britain. Arthur, however, had to continue to work. Unfortunately, he died of fever in 1896 in South Africa. His father's death left Mabel with lifelong financial problems, and their

financial situation would impact Tolkien greatly, especially his education as he had to rely on others and scholarships for funding (Carpenter, 1977).

In the summer of 1896, Mabel and her brood moved to the hamlet of Sarehole to Mabel's parents' house, and here the young Tolkien became a frequent visitor to Sarehole Mill and the nearby woods. At Sarehole, though Mabel was not terribly well educated, she taught him penmanship, which he learned by age four, drawing, the rudiments of Latin and French, and where he acquired a love for botany, especially trees, under her tutelage (Carpenter, 1977). His childhood love of nature was later in life, when coupled with his near Neo-Luddite disdain for modern industry, to play a major role in the ecological tropes used in his high fantasy works and gave him a strong attachment to place, the English Midlands, whose language and lore he studied carefully in his philological endeavors (Morgan, 2010). As far as literature goes, Tolkien, at that time, had a penchant for George MacDonald's "Curdie Books," where he found his initial exposure to classical Western literature through MacDonald and through the great works of Dante, Milton, Goethe, and Shakespeare, all who influenced the later works of both Tolkien and MacDonald (Shippey, 1983). He was especially enamored by *The Princess and the Goblin*, which in his *Letters* (1981) he has credited MacDonald for his creation of the race he called Orcs (Tolkien, 1981; Kreglinger, 2007)<sup>7</sup>. Tolkien was also influenced by Andrew Lang's fairy books and Arthurian lore (Shippey, 1983). These works too would be of seminal importance in both his professional publications and his works of fantasy.

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<sup>7</sup>Orcs were an evil race created by the first dark lord Melkor by twisting and corrupting once good Elves into something perverse of nature.

In 1900, also at Sarehole, another major influence on Tolkien's life occurred; that was, his mother's conversion to Catholicism via the persuasion of her sister May, a new convert from Anglicanism. After their conversion, both Tolkien boys were instructed in Catholicism. Tolkien became a staunch Catholic and Dickerson and Evans (2006) have postulated that this was the root of his environmental ethos. Soon after their conversion, the family moved to Birmingham so the boys could be closer to King Edward's School founded by Edward VI (Carpenter, 1977). Tolkien hated the city with all its noise, pollution, and hurriedness, as he has mentioned in his *Letters* (1981). He sorely missed Sarehole and the countryside. He would become melancholically nostalgic about Sarehole and the surrounding area as is exemplified by its parallel in *The Hobbit* and *TLOR*, the Shire of the Hobbits. Further, his disdain for Birmingham was also a major influence on Tolkien's hatred of modern industrial capitalism and its ensuing environmental destruction.

After two years at King Edward's School, Tolkien began studying at the Birmingham Oratory and St. Phillip's School to further his Catholic education. Here he was befriended by Father Francis Xavier Morgan, a flamboyant but not overly intellectual half-Welsh and half -Spanish man who was a major influence on young Tolkien's life and love of languages (such as Welsh), and he became especially important in Tolkien's life after his mother's death by acting as his unofficial guardian. (Carpenter, 1977)

However, his stay at St. Phillips was short-lived. Its academic standards were low, so he returned to the more prestigious King Edward's School on a scholarship in 1903 which exemplified his mother's money issues as mentioned earlier. There Tolkien began to study Greek: "The fluidity of Greek, punctuated by its hardness, and with surface glitter captivated me" (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 27). At King Edward's School, Tolkien was influenced by the Medievalist George Brewerton, and he read such works as those by Chaucer in Middle English. It is arguable that this juncture was the genesis for his love of all things English, and, hence, his devotion to its study in his later professional life and his lifelong pursuit to create a viable mythology for it (Carpenter, 1977).

In late 1904, his beloved mother Mabel died of complications due to diabetes, and this profoundly affected him sending him into a state of melancholy: "Indeed it might be said that after she died his religion took the place in his affections that she had previously occupied" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 31). His former mentor, Father Morgan, became the boys' guardian, though they moved in with his aunt, Beatrice Suffield, in the city, who gave the boys' little attention.

This love for the memory of the countryside of his youth was later to become a central part of his writing, and it was intimately bound up with his love for the memory of his mother. (Carpenter, 1977, p. 33)

At King Edward's School, Tolkien's more aggressive side began to surface. He became friends with Christopher Wiseman, and they developed a friendly rivalry in academic subjects such as Latin and Greek, sports like rugby, and open debate. His

aptitude for languages that started with his mother began to grow further. Under the tutelage of Headmaster Robert Cary Gilson, Tolkien was encouraged to study classical linguistics and philology expanding his knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, and German. This further influenced his later works both professional and of high fantasy.

Under Brewerton he studied Old English (Anglo-Saxon) via such works as *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain*, and *Pearl*, even picking up a bit of Old Norse, and he bought books on philology with his own meager funds. It was at this time that he began experimenting with his own languages like “Nevbosh” and reading dead languages such as Gothic using Joseph Wright’s *Primer of the Gothic Language* as a guide for self-instruction (Shippey, 1983; Shippey, 2001; Carpenter, 1977). His study at this time cemented his particular love for Germanic languages and lore, of which he would become a specialist, and which would become the core of his later works.

The year 1908 was a watershed in young Tolkien’s life because Father Morgan moved him out of Aunt Beatrice’s home due to the brothers’ unhappiness there and to Mrs. Faulkner’s house. There he met Edith Bratt who would become the other most important woman in his life, and later his wife (Carpenter, 1977).

Edith and Tolkien became allies against “the old lady” (Mrs. Faulkner), and both shared the commonalities of being orphans who enjoyed going to teashops to eat, drink, and talk. Carpenter (1977) has said of Edith: “Certainly she did not share his interest in languages, and she had only received a rather limited education” (p. 39). Though quickly enamored by Edith, Tolkien continued to pursue his interests in debating, rugby, and philology. Their friendship was nearly ruined, however, by Father Francis who forbade

Tolkien to see her because he felt it was hurting his studies. This caused him to have another bout with depression akin in severity to the one he had when his mother died, and hence, he failed to win a scholarship he desperately needed to attend Oxford.

(Carpenter, 1977)

In the meanwhile, and despite his gloom, Tolkien became the school co-librarian at King Edward's School along with friend and son of the headmaster, R. Q. Gilson. With the addition of Christopher Wiseman and others they formed the "Tea Club" where Tolkien recited *Beowulf*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain*, and the Norse *Völsungasaga* (Shippey, 1983). Meanwhile, Wiseman lectured on math, natural science, and music; Gilson discussed painting and the eighteenth-century; and Geoffrey Bache Smith mused on English literature and poetry (Carpenter, 1977). "[They were] going through a stage of enthusiastic intellectual discovery" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 46). Their Tea Club can be viewed as a crypto-version of The Inklings, and both were important venues for Tolkien to share his ideas, hone his scholarship, and the latter to test out versions of his high fantasy literature with other like-minded scholars such as C. S. Lewis who will be discussed in detail later.

At King Edward's School, Brewerton and R. W. Reynolds were among the few to teach English literature. Though Tolkien was not fond of the subject, he did begin to write verse under Reynolds, a precursor to the poetry that permeates his high fantasy works (Carpenter, 1977). He was also influenced by J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Catholic mystic poet Francis Thompson whom he emulated in some of his verse (Harper, 2007). Tolkien also studied Finnish language and myth through W. H. Kirby's translation

of *Kalevala*<sup>8</sup> saying of it “the more I read of it, the more I felt at home and enjoyed myself” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 47). All the while, he managed to study a bit more for an Oxford Scholarship and won a partial scholarship via the Open Classical Exhibition to Exeter College in late 1910 (Fry, 2007). Upon graduation in 1911, he went for a summer walking tour of Switzerland with some of his brother Hilary’s employers, the Brookes-Smiths, and there in the Alps he gained inspiration for the Misty Mountains adventure by the questing Hobbits and their entourage in *TLOR* (1994) (Morgan, 2010).

### **Oxford**

In autumn of 1911, Tolkien began his career as a student at Oxford, one of the world’s most prestigious universities consisting of 39 independent colleges (Fry, 2007). Given the itinerant nature of his homes since his mother’s death, it was the first real home he had known in seven years. He immediately set upon joining various teams and clubs such as: Rugby, the Essay Club, the Dialectical Society, the Stapeldon (a debating society), started the Apolausticks (as society devoted to self-indulgence), and he even found some time to study the Classics; however, the latter bored him, and he preferred to read Germanic literature, his deepest philological love. (Fry, 2007)

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<sup>8</sup> The *Kalevala* is Finland’s national epic poem of more than 22,000 lines. It was written down by Finnish scholar Elias Lönnrot during the course of his life in the nineteenth-century and published in 1835 when he went about studying and collecting oral stories by the Finns, Laps, and Estonians. The poem tells many stories and helped forge Finnish cultural identity not unlike the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or the Norse *Eddas* (Wilkinson, 2009). The *Kalevala* was highly influential on Tolkien’s high fantasy since with his fictional works he set out to create a mythology for the English, and he has referred to the *Kalevala* as, “because that set the rocket off in story. I was immensely attracted to something in the air of the *Kalevala* [sic], even in Kirby’s poor translation” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 214).



At Oxford, he soon came under the sway of Joseph Wright who taught comparative philology. Wright was an interesting character. He was a self-made scholar born to a lowly mill worker. He earned his doctorate at Heidelberg University where he studied: Sanskrit, Gothic, Old Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Russian, Old Norse, Old Saxon, Old and Medieval High German, and Old English. He was also the scholar who wrote Tolkien's Gothic primer, all six volumes. Wright also pushed Tolkien to study Welsh with which Tolkien became fascinated once again. Despite the Don's pressure, Tolkien became lax and studied only what he wanted, staying up late debating his ideas with fellow classmates. He continued with his work from the *Kalevala* and picked up a bit of Finnish which became the basis for his Quenya or High Elvish language. (Carpenter, 1977).

In 1913, Tolkien, after a good deal of "cramming" took Second Class in Honour [sic] Moderations. However, he did score "pure alpha" or perfect paper in comparative philology (Carpenter, 1977, p. 62). His love and success as a philologist would play a major role in his creation of his high fantasy works (Fisher, "Preface," 2011). The Rector of Exeter, Dr. Farnell, encouraged him to drop Classics and study English; he studied philology and pre-Chaucerian literature. Though he chose philology over English modernists, philology students still were required to study modern literature. Here in English language and literature, he came under the sway of Tutor Kenneth Sisam, a young New Zealander who assisted Professor A. S. Napier. When Tolkien read the syllabus, "[He was] seized with panic because I could not see how it was going to

provide me with honest labor for two years and a term” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 63); however, his initial panic would prove premature and unwarranted.

Sisam was an uninspiring but accurate and meticulous scholar. Tolkien became very interested in the West Midland dialect in Middle English because of his fond childhood memories of that region. This would heavily influence his studies and future works. Under Sisam he was exposed to *Crist* by Cynewulf; two lines struck him deeply:

Eala Earendel engla beorhtast  
ofer middangeard monnum sended.

Hail Earendel, highest of angels  
above the middle-earth sent unto men. (Carpenter, 1977, p. 64)

Of these lines of verse, Tolkien has said, “There was something very remote and strange and beautiful behind those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond ancient English” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 64). He also studied the Old Icelandic language and the *Prose* and *Poetic Eddas*.<sup>9</sup> He especially liked the *Poetic Edda*’s “*Völuspá*” (“Prophecy of the Seeress”) with its pagan cosmos. It would also heavily influence his mythopoetic masterpiece, *The Silmarillion*. (Carpenter, 1977; Fry, 2007).

Meanwhile returning to his personal life, Edith had to become a Catholic before they were married since she was before her conversion an active Anglican. Tolkien was adamant about her conversion due to his profound Catholicism which would influence his works of high fantasy so greatly (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Concerning Anglicanism, Tolkien (1981) has said of it, “. . . [it is] a pathetic and shadowy medley of half

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<sup>9</sup> The *Eddas* are thirteenth-century or older Icelandic sagas of Norse gods and heroes based on their Swedish roots.

remembered traditions and mutilated beliefs” (p. 54). Edith’s family was disconcerted about her conversion, and her uncle kicked her out of his home. She went to live with her cousin Jennie. In the summer of 1913, the two toured Warwick and explored the woods, its hill, and its castle. Also that summer, Tolkien traveled to Paris, France as a paid tutor to two Mexican boys with wealthy parents. Here, due to his bad experience with them caused by French snobbery and vulgarity, one of the boys being run over by a car and later dying from his wounds, and his already present dislike of the French influence on England which he blamed on the Norman Conquest that he took personally, his Gallophobia began to blossom (Seaman, 2007). He has written in his *Letters*, “I detest French . . . . and [I] detest French cooking” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 288-289). His disdain for France would only grow after his experience in World War I in the bloody, muddy horror of the trenches.

Returning to school in autumn of 1913, Tolkien began the Chequers Club with Colin Cullis, was elected president of the College Debating Society, punted, played tennis, and he won the Skeat Prize for English in Spring (Carpenter, 1977). With the prize money, he bought books on Medieval Welsh and William Morris’s *The Life and Death of Jason*, his translation of *Völsungasaga*, and *The House of Wolfings*. Morris, who also went to Exeter College, had a similar view of literature with Tolkien and heavily influenced him. Morris tried to recreate early English and Icelandic fictional narratives as Tolkien would later do in his high fantasy literature (Fry, 2007). In a December 1960 letter to Professor Forster concerning some aspects of his fantasy works and his indebtedness to Morris, Tolkien (1981) wrote:

The Dead Marshes [in *TLOR*] and the approaches to the Morannon owe something to Northern France after the Battle of the Somme [where Tolkien was taken seriously ill]. [However,] they owe more to William Morris and his Huns and Romans, as in *The House of the Wolfings* or *The Roots of the Mountains*. (p. 303)<sup>10</sup>

The last significant event before Tolkien's war years was his summer vacation of 1914 in Cornwall. There in that ideal landscape, he wrote the poem "The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star" based on *Crist* (Carpenter, 1977). This was the beginning of Tolkien's now famous mythology.

### **War Years**

Tolkien decided to finish school before answering to the "guns of August." He joined the Officers' Training Corp though. While still at Oxford, he began but never finished a Morris-style essay on the Finnish *Kalevala*'s "The Story of Kullervo." This was his first foray into writing legend in both verse and prose (Fry, 2007). Over Christmas break of 1914, at a gathering of the Tea Club with Christopher Wiseman, R. Q. Gilson, and G. B. Smith, Smith inspired Tolkien to work on his poetry including "The Man in the Moon Came Down Too Soon," as found in *TATB* (Carpenter, 1977). Below is the opening stanza of this somewhat childlike poem used here as precursor to demonstrate how his verse would develop and mature over the years, as does his poetry in *TLOR*, and to show Morris's influence:

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<sup>10</sup> *The House of the Wolfings* is set in a land threatened by Roman invasion, and it centers on a clan that lives near Mirkwood Forest (a name Tolkien would borrow and use extensively in his high fantasy works). Like Tolkien's fantasy, its style is highly idiosyncratic, filled with archaisms, and it creates an aura of ancient legend. Tolkien would mimic Morris in his high fantasy literature. (Fry, 2007)

The Man in the Moon had silver shoon,  
And his beard was of silver thread;  
With opals crowned and pearls all bound  
About his girdlestead,  
In his mantle grey he walked on day  
Across a shinning floor.  
And with crystal key in secrecy  
He opened an ivory door. (Tolkien, 1990, p. 36)

In June of 1915, Tolkien took First Class Honours [sic] in English Literature and Languages, which guaranteed him a job after the war. Soon after, he joined the British Lancashire Fusiliers in the 13<sup>th</sup> battalion as a second lieutenant where he specialized in signaling (Buck, 2007).<sup>11</sup> World War I had a profound effect upon Tolkien, and he would never forget “the carnage of the Somme” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 53). Over the course of the war, he lost dear friends R. Q. Gilson and G. B. Smith in the “animal horror” of trench warfare (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 84). He has written in the Foreword of *TLOR*:

One has indeed personally to come under the shadow of war to feel fully its oppression; but as the years go by it seems now often forgotten that to be caught in youth by 1914 was no less hideous an experience than to be involved in 1939 and the following years. By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead. (Tolkien, 1994, p. xi)

Aside from the psychological scars, Tolkien suffered physically too, not only from dirt, exhaustion, and privation, but from disease. On October 27, 1916, during the seemingly endless and pointless Battle of the Somme, he caught “trench fever” which led to extensive stays in British hospitals. (Carpenter, 1977).

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<sup>11</sup> Signal Corps members dealt with Morse Code translations, flags, telephones, and encrypted messages.

However, all was not bleak during his war years. Before leaving for France, he was married to Edith Bratt in Warwick by Father Murphy (Fry, 2007). While he was convalescing in hospital after falling ill in the trenches of France, Edith became pregnant, and on November 16, 1917, John Francis Ruel Tolkien was born. He was to have three more children: Michael, Christopher (who would become his editor, co-scholar, and confidant), and Priscilla. Further, while in and out of hospitals, he wrote, and worked on improving his Spanish, Italian, and Russian. (Carpenter, 1977)

During this period, Tolkien was not intellectually stagnant. He decided to create a whole mythology based on his study of philology, as an expression of his emotions, his profound Catholicism, and for England in the Anglo-Saxon sense. He felt England lacked a proper mythology of its own, and what it did have was too influenced by other cultures whether they were Celtic, Roman, Norman, or French. At this time, he began *The Book of Lost Tales* which would eventually become the posthumously published *The Silmarillion*. Of *The Silmarillion*, Carpenter (1977) has written:

Some have puzzled over the relation between Tolkien's stories and his Christianity, and have found it difficult to understand how a devout Roman Catholic could write with such conviction about a world where God is not worshipped . . . . It [*The Silmarillion*] does not contradict Christianity but compliments it. There is in the legends no worship of God, yet God is indeed there . . . . Tolkien's universe is ruled over by God, 'The One.' Beneath Him in the hierarchy are 'the Valar,' the guardians of the world, who are not gods but angelic powers, themselves holy and subject to God . . . . He wanted the mythological and legendary stories to express his own moral view of the universe; and as a Christian he could not place this view in a cosmos without the God that he worshipped . . . while God is present in Tolkien's universe, He remains unseen. (p. 91)

Concerning influences on *The Silmarillion* are “The Fall of Gondolin” (an assault on an Elven fort by Morgoth)<sup>12</sup> which was derived from Morris’s works, his harrowing experience at the Battle of the Somme, and Elves may have arisen from his reading of Francis Thompson’s “Sister Songs.” The Elven language Quenya, and Tolkien loved inventing languages, was heavily influenced by Finnish, and Sindarin (another Elven language) was influenced by Welsh. At this time, he also composed “The Children of Húrin” based on the story of Kullervo in the *Kalevala*. (Carpenter, 1977)

In 1918, Tolkien got a job as an assistant lexicographer in Oxford for the *New English Dictionary* via his former teacher William Craigie who had taught him Icelandic at Exeter College (Fry, 2007). While working on the dictionary, he began keeping a diary interestingly enough written in Rúmil script which is an admixture of Hebrew, Greek, and Pitman’s shorthand showing again his love for invented languages based on the real ones he studied. While working on the dictionary, Tolkien said, “I learned more in those two years than in any other period of my life” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 101). However, his stint as a lexicographer was short-lived.

In 1920, he took a position as a reader in English language at the University of Leeds. Meanwhile, on the home front, Michael Hilary Ruel Tolkien was born in October (Carpenter, 1977). Also during his time at Leeds, he met E. V. Gordon who was a

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<sup>12</sup> Morgoth, meaning the Black Enemy in Elvish Quenyan, was the name given to Melkor who is a Satanic-like character in Tolkien’s works of high fantasy, and whose lieutenant was Sauron during the First Age and the antagonist of *TLOTR*. Melkor was given this epithet by Fëanor after the rape of the Silmarils (magical gems). Morgoth or Melkor was a rebellious Valar, jealous of Ilúvatar’s creation, bent on ruling Middle-earth before ultimately being defeated and exiled into the Void by fellow Valar and is the beginning of evil in Tolkien’s legendarium. (Tolkien, 1999)

Canadian born Oxford Rhodes Scholar (Anderson, "Gordon, E. V.," 2007). They were close friends and scholarly collaborators until Gordon's untimely death in 1939 from influenza (Tolkien, 1981). Together they co-authored a new, and still highly respected, version of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Tolkien and Gordon, 1925). While at Leeds, Christopher Tolkien was also born (Carpenter, 1977). However, Tolkien did not stay at Leeds long.

In 1925, Tolkien became the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University. Twenty years later he became the prestigious Merton Professor of English Languages and Literature, a post he would hold until his retirement in 1959. While fairly new at Oxford as a professor, Priscilla Mary Ruel Tolkien was born in 1929; she was his last child. (Fry, 2007)

### **Oxford Years as Professor**

At Oxford, Tolkien proved to be a workaholic. For example, in his second year he gave 136 lectures/classes, well above the required 36, with no assistance until Charles Wrenn took over some of the burden. During this time, he did not publish too much due to his teaching and his almost compulsive perfectionism with his own works (Fry, 2007). The latter would put into play with the publication of his high fantasy works, and it would sometimes put him at odds with his publisher, Allen and Unwin (Carpenter, 1977). For example, Tolkien was supposed to have a manuscript of *TLOR* to Allen and Unwin to go to print by March 25, 1953, as stipulated by contract. In a letter to Rayner Unwin from April 11, 1953, Tolkien (1981) nervously wrote:



I am extremely sorry that it is already eleven days after the end of the month (March)! . . . I still cannot lay my hands of the many papers and notes that I need [to finish *TJOR*]. . . Maps are worrying me. One at least . . . is absolutely essential. (pp. 165-168)

He did manage, however, in this early period of teaching at Oxford to publish a version of Chaucer's "The Reeve's Tale" (1934), and his lecture *Beowulf: Monsters and Critics* was published and became a landmark of criticism of the poem whose importance endures to today (Carpenter, 1977).

When E. V. Gordon, Tolkien's friend and collaborator, with whom he wrote the aforementioned rendition of *Gawain*, and with whom he had planned to co-author a work on *Pearl*, suddenly died of kidney failure brought on by influenza Tolkien was once again propelled into a long bout of melancholy and was rather unproductive (Anderson, "Gordon, E. V.," 2007). After mourning his friend's death, he began to collaborate with Simone d'Ardenne (a Belgian student of Middle English at Oxford). He assisted her with *The Life and Passion of Saint Juliene*, but its publication was hampered by World War II. Eventually returning to *Pearl*, it was published along with *Sir Orfed*. Both are staples of the genre proving his enduring scholarship. (Fry, 2007)

In 1926, Tolkien met another of the greatest influences on his life, Clive Staples Lewis (a. k. a. Jack) (Fry, 2007). C. S. Lewis was a fellow and tutor in English Languages and Literature at Magdalene College. They shared a love for Norse myths and would meet with others to discuss them in Lewis's rooms on Thursday nights. Lewis was the son of a Belfast barrister, Ulster Protestant, and took a degree in Medieval Literature First Class; though originally agnostic, Lewis found God through Tolkien. On God and

myths, telling of his profound religiosity, penchant for fantasy, and disdain for modernity, Tolkien has written:

We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God. Indeed only by myth making . . . can Man ascribe to the state of perfection that he knew before the fall . . . [myths] steer however shakily towards the true harbor, while materialistic ‘progress’ leads only to a yawning abyss and the Iron Crown of evil.<sup>13</sup> (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977)

In 1931, Tolkien and Lewis joined the famous Inklings, a literary club founded by Tangye Lean. Other members were: Warren Lewis, R. E. Howard, Owen Barfield, and Hugo Dyson. They met on Tuesday evenings at the Eagle and Child Pub. The Inklings, and especially Lewis, had a tremendous impact on Tolkien personally and professionally (Duriez, 2007). Of Lewis, Tolkien (1981) has written:

But Lewis was a very impressionable man, and this was abetted by his great generosity and capacity for friendship. The unpayable debt that I owe to him was not ‘influence’ as it is ordinarily understood, but sheer encouragement. He was long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my ‘stuff’ could be more than a private hobby. But for his interest and unceasing eagerness for more I should never have brought *The L. of the R.* to a conclusion . . . (p. 362)

On Thursdays, Tolkien would meet with Lewis at Magdalene, and he would read parts of *The Hobbit* and *TLOR* aloud to his friend for input. However, Tolkien and Lewis’s friendship waned when Lewis became an Anglican and Christian apologist, as found in his *Screwtape Letters*. (Carpenter, 1977)

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<sup>13</sup> The “Iron Crown” is an allusion to Morgoth as found in Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* (1999).

As almost an aside, but relevant to understanding Tolkien's environmental ethos, it is worth noting that after moving his family to Northmoor Road in the 1930s, he had two Morris Cowley cars.<sup>14</sup> Tolkien was not a good driver and wrecked often. Further, the petrol shortage engendered by rationing during World War II made private automobile ownership almost untenable, so he gave them up preferring to walk or bicycle, as he did going to work. Also, returning back to Tolkien's views on the environment and modernity, he has written, "[I] perceived the damage that the internal combustion engines and new roads were doing to the landscape . . ." (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 159). Also, at this time on Northmoor Road, Tolkien and his family would walk in Wood Eaton, further evidence for Tolkien's love of botany and trees as nurtured by his mother during his childhood, and Michael would hide in the crack of a Willow Tree (Carpenter, 1977). Here is the origin of Bombadil's rescue of the Hobbit Merry from being devoured by Old Man Willow in the Old Forest in *TLOA*, where Bombadil is introduced into the storyline.

Continuing with this environmentalism in Tolkien, some things are worth noting at this juncture. First, during his most productive years as an author of high fantasy literature, Tolkien made no trips outside the British Isles. He tended to his work and family, with private concerns about the destruction of nature, especially trees, in his beloved Oxfordshire due to modernity and industry. Carpenter (1977) writes: "for man's destruction of the landscape moved him to profound anger" (p. 124). Concerning trees, in

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<sup>14</sup> Despite delving into Tolkien's personal life, such as I have done to Tolkien's bad relationship with cars, it is worth re-iterating his disdain for source/biographical criticism. Carpenter (1977) notes: "It was one of his strongest held opinions that the investigation of an author's life reveals very little about the workings of his mind" (p. 122).

a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* written in 1972, Tolkien (1981) has stated in a Naessian tone:

In all my works I take the part of trees as against their enemies. Lothlórien is beautiful because there the trees were loved; elsewhere forests are represented as awakening to consciousness of themselves. The Old Forest was hostile to two legged creatures because of the memory of many injuries [like Old Man Willow]. Fangorn Forest was old and beautiful, but at the time of the story tense with hostility because it was threatened by a machine-loving enemy [Saruman and his Orcs]. Mirkwood had fallen under the domination of a Power that hated all living things<sup>15</sup> but was restored to beauty and became Greenwood the Great before the end of the story . . . [In England] the savage sound of the electric saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing. (p. 419-420)

Also in the Forward of the Ballantine edition of *TLOTR*, Tolkien (1994) railed against the ravages of industry and modernity: “The country in which I lived in childhood was being shabbily destroyed before I was ten, in days when motor cars were rare objects (I had never seen one) and men were still building suburban railways” (p. xi).

Tolkien’s ecological stance manifests itself even in Tolkien’s metaphysical musings about the act of “sub-creation” in regard to an author being the god of his own work, and having introspection into his own influences (Tolkien, 1981, p. 145). He has espoused:

One writes such a story not out of the leaves of trees still to be observed, nor by means of botany and soil science; but it grows like a seed in the dark out of the leaf-mould [sic] of the mind: out of all that has been forgotten, descending into the deeps. No doubt there is much selection, as with a gardener: what one throws on one’s personal compost heap; and my mould is evidently made largely of linguistic matter. (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 126)

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<sup>15</sup> Early in the Third Age of Arda, a recuperating Sauron had his fortress of Dol Guldur (Hill of Sorcery) in southern Mirkwood Forest (Tolkien, 1999).

## Politics

Also relevant at this juncture is a glimpse into Tolkien's political views, for they had influence on his works of high fantasy and views about ecology too. Essentially, he was a right-wing unconstitutional monarchist (Tory), or even Anarchist (Veldman, 1994). He "did not believe in the rule of the people" (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 128). He also did not like Nazism, Communism, American cosmopolitanism, feminism, and was a proto anti-globalism isolationist, neo-Luddite, anti-modernist (as exemplified earlier), believed in sabotage, and some of his views ring of Raymond Williams. In two letters to his son Christopher during World War II, after Christopher was called to join the Royal Airforce, Tolkien (1981) has written:

My political opinions lean more and more to Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning the abolition of control not whiskered men with Bombs)---or to 'unconstitutional' Monarchy . . . . If people were in the habit of referring to 'King George's council, Winston [Churchill] and his gang,' it would go a long way to clearing thought, and reducing the frightful landslide into Theyocracy . . . . Anyway the proper study of Man is anything but Man; and the most improper job of any man . . . is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek opportunity. . . . Even unlucky little Samoyedes [a group of people from Siberia], I suspect, have tinned food and the village loudspeaker telling Stalin's bedtime stories about Democracy and the wicked Fascists who eat babies and steal sledge-dogs. There is one bright spot and that is the growing habit of disgruntled men of dynamiting factories and power-stations ; I hope that, encouraged now as 'patriotism,' may remain a habit! . . . . The bigger things get the smaller and duller or flatter the globe gets. It is getting to be all one blasted little suburb. When they have introduced American sanitation, morale-pep, feminism, and mass production . . . [to then Third World nations] how happy shall we be. But seriously: I do find this Americo-cosmopolitanism very terrifying. Quâ mind and spirit, and neglecting the piddling fears of timid flesh which does not want to be shot or chopped by brutal and licentious soldiery (German or other), I am not really sure that its victory is going to be so much better for the world as a whole and in the long run than the victory of [shit]. (pp. 63-65)

As mentioned earlier, Tolkien disliked Hitler and the Nazis, Stalin and the Communists, and Churchill's British government. In his *Letters*, he discusses each one. These discussions provide insight into the man, his thoughts, and influences that come to bear, consciously or not, on his works of high fantasy and ecology. Concerning Adolf Hitler, Tolkien (1981) wrote in a 1941 letter to his son Michael:

Anyway, I have in this War a burning private grudge---which would probably make me a better soldier at 49 than I was at 22: against that ruddy little ignoramus Adolf Hitler (for the odd thing about demonic inspiration and impetus is that it in no way enhances the purely intellectual stature: it chiefly affects the mere will). Ruining, perverting, misapplying, and making for ever accursed, that noble Northern spirit, a supreme contribution to Europe, which I have ever loved, and tried to present in its true light. (pp. 55-56)

As one can see, Tolkien is angry at Hitler in this letter, maybe not so much for the War and its atrocities, but for destroying and forever tainting Germanic contributions to world culture. Nordic and Germanic studies were the intellectual love of his life; hence, his early professorship at Oxford in Anglo-Saxon Studies, and his works of high fantasy literature that are heavily laden with Germanic/Norse themes and allusions. For example of the later, the Rohirrim, or Horse Lords, are portrayed in Tolkien's *The Two Towers* (1994) as being Viking-like in appearance, and King Théoden's palace, the Golden Hall, is reminiscent of Hrothgar's Herot in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*.

Tolkien disliked Stalin and Communists at least as much, if not more, than he did Hitler and the Nazis. In yet another letter to his son, Christopher from 1943, Tolkien (1981) wrote: "I heard of that blood-thirsty old murderer Josef Stalin inviting all nations to join a happy family of folks devoted to the abolition of tyranny & intolerance! [sic]"

(p. 65). Further, in a letter to Michael from 1941, Tolkien (1981) wrote: “It is plain that our dear old friends the U. S. S. R. are up to some mischief” (p. 47).<sup>16</sup> Finally, though Tolkien really did not follow current events that closely because he was disgusted by the state of global affairs. He considered all that needed to be known (truth) to be found in his Catholicism and literature (Carpenter, 1977). That being said, Tolkien was aware enough of world events to predict the Cold War and the death knell of the British Empire and America as becoming one of the major players in polarized post-war global affairs. In a letter to Christopher from May 1945, after Germany’s defeat, while the American-Soviet camaraderie of the War as exemplified by the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences was still intact, at least superficially, and before the Berlin Blockade or Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech, Tolkien was abreast enough of underlying American-Soviet tensions to state: “It [the War] can only benefit America or Russia: prob. [sic] the latter. But at least the Americo-Russian War won’t break out for a year yet” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 115).<sup>17</sup>

Tolkien was not very enthused with Conservative British Prime Minister Winston Churchill either. In general, as mentioned earlier, Tolkien disliked democracy, and like his friend C. S. Lewis was more of an elitist unconstitutional monarchist. Of Churchill, bordering on sedition especially during wartime while writing to a soldier, his son Christopher, Tolkien (1981) has written: “But I must admit that in the photograph [of the Allies’ leaders at the Teheran Conference] our little cherub W. S. C. actually looked like the biggest ruffian present” (p. 65).

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<sup>16</sup> One can sense the sarcasm in this quote as well as the previous one.

<sup>17</sup> The famous, flamboyant, and arrogant George S. Patton is infamous for wanting to take the remnants of the defeated German Army and march them on Moscow. Patton was a virulent and vociferous anti-communist.

Moving away from then world leaders and political partisan affiliations, Tolkien was a misogynist but also an apologist for what he perceived as the state of women. This misogyny is exemplified in both his correspondence and his high fantasy works. It probably stems from his conservative brand of Catholicism, his traditional upbringing where women were considered inferior partners to their husbands, his bad experiences with women like his Aunt Beatrice, and the status quo of the time. Concerning women in his correspondence, Tolkien (1981) shamefully has written:

You may meet in life (as in literature) women who are flighty, or even plain wanton---I don't refer to mere flirtatiousness, the sparring practice for real combat, but to women who are too silly to take even love seriously, or are actually so depraved as to enjoy 'conquests', or even enjoy the giving of pain . . . (p. 50)

In his fantasy literature, women are sorely missing as major characters, with some exception that will be discussed later, and when they are presented they are generally secondary to men. For example, in *TLOR*, Arwen, the Elven Princess, who could be strong at some moments, is generally portrayed as Lord Elrond's daughter and Aragorn's love. She is lesser than her father, and too smitten by Aragorn to be independent in her own right (Tolkien, *TLOR*, 1994). Then there is Eowyn, the princess and shield maiden of Rohan. Not unlike Arwen, and even though Eowyn is fierce enough in combat to kill the Witch King of Angmar who was the leader of the Nāzgul (Sauron's Ring-wraiths), she is second to her father King Théoden, works in his palace as a cup-bearer, and is hopelessly in love with Aragorn (Tolkien, *TLOR*, 1994). Finally, there is Goldberry. She is Bombadil's wife who is a naiad or water spirit (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). In the poem



“The Adventures of Tom Bombadil” found in *TATB*, Tolkien (1990) describes her abduction by Bombadil which is reminiscent of the abduction of Persephone by Hades or Helen by Paris, which is more likely a case in Greek mythology, of which Tolkien was well-versed from his Classical Studies.

‘Sons of Arctus,’ he cried, ‘and all other Achaeans, may the gods who dwell in Olympus grant you to sack the city of Priam and to reach your homes in safety; but free my daughter and accept a ransom for her, in reverence to Apollo, son of Zeus’ (Homer, *The Illiad and the Odyssey*, 2008, p. 15).

Further, Tolkien (1990) in *TATB* has written concerning Goldberry’s abduction by Bombadil:

But one day Tom, he went and caught the River-daughter,  
in green gown, flowing hair, sitting in the rushes,  
singing old water-songs to birds upon the bushes.

He caught her, held her fast! Water-rats went  
scuttering  
reeds hissed, herons cried, and her heart was  
fluttering.  
Said Tom Bombadil: ‘Here’s my pretty maiden  
You shall come home with me! The table is all  
laden:  
yellow cream, honey comb, white bread and  
butter;  
roses at the window-sill and peeping round the  
shutter.  
You shall come under Hill! Never mind your  
mother  
in her deep weedy pool: there you’ll find no  
lover!’ (pp. 9-10)

While the above examples seem to prove Tolkien's misogyny, in his *Letters* there are some curious contradictions, as there are in his fantasy works. In one letter to Michael Tolkien, he apologizes for the state of women, and men, blaming all human imperfection on the Fall of Humanity from God (Tolkien, 1981). In essence, then, post-lapsarian men are as bad as women proving again his strong Catholicism and his disappointment in humanity in general. Also, the specter of domination comes into play once again. Women have traditionally been subjugated by men (hooks, 2000). As far as his literature is concerned, Hesser (2007) has said this of Goldberry:

What is quite possibly the most significant point when describing Goldberry as a feminine figure in *The Lord of the Rings* is the cooperative and reciprocal relationship that she shares with her husband Tom Bombadil. They share a domestic responsibility in a way that is not seen between men and women anywhere else in Tolkien's work. (p. 245)

This is supported by the contentions of hooks (2000) who has noted that equality in a relationship between men and women subverts domination and is fueled by love.

Bombadil genuinely seems to love Goldberry, despite his controversial courtship of her.

The same thing seems to have occurred in the relationship between Paris and Helen in Greek mythology.

Another strong woman is Galadriel the Elven Queen of Lothlórein. She is the ruler of a beautiful, magical realm possibly inspired by the parks at Oxford University that Tolkien frequented (Morgan, 2014). Fisher (2007) says of her, "*The Lord of the Rings* has often been criticized for a supposed dearth of strong women, but one need look no further than the character of Galadriel for a counterargument" (p. 227). She is one of

Tolkien's strongest and most vividly portrayed characters regardless of gender (Fisher, 2007). Further, she, alluding back to hooks (2000), seems to be genuinely loved by her husband Celeborn and her minions. Also, Legolas, the lone Elf among the questing party, shows great deference to her when they meet in Lothlórein (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). In some ways, minus her husband, she is reminiscent of England's most powerful queen, Elizabeth I. To support this contention of her clout, Tolkien (1999) in *The Silmarillion* speaks of her as the only woman of the Noldor (High Elves) standing alone and proud among princes competing for a kingdom, well-loved in her realm, and the holder of one of the Three Rings of Power given to the Elves. The above information about her from Tolkien directly supports my contention that she could have been modeled, albeit loosely, on Elizabeth I. Elizabeth I stood nearly alone against the tyranny of Philip II of Spain who sought to either marry her and restore England to Catholicism or take England by force, as he attempted to do with the failed invasion of England by his Armada in 1588.

Tolkien's treatment of women is ambiguous. He makes misogynistic statements in his personal correspondence, has been accused of not portraying strong women in his work, yet sometimes he does the opposite. Obviously, further investigation into this area is needed, but that is not in the scope of this dissertation. Studies of Tolkien's mal-treatment of women, and/or under-treatment of their importance in his works, is not the focus of this dissertation; I focus on Tom Bombadil, and how he can be used to promote a more environmentally sound approach from humankind to the rest of the Earth.

Finally, there are Tolkien's views on the country and the city that seems to coincide with those discussed in Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973). Though it seems unlikely Tolkien read Williams's work since it was published the year of Tolkien's death, he would have most certainly have been familiar with the authors Williams cites in his work such as William Blake. As has been mentioned, Tolkien grieved the loss of the English countryside and abhorred industrial modernity. According to Williams's work, Tolkien's, though only mentioned once in regard to the growth of "country-based fantasy" (Williams, 1973, p. 258), sentiments were not alone:

For it is a critical fact that in and through these transforming experiences [urban and industrial growth] English attitudes to the country, and to ideas of rural life, persisted with extraordinary power, so that even after the society was predominantly urban in its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural; and even in the twentieth century, in an urban and industrial land, forms of older ideas and experiences remarkably persist. (Williams, 1973, p. 2)

Tolkien, like Barrie, Grahame, and T. H. White, created through their various works, "lost worlds" based on folktales and mythology that were nostalgic of a past that never existed (Williams, 1973, p. 258). It is high fictionalized fantasy they created that deluded and even falsified history to the masses for the sake of making a history they wanted. In Tolkien's case, it was a mythology for the England of Anglo-Saxon heritage since he felt it had no proper mythology of its own or it was tainted too much by Romano-Celtic and/or Norman-French influences, and in his mythology he included many ecological themes and tropes, though they were not his primary impetus for writing his mythology (Tolkien, 1981).

## Tolkien's Fantasy World

Tom Bombadil, part of the core of this dissertation, was the name assigned to a Dutch doll given to Tolkien's son Michael as a child. Michael seems to have disliked the doll so much that he tried at some point to flush it down the commode (Carpenter, 1977). As a character, Bombadil first appears in the poem "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil" published in *Oxford Magazine* (1934). The poem tells of the adventures of Bombadil and Goldberry, and their encounters with Old Man Willow, Badger-folk, and Barrow-wights in Bombadil's domain, the Old Forest (Tolkien, 1990). After the publication and success of *The Hobbit* (1937), Tolkien wanted to use Bombadil as the protagonist in a sequel, but the publishers disliked the notion (Carpenter, 1977). Bombadil was meant to be an enigma, according to Tolkien, and he represents the geist of the vanishing Oxford and Berkshire countryside, according to his own writings (Tolkien, 1981). Tolkien (1981) further has said of Bombadil in relation to his function in *TLOR* that:

He represents something that I feel important, though I would not be prepared to analyze the feeling precisely. I would not, however, have left him in, if he did not have some kind of function. I might put it this way. The story is cast in terms of a good side, and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, and so on; but both sides in some degree, conservative or destructive, want a measure of control; but if you have, as it were taken 'a vow of poverty', renounced control, and take your delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing, then the question of the rights and wrongs of power and control might become utterly meaningless to you, and the means of power quite valueless. (pp. 178-179)

Among Bombadil's functions in Tolkien's high fantasy works is that he serves as an ecological trope for how the environment should be treated against a background of

dominating industrial capitalism and the destruction it rained upon the English countryside in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries; it was an ugly transformation that occurred with increasing ferocity over the course of Tolkien's lifetime. According to Eagleton, though Tolkien was not an environmentalist per se, characters like Bombadil serve as examples to curtail excessive individual appetites, defend the landscape against ethical and technological changes symbolized in his fantasy by the Enemy and their strongholds of Mordor and Isengard, and to foster communal sustainability (Eagleton cited in Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Tolkien's sub-textual purpose is very similar to what Leopold (1949) was driving at with his land ethic. By studying characters like Tom Bombadil, in both formal and informal venues, maybe we as a species can come to realize that ecological problems are social problems and avert what Li (2006) calls "the end of nature" (p. 2453).

As far as Tolkien's reading of popular fiction goes, he read little. What he did read were John Buchan's works, H. Rider Haggard's fantasy, Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*, and E. A. Wyke-Smith's *The Marvellous Land of Snergs* (Carpenter, 1977). His major literary influences, according to Shippey (1983), who is the prime expert on Tolkien's sources, are as follows: *Beowulf*, and myriad other Anglo-Saxon or Old English works, the Icelandic *Eddas*, Morris's translation of *Völsunga Saga*, the Brothers Grimm, F. J. Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Wimberly's commentary *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads*, *A Book of Danish Ballads* (Orik, Ed.), *Sir Gawain*, *Pearl*, *Sir Orfed*, *The Ancrene Wisse*, Arthurian works, Saints' *Vitas*, *Madeville's Travels*, the *Lais of Marie de France*, Kirby's translation of the Finnish *Kalevala*,

Widsith's *A Study in Old English Heroic Legend*, Wilson's *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Saxo Grammaticus, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, the fantasy of George MacDonald (though later in life he claimed to despise his works), and works of fantasy by William Morris. Further, Tolkien (1981) claimed to have read, or tried to read, current works of science fiction and fantasy, but he states in his *Letters* that they failed to hold his attention, so in his later years he read little but fairy-stories.

Returning back to Tolkien's work, he also wrote the novella *Farmer Giles of Ham*, but it failed to become the successor to *The Hobbit* (Croft, 2007), and many poems such as "The Gest of Beren and Lúthien," and "The Fall of Arthur" (Carpenter, 1977).

In the 1930s through 1940s and early 1950s, Tolkien wrote his most famous work of high fantasy, *TLOR*, first published by George Allen and Unwin 1954-1955 (Sturgis, 2007). It embodied everything he loved about the West Midlands. Hobbits, many of the central characters of *The Hobbit* and *TLOR*, were developed out of a scribble he wrote in while grading certificate exams for extra income in 1930, "In a hole in the ground lived a hobbit" (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 1994, p. 1). After its success, he began *TLOR* which was not a children's book like its precursor, but geared more to adolescent and adult audiences (Tolkien, 1981). And again, given Tolkien's disdain for allegory, it is not about the momentous then current events of World War II according to him. Of it, C. S. Lewis has said, "These things were not devised to reflect any particular situation in the real world" (Lewis cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 190). It was, in its making, read chapter by chapter to The Inklings, and met with enthusiasm, though Tolkien was often hurt by

Lewis's private comments, as well as his conversion to Anglicanism, and he disliked Lewis's Narnia stories (Tolkien, 1981). In public, upon the 1954 serial release of *TLOR* by Allen and Unwin, however, Lewis was more generous and positive. Lewis wrote in an August 4, 1954, review of it that appeared in *Time and Tide*:

This book is like lightning from a clear sky. To say that in it heroic romance, gorgeous, eloquent, and unashamed, has suddenly returned at a period almost pathological in its anti-romanticism, is inadequate. But in the history of Romance itself---a history which stretches back to the *Odyssey* and beyond---it makes not a return but an advance or revolution: the conquest of new territory. (n.p.)

Overall, other reviews of *TLOR* were positive too, with some exception. W. H. Auden of *The New York Times* said, "Nobody seems to have a moderate opinion [of it]; either, like myself, people find it a masterpiece of its genre or they cannot abide by it" (Auden cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 222). Later, after its British release, it came to America published by Houghton Mifflin (Carpenter, 1977). Its success, as already mentioned earlier, proves it to be monumental, enduring, and it has the capacity to cross cultural and ethical boundaries, a facet so important in successful environmental education (Li, 2006). His other major fantasy works, *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*, were posthumously published in 1977 and 1980 respectively, and edited by son Christopher Tolkien. To Tolkien, the publication and success of *TLOR* brought fame, money, and, of course, tax and copyright issues. For example, upon its translation into Swedish, the translator commented in the Forward that it was an allegory of contemporary world politics, something we have seen Tolkien vehemently disagreed with (Carpenter, 1977). Also,



unauthorized versions of it were published as by Ace Publications in the United States; a case not settled by the Tolkien estate until 1992 (Sturgis, 2007).

During the tumultuous 1960s with the radicalization of youth, *TLO*R became a center of attraction, especially in America: “Its implied emphasis on the protection of natural scenery against the ravages of an industrial society harmonized with the growing ecological movement . . .” (Carpenter, 1977, p. 230). Along with its success, especially among more radicalized American youth, spinoffs of sorts sprung up. For example, there were Hobbit picnics, it began to receive both scholarly and lay criticism, and tags of deference such as “Frodo lives!” and “Gandalf for president” could be seen sprawled across walls as graffiti in cities such as New York (Carpenter, 1977, p. 230; Beagle cited in Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 1994, Preface). As Tolkien became a cult figure, which he disliked, his work’s popularity grew globally culminating in the recent cinematic versions of his work by Peter Jackson.

### **Final Years of Tolkien’s Life**

In 1959, Tolkien retired from Oxford. He had broken off an already cooling relationship with C. S. Lewis in 1957 for his marriage to Joy Davidson, a divorcee much Lewis’s junior, again showing his staunch adherence to Catholicism and because of Lewis’s conversion to Anglicanism. Lewis, who had years before taken a position at Cambridge, died in 1963 from renal failure (Shippey, 2001). Tolkien was again stricken by grief that he never seemed to shake when coupled with his own old age and his sickly wife. In his remaining years, Tolkien occupied himself by working on *The Silmarillion*, which incidentally he had wanted published before the rest of his high fantasy novels, but

could never finish as he was a known perfectionist that drove him to procrastination, taking care of his ailing wife, doing domestic chores, answering mail, and playing Patience (Solitaire) (Carpenter, 1977). In his gloom, he has written, “I can get nothing done, between the staleness and boredom, and anxiety and distraction” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 242). During this time, among his other publications, he managed to write *Smith of Wootton Major*, a short story, and seemingly a practical application of his “On Fairy-Stories” lecture/essay from 1936, which will be discussed later in the text (Flieger, 2007), *Leaf by Niggle*, and *TATB* (Carpenter, 1977).

In his last years, he received many honorary degrees: English, American, Scottish, Irish, Belgian, and even a Doctorate of Letters from Oxford. His wife Edith died in 1971 of an infected gall bladder. Tolkien died two years later on September 2, 1973, of a chest infection. He never did finish *The Silmarillion*; that task was left to his son Christopher.

## CHAPTER III

### FANTASY LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

High fantasy literature and ecological issues collide Romantically (in the literary sense) in J. R. R. Tolkien's high fantasy fiction to produce an enriched literary vehicle that attacks the foes of the environment and supports its allies. Veldman (1994) has said this of *TLOR*'s central theme of Romantic protest:

In it the good and the heroic treasure the past and traditional wisdom, see themselves as part of the natural world, affirm the power of individual agency to transform the course of history, and seek to create a community in which each individual has a place and a purpose. In contrast, Tolkien's villains reject the lessons of the past, regard nature as a resources to be exploited, revel in technology, and work to obliterate individuality while creating a universe characterized by self-interest and alienation. (p. 80)

Given that, J. R. R. Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature, as embodied by *TLOR*, can affect how current society thinks about ecological issues and change the dominate, ecologically pernicious weltanschauung. It does so because, as will be discussed about fantasy literature in general, it allows us to experience a world larger than can be perceived through our senses, but yet it is still plausible to us. It provides the possibility of something more than the quotidian, something that is sometimes ineffably transcendent, "the possibility of the impossible" (Cart, 2007, p. 40). In other words, what can be imagined can come into reality. In a sad and nostalgic sense, it is about the demise

of the Elven dominated Third Age of Middle-earth as it gives way to the world of men and the growing gap between humanity and nature that dominates the Fourth Age of Arda (Veldman, 1994). On a more cheerful note, it shows that the world can be re-enchanted to a more pristine state from what was lost to a mechanistic, uncaring, greedy, and exploitative capitalistic society.

### **Terms Defined**

Some terms need to be defined before proceeding to the discussion. “Fantasy” can be defined as a generalized term for any work of fiction that is not primarily grounded in a realistic depiction of the known world (Baldich, 2001). Examples of fantasy literature in general include Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Tolkien’s *TLOR*, and White’s *The Once and Future King* (“Fantasy,” 2014). It has been argued that modern high fantasy literature began with George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Phantasies*, and *The Golden Key*. As mentioned earlier, MacDonald had a deep influence on Tolkien from an early age in his life. His works written in the context of Victorian writers, like Charles Dickens, hold a deep concern for social justice (Kreglinger, 2007). Further, a close reading of Tolkien’s “On Fairy Stories” “show how deeply Tolkien’s thinking about fairy stories was shaped by MacDonald ” (Kreglinger, 2007, p. 399). Of MacDonald’s influence, though elsewhere Tolkien carefully downplays it, he has written, “They [Orcs] are not based on direct experience of mine; but owe, I suppose, a good deal to the goblin tradition . . . , especially as it appears in George MacDonald ” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 178). These Orcs, twisted and perverse creatures that revel in technology and destructive exploitation of all living things, coupled

with other evil beings in Tolkien's high fantasy, are the opposite of Bombadil and nature loving Elves. Of their primary home in Sauron's hideous land of Mordor, Tolkien has written that "here nothing lived, not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness" (Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 1994, p. 26). Mordor is a place like can be found in Dante's *Inferno*. Further, during their attack on the Hobbit's Shire under the guidance of Sharkey (a. k. a. Saruman the White), "The Enemy's infiltration of the Hobbit's Shire produces a Mordor in the making: a new and ugly mechanized mill, polluted water and air, senseless destruction of trees . . ." (Veldman, 1994, p. 82). Sauron, the primary antagonist of *TLOTR*, and his minions use their power especially the Master Ring to gain absolute power over all living things to be used at their will. Elves, on the other hand, used their lesser Rings of Power to make, heal, and preserve life. The Elves, like Bombadil, join in a partnership of sorts with nature that affirms life. Sauron and his forces seek to hinder such independence and build a world as a stage for a display of their absolute power (Veldman, 1994).

Here, it is worth noting to make a distinction between two often confused terms, science fiction and fantasy. While science fiction is a form of fantasy literature the terms are not interchangeable since science fiction is usually set in the future and is based on some sort of advanced science or technology. Fantasy is set in an imaginary world and features magic and mythical beings to varying degrees.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Science fiction paragon Arthur C. Clarke is famous, among other things, for noting that highly advanced technology is often considered magic. Ancient Alien theorists seem to like to state that quite often, as Erich von Däniken does in his *Chariots of the Gods* (1968) and other works.

A sub-genre of fantasy is “high fantasy” (or epic fantasy) which is defined by the epical nature of its characters, themes, and/or plots set in invented or parallel worlds, and it is chiefly concerned with the Manichean battle between good and evil fought out in pervasive but well-articulated landscapes (“High Fantasy,” 2014; Egoff cited in Cart, 2007). Further, often in high fantasy, as is the case of the primary protagonist the Hobbit Frodo Baggins in *TLOR*, a seemingly ordinary character endeavors in trials and tribulations that morph him/her into a hero capable of superhuman feats necessary to conquer evil on an epic scale (Hollands, 2011). Also, high fantasy literature is often ripe with miraculous events which Tolkien dubbed “eucatastrophe” as outlined in his 1947 lecture/essay “On Fairy Stories” (Tolkien, 2004, n. p.). An example of this “eucatastrophe,” (certain doom miraculously eradicated<sup>19</sup>) cited from a 1944 letter to Christopher Tolkien, is as follows:

So that in the Primary Miracle (the Resurrection) and lesser Christian miracles too though less, you have not only that sudden glimpse of the truth behind the apparent Anankê [personification of fate] of our world, but a glimpse that is actually a ray of light through the very chinks of the universe about us . . . . To descend to lesser things: I knew I had written a story of worth in ‘The Hobbit’ when reading it . . . I had suddenly in a fairly strong measure the ‘eucastrophic’ emotion at Bilbo’s exclamation: ‘The Eagles! The Eagles are coming!’ (Tolkien, 1981, p. 101)<sup>20</sup>

Obviously, this quote tells much about Tolkien’s staunch Catholicism, as well as his literary prowess and taste. It is this adherence to Catholicism that authors like Dickerson

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<sup>19</sup> Gollum, the dubious character whose life is devoted to the One Ring of Power, eventually destroys it as he does himself in the fires of Mount Doom. Or, maybe he finds peace in oblivion from his life-long obsession that is not of his making?

<sup>20</sup> This is an allusion to the Battle of the Five Armies found in *The Hobbit*.

and Evans (2006) claim as being the key to understanding Tolkien's concern for the environment. As has been/or will be discussed, I believe there is more than just one influence on Tolkien's environmentalism such as the influence of his mother, an innate love of nature, his literary tastes, and his hatred of modern industrial excesses.

Recently, popular examples of this genre of high fantasy literature are Tolkien's *TLOR* and *The Hobbit*, Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and Rowlings's Harry Potter books. The success of these works is "measured by the verisimilitude the author brings to his/her creation" (Cart, 2007, p. 40), the popular appeal of the author's writing style and subject matter, advertizing, and the tastes of his/her audience, driven in part by individual idiosyncrasies, in a particular socio-historical context.

That being said, Romanticism can be a form of fantasy, and fantasy is its antecedent. This chronology can easily be proven, for example, by correspondence between Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb in 1802 regarding the utility of fantasy as embodied by children's literature (Bottoms, 2006). However, Romanticism is a bit difficult to define since it can mean different things depending on the interpreter of its definition, thus giving it diverse meanings. Smith (2008) in "Proteus Rising . . ." most loosely defines it as a cross-disciplinary reaction against modernity, the Enlightenment with its empirical *weltanschauung*, industry, and capitalism. Key elements of Romanticism are as follows: utopias, romance, nature, imagination, love, heroism, rebellion, and social criticism (Smith, 2008). Specifically, Smith (2008) has said this of Romantic writers in the postmodern period:

What some writers call . . . Romanticism is a critical response to modernity, drawing on or echoing the legacy of nineteenth-century Romanticism, that is being articulated in our own time . . . . Nature is of course important both as a refuge from the excesses of civilization grown utilitarian and mechanistic, and as a way into enhanced self-consciousness for the poet or artist who finds an analogue for his or her feelings in landscape and weather. (pp. 187-188)

As is one of the main points of this study, via his Romantic impulses, Tolkien was able to express his strong emotions about the environment, specifically the destruction of the English Mid-lands by modernity and industry, in his works of high fantasy and in them as embodied by the power-yielding yet pacifistic character of Tom Bombadil. Of his Romantic impulses, Tolkien (1981) has stated:

But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story---the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendor from the vast backcloths---which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country (p. 144).

Not only does this exert from a letter tell of his positive opinion of Romanticism in general, but it also tells of his proverbial mission for writing his mythopoeia: to give England its own unique mythology as “it had no stories of its own” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 144).

That being said, more about Romanticism is in order. Traditional nineteenth-century Romantics include such poets as: Keats, Byron, Coleridge, and Shelley. According to Smith (2008), their works and works by modern Romantics<sup>21</sup> such as Tolkien driven by his staunch Catholic morality and to abate that which offends God by

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<sup>21</sup> What differentiates nineteenth-century Romantics from modern ones is simply the difference in time.



harming his creation often include topics that demand to be addressed but cannot be spoken of adequately in terms of modern empiricism. However, they can be addressed by Romantics via their ability to bring reality creatively into being, ability to work with the protean and unstable, and to inculcate truth and knowledge that transcend the explicit. Their works have proven to be efficacious by providing paths to ameliorate social (and environmental) problems by suggesting both direct and indirect action and through overt and vague proposals and themes. Tolkien's contributions towards ecological awareness fall under the indirect and vague category since his environmental tropes are masked somewhat by the complexities of high fantasy literature itself. As far as an example of more direct and overt action goes, the lessening of poverty, homeless children, work houses, and debtors' jails in Victorian Britain were accomplished at least in part through the socially conscious writing of Charles Dickens in works such as *Oliver Twist*.<sup>22</sup> Others, though, who were labeled Romantics such as William Blake, did also rail against industry and capitalism:

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every black'ning Church appalls;  
And the hapless Soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlot's curse  
Blasts the new born Infant's tear  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.  
(Blake cited in Williams, 1973, p.148)

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<sup>22</sup> Though not labeled a Romantic (he was more of a realist), Dickens's works had Romantic qualities.

Not only is this exert from Blake a non-traditional way of seeing both vice and innocence in the city, it is a making of new connections in the city to the entire system of human society that it embodies. It questions human social order as a whole. Other British poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries such as Meredith, Elliot, Tennyson, and James Thomson were also concerned about society and the environment too, as they also looked upon the pre-industrial past as a Golden Age of mankind (Williams, 1973). The poet Thomson has written:

That City's atmosphere is dark and dense,  
Although nor many exiles wander there,  
With many a potent evil influence,  
Each adding poison to the poisoned air;  
Infections of unutterable sadness,  
Infections of incalculable madness,  
Infections of incurable despair.  
(Thomson cited in Williams, 1973, p. 239)

Like Tolkien many years later, these poets and other social critics were aware of the profound connections between humankind and nature. To destroy nature is to destroy ourselves, as the corrupted wizard Saruman the White does in *TLOR*. One of the values of Tom Bombadil as an ally of nature is his realization of the necessity of harmony with it.

Also, like other Romantic poets, Tolkien looked to the past, though a fictitious one, to find a paradise long lost under the belching smoke of factories, automobiles, trains, and other polluters of nature driven by modern industrial capitalism. Further, even though Tolkien's high fantasy is set in the past, in itself it looks to a deeper past for a more perfect world that was at peace with nature and that can be re-created in the future

(Tolkien, 1981). Finally, like the Romantic poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, Tolkien believed that empiricism and industrialization threatened to reduce the world to its materialistic value. He, like the Romantics, was terrified and disgusted by the mechanized destruction of nature, by technological approaches to human existence, and by self-serving assumptions about what ethical conduct needed to be. So, like his forbearers, he turned inward on himself to his imagination in order to voice his protests against these abominations (Veldman, 1994).

To conclude this section, and moving forward to the present, or near present, it is worth noting that examples of such topics that bear relevance to environmental concerns and often lack enough voice through science are the more aesthetic and life-encompassing aspects of the myriad and manifold ecological issues that currently plague the Earth such as the mistreatment of animals. Romantic fantasy, such as the works of Tolkien, Lewis, Rowlings, White and others are able to accomplish what cold empiricism cannot do by fueling the imagination for a better world in the future, though these authors tend to look to a fictional past that respects nature for inspiration.

### **Tolkien on Fantasy Literature or “Fairy Stories”**

Tolkien uses the term “fairy stories” interchangeably with the term “high fantasy literature,” and I take license to do the same. For Tolkien (1981), these tales were acts of “sub-creation” and the making of “secondary worlds” (p. 145). Secondary worlds, according to Nagy (2007), simply mean literary fiction. Sub-creation links the making of fiction with the human creative faculty and with creator-God for the deeply Catholic Tolkien (Nagy, 2007). Drawing from though ultimately dismissing the classical Romantic

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous argument for readers to engage in a "willing suspension of disbelief" found in his *Biographia Literaria*, also discussed by Aristotle, Tolkien refutes and expands upon Coleridge's musings (Coleridge cited in Thomas, 2007, p. 481). Though he disagrees with Coleridge on proper readings of fantasy, he does agree with Coleridge that literature is like a lamp rather than a mirror, "that is, literature creates 'secondary worlds,' which illumine, rather than simply reflect reality [or are a simulacrum]" (Tolkien cited in Veldman, 1994, p. 46). In his own words, "Because I think that fairy story has its own mode of reflecting 'truth,' different from allegory, or (sustained) satire, or 'realism,' and in some ways [is] more powerful" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 233). This special ability for fairy stories to reveal "truth" above other genres is due to their capacity to stimulate the human imagination of what could be. So, as relevant to this dissertation, fantasy literature could very well affect today's readers' perceptions of issues like the ecological crisis "through the presence of the marvelous or numinous, which not only define fantasy but gives it its power" (Veldman, 1994, p. 40). Further, this idea of "truth" will be discussed in other chapters, and examples of fantasy's awe-inspiring nature will be given too.

Much of what Tolkien has written on fairy stories can be found in his eponymously named essay first presented at the University of Saint Andrews on March 8, 1939, when he addressed the annual Andrew Lang Lecture (Thomas, 2007). In his speech, Tolkien discusses three main questions: First, what are fairy stories? Second, What is their origin? Third, and of greatest importance for the purposes of this dissertation, What is their purpose and/or value? (Thomas, 2007). For sake of brevity, I

will summarize what Tolkien said about the first two questions. The third question, given its pertinence, I will examine in more detail.

In regard to the definition of fairy stories, Tolkien disagreed with the then *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of the term because he felt it to be too narrow. He said: “For the moment I will say only this: a ‘fairy-story’ is one which touches on or uses Faerie [sic], whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy” (Tolkien, 2004, p. 2). He goes on to provide examples of what should not be called fairy stories, and his list includes: Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Well’s *The Time Machine*, Carroll’s Alice books, and bestiary fables (Tolkien, 2004). He does not provide a list of what he considers successful fairy tales in his lecture/essay (Tolkien, 2004). However in his *Letters*, and in reference to his own fantasy works, which grows especially important when fused with the possible moral/ethical underpinnings of fantasy, Tolkien (1981) has stated:

Middle-earth is not an imaginary world . . . [It is] the objectively real world, in use specifically opposed to imaginary worlds (as Fairyland) or unseen worlds (as Heaven or Hell). The theatre of my tale is this earth, the one in which we now live, but the historical period is imaginary. (p. 239)

This supports the notion that his work (and fantasy literature more generally) can have real world applications, such as influencing perceptions of the current global ecological crisis; a good example of his real world applications is Tom Bombadil with his love, reverence, and care of nature from which we can learn. On moral conundrums, Bonnet (2003) has noted that we are morally linked to the Earth via the biocentrism as espoused in the “Gaia Hypothesis” (p. 660). That is the idea of lending equal importance and

reverence for all life, and with it “comes to constitute the primary object of morality” (Bonnet, 2003, p. 660). This view becomes even more plausible when considering that Tolkien has postulated that his works are “true” in the sense that they were not invented by him, but they are based on canonical works with universal truths, if that can be so, of European literature, and whose truths he merely re-discovered and reapplied in his philological studies and works of high fantasy literature. The proverbial truisms of it all are not based on any comprehensive understanding of “truth,” but Tolkien’s notions of them. His “truisms” do not make him unquestionably correct, but they still are very plausible. Tolkien (1981) once postulated that he would leave the truth to the philosophers. Watson (2009), a renowned Cambridge scholar of English, has noted that both Tolkien and his friend C. S. Lewis, another well-known author of high fantasy literature, both firmly believed universal truth could be found in stories and were reacting against modern fiction which they both disliked. So, this notion of truth as found in Tolkien remains contested, but as this dissertation demonstrates it can be found in the likes of his character Tom Bombadil, and others, in regards to their treatment of the environment.

As for the second question Tolkien raises concerning the origin of fairy stories from his Andrew Lang Lecture/essay, he dances over this topic with few well-articulated answers with the exception of a diatribe concerning the creative capacity of humankind through the use of imagination. However, he does say that the importance of fairy stories is found in that “there remains still a point too often forgotten: that is the effect produced now by these old things in the stories as they are” (Tolkien, 2004, pp. 10-11). Meaning,

these stories still can be valuable to current readers, despite the antiquity of them and their themes. For example, the collection of German folk tales by the Brothers Grimm can still teach modern readers much about various topics related to life experiences. *Little Red Riding Hood* has much to say about sexually predatory adult males to adolescent girls; hence, the “big bad wolf” motif. The former example is in reference to an antithetic monomythic view of legends and myths in the sense of Joseph Campbell. This lends credence to my postulation that motifs in this genre, such as ecological preservation, can be nourished in their readers. If *Little Red Riding Hood* can teach something about “sexual predators” to young women, then Tolkien’s Tom Bombadil can teach us something about how to treat the environment with reverence and respect.

Now, consider the third and most important question for this dissertation’s purposes that Tolkien proposed in his lecture/essay: What is the purpose of fairy stories and what is their value? In his explanation, this dissertation’s argument that high fantasy/fairy tales can be utilized to affect readers’ perceptions of contemporary problems, such as ecological issues, becomes readily apparent. In general on fantasy literature, Tolkien (2004) has said, “For creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not slavery to it” (p.18). He also has said:

Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary, the keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make. If men were ever in a state in which they did not want to know or could not perceive truth (facts or evidence), then Fantasy would languish until they were cured. If they ever get into that state (it would not seem

at all impossible), Fantasy will perish, and become Morbid Delusion. (Tolkien, 2004, p. 18)

One interpretation of this is that we (humans) have the ability to change our situation and that of the world and its minions that we affect so adversely. We could change our ecological situation if we are spurred to do it. Tolkien's fantasy's ability to do this lays in his Catholic "creation-centered ethic of stewardship" achieved in his mythopoetic imagination "that holds the potential to re-enchant the world" (Morgan, 2010, p. 383). It is this re-enchantment that Bateson contends can resuscitate our reverence for nature; that is, giving life back to the appreciation of life. But, it must be done through a praxis (or Deweyan practicality) that realizes the interconnectedness of all life and puts an end to Bacon's "natura vexata" and Cartesian dualism (Berman, 1981; Freeman, 2009). We can learn a lot about how to treat nature with reverence and respect from Tolkien and his character, Tom Bombadil. Returning to Morgan (2010), by re-enchantment he is referring to Tolkien's idea that at the core of many of our fairy stories that there is "open or concealed, pure or alloyed, the desire for a living, realized sub-creative art, which is . . . wholly different from the greed for self-centered power" (Tolkien, 2004, p. 17). According to Eaglestone (2007), power in Tolkien's fantasy works takes three forms, some of which are pernicious:

- Power from rank or nobility such as held by Denethor the (bad) Steward of Gondor.
- Power through charisma such as possessed by Aragorn or Gandalf.



- Power from knowledge about things such as is the case with Bombadil or his antithesis Saruman.

The later, this knowledge-based power, links Tolkien to Michel Foucault who found the core of power elusive and who notoriously refused to define it. However, Foucault did analyze its plastic and changing effects. He also scrutinized its effectiveness in altering perceptions as hard science has done over the past several hundred years decimating the mystical nature of creation for one based on axioms supported by empiricism. The categories through which we perceive the world create knowledge, and it is not neutral (Eaglestone, 2007). It, like magic, can be used for good or evil as is done in Tolkien's high fantasy. For example, and as will be demonstrated later in another chapter, Saruman uses his knowledge and power for evil and self-aggrandizement, while Bombadil uses his knowledge and power for good and mutual well-being.

Fantasy's proverbial "magic" to re-enchant is powered by the imagination that can re-connect us to being human and more humane moving beyond allegations that fantasy literature is no more than escapism (Le Guin cited in Ashitagawa, 2009). Though some fantasy literature is no more than escapism, there can be a very profound utility to the genre. It can be used to change mindsets such as the dominant one promoted by empiricism and industrial capitalism that only values nature for its utility and whose conscious goal is exploitation of it (Berman, 1981). Through this magical re-enchantment, humans could challenge the dominant and domineering anthropocentric mindset where, "They [We] have made false gods out of other materials; their notions, their banners, their monies; even their sciences and their social and economic theories

have demanded human sacrifice” (Tolkien, 2004, p. 18). Hence, the social and ecologically disastrous consequences of planetary abuse can possibly be challenged or recovered/restored to a more pre-lapsarian state.<sup>23</sup> Expanding upon this notion of high fantasy literature as a segue to recovery and re-enchantment of the world, ecologically or otherwise, Tolkien (2004) has written that:<sup>24</sup>

Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining---regaining of a clear view. I do not say ‘seeing things as they are’ and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say ‘seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them’---as things apart from ourselves. (p. 19)

Tolkien holds that literature could reframe our perception of reality by persuading us to not objectify things, such as nature, only for devastating utility. In some ways, he engages in proto-queer theory in that he wanted to make the familiar strange. Further, he avers we can through literature, “be free with Nature,” and be “her lover” (Tolkien, 2004, p. 20).

For in fairy stories (high fantasy literature) as he read them and mused upon them,

Tolkien (2004) “first divined the potency of word, and the wonder of the things, such as stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine” (p. 20). This is

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<sup>23</sup> Tolkien’s Letter 155 (1981) further has defined the magic he addressed, in part, through the character of Galadriel in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1994). There are two types of magic: “magia” and “goeteia.” Magia is ordinary magic, while goeteia is witchcraft and/or necromancy (see *The Hobbit* and the Necromancer’s, a recuperating Sauron from his first defeat by Isildur during the Second Age, fortress in southern Mirkwood, Dol Guldur) (Tolkien, 1999). Neither of them is inherently good or evil. Only motive, purpose, or use makes them one of the other (Tolkien, 1981). The magic I am referring to here is beneficent.

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that both Tolkien and his friend C. S. Lewis were so disenchanted by the state of global affairs throughout their lives that they rarely kept up with current events beyond giving cursory attention to the happenings via newspapers (Tolkien never owned a television). Both steadfastly believed only in the “truth of literature,” and of course God for Tolkien, but less so for Lewis (Carpenter, 1977, p. 115).

reminiscent of Tolkien considering himself a Hobbit of sorts. In fact he said, “I am a Hobbit, all but in size” (Tolkien cited in Stanton, 2007, p. 282). Since Tolkien found fantasy literature life changing, it follows that his readers can too. Fictional prose and/or poetry can affect us all for ill or for good.

Specifically, in regard to the power of fantasy to challenge and change our convictions about the environment, Tolkien (2004) is all too blunt when he has stated, “The rawness and ugliness of modern European life . . . is the sign of a biological inferiority, of an insufficient or false reaction to environment” (p. 21). We readers of high fantasy literature should welcome corrections to our dominant anthropocentric *weltanschauung* that can be made by this most important genre of literature. It is this human centered arrogance that alienates us from the rest of creation and to which we naturally, though often sub-consciously, seek restoration and recovery. Biologist E. O. Wilson (1992) calls it “biophilia” (p. 350), while Tolkien, ever the devout Catholic, attributes the world’s malaise to the Fall of Man, and humans’ subsequent alienation from God and the rest of his creation (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Tolkien (1981) has said in this vein, after railing against the shortcomings endemic to all ages of civilization but most poignantly about the recent advent of the internal combustion engine (cars), that:

There are profounder wishes: such as the desire to converse with other living things . . . . Other creatures are like other realms with which Man has broken off relations, and sees now from the outside at a distance, being at war with them, or on terms of an uneasy armistice. (p. 22).

I take this as an allusion, despite Tolkien’s disdain for allegory, to his experience in the Battle of the Somme in Summer 1916, where on the first day the British had over 50,000

casualties. All things being considered, the Somme cost both sides scores of men who died horribly. Further, it alludes to the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which was not so much a treaty as uneasy armistice that would inevitably cause World War II as A. J. P. Taylor has argued in his *Origins of the Second World War* (1961).

Humans share with other beings a deep common interest in life and that which advances life. Tolkien's ecology, according to Curry (1997), “. . . is radical in a modern sense and a return to our roots. It anticipates ‘deep ecology’ [as a popular movement]” (p. 28).

In an unintended sense, Tolkien's high fantasy works such as *TLOA* can be considered ecocritical. Ecocriticism is a dialogue between literature and the natural world to save nature from disaster (Khan, 2010). More recently, ecocriticism is a dialogue between traditional criticism and ecological disaster. Ecocriticism has brought refreshing new investigations of canonical authors as diverse as Shakespeare, Milton, Cervantes, Whitman, Dickenson, Virginia Woolf, and Faulkner, in hope of finding connections that speak to what Terry Eagleton dubs, “issues that speak to transformation” (Eagleton cited in Elder in Dickerson and Evans, 2006, p. x).

Environmentalism of today is looking beyond the dichotomy of wilderness preservation and away from the more utilitarian definitions of conservationism than which prevailed in the twentieth-century; that is, as propagated by such pioneering ecologists as Aldo Leopold. In Tolkien's fantasy works, as in our world, a different approach to globalization is possible where people could unite to protect the Earth (Elder cited in Dickerson and Evans, 2006).

Tolkien is important, as he and others point out that fantasy literature is important, in that his fantasy works have the enormous power to change ecologically detrimental practices largely caused by dominant anthropocentric mindsets for at least the following reasons: his ongoing popularity in print and in film; his work's popularity is not singularly centered on an environmental premise making it more palatable to general audiences; and the breadth, depth, and complexity of his compelling, though not overt, case for the preservation of nature (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Finally, to conclude this chapter, and most important of all, Tolkien provides hope in his own Catholic albeit somewhat pessimistic way. As Patrick Curry (1997) has said: "Tolkien's Middle-earth gleams with light of an ancient hope: peace between peoples, and with nature, and before the Great Unknown" (p. 165).

CHAPTER IV  
TOM BOMBADIL

**Introduction**

This chapter has multiple purposes and serves as the core of evidence for my dissertation. First, it investigates the mysterious character of Tom Bombadil, and it offers alternatives to what sort of creature he may be. Most importantly, the first section defines his nature that is reverential and respectful of all life, and he is a good steward of all life's myriad forms in his realm mirroring Tolkien's own perspective of how nature should be treated.

Second, this chapter ventures in to specific examples from Tolkien's works about how Bombadil is a prime example of a harmonious approach to nature that is devoid of anthropocentric domination and abuse of it. The examples come from *TLOR* and *TATB*. From *TLOR* the main incidents are from Bombadil's rescuing of the Hobbits from Old Man Willow, their stay at his house after their rescue, and his saving of the Hobbits from the clutches of an evil Barrow-wight. From *TATB* poems varied in topic are scrutinized.

The key to all this textual support from Tolkien's high fantasy works and poetry are woven into the analysis; that is, as follows: all life is sacred and should be treated as such, our current anthropocentric weltanschauung is pernicious to all of nature including ourselves and needs to be changed to one that is much more biocentric, and finally the

readers of Tolkien's fantasy can learn much about how the Earth should be cared for properly without exploitation by humanity.

### **What is Tom Bombadil?**

The character of Tom Bombadil is introduced fairly early in the *Fellowship of the Ring* of *TLOR* (1994). As mentioned, he could be many things such as, according to the few scholars who have bothered to notice him, and he is not found in the Jackson's movies: an Earth (Arda) spirit, the spirit of the fading early twentieth-century English countryside, a Valar, a Maiar, a member of the Istari, some sort of Elf, a prehistoric Green Man, an avatar of Illúvatar, or something totally unique and unclassifiable in terms of Tolkien's mythology (Campbell, 2001; Dickerson and Evans, 2006; Curry, 1997; Tolkien, 1981). Tolkien has offered an explanation for Bombadil's character in his correspondence; that is, he is the spirit of the fading early twentieth-century English countryside and whose name he derived from a Dutch doll belonging to one of his children. He was really unsure of who or what Bombadil is, or how he is represented in the fabric of the Trilogy. Tolkien has stated:

I don't think Tom needs philosophizing about, and is not improved by it. But many have found him an odd or indeed discordant ingredient. In historical fact I put him in because I had already 'invented' him independently (he first appeared in the Oxford Magazine) and wanted an 'adventure' on the way. But I kept him in, and as he was, because he represents certain things otherwise left out. I do not mean him to be an allegory---or I should not have given him so particular, individual, and ridiculous a name---but 'allegory' is the only mode of exhibiting certain functions: he is then 'allegory', or an exemplar, a particular embodying of pure (real) natural science: the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature, *because they are 'other'* [sic] and wholly independent of the enquiring mind, a spirit coeval with the rational mind, and entirely unconcerned with 'doing' anything with the knowledge . . . . T. B. exhibits another point in his attitude to the Ring, and its failure to affect him. You must concentrate on

some part, probably relatively small, of the World (Universe), whether to tell a tale, however long, or to learn anything however fundamental--- and therefore much will from that 'point of view' be left out, distorted on the circumference, or seem a discordant oddity. The power of the Ring over all concerned, even the Wizards or Emissaries, is not a delusion---but it is not the whole picture, even of the then state and content of that part of the Universe. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 192)

What is worthwhile studying about Bombadil is his benevolent treatment of nature or him being a "prime exemplar" of environmental ethics (Campbell, 2011). In the Preface to *Ents, Elves, and Eriador*, Dickerson and Evans (2006), two of the few authors to give much press to Bombadil, have noted their work is part of a new agrarianism, and this assists in understanding him:

Agrarianism is a comprehensive worldview that appreciates the intimate and practical considerations which exist between humans and the earth. It stands as our most promising alternative to the unsustainable and destructive ways of current global, industrial, and consumer culture.

Their agrarianism segues into ecocriticism, which is a dialogue between literature and the natural world, falling in step with the modern environmental movement. It grew out of nature writing from the likes of Thoreau, Emerson, Leopold, Carson, and Naess (Elder, 2006). It has also been used to give rise to re-investigations of canonical authors such as: Shakespeare, Milton, Whitman, Emily Dickenson, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Dante, Faulkner, and Cervantes (Elder, 2006). Terry Eagleton has argued that criticism, more generally, must speak directly to issues of social transformation to be effective (Eagleton cited in Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Tolkien, for example, has emphasized, though not an environmentalist per se, to restrain individual appetites, defend the



landscape against ethical and technical changes, as symbolized by Sauron's Mordor and Saruman's Isengard, and for communal sustainability.

Saruman's Isengard, for example, is a hellscape blighted by industrial waste and devastation, not unlike Tolkien's childhood home which had been overrun by Birmingham's industrial sprawl as were other parts of England (Elder, 2006). Opposed to it is the bucolic Shire of the Hobbits which is a sentimental re-description of Tolkien's childhood home of Sarehole, England. These Hobbits, like the gardener Sam Gamgee, exercise true stewardship of the land and are opposed to despotic characters such as Saruman and Denethor (the Steward of Gondor) through acts of love and community (Morgan, 2010).

Tolkien's ethic of stewardship stemmed from his creation-centered Catholic faith, according to Dickerson and Evans (2006). Those who harm nature or use it for self-aggrandizement were sinners to him. Tolkien has averred that God's creation should be preserved based on the Christian values of love, humility, pity, temperance, compassion, and the service to others, as is the case with the characters in *TLOR* such as Gandalf, Frodo, Sam, and Aragorn (Morgan, 2010). Further, returning to those noble characters' antithesis and nemesis, Saruman represents possible human tinkering with creation through biogenetic engineering as exemplified by his race of super Orcs, the Uruk-hai, and his destruction speaks to the notion of domination and ownership unlike Tom Bombadil who lives in harmony with nature. In Tolkien, as in our world, a different approach to globalization and destructive industrialization is possible, where free peoples

could unite to protect the Earth by upholding the diversity of both human communities and wild lands.

Again, though Tolkien was not an environmentalist per se, his ecological vision is of a responsible Catholic whose Christianity shaped his fundamental perspective on the Western intellectual tradition (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Despite other opinions about the environmentally destructive ethos of Christianity, it deserves some credit, opinion varies on how much if any, for the foundations of responsible environmentalism, according to Dickerson and Evans (2006). I am not sure I agree totally with their opinion on this matter of the foundations of ecological preservation, but there is some Biblical support for this notion as found in the New Testament. For example, *Luke 12:42-44* is the parable of the good steward as exemplified in *TLOR* most prominently by Bombadil with his care for all life in the Old Forest:

And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions'.

Soon after in *Luke 12:45-46* follows its opposite as exemplified in *TLOR* by the likes of Saruman and Denethor. The parable of the bad steward states:

But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful.

Finally, there is *Luke* 16:1-2 supporting this notion of stewardship in the parable of the unjust steward like Denethor in his treatment of his son Faramir:

Then Jesus said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’

Bad stewardship because of such misuse as in the last two parables is often looked upon harshly by environmentalists. But in Tolkien’s environmental ethic, stewardship is an appropriate term because Tolkien used it in terms of the good steward, and as is modeled by Gandalf and Bombadil. Further, to delve into the realm of Tolkien’s love of languages, and since philology was such a massive influence upon his works of high fantasy, steward comes from the Old English *stig* (hall) and *weard* (keeper). “Stigweard” was a keeper of the mead hall, an all important place of communal gathering in Dark Age societies. It came to be expanded to being the overseer of agriculture of the feudal estate during the lord’s frequent absences (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Denethor, Steward of Gondor, is a prime example of a bad steward (Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 1994).

However, that being said, I feel that Dickerson and Evans (2006) are correct when they have written that “[Tom Bombadil] whose selfless knowledge and love of the created world are independent of any power or advantage they might afford” (p. xx). Further, I agree that Tolkien’s environmental model is not completely economic (like capitalism or communism) but rooted in the goodness of the Earth as the handiwork of its maker, Eru Ilúvatar; and also, his model is based on Christian stewardship that is “. . . benevolent, selfless custodial care of the environment rather than as a ‘cover term’

justifying the exploitation of our natural resources for commercial, corporate, or personal gain” (Dickerson and Evans, 2006, p. xx). A steward is not someone who owns property or lords over a domain, but one who is responsible for the care of something placed in his/her custody. We are all stewards of the Earth whether we like it or not, and it is our duty to protect the planet in a Naessian sense like Bombadil does in Tolkien’s fantasy works.

Also, returning to philological matters, curiously enough, Tom Bombadil refers to himself in proper third person without the use of pronouns. Instead of saying “I,” he generally says “Tom.” For example, when the questing Hobbit Frodo asks Bombadil, while staying in his house after the Old Man Willow incident about what he is, Bombadil responds: “Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the Big People [sic], and saw the little People arriving” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 148). This use of proper third person, especially concerning Bombadil’s enigmatic origins could refer to his proverbial power over nature. It is akin to God in the *Old Testament* referring to himself in *Leviticus* 18: 2, “I am the Lord your God.” It is probable that this alludes to the power of naming, as exemplified in the *Old Testament* by YHWH, the tetragrammaton . Naming has power in the Abrahamic faiths, and Tolkien, being a good Catholic, was likely aware of this. By constantly naming himself in third person, Tom shows his power over his domain. Also, this could support the contention that Bombadil is an avatar of Ilúvatar, the Creator God in Tolkien’s legendarium. If he is not an avatar of Ilúvatar, he could be something close like the Metatron (Enoch/God’s Herald and highest ranking angel). One

way or the other, by incessantly naming himself, Bombadil proves power over his realm as a good steward.

There are also other noteworthy inconsistencies/oddities about Bombadil's character worth mentioning here to learn more about his character, some concerning his age. "In the House of Tom Bombadil" he has said:

Mark my words, my friends: Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn. He made paths before the Big people, and saw the little People arriving. He was here before the Kings and the graves and the Barrow-wights. When the Elves passed westward, Tom was already here, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless---before the Dark Lord [Melkor] came from the Outside. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, pp. 148-149).

So it would seem by his own description of his origins that Bombadil was one of the first, possibly a Valar. Glorfindel, at the Council of Elrond, seems to concur when he has stated of him: "Last as he was First" (Tolkien, 1994, p. 298). However, in *The Two Towers*, Tolkien (1994) has Gandalf say that the Ent Lord Treebeard is the oldest creature on Middle-earth. Who is wrong Bombadil or Gandalf? In fact, Peter Jackson left Bombadil out the films all together due to temporal constraints, so the films do not help in clarifying the issue. Dickerson and Evans (2006) have made a statement that could make this a moot point:

The fact that he does not quite fit into Middle-earth is ironic in this respect: he may be the most explicit, concrete embodiment of the natural world---an incarnation, we might say of the environment itself. Tom may not fit into Middle-earth because he stands for it. (p. 19)

One of the better interpretations of Bombadil is that he is a personification of nature itself (Dickerson and Evans, 2006), an Earth spirit that is really not classifiable in Tolkien's pantheon. This is suggested by his deep, glad, carefree, happy voice, and his peculiar habit of referring to himself in third person, and being adorned in his rather comical outfit, as described earlier in an exert (see p. 18 of text) from Tolkien's (1990) *TATB*. When he first appears in *TLOR*, during the abduction of the Hobbit Merry by Old Man Willow in the Old Forest, Bombadil comes singing:

*Hey dol! Ring a dong dillo!  
Ring a dong! hop along! fal lai the willow!  
Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo! . . .  
Hey! Come merry dol! derry dol! My darling!  
Light goes the weather-wind and feathered starling.  
Down along under Hill, shining in the sunlight,  
Waiting on the doorstep for the cold starlight,  
There my pretty lady is, River-woman's daughter,  
Slender as the willow-wand, clearer than the water.  
Old Tom Bombadil water-lillies bringing  
Comes hopping home again. Can you hear him singing?  
Hey! Come merry dol! derry dol! and merry-o,  
Goldberry, Goldberry, merry yellow berry-o!  
Poor old Willow-man, you tuck your roots away!  
Tom's in a hurry now. Evening will follow day.  
Tom's going home again water-lillies brining.  
Hey! Come derry dol! Can you hear me singing?[sic]  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, p. 134)*

At this juncture it is worth mentioning the character of Goldberry again. Though some have noted Tolkien was a misogynist for his abduction of Goldberry story as found in *TATB* (Tolkien, 1990, pp. 9-10; see text), his relationship with her seems quite amicable at this point or why would he be brining his wife flowers? Goldberry is a naiad, or water spirit, in all probability. According to Tolkien (1981), "Goldberry represents the actual

seasonal changes in such lands” (p. 272). This further supports the contention that Bombadil, as well as Goldberry, are physical embodiments of the spirit of nature (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Additional support for this supposition is given at the Council of Elrond (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) when Galdor states: “Power to defy our enemy is not in him [Bombadil], unless such power is in the earth itself. And yet we see that Sauron can torture and destroy the very hills” (p. 298). Bombadil’s power is equated with the natural potency of the Earth to exist and resist destruction. Tolkien (1981) has written that “[Bombadil] is to take delight in things for themselves without reference to yourself, watching, observing, and to some extent knowing” (p. 179). For Bombadil the trappings of power, right or wrong, and control are meaningless and the means of acquiring it quite useless. “It is a natural pacifist view” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 179). Bombadil, in part, represents the pursuit of love of selfless knowledge of creation independent of any power or advantage such knowledge may bring (Curry, 1997).

Now, let me make mention here of the texts concerning Tom Bombadil. He appears first in *TATB* (originally published in 1934), a collection of poems, and his presence is integral in three chapters of *TLOR*: “The Old Forest,” “In the House of Tom Bombadil,” and “Fog on the Barrow-downs.” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* 1994). He is also mentioned in “The Council of Elrond,” and at the tale’s end in “Homeward Bound” and “The Grey Havens” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994; *The Return of the King*, 1994).

## Tom Bombadil and Old Man Willow

One way to view Tom Bombadil is as a creature of pure power without the desire to dominate others or other things. Tolkien (1981) has written:

He [Bombadil] is *master* [sic] in a peculiar way: he has no fear, and no desire of possession or domination at all. He merely knows and understands about such things as concern him in his natural little realm [the Old Forest]. He hardly even judges, and as far as can be seen makes no effort to reform or remove even the Willow. (p. 192)

Further, he does not want to oppress anything. Bombadil embodies Foster's Ninth Principle of Simplicity: "Reject anything that will breed opposition in others" (Foster, 1978, p. 82). Bombadil does not need or desire the Ring of Power forged by Sauron, "This is why the Ring seems but a trifle to Bombadil . . . . Tom rejects the Ring because he does not need power, but because he has his own power, a clean and pure power" (Brooks, 2014). He can command without violence, as he does in the case of Old Man Willow attacking the questing Hobbits in the Old Forest.

Concerning Old Man Willow and the Hobbits in the Old Forest, the Hobbits have a discussion about the dreadfulness of the place before entering it:

'If there are no worse things ahead than the Old Forest, I shall be lucky,' said Frodo . . . . 'There!' said Merry. 'You have left the Shire, and are now outside, and on the edge of the Old Forest.' 'Are the stories about it true?' asked Pippin. But the Forest is queer. Everything in it is very much more alive, more aware of what is going on, so to speak, than things are in the Shire. And the trees do not like strangers. They watch you. They are usually content merely to watch you, as long as daylight lasts, and don't do much. Occasionally the most unfriendly ones may drop a branch, or stick a root out, or grasp at you with a long trailer. But at night things can be most alarming, or so I am told. I have only once or twice been in here after dark, and then only near the hedge [a hedgerow separates the Shire from the Old Forest as a barrier of sorts]. I thought all the



trees were whispering to each other, passing news and plots along in an unintelligible language [probably Entish as used by the trees in Treebeard's Fangorn]; and the branches swayed a groped without any wind. They do say the trees do actually move, and can surround strangers and hem them in. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 124)

This discussion sets the stage for the Hobbits adventure in the domain of Bombadil, the Old Forest, and Tolkien describes the nature of his realm too in detail. It is obviously not a place for most humanoids to venture, as the stories the Hobbits recount prove to be all too true. Further, Tolkien has given us reason for the Old Forest's dislike of Hobbits. Though when compared to other more insidious creature like Orcs, the Hobbits are good stewards of the land, but they are not perfect.

Tolkien (1994) has written:

In fact long ago they [the trees] attacked the Hedge: they came and planted themselves right by it, and leaned over it. But the hobbits came and cut down hundreds of trees, and made a great bonfire in the Forest, and burned all the ground in a long strip east of the Hedge. After that the trees gave up the attack, but they became very unfriendly. (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, pp. 124-125)

Obviously, for previous crimes against them by Hobbits, the trees have due reason to dislike them. Here, it seems, Tolkien is alluding to the general destruction of forests even prior to the ravages of industrialization in England by usually fairly ecologically benign Medieval farmers because of their over-dependence on wood for building and fuel, and their need to clear lands to pasture their animals.

Upon entering the Old Forest, the Hobbits begin to feel the hatred of the trees towards them and their intrusion: "Now stronger than ever they felt again the ill will of the wood pressing on them" (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 127). After

pressing farther on into the forest, the Band rests by a Willow Tree. Soon after dozing off, Sam and Frodo find that Merry and Pippin have vanished. Both were being devoured by Old Man Willow, Merry more so than Pippin. After trying to free them in vain, Frodo runs down a path screaming for help. Then he hears Bombadil's nonsensical song.

Tolkien (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) describes the shock of the encounter for Frodo and Sam, and he provides another description of Bombadil:

Frodo and Sam stood as if enchanted . . . . There was a burst of song, and then suddenly, hopping and dancing along the path, there appeared above the reeds an old battered hat with a tall crown and a long blue feather stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big people, though he made noise enough for one, stumping along with great yellow boots on his thick legs, and charging through the grass and rushes like a cow going down to drink. He had a blue coat and a long brown beard; his eyes were blue and bright, and his face was red as a ripe apple, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter. In his hand he carried on a large leaf as on a tray a small pile of white water-lilies. (p. 135)

In the quotation, Bombadil's nature is once again called into question. He is not man nor Hobbit, but something quite different.

After inquiring to the nature of the Hobbits' woes, and after introducing himself, Bombadil proceeds to rescue Merry and Pippin from Old Man Willow. In his rescue of the half-eaten Hobbits, Bombadil exemplifies Ball's (1998) Third Definition of Stewardship; that is, of caring management which sees humans and other creatures in roles of lord and well-loved servant, as gardeners and managers, with the rest of creation having intrinsic value apart from being a mere resource for the taking. Bombadil is master in his realm of the Old Forest, but he is more akin to a gardener who manages his

plot with love for his lands for their own sake. He does not try to change Old Man Willow. He just keeps him in check (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). Proof of this lies in the Tolkien's (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) text:

‘What?’ shouted Tom Bombadil, leaping up in the air. ‘Old Man Willow? Naught worse than that, eh? That can soon be mended. I know a tune for him. Old grey Willow-man! I’ll freeze his marrow cold, if he don’t behave himself. I’ll sing his roots off. I’ll sing a wind up and blow leaf and branch away. Old Man Willow! setting down his lilies carefully on the grass, he ran to the tree. There he saw Merry’s feet still sticking out---the rest had already been drawn further inside. Tom put his mouth to the crack and began singing into it in a low voice. They could not catch the words, but evidently Merry was aroused. His legs began to kick. Tom sprang away, and breaking off a hanging branch smote the side of the willow with it. ‘You let them out again, Old Man Willow!’ he said. ‘What be you a-thinking of? You should not be walking. Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep! Bombadil is talking!’ He then seized Merry’s feet and drew him out of the suddenly widening crack. There was a tearing creak and the other crack split open, and out of it Pippin sprang, as if he had been kicked. Then with a loud snap both cracks closed fast again. A shudder ran through the tree from root to tip, and complete silence fell. (pp. 134-135)

Hence, Bombadil rescues Merry and Pippin without causing injury to Old Man Willow or changing his demeanor. This demonstrates both his stewardship and even his servant hood.

On this same notion of stewardship, again which Tolkien derives from his Catholicism and love of nature in general, Bombadil also appreciates other like-minded persons. That is why he enjoys conversing with his neighbor Farmer Maggot, who is also a good farmer or gardener like himself. Since the Old Forest in a sense is Bombadil’s farm, it is easy to see why he would take interest in Farmer Maggot. Bombadil, whose character is particularly significant in the portrayal of harmony between people and the land, regards Maggot as:

. . . a person of more importance than they [the four Hobbits] imagined [the Hobbits had a bad run in with Maggot while stealing his crops]. ‘There’s earth under his old feet, and clay on his fingers; wisdom in his bones, and both his eyes are open’. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 150).

Despite this one portrayal of Bombadil as a good steward and gardener, more needs to be said. Even though the Old Forest has hostility to outsiders, its animosity is for reason of abuse by prior generations of Hobbits as mentioned earlier. The Old Forest was once part of the vast forest region of Eregion in the First Age (Tolkien, 1999). By the Third Age, after the ecological devastation by hominid creatures, it was one of only four heavily wooded areas remaining in Arda: itself, Treebeard’s Fangorn, Lothlórien of Celeborn and Galadriel, and Mirkwood of the Dark Elves. Like the other forests, the Old Forest is still worthy of preservation. Though master of it, Bombadil makes no attempt to cultivate it or turn it from wild to tame; his treatment of it is reminiscent of Naess (1973), Devall and Sessions’s (1985) ecosophy, and Leopold’s (1949) feraculture.

### **Bombadil’s House**

After their narrow escape from the clutches of Old Man Willow, and upon invitation by Bombadil, the Hobbits made their way to Bombadil’s house. Tolkien (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994) has written: “‘You shall come home with me! The table is all laden with yellow cream, honeycomb, and white bread and butter. Goldberry is waiting. Time enough for questions around the supper table’” (p. 136). Hobbits are notorious gluttons, and curiously enough, Tolkien (1981) once told a correspondent, “I am in fact a *Hobbit* [sic] (all in but size)” (p. 288). This enticement to supper seems to tell

of Tolkien himself, for he also relates his love of food and drink in his lecture/essay “On Fairy Stories” (2004).

After trodding behind Bombadil through the wild forest, the Hobbits came upon a well-kept path leading to a lawn and Bombadil’s house “. . . up, down, underhill [like a Hobbit home]” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 137) and were greeted by a melodic voice coming from an open door beaming with golden (magical) light. The beautiful voice said:

*Now let the song begin! Let us sing together  
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,  
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather,  
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather,  
Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water:  
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter! [sic]  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 138)*

It was the welcoming voice of Goldberry, Bombadil’s wife. Despite her aforementioned probable abduction by Bombadil (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 9), they have a blissful relationship representing the harmonious co-existence that can be had between men and women which is crucial for the fecundity of the Earth. In their relationship, the portrayal of ecologically diverse yet compatible forms of stewardship over nature, Tom may be some kind of Earth spirit and Goldberry is of the water (Dickerson and Evans, 2006).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> According to Dickerson and Evans (2006), Bombadil and Goldberry’s relationship is reminiscent of the myth of Yavanna and Aulë in *The Silmarillion*. Their marital harmony is the antithesis of the Ents and Entwives spousal discord, and their disagreement over how to grow things which can be viewed as a preservationist versus conservationist mentality that leads to the Entwives departure. Treebeard says of their relationship, and somewhat echoing Tolkien’s misogynistic tendencies:

In the house of Bombadil and Goldberry, where the Hobbits lodged for two nights, with its Hobbit-friendly amenities, they washed, ate heartily, rested, and learned many things. It is important to note that the food sharing with the Hobbits by Bombadil and Goldberry goes much deeper than civilized customs or even the Eucharist. It is a tradition that dates back to Homo Habilis (2 million years ago) when the first true humans ate together and engaged in complex communications over the meal often reaching reciprocal agreements and understandings of those alien to them (Wilson, 1992).

Bombadil and Goldberry's house is rather plain, but its magical qualities are readily evident; it is filled with lamp light, its furnishings are ethereal, and all the Hobbits, excepting Sam, have portentous dreams. Also, upon entering the house, Frodo was "feeling his heart moved with a joy that he did not understand" (Tolkien, *The*

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But our hearts did not go on growing in the same way: the Ents gave their love to things that they met in the world, and the Entwives gave their thoughts to other things, for the Ents loved great trees, and the wild woods, and the slopes of the high hills; and they drank of mountain-streams, and ate only such fruit as the trees let fall in their path; and they learned of Elves and spoke with the Trees. But the Entwives gave their minds to the lesser trees, and to the meadows in the sunshine beyond the feet of the forests; and they saw the sloe in the thicket, and the wild apple and the cherry blossoming in the spring, and the green herbs in the waterlands in the summer, and the seeding grasses in the autumn fields. They did not desire to speak with these things; but they wished them to hear and obey what was said to them. The Entwives ordered them to grow according to their wishes, and bear leaf and fruit to their liking; for the Entwives desired order, and plenty, and peace (by which they meant that things should remain where they had set them). So the Entwives made gardens to live in. But we Ents went on wandering, and we only came to the gardens now and again. Then when the Darkness came in the North, the Entwives crossed the Great River, and made new gardens, and tilled new fields, and we saw them more seldom [until they were gone from us]. (Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 1994, pp. 78-79)

*Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 140). This joy is a celebration of being at one with nature.

According to Dickerson and Evans (2006), Bombadil and Goldberry's house is a liminal space, a sensory threshold that is barely perceptible. It is a place where divergent worlds collide without clear lines of demarcation as between the Shire and the Old Forest exemplified by the hedgerow separating them. Their house is a timeless and enchanted place where the mythic realm and the natural world meet. This distinct separation between lands is also embodied by the conversation the Hobbits have about leaving the Shire for the dark and strange Old Forest (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). The significance of this is the abrupt change from the friendly, cultivated Shire to the wild, untamed lands such as the Old Forest, the Barrow-downs, Fangorn, and eventually Mordor (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). The four Hobbits encounter hostile forces throughout their travels not found in the comfort of the Shire and Buckland: Old Man Willow, the Barrow-wights, the Ring-wraiths, Orcs, Shelob (the ancient monstrous spider), and ghosts. They also face threats from nature herself: malicious trees like Old Man Willow, thorns and underbrush in the Old Forest, living fog on the Barrow-downs, Mount Caradhras, stinging insects in the Midgewater Marshes, the pathless marshes themselves, and rough terrain. However, they only truly leave civilization after participating in the multi-racial Council of Elrond in the Elven city of Rivendell. The shift from the safety of the agrarian Shire to the wilderness is gradual; it is an ecotone or transitional phase between biomes (Dickerson and Evans, 2006).

Early on in the chapter “In the House of Tom Bombadil,” Bombadil’s enigmatic character is again brought to question by Frodo. Goldberry responds to his inquiry:

Frodo looked at her questioningly. ‘He is, as you have seen him,’ she said in answer to his look. ‘He is the Master of the wood, water, and hill.’ ‘The all this strange land belongs to him?’ ‘No indeed!’ she answered, and her smile faded. ‘That would indeed be a burden,’ she added in a low voice, as if to herself. ‘The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master. No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master.’ (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, pp. 140-141)

Again, Bombadil, via this example, proves more to be a steward of the Old Forest than the ruler of it. According to Dickerson and Evans (2006):

In his simplicity, in his freedom from domination and from the will to dominate, as an incarnation of the world and of the joyful knowledge of the world, Bombadil can be said to represent selfless love of the created order---in our view, the foundation for the most authentic form of environmentalism. (p. 23)

Bombadil is the opposite of what C. A. Bowers (1993) and others have blamed for the demise of the Earth’s ecology: a weltanschauung that values “abstract rational thought, efficiency, individualism, profits” (p. 3). Bowers (1993) advocates a more caring mindset that values a higher quality of life for all, and not one based on just the pursuit for quantity of material wealth for a select few and at the expense of others in Creation. Bombadil embraces a Naess’s (1973) value of life for its own sake, and he exemplifies how nature should be treated if it is to remain with us. We can learn from his example about how to treat other forms of life.



One of the most important scenes in Bombadil's house occurs on Goldberry's washing day with the rain:

He [Bombadil] then told them many remarkable stories, sometimes half as if speaking to himself, sometimes looking at them suddenly with a bright blue eye under his deep brows. Often his voice would turn to song, and he would get out of his chair and dance about. He told them tales of bees and flowers, the ways of trees, and the strange creatures of the Forest, and about evil things and good things, things friendly and things unfriendly, cruel things and kind things, and secrets hidden under brambles. As they listened, they began to understand the lives of the Forest, apart from themselves, indeed to feel themselves as the strangers where all other living things were at home. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, pp. 146-147)

Indeed, Bombadil was the Hobbits' teacher in biophilia, and they learned a modicum of respect and reverence for nature in and for itself through his lessons. He embodies what Bowers (2013) has written of as "... the teacher/professor's role as a mediator between the students' culturally embedded experiences" and Naessian reverence of nature for its own sake (p. 148). The Hobbits learned, or began to realize, that the world was full of life, and they were a mere link in the great and diverse biological web of life. In his tales, Bombadil once again exemplifies what Tolkien (1981) called his "natural pacifist view" (p. 179). He taught them of "the spirit that desires knowledge of other things, their history and nature" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 192). This is the *weltanschauung* that needs to replace the current anthropocentric mindset that is destroying our Earth. Of this Dickerson and Evans (2006) have stated:

This is a vision of pristine wilderness, suggesting a perspective on the created world in which the components of the natural environment---forests, mountains, rivers, and trees in their earliest natural state---'belong each to themselves' (p. 159)

Further, it recalls what Leopold (1949), Orr (2011), Naess (1973), Kahn (2010), Manes (1990), Wilson (1992) and others have written about letting nature thrive for its self.

Nature should be treated with respect and reverence independent of its utility for mankind, especially in its industrial capitalist usages which are so pernicious to it.

Bombadil goes on to tell the stupefied Hobbits, and exemplifying Tolkien's love of trees, hatred of rapacious modernity and industry, and in almost an apologetic tone, more about trees:

Tom's words laid bare the hearts of trees and their thoughts, which were often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers. It was not called the Old Forest without reason, for it was indeed ancient, as survivor of vast forgotten woods; and in it there lived yet, aging no quicker than the hills, the fathers of the fathers of trees, remembering times when they were lords. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 147).

In a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* from 1972, a cynical, elderly Tolkien who is near his death has expanded upon his musings about trees in stinging prose:

The Old Forest was hostile to two legged creatures because of the memory of many injuries. Fangorn Forest was old and beautiful, but at the time of the story tense with hostility because it was threatened by a machine-loving enemy. . . . It would be unfair to compare the [British] Forestry Commission with Sauron because as you observe it is capable of repentance; but nothing it has done that is stupid compares with the destruction, torture and murder of trees perpetrated by private individuals and minor official bodies. The savage sound of the electric saw is never silent wherever trees are still found growing. (Tolkien, 1981, pp. 419-420)

According to Dickerson (2007), it is hard to underestimate the importance of trees in Tolkien's high fantasy and his life. For example, in *TLOR* Tolkien uses them as mythic

symbols. The Sun and the Moon were made from sacred tree flowers from the Telperion and Laurelin of ancient Valinor (the realm of the great Ainur or angels) respectively (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 1999). Further, many of the settings in his fantasy works occur in forests such as: the Old Forest, Fangorn with its Ents, and Mirkwood. They are also used, according to Dickerson (2007), as an allegory for life or the world not unlike the Yggdrasil in Nordic mythology. On a personal level, Tolkien has written in his *Letters* (1981) that he loved trees so much that he could not bear seeing them harmed anymore than he could an animal being injured.

In many ways, Tolkien's aforementioned diatribe foreshadows Manes's (1990) sympathetic view of Earth First! [sic] with its anti-anthropocentric stance on the destruction of flora and his Naessian view of letting all life blossom. In another life, I would suppose that Tolkien would have been an Earth Firster! given his invective against the brutal destruction of forests.

### **Tom to the Rescue, Again: the Barrow-downs**

Upon their departure from Bombadil's and Goldberry's house in the Old Forest, the intrepid four Hobbits were bidden farewell by Bombadil and a bit later Goldberry who, in retrospect, left them with an ominous warning: "Speed now fair guests . . . and hold to your purpose . . . make haste while the Sun shines!" (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 154). They were going to make their way to the human town of Bree, traversing through the Barrow-downs on their way to their ultimate destination of the

Elven stronghold of Rivendell.<sup>26</sup> After travelling some distance across these strange and ominous hills with their pack ponies, some of which “were crowned with green mounds, and on some were standing stones, pointing upwards like jagged teeth out of green gums” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 155), the Hobbits took lunch, and then they fell asleep in naps unintended. When they awoke from an uncomfortable sleep an eerie fog that seemed to stalk them encircled them on the hilltop. As the Hobbits tried to make their way through the icy fog, they became separated, lost, and confused in a panic. Through a scene where the reader can almost feel the confusion, fear, and desperation of the Hobbits, Frodo was beckoned by a haunting voice coming from the ground, “I am waiting for you!” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 158).

Then Frodo was grabbed by a strong, cold, dark figure, and he fainted. When he awoke, he realized he was in a barrow, and hopelessly ensnared by a Barrow-wight. As he looked about he saw his companions were there too, and that the tomb was filled with treasure and weapons. Despite his trepidation, Frodo mustered enough strength to grab a short sword and hack the hand off of the ghost. Then, for reasons unclear, he remembered the poem Bombadil had taught them, and as he recited the rhyme his strength and courage grew as his words magically echoed off of the walls of the grave as if tuned to some unknown music:

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<sup>26</sup> The Barrow-downs were low hills to the east of the Old Forest and to the west of Bree. They were the resting places of great men of previous ages until the Witch-king of Angmar (Lord of the Nazgûl or Ringwraiths) sent evil spirits to corrupt them, turning them into Barrow-wights to haunt the tombs. (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 1999)

*Ho! Tom Bombadil, Tom Bomdadillo!  
By water, wood and hill, by the reed and willow,  
By fire, sun and moon, harken now and hear us!  
Come, Tom Bombadil, for our need is near us! [sic]  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 161)*

After a moment of agonizing silence, Frodo heard an answering song:

*Old Tom Bombadil is a merry fellow,  
Bright blue his jacket is, and his boots are yellow.  
None has ever caught him yet, for Tom is master:  
His songs are stronger songs, and his feet are faster.  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 161)*

Next, the stone door to the chamber was rolled away, and with the red glare of the sun rising, Bombadil appeared. As was the case with Old Man Willow in the Old Forest, Bombadil exhorted the Barrow-wight with verse and without use of force driving him from the grave:

*Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!  
Shrivel like the cold mist, like the winds to wailing,  
Out into the barren lands far beyond the mountains!  
Come never here again! Leave your barrow empty!  
Lost and forgotten be, darker than the darkness,  
Where the gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended. [sic]  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, pp. 161-162)*

Here again, Bombadil shows his pacifistic tendencies and respect for all life forms, though in the case of the Barrow-wights they are dead. Though he is master of this part of Middle-earth too, he uses fairly benign coercion and not overt force to curb those in his realm who seek to do others harm. It seems he respects even the right to exist of something that is dead and evil like the Barrow-wights. Shippey (1983) has explained

this by noting that these creatures, no matter how evil and vile they may be now, were once living and good, earning them a modicum of respect by Bombadil.

This scene also is an example of Bombadil's deep knowledge of all living, or once living creatures in his realm, something equitable with what Orr (2011) calls "slow knowledge" that values the qualitative aspects of life and seeks to avoid problems instead of rushing to conflict and the quantitative evaluations of life like "fast knowledge" (pp. 15-17). Finally, it is readily evident at the end of Bombadil's exhortation of the Barrow-wight that he realizes that Arda is proverbially broken, going beyond his realm that needs to be relatively biophilic, and like our planet, it is in need of mending.

After driving away the evil Barrow-wight with his magical and non-violent verse, Bombadil wakes the other three Hobbits from the enchanted sleep death of the Barrow-wight after he and Frodo carry the nearly nude Hobbits (their clothes had been taken by the ghost who had wrapped them in something akin to death shrouds) out of the tomb with another incantation. After they awoke and puzzled and lamented the loss of their clothing, the Hobbits basked in the warmth of the sun where the previous day had been icy fog alive with evil (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). It seems that Bombadil has power over the weather in his domain too making him truly master of all in his realm including the sky above.

After dancing off while singing for awhile, Bombadil returned with their five ponies and a new one. The new pony was old Fatty Lumpkin who despite his age was larger, stronger than their other horse flesh. Bombadil was telling of his benign treatment of animals when he tells the Hobbits of Fatty Lumpkin's purpose there:

My four-legged friend; though I seldom ride him, and he wanders often far, free upon the hill-sides. When your ponies [who had fled from the Barrow-wight] stayed with me, they got to know my Lumpkin; and they smelt him in the night, and quickly ran to meet him. I thought he'd look for them and with his words of wisdom take all their fear away.  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 164)

Not only does Bombadil respect and revere flora, like we should, but he respects animals too. He lets his pony run free, the animal is well fed, does not burden him by riding him too much, he seems to understand their speech, and he trusts in their ability to solve problems. Manes (1990) has said: "Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in constitutive relations. These relations are not only relations we have with humans and the human community, but with the larger community of all living beings" (p. 148)

After the Hobbits dressed themselves in the spare clothes held on the ponies' packs, they thanked Bombadil profusely. Bombadil then reaffirms his role as custodian over his realm and dutiful husband when he tells them, and again, note his use of third person:

I've got things to do . . . my making and my singing, my talking and my walking and my watching of the country. Tom can't be always near to open doors and willow-cracks. Tom [also] has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting.  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, pp. 164-165)

He provided them with brunch, and as they ate he rummaged through the treasures in the Barrow-wight's former abode. With the loot he brought out, he laid it on the grass "free to all finders, birds, beasts, Elves or Men, and all kindly creatures" (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 165). He took only a brooch set with blue stones for

Goldberry. He gave the Hobbits each magical daggers since daggers were long enough to be swords for the small Hobbits, and told them they were made long ago by Men of Westeros. They were foes of the Dark Lord Sauron in the Second Age of Middle-earth, but their goodness had been overcome and tainted by the evil king of Carn Dûm in Angmar (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994).

Here Tolkien has added another admirable aspect to Bombadil's demeanor; he does not lust after money or precious things. Tolkien, consciously or not, is making a strong statement about the excesses of capitalism with its lust not only for power, but material gain. It is this want of material gain that drives capitalism to exploit the planet so brutally and so totally. As the late Paulo Freire has so eruditely pointed out in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998), this capitalist status quo that promotes human inequality, and the related sin of environmental devastation to promulgate economic and social hegemony through the accumulation of wealth by a privileged few and aggrandizing wealth over the poorer masses in part to justify their status does not have to be:

Mass hunger and unemployment, side by side with opulence, are not the result of destiny, as some reactionary circles would have us believe, claiming that people suffer because they can do nothing about the situation. The question here is not 'destiny.' It is immorality . . . . The advance of science and technology cannot legitimate 'class' and call it order so that a minority who holds power may use and squander the fruits of the Earth while the vast majority are hard pressed even to survive and often justify their own misery as the will of God. (p. 93)

One thing humanity must realize is that domination of the Earth's resources is inextricably bound with human power relations based on wealth in the form of structures of control. This domination, along with the prevalent anthropocentric mindset, is destroying the



Earth and humankind with it. Again, we need to learn from Bombadil that we should use power to preserve and enhance life, not to lord over it. We should also respect and revere all life, not for its utility for humankind, but for its own sake.

When speaking of the daggers' origins, Bombadil says this of their former owners: "Few now remember them . . . yet some still go wandering, sons of forgotten kings walking in loneliness, guarding from evil things folks that are heedless" (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 165). Of course, he is foreshadowing the coming of Strider (Aragorn) who becomes a pivotal character in *TLOR*. As he explains the knives' origins, the Hobbits have visions of these grim, unappreciated men like Aragorn who Tolkien classifies as Rangers. Rangers are akin to errant knights wandering the world to eradicate evil where they can. Not only does this foreshadow, but it connects the Hobbits to Middle-earth's past, something Tolkien wanted because in the past as well as the future there was and could be a better world in which mankind is in harmony with itself and nature. In his *Letters*, Tolkien (1981) wrote from his Catholic stance:

Certainly there was an Eden on this very unhappy earth. We all long for it, and are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with a sense of 'exile'. If you come to think of it, your (very just) horror at the stupid murder of the hawk, and your obstinate memory of this 'home' of yours in the idyllic hour. . . are derived from Eden (p. 110).

In his own unique Catholic way, Tolkien provides hope for a better tomorrow. It is one not based on greed, power, and technological advancement, but one found in the prelapsarian past and a post-redemption future of an appreciation and gratitude for God's Creation: what was once can be again. As Berman (1981) would have it, this is a return

or revitalizing of a world re-enchanted in awe of the mystery, wonder, and interconnectedness of all life that is necessary if humanity is to preserve life on this planet. Without a re-enchantment of the world, then there can be no respect for it beyond its utility for human usage. As Orr (2011) has so eloquently stated:

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder almost necessarily declines . . . mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder. (p. 42)

As Bombadil and the Hobbits rode throughout the day, he sang words to himself in an unknown, ancient language that filled them, at least temporarily, with wonder and delight. Perhaps, Bombadil plays the role of the last paraclete, offering hope in troubled times. However, as they reached a line of shrubbery in a deep dike their spirits began to fall again. It was the boundary of an ancient kingdom; one whose demise seemed to fill Bombadil with sadness of which he spoke little. It was also the boundary of Bombadil's realm, and the Hobbits began to feel the dread of the Black Riders (Ring-wraiths) bear upon their minds again. Pippin inquired of Bombadil if they would encounter the Riders again as they had on the road to the Old Forest. He could not hazard a guess though he hoped not for their return. He said, "Out east my knowledge fails. Tom is not master of the Riders from the Black Land far beyond his country" (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 167). So it seems Bombadil's power and vision is finite in that it is limited to his little chunk of Middle-earth.

Bombadil does, however, advise them to go to Bree and stay at the inn of *The Prancing Pony*. The band of Hobbits bid him farewell, and he reciprocated leaving them to “your own luck must go with you and guide you” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 167). The Hobbits begged him to take them the few remaining miles to the inn, but he refused stating: “*Tom’s country ends here: he will not pass the borders. Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting [sic]*” (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 168). Then he turned, tossed his hat in the air, and started singing again. At this juncture, except for brief mentioning of him by others involved in the War of the Ring, Tom Bombadil leaves *TLOR*.

### ***The Adventures of Tom Bombadil***

Tolkien’s earliest formulation of *TATB* is the eponymously titled opening poem which appeared in *Oxford Magazine* in 1934. By 1962, with the publication of *TATB* as a separate book, it contains 16 poems. It was illustrated by Pauline Baynes and published by George Allen and Unwin. It is presented like *TLOR* as part of his legendarium of Middle-earth, as contained in the Hobbit-written *Red Book of Westmarch*, and in the Preface, Tolkien has gone to some length to explain its fictional origins to augment its importance in his history of his fantasy world of Middle-earth (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990).

Tolkien has said of it in the Preface, for example:

The present selection is taken from the older pieces, mainly concerned with legends and jests of the Shire at the end of the Third Age, that appear to have been made by Hobbits, especially by Bilbo and his friends, or their immediate descendents. Their authorship is, however, seldom indicated. Those outside the narratives are in various hands, and were probably written down from oral tradition. (*TATB*, 1990, Preface)

Most of the poems, he has said, are written in typical Hobbit fashion; that is, bestiary tales and rhymes or stories that revert back to their own beginning. Tolkien also has noted their style ranges from crude to complex and shows the influence of High-elvish, Númenorean legends of Eärendil, Gondorian<sup>27</sup>, and the widening of the Hobbits' world via contact with other races and places at the end of the Third Age (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990). He also has noted that some of the manuscripts came from Hobbit Buckland where they obviously knew of Bombadil and probably gave him this appellation since it is in the Bucklandish dialect (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990). Further, Tolkien has written:

They also show that [even though they knew Bombadil] . . . no doubt they had little understanding of his powers as the Shirefolk had of Gandalf's: both were regarded as benevolent persons, mysterious maybe and unpredictable but nonetheless comic. No. 1 is the earlier piece, and is made up of various hobbit-versions of the legends concerning Bombadil. No. 2 uses similar traditions, though Tom's raillery here turned in jest upon his friends, who treat it with amusement (tinged with fear); but it was probably composed much later and after the visit of Frodo and his companions to the house of Bombadil. (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, Preface)

Again, in his Preface, there is no doubt that Tolkien had went to great lengths to include *TATB* into his larger canon and legendarium.

Curiously enough, in the Preface, Tolkien has worked especially hard at singling out "The Sea-Bell" or "Frodo's Dreme [sic]" pointing out that it belongs to the dawn of the Fourth Age, and it seems unlikely to have been written by Frodo himself because by that time he had left with the last of the Elves to go to the Western lands. It falls into the

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<sup>27</sup> High-elvish is the language of the Elves such as those at Rivendell, Elrond's stronghold. Eärendil was a great sailor who became the Evening and Morning Stars. Númenorean and Gondorian refer to great kingdoms of Men from prior ages of Middle-earth.

genre of the pseudoepigraphic like many of the books of the Bible that Tolkien revered so much. This Medieval Dream vision filled with alienation and disillusion is associated with the dark dreams Frodo had during his last three years before leaving Middle-earth for the Grey Havens (mystical lands across the Sea to where many Elves went at the end of the Third Age) and is attributable to the “wandering-madness” that occurred in the questing Hobbits and thoughts of the Sea (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, Preface). The Sea was ever-present in Hobbits’ minds, but it was also a source of fear and distrust of Elvish lore (and all things non-Hobbit) that still prevailed at the end of the Third Age (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990). Consequently, “The Sea-Bell” is the poem in *TATB* that has been most admired by W. H. Auden, a famous Anglo-American poet and *New York Times* Book Reviewer to whom Tolkien (1981) had written on several occasions.

The first poem in Tolkien’s *TATB* is “The Adventures of Tom Bombadil.” In the poem, written in rhyme, Bombadil encounters several characters already introduced in this dissertation, and he deals with them each in a non-violent fashion, again showing the reader examples of how others and nature should be treated. This seems to be a re-telling of the Hobbits’ adventure under Bombadil’s watch just without the Hobbits and in verse rather than prose possibly showing a connection to the *Poetic Eddas* of which Tolkien was well-versed. The first part involves a pre-nuptial Goldberry who tries to capture Bombadil as he strays too close to a stream while picking buttercups, chasing shadows, and annoying bumble bees. Goldberry attempts to drag Bombadil into her stream but manages only to get his cap:

‘You bring it back again, there’s a pretty maiden!’  
said Tom Bombadil. ‘I do not care for wading.  
Go down! Sleep again where the pools are shady  
far below willow-roots, little water-lady!’

Back to her mother’s house in the deepest hollow  
swam young Goldberry. But Tom, he would not  
follow. (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 2)

Bombadil with his ever pacifist tendencies rebukes Goldberry’s possibly amorous advances with a command. As with all other life, though Bombadil may have dominion over them, he does not use force against her. But, this is not the last of Goldberry in the poem. Near the end of it, he “caught the River-daughter” and made her come home with him (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 9). There they “had a merry wedding” (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 10). Though she was abducted by Bombadil as mentioned earlier in this text, it seems more like the taking of Helen by Paris than the unhappy abduction of Persephone by Hades, to tie it into Greek mythology of which Tolkien was well-versed.

If it were the latter, this would be very uncharacteristic of Bombadil’s benign nature and treatment of other life forms. All things considered, and given the criticism of Tolkien’s Bombadil and Goldberry due to his misogyny, the attraction was mutual, and they lived a harmonious and rather equal life of domesticity together.

Next, after he rebuts Goldberry’s advances, Bombadil falls asleep under Old Man Willow. As was the case with Merry and Pippin of the band of Hobbits in the Old Forest, the cantankerous, ravenous Old Man Willow tries to eat Bombadil. Just like in that story of the Hobbits in the Old Forest in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Bombadil the master of the Old Forest forces the voracious tree to release him with a command and no injury,

though he may have done so if he did not respect the right of all things to live---a proto-biophilic attitude current humankind needs to adopt or resurrect.

‘You let me out again, Old Man Willow!  
I am stiff lying here; they’re no sort of pillow,  
your hard crooked roots. Drink your river-water!  
go back to sleep again like the River-daughter!’  
Willow-man let him loose when he heard him speaking;  
locked fast his wooden house, muttering and creaking,  
whispering inside the tree. Out from the willow-  
dingle (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 3-4)

In this case, Bombadil’s reaction is a step beyond his usual passivity where he belays attacks on others with benevolence. He does not return an act of violence against himself with violence, but with a calm resourcefulness that is conducive to life.

As the poem continues, he is pulled inside the earth by his coat by hostile Badger-brock.

Out came Badger-brock with his snowy forehead  
and his dark blinking eyes. In the hill he quarried  
with his wife and many sons. By the coat they  
caught him,  
pulled him inside their earth, down their tunnels  
brought him.

Inside their secret house, there they sat  
a-mumbling:  
‘Ho, Tom Bombadil! Where have you come  
tumbling,  
bursting in the front-door? Badger-folk have  
caught you.  
You’ll never find it out, the way we have  
brought you!’

‘Now, old Badger-brock, do you hear me  
talking?’

You show me out at once! I must be a-walking.  
Show me to your backdoor under the briar-roses;  
then clean grimy paws, wipe your earthy noses!  
Go back to sleep again on your straw pillow,  
like fair Goldberry and Old Man Willow!

Then all the Badger-folk said: 'We beg your  
Pardon!'  
They showed Tom out again to their thorny  
garden . . . (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 5-6)

As with the other two incidents in the poem, Bombadil averts capture and possible injury by simply ordering the Badgers to go to sleep. He does not meet aggression with hostility, though he is master of this subterranean terrain too. He also exhibits profound knowledge of all creatures in his realm. He seems to know the way out through the back door of their hole by noting that it is under the roses. For that matter, Bombadil also elicits an apology from all of the den's inhabitants for their misdeeds. It seems that they realize their grievous mistake in taking on this master of the Old Forest.

When at last Bombadil arrives from the day's adventures at his magical home, he encounters one of the more menacing characters faced by the Hobbits while in his domain, a Barrow-wight. As with his other would be captors, he dismisses him with words and not violence showing his reverence for all life even if it is dead.

Dark came under Hill. Tom, he lit a candle;  
upstairs creaking went, turned the door-handle.  
'Hoo, Tom Bombadil! Look what night has  
brought you!  
I'm here behind the door. Now at last I've caught  
you!  
You'd forgotten Barrow-wight dwelling in the  
old mound  
up there on hill-top with the ring of stones round.



He's got loose again. Under earth he'll take you.  
Poor Tom Bombadil, pale and cold he'll make  
you!

'Go out! Shut the door, and never come back  
after!  
Take away gleaming eyes, take your hollow  
laughter!  
Go back to grassy mound on your stony pillow  
lay down your bony head, like Old Man Willow,  
like young Goldberry, and Badger-folk in  
burrow!  
Go back to buried gold and forgotten sorrow!'

Out fled Barrow-wight through the window  
leaping,  
through the yard, over wall like a shadow  
sweeping,  
up hill wailing went back to leaning stone-rings,  
back under lonely mound, rattling his bone-rings.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 8-9)

Of course the Barrow-wight is by far the most evil and threatening of all Bombadil's would be abductors, but he still treats him with a modicum of reverence for the life and goodness he once had, though the sinister entity invades the sanctity his home. It is worth noting that Tolkien (1981), a very private person in regard to his domestic life, abhorred unannounced visitors.

Also, as in the prose version of the story found in *TLOR*, Bombadil rebukes wealth too. Again, through Bombadil, Tolkien does not only show the proper respect that should be given for living things, but his disdain for materialism is of paramount importance too since the lust for wealth is what has driven industrialization with its all its adverse affects on the planet. In fact Tolkien has said, "Wise old Bombadil, he was a wary fellow. . ." (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 9).

At the poem's end, and on his honeymoon night, reconciliation between Bombadil and his enemies is exhibited probably stemming from somewhere in Tolkien's Catholic notion of forgiveness. For example, he is happily wed to Goldberry, and the Badgers and Old Man Willow come down to see how his wedding night is progressing. Only the most evil being in the poem, the Barrow-wight long ruined by the Witch-king, does not come but stays in his tomb moaning. Here, through Bombadil, Tolkien is exemplifying Curry's (1997) "light of an ancient hope" for peace through the reconciliation with at least some of his enemies (p. 165).

The next poem in Tolkien's *TATB* (1990) that provides insight into his ecological stance, and not all of them really do, is "Bombadil Goes Boating." Here, among other environmental tropes, one of time and interpersonal interaction and introspection comes to bear as found in Orr's (2011) *Hope is an Imperative: the Essential David Orr* and C. A. Bowers *In the Grip of the Past* (2013). Orr (2011) has stated:

We might do better with less stuff, less envy, less hassle, less frenzy, and more conviviality, more leisure, better poetry, more silence, slower food, more bike trails, and more face-to-face friends (p. 3).

In the poem, Bombadil exhibits his attitude to time in his boating trip. He is not hurried, takes his time to talk with the forest creatures, and he does so lyrically. For example, Bombadil says as follows about his stance on time in general:

The old year was turning brown; the West  
Wind was calling;  
Tom caught a beechen leaf in the Forest falling,  
'I've caught a happy day blown me by the breezes!  
Why wait till morrow-year? I'll take it when me pleases.

This day I'll mend my boat and journey as it chances  
west down the withy-stream, following my fancies!  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 12)

So he takes his time going wherever chance may take him, uncaring about the speed getting there, wherever there may be. Taking a trip without purpose with no temporal schedule is something almost unheard of in modernity. Even when going on an outing, we tend to have a direction, destination, and a schedule all neatly figured out on a GPS, and this ingrained sense of hurriedness even in leisure pursuits is part of modern humankind's downfall. It is a design problem as Orr (2011) and Bowers (2013) would have it; that is, both believe much of humanity has a misplaced sense of values giving importance to one that is driven by greediness and exploitation instead of one is more generous and caring. It is the comodification of time seeping over from our technologically driven lives as both producers and consumers into even supposedly relaxing activities. Tolkien, through Bombadil, shows us that there can be another way: one where we are only driven by the natural temporal constraints of the seasons and daylight hours. This is something most of us lost long ago to the factory whistle of the Industrial Age. Even members of First Nations (Indigenous Peoples), who were long holdouts against these anti-circadian rhythms, have now become as vulnerable to them as those first to embrace modern industrial capitalism with all its constraints on humanity's naturalness and innate sense of time (LaDuke, 2005).

Bombadil in the poem also takes time to converse face-to-face with animals showing his appreciation for their lives and their right to exist. He speaks to numerous birds on his voyage down the Withywindle River like the Old Swan from whom he took a

feather and chides, “You old cob, do you miss your feather?”(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 16). He also speaks to some un-named wary Hobbits disarming them with his charm and affability in what becomes a quest for ale:

‘Away over Brandywind by Shirebourn I’d be  
going,  
But too swift for cockle-boat the river is now  
flowing.  
I’d bless little folk that took me in their wherry,  
wish them evenings fair and many mornings  
merry’. (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 18)

In his charming of the suspicious and even potentially hostile Hobbits, Bombadil proves Orr’s (2011) prior mentioned statement to be true on another level: being convivial even to hostile strangers can go a long way in making peace where enmity once prevailed.

Eventually, Bombadil makes his way to his friend Farmer Maggot’s house for an impromptu visit. This is something seldom done in these days of hurriedness and computer technology. The closest many of us come to an unscheduled meeting with friends is through social media like Facebook. Bowers (2013) has an interesting remark about this, and though specifically aimed at education, it is still applicable even in more social situations with all the complex dynamics that are at play in them:

The different educational uses of computers, from participating in electronic communities to learning various forms of decision making and model building, should be seen by teachers as opportunities to help students understand the forms of knowledge and relationships that cannot be communicated through a computer. It would be important to teach why computers cannot communicate the forms of local knowledge passed on through face-to-face relationships. Students should also be encouraged to recognize that computers cannot be used to communicate the following as a living experience: elder knowledge, participation in ceremonies, family relationships and interdependencies, mentoring in clan

knowledge and skills, and the stories and practices that carry forward an awareness of how the spirit world requires different expressions of moral reciprocity. (p. 126)

Bombadil in his visiting of his friend Farmer Maggot and his family in person show all of these dynamics that cannot be adequately reproduced electronically.

Maggot's sons bowed at the door, his daughters did  
their curtsy,  
his wife brought tankards out for those that might  
be thirsty.  
Songs they had and merry tales, the supping and  
the dancing;  
Goodman Maggot there for all this belt was  
prancing,  
Tom did a hornpipe when he was not quaffing,  
daughters did the Springle-ring, goodwife did the  
laughing.  
When others went to bed in hay, fern, or feather,  
close in the inglenook they laid their heads  
together,  
Old Tom and Muddy-feet, swapping all the  
tidings  
from Barrow-downs to Tower Hills: of walkings  
and of ridings  
of wheat-ear and barley-corn, of sowing and of  
reaping;  
queer tales from Bree, and talk at the smithy, mill,  
and cheaping;  
rumours in whispering trees, south-wind in the  
latches,  
tall Watchers by the Ford, Shadows on the  
marches. (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 20-21)

By engaging in face-to-face conversation and frivolity, several things are accomplished by Bombadil that cannot be done with today's social media: true fellowship, engaging in customary rituals like bowing and unique local dancing, and the dissemination of

practical and impractical information about local events not only through conversation with all its nuances and inflections, but the gestures that can often go unseen by the computer-aided eye, especially through such popular habits like texting, Emoticons or not. In such an environment unencumbered by technology, one begins to engage in what anthropologist Geertz called the “thick description” of ethnography even if that was not Bombadil’s purpose in his visit (Geertz cited in Bowers, 2013, p. 60). Otherwise, if technology had been the venue of their meeting, only a thin conveyance of such a rich, life-enhancing environment could be gleaned.

Through Bombadil’s actions and meetings in this poem, the reader can learn to appreciate a need for another type of time not driven by clocks but by natural means, to be kind and likeable even to your enemies, to partake in the custom of breaking bread and conversation, native acts of politeness and culture, and even to travel in an ecologically sound manner; that is, by man-powered boat. If we are to break the anthropocentric mindset that has proven so detrimental to ourselves and our world, interaction with nature and others is integral.

The third poem in Tolkien’s *TATB* (1990) is “Errantry” which at first glance seems to conjure images of a chivalrous knight on an adventure with some lofty moral goal as found in Malory’s *Le Morte de Arthur* when his knights embark upon the quest for the Holy Grail; however, this is not the case in this short poem. It is a poem about loneliness and alienation caused by greed. One way to read this poem is in light of Bower’s commentary on Ayn Rand’s Objectivist Ethic that requires man “to live for his own sake [which] means that the highest achievement of his own happiness is man’s

highest moral purpose” (Rand cited in Bowers, 2013, p. 78). This has been further interpreted by her followers as unfettered capitalism, despite her objections that her philosophy should not be equated with greed. One way or the other, and without getting bogged down in her fondness for abstraction, what is capitalism but unchecked greed with a government to ensure the right to be greedy is protected by law?

In “Errantry,” the protagonist begins his seaward voyages out to make a profit for himself in the world:

There was a merry passenger,  
a messenger, a mariner;  
he built a gilded gondola  
to wander in . . . (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 24)

He seems to have started out with innocuous intentions but soon was rejected by the one he loved, and with that and the loneliness of his voyages, his heart hardened.

He passed the archipelagoes  
where yellow grows the marigold,  
where countless silver fountains are,  
and mountains of fairy-gold.  
He took to war and foraying,  
a-harrying beyond the sea,  
and roaming over Belmarie  
and Thellamie and Fantasie.

He made a shield and morion  
of coral and of ivory,  
a sword he made of emerald,  
and terrible his rivalry  
with elven-knights of Aerie  
and Faerie, with paladins  
that golden-haired and shining-eyed  
came riding by and challenged him.

Of crystal was his habergeon,  
his scabbard of chalcedony;  
with silver tipped at plenilune  
his spear was hewn of ebony.  
His javelins were of malachite  
and stalactite-he brandished them.  
and went and fought the dragon-flies  
of Paradise, and vanquished them.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 26-27)

As this errant sailor became wealthy, probably by ill-gotten means, his rivals became jealous of his wealth, and since there was no government around to protect his property rights, he took it upon himself to defend his wealth. Where did his unmitigated greed get him?

So now he must depart again  
and start again his gondola,  
are ever still a messenger,  
a passenger, a tarrier,  
a-roving as a feather does,  
a weather-driven mariner.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 27)

He may have won his fortune and protected it similarly to how in the current era we justify protecting our oil from the Middle East; that is, with violence under the guise of property security that to infringe upon it is tantamount to a declaration of war. Further, Tolkien's character seems of the same mind as many American Republicans who believe that capitalism should be globalized even if it means resorting to military force (Bowers, 2013). Tolkien was aware of this situation in his native England and detested it for he knew that avarice was the root of evil in the form of industrial capitalism and globalization that had ruined the landscape of his beloved England and hindered society



as well. In his *Letters*, Tolkien (1981) has written of globalization (though he does not use the term *per se*):

When they have introduced American sanitation, morale-pep, feminism, and mass production throughout the Near East, Middle East, Far East, U. S. S. R., the Pampas, el Gran Chaco, the Danubian Basin, Equatorial Africa, Hither Further and Inner Mumbo-land, Gondhwanaland, Lhasa, and the villages of darkest Berkshire, how happy we shall be. At any rate it ought to cut down travel. There will be nowhere to go. So people will go all the faster. (p. 65)

Despite being laden with sarcasm, it blatantly obvious he abhorred globalism for the damage it could do to human cultures and the rest of the planet as well.

The next poem to be considered from Tolkien's *TATB* (1990) is "The Stone Troll." It is a brief yarn that tells of Bombadil's encounter with a lonely, mean, carnivorous troll to whom he tries to play the role of pedagogue, but only to fail and show his own vulnerability and that he had parents.

Up came Tom [to the Troll's cave] with his big boots on.  
Said he to Troll: 'Pray what is yon?  
For it looks like the shin o' my nuncle Tim,  
As should be a-lyin' in graveyard.  
Caveyard! Paveyard!  
This many a year has Tim been gone,  
And I thought he were lyin' in graveyard'.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 42)

It is evident from this verse that Bombadil has had parents at some point in his long life, something mentioned nowhere else in Tolkien's high fantasy works or his correspondences, or how could he have had an Uncle Tim? This adds fuel to the fire of his enigmatic nature. One possible answer for this comes from Hargrove. Hargrove

(1986) has noted that in an early draft of *TLOR*, Tolkien considered having Bombadil refer to himself as “aborigine” instead of “eldest,” meaning he was the first inhabitant of a region like his domain the Old Forest. So, in this scenario, he could have migrated there in prehistoric times, spawned by some other creature not of a divine, immortal nature without being inconsistent with Tolkien’s claim that Bombadil was present peri-creation of Arda.

In regard to Bombadil’s role as pedagogue in “The Stone Troll,” he is obviously appalled at the Troll’s desecration of his Uncle’s corpse, and this is compounded when the Troll threatens to eat him too. So, in turn, Bombadil tries to teach him a lesson in reverence for the dead and the living (himself). In a rather comical manner, Bombadil engages the Troll in his lesson as follows:

But just as he thought his dinner was caught,  
He found his hands had hold of naught.  
Before he could mind, Tom slipped behind  
And gave him the boot to larn [a regional dialectical form of learn] him.  
Warn him! Darn him!  
A bump o’ the boot on the seat, Tom thought,  
Would be the way to larn him.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 43)

Bombadil’s pedagogical endeavor, in the Deweyan sense of practicality, has two possible interpretations. First, it could be that he is not driven by a desire to educate but “to teach a lesson” in the vindictive sense of the cliché. However, this would seem to go against Bombadil’s character. As has been the case in previous examples, Bombadil embodies a “live and let live” ethos to all creatures he encounters, and he manifests no desire for revenge, no matter how great the offense against him. A second possibility is

that Bombadil is really trying to teach the Troll something about reverence for the living and the dead, no matter how crude his methods may be. Bowers (2013) speaks of “cultural commons;” that is, “the cultural commons is the phrase that encompasses the traditions of community that are nested in larger social and ecological systems” (p. 141). Bombadil may be trying to teach the Troll something from his culture that respects life whereas the culture of the Trolls has little regard for anything unless it fills their greedy bellies or satiates their lust for precious metals. Again, current society could learn much from Bombadil’s example.

Finally, in this poem it becomes evident that Bombadil is not immune to harm lending support that he is not some sort of god, and, again, compounding further his mysterious nature.

[After kicking the Troll in the ass] But harder than stone is the flesh and bone  
Of a troll that sits in the hills alone.  
As well set your boot to the mountain’s root,  
For the seat of a troll don’t feel it.  
Peel it! Heal it!  
Old Troll laughed, when he heard Tom groan,  
And he knew his toes could feel it.

Tom’s leg is game, since home he came,  
And his bootless foot is lasting lame . . .  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 43-44)

The very fact that Bombadil can be injured permanently does somewhat assist in clarifying who or what he is. If he were an avatar of Ilúvatar, the supreme God head in Tolkien’s mythopoeia, then one would think he could heal as did Christ in being resurrected from the dead according to Christianity. In a way, by showing his mortality,

Bombadil seems more human like us reinforcing the need for modern societies to be more like him and attune to nature and our link to the great biological web of being.

The next poem to be considered from Tolkien's *TATB* (1990) is "Perry-the-Winkle" which is also about a Troll; however, this Troll is not malicious, just lonely. He is even a vegetarian, a non-drinker, and a pacifist. Two themes undergird this poem, isolation and greed. Both have relevance to the environment.

First, there is isolation. A lonely, and surprisingly benign, intelligent, introspective Troll goes in search of a friend. This is odd in Tolkien's mythology because the rest of the time Trolls are portrayed as mindless brutes driven by their passions of gluttony, drunkenness, greed, and destruction. For example, in *The Hobbit* Bilbo and his Dwarf companions are nearly eaten by the three arguing, drunken Trolls, Bert, Tom, and William, only to be saved by the dawn's light which turned them into stone (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 1994). But again, the Troll in this poem is different.

The Lonely Troll he sat on a stone  
and sang a mournful lay:  
'O why, O why must I live on my own  
in the hills of Faraway?  
My folk are gone beyond recall  
and take no thought of me;  
alone I'm left, the last of all  
from Weathertop to the Sea.'

'I steal no gold, I drink no beer,  
I eat no kind of meat;  
but People slam their doors in fear,  
whenever they hear my feet.  
O how I wish that they were neat,  
and my hands were not so rough!  
Yet my heart is soft, my smile is sweet,  
and my cooking good enough.'

‘Come, come!’ he thought, ‘this will not do!  
I must go and find [sic] a friend;  
a-walking soft I’ll wander through  
the Shire from end to end’.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 45)

This very civilized, compared to others of his kind, vegetarian, non-drinking, introspective Troll is reminiscent of Frankenstein’s creature in Mary Shelley’s novella and gothic horror *Frankenstein or a Modern Prometheus* (1818). He is intelligent and all too aware of his proverbial humanity. Like Frankenstein’s monster, he goes in search of a friend only to be shunned, vilified, and rejected time and again for his ghastly appearance. For example, Tolkien has written that:

Old Pott the Mayor was strolling near;  
When he heard that awful sound,  
He turned all purple and pink with fear,  
And dived down underground.  
The Lonely Troll was hurt and sad:  
‘Don’t go!’ he gently said,  
But old Mrs Bunce ran home like mad  
And hid beneath her bed.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 46)

The Troll’s alienation from society is akin to our own alienation from each other and from nature of which we are a part, according to Devall and Sessions (1985). The Troll is a victim of dominance by the elite in the Shire, such as Mayor Pott, because of his different physicality, alien culture, and because of stereotypes of Trolls. Devall and Sessions (1985) have said this in regard to the cause of isolation in modernity:

Ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of technocratic industrial societies which regards humans

as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But the view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, Western culture has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of dominance: with dominance of humans over nonhuman Nature, masculine over feminine, wealthy and powerful over the poor with the domination of the West over non-Western cultures. Deep ecological consciousness allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions. (pp. 65-66)

Bowers (2013) supports this notion in his comments about the oppression of minority groups, as does Freire (1998) and LaDuke (2005), and in this case the Troll is a minority among the Hobbits and a victim of their cultural hegemony.

In regard to the poem, it is easy enough to see the Hobbits of the Michael Delving township as Western humans on the edge of industrialization where patriarchy reigns, and the poor Troll is a non-Westerner. In fact, Tolkien being of the former is famous for referring to himself as a Hobbit in all but stature (Tolkien, *Letters*, 1981).

Returning back to the poem and the Frankenstein's creature allegory, the Troll finally finds a friend in a young Hobbit, Perry-the-Winkle, like the creature in Shelley's novella; however, the Troll does not murder him but builds a close, enduring friendship with him. Thus, his isolation from society at large begins to end.

The Old Troll sadly sat and wept  
outside the Lockholes' gate,  
and Perry-the-Winkle up he crept  
and patted him on the pate.  
'O why do you weep, you great big lump?  
You're better outside than in!'  
He gave the Troll a friendly thump,  
and laughed to see him grin.

'O Perry-the-Winkle boy', he cried.  
'come, you're the lad for me!

Now if you're willing to take a ride,  
I'll carry you home to tea'.  
He jumped on his back and held on tight,  
and 'Off you go!' said he;  
and the Winkle had a feast that night,  
and sat on the old Troll's knee.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 47)

Oftentimes it takes the innocence and love of a child who has yet to be indoctrinated in malfeasant social mores like bigotry, racism, and environmental abuse to overcome them, and Kennedy (2002) in his study of children supports this contention as does Orr (2011). It is the case here with the Troll and as is the case with Frankenstein's creature. Orr (2011) writes: "Love is a gift but the giver expects no return on the investment, and that differs from logic, reason, and even arguments about selfish genes" (p. 197).

Not only does Perry-the-Winkle come to love the once unloved Troll, but Shire-folk take a liking to him too, though it is probable they are driven by greed. Tolkien has written that:

Then all the People went with a will,  
By pony, cart, or moke,  
Until they came to a house in a hill  
And saw a chimney smoke.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 48)

Whatever their intentions, which will be addressed next, the Hobbits came to need and want the Troll, thus proving as most post-modernists would concur and as Leopold (1949) has said: "If all things are in a state of constant change, then human behavior can change too--- and for the better" (p. xxv). I take this to mean that it is possible to alter such detrimental human practices as racism, sexism, animal, and planetary abuse. We

could adopt a life-embracing *weltanschauung* to replace the current anthropocentric mindset which is akin to Arendt's "radical evil" or thoughtless evil with our mindless abuse of nature (Arendt cited in Orr, 2011, p. 318).

Another theme in Tolkien's "Perry-the-Winkle" (1990) is that of greed. As noted in Chapter I of this dissertation, greed is what drives capitalism, and capitalism is the main force that has led to such great environmental devastation on Earth. Hirsh (cited in Orr, 2011) says this of greed: "Increased material goods enlarge the demand for positional goods, a demand that can be satisfied for some only by frustrating demand by others" (p. 79). This is especially true of undeveloped nations who are victims of what Shiva (2005) calls "biopiracy," or the stealing of natural resources by greedy industrial powers clamoring for scarce or valuable resources that use them to develop products without giving compensation to the people from whose lands they originated (p. 146).<sup>28</sup> Hobbits, as in "Perry-the-Winkle," are really no different from industrialized, consumer driven humans of the current era except in scale. After discovering that the Troll is a good cook, they greatly desire to sample of his culinary delights, especially since Hobbits have a very close relationship with their stomachs.

They hammered upon the old Troll's door,  
'A beautiful cransome cake  
O bake for us, please, or two, or more;  
O bake!' they cried, 'O bake!'  
'Go home, go home!' the old Troll said,  
'I never invited you.

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<sup>28</sup> Many conservative thinkers blame environmental erosion on over population in Third World nations; however, this is not the case. As Shiva (2005) and others have proven, environmental devastation really comes from over-consumption in the First World.



Only on Thursdays I bake my bread,  
and only for a few'. (Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 48-49)

It does not take much of a stretch of the imagination to see the comparison between the Troll and the Hobbits and Third World nations and First World nations. One lusts for what the other can provide for them. History provides myriad examples of this: the Punic Wars, Britain in India, the Opium Wars in China, and the seemingly endless involvement of the United States in Iraq over securing cheap oil supplies and opening new markets (Lerner, 2006). Greed is an age old problem that does not seem to be getting any better. Tolkien (1981) poignantly has said of exploitation driven by avarice, “commercialism is a swine at heart” (p. 55). Obviously, he was aware of the pernicious effect greed was having on all aspects of the planet and its inhabitants, and we could learn from this, as we could *Mark 8:36* in the *Bible*, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” By engaging in greedy overconsumption, we, mostly the advanced industrialized nations, are destroying nature which is a vital part of our lives.

The next poem to be considered in Tolkien’s *TATB* (1990) is “The Hoard,” which also is undergirded by the theme of greed, even more poignantly so than “Perry-the-Winkle.” This poem shows that this deadly sin is not just endemic to Trolls or Hobbits, but also to gods/angels in Tolkien’s legendarium (Valar and Maiar), Elves (usually considered the most environmentally-friendly of Tolkien’s races of Middle-earth), Dwarves, Dragons, and, of course, Men. Of Angels and the Elves’ greed and lust for precious metals, Tolkien (1990) has written:

When the moon was new and the sun young  
of silver and gold the gods sung:  
in the green grass they silver spilled,  
and the white waters they with gold filled.  
Ere the pit was dug or Hell yawned,  
ere dwarf was bred or dragon spawned,  
there were Elves of old, and strong spells  
under green hills in hollow dells  
they sang as they wrought many fair things,  
and the bright crowns of the Elf-kings.  
(*TATB*, p. 60)

These Angels and Elves seem to have become engaged in what Midgley calls “anthropolatry” or a form of idolatry of the self from the worship of their accomplishments built upon the mastery of the world’s resources (Midgley cited in Orr, 2011, p. 227). Like the chief problem with Humanism, it goads over humankind’s dominance over the Earth; hence, breeding ever greater our anthropocentric weltanschauung and environmental destruction. Tolkien, in his abhorrence of the greed of industrial societies, “believed that empiricism and industrialization threatened to reduce the whole of reality to its materialist aspects” (Veldman, 1994, p. 51). In no point of human’s exploitation of the Earth is it more revolting than over our lust for precious metals, with the possible exception of oil, which has caused so much carnage to so many species. As Colwell (1985) has stated:

Knowing, learning, the entire enterprise of human life require not a narrow anthropocentric one-way consideration of how the rest of nature may serve us but a consideration of how we may preserve it, contribute to its well-being according to our best understanding of it (p. 255).

If it was such the case, then the proverbial “lungs” of Earth, the Amazon Basin, may not be in such sorry shape, as we have for decades de-forested it for farms, wood, and the search for valuable minerals (Wilson, 1992).

Next in “The Hoard” is the greed of the Dwarves, who throughout Tolkien’s works are considered the epitome of greed only surpassed, perhaps, by Dragons like Smaug, the antagonist of *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1994).

There was an old dwarf in a dark cave,  
to silver and gold his fingers clave;  
with hammer and tongs and anvil-stone  
he worked his hands to the hard bone,  
and coins he made, and strings of rings,  
and thought to buy the power of kings.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 61-62).

Here an additional problem is added to Tolkien’s works of high fantasy to the greed for metal and gems; that is, its equation with political power. Political power is not necessarily a bad thing. It becomes bad when it oppresses others and becomes an end to itself. Tolkien, in his *Letters* (1981), has offered interesting comments on the problem of power in a correspondence to a bookshop owner, Mr. Hastings:

Sauron was of course not ‘evil’ in origin. He was a ‘spirit’ corrupted by the Prime Dark Lord (the Prime sub-creative Rebel) Morgoth. He was given an opportunity of repentance, when Morgoth was overcome, but could not face the humiliation of recantation, and suing for pardon; and so his temporary turn to good and ‘benevolence’ ended in a greater relapse, until he became the main representative of Evil of the later ages. But at the beginning of the Second Age he was still beautiful to look at, or could still assume a beautiful visible shape--- and was not indeed wholly evil, not unless all ‘reformers’ who want to hurry up with ‘reconstruction’ and ‘reorganization’ are wholly evil, even before pride and the lust to exert their will eat them up. (p. 190)

Aside from the parallels with the Devil stemming from Tolkien's strict Catholicism, and Saint Origen's contention that even Satan could be forgiven, power is the real problem here. What may start out as a benign attempt to reform can quickly transmogrify into wielding power to the detriment of others and nature too for its own sake. Curry (1997) has said this of the other main antagonist in Tolkien's *TLOA* (1994), Saruman the White (who will be discussed in more detail later):

Though the only real good in, or rational motive for, all this ordering and planning and organization [of Arda ravaged by Melkor] was the good of Arda (even admitting Sauron's right to be their supreme lord), his 'plans,' the idea coming from inside his own mind, became the sole object of his will, and an end, the end, in itself . . . (p. 74).

So a once good Wizard (hence his appellation "the White") becomes totally corrupted by power, not unlike many rulers of humanity have done such as Julius Caesar and Napoleon. Power is so seductive in Tolkien's *TLOA* (1994) that even though none of the protagonists, with little exception such as is the case with Boromir from Gondor, accept the Ring of Power, they cannot resist its power to dominate others, and they know it. The major exception, of course, is Bombadil. He, aside from Galadriel, is the only one who can probably resist being seduced by its power for dominion over all, but he is never offered it (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994). Again, in his refusal to dominate others, Bombadil can teach us much about using power for benevolent means. Tolkien writes in his *Letters* (1981), "But since in the view of this tale and mythology Power---when it dominates or seeks to dominate other wills and minds . . . is evil . . ." (p. 237).

A dragon also figures prominently in Tolkien's "The Hoard." Dragons are large, greedy, reptilian creatures created during the First Age of Arda by Morgoth. They are inimical to all of Ilúvatar's creation, but especially so to Dwarves and Men. Tolkien seems to derive his Dragons from the Old Norse *Völsunga Saga* translated by William Morris, *Beowulf*, *Revelations*, and Sigurd of Germanic lore (Evans, 2007). These creatures do not appear prominently in *TLOR*, only in *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion*, and *TATB*. Prime examples of Dragons' nature is well-described by Tolkien as embodied by Glaurung in *The Silmarillion* and Smaug in *The Hobbit* (Evans, 2007). Of the Dragon in "The Hoard," Tolkien has written:

There was an old dragon under grey stone;  
his red eyes blinked as he lay alone.  
His joy was dead and his youth spent,  
he was knobbed and wrinkled, and his limbs bent  
in the long years to his gold chained;  
in his heart's furnace the fire waned.  
To his belly's slime gems stuck thick,  
silver and gold he would snuff and lick:  
he knew the place of the least ring  
beneath the shadow of his black wing.  
Of thieves he thought on his hard bed,  
and dreamed that on their flesh he fed,  
their bones crushed, and their blood drank:  
his ears drooped and his breath sank.  
Mail-rings rang. He heard them not.  
A voice echoed in his deep grot:  
a young warrior with a bright sword  
called him forth to defend his hoard.  
His teeth were knives, and of horn his hide,  
but iron tore him, and his flame died.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 62-63)

Obviously, this section of the poem harbors profound allusions to Smaug and the burglar Bilbo Baggins in Tolkien's work *The Hobbit*, as well as what he gleaned from older mythic traditions and his Catholicism. The Dragon's unmitigated greed, tinged by paranoia, is equitable with what Berman (1981) has referred to as "a world defined by capital accumulation [no matter how private] . . ." (p. 49). In a sense, the Dragon is not so unlike the richest of the rich in our day, such as CEOs who earn over 300 times what their average workers do (Liberto, 2011). Wealth in the form of gems and precious metals are over-valued, as are stocks and other commodities in modern society. Proof of this can easily be found in our latest economic fiasco, the Great Recession.

Today, and at least since the seventeenth-century with the dawn of the Scientific Revolution and ensuing industrialization, natural creations do not have their own purpose, and they are generally described in their function in a mechanized, axiomatic, quantitative manner (Berman, 1981). This greatly devalues all living things and that which we destroy to get to non-living things we value such as gold, coal, and oil.<sup>29</sup>

Berman (1981) has written:

As a result, our relationship to nature is fundamentally altered. Unlike medieval man, whose relationship with nature was seen as being reciprocal, modern man (existential man) sees himself as having the ability to control and dominate nature, to use it for his own purposes (p. 51).

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<sup>29</sup> One only has to look at the decimated landscape of the coal fields of West Virginia and Kentucky to see how the search for mineral wealth adversely affects the environment. Further, the fairly recent oil spill in April 2010 by British Petroleum in the Gulf of Mexico speaks for itself in terms of ecological degradation.

Again, we can learn from Tolkien and Bombadil that greed is yet another destructive force in our lives and to nature, as is the socio-economic power that it can buy.

Finally, in Tolkien's "The Hoard" the greed of man is examined. This may be the most telling part of the poem as it concerns the pernicious nature of avarice and power to humankind, the Earth, and other species. Tolkien (1990) has written:

There was an old king on a high throne:  
his beard lay on knees of bone;  
his mouth savoured [sic] neither meat nor drink,  
nor his ears song; he could only think  
of the huge chest with carven lid  
where pale gems and gold lay hid  
in secret treasury in the dark ground;  
its strong doors were iron-bound.  
The swords of his thanes were dull with rust,  
his glory fallen, his rule unjust,  
his halls hollow, and his bowers cold,  
but king he was of elvish gold.  
He heard not the horns in the mountain-pass,  
he smelt not the blood on the trodden grass,  
but his halls were burned, his kingdom lost;  
in a cold pit his bones were tossed. (p. 63)

Since Tolkien liked to mine his own work for other ideas, it is easy to see how these verses allude to the plight of King Théoden of Rohan before his duplicitous advisor Grima Wormtounge was removed by Gandalf, and Saruman's possession of Théoden was exorcised by him too (Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 1994). Very well Théoden could have suffered the same fate as the old King in "The Hoard" if it were not for Gandalf's intervention.

Saruman the White, once demon-like possessor of Théoden's body and mind, had a different sort of greed, though just as deadly as gold-lust; that is, the greed for power. In

his lust for domination, he takes control of those weaker than him, and it is not unlike to what Shiva (2005) has railed against concerning the exploitation of Third World nations (especially India) by the First World. Saruman should have been a good steward to those whom he could influence; instead he became corrupted by power.<sup>30</sup> A good steward is not someone who necessarily is rich in property or lords over a domain, but one who is responsible for the care of something placed in his/her custody. Gandalf has said we are not given the liberty to choose whether or not to discharge our stewardship responsibilities, but we are required by what means we should do it, for good or ill (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). We are all stewards of something, even the least of us, and that something is our planet and our fellow humans; hence answering Cain's question to God in *Genesis* concerning the whereabouts of his brother Able: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Like Cain who murdered his brother, so we collectively are guilty of mistreatment of our fellow man, animals, and the Earth. I contend we have all been bad stewards of our planet with varying degrees of culpability. To ameliorate this, *we need to be actively involved respecters of all life such as is exemplified by Tolkien's character Tom Bombadil, and not be like Saruman the White* (italics added for emphasis).

Saruman uses all at his disposal: nature, other races, and other species for his own ambition. To him all life is a mere commodity and a means to an end. Campbell (2011) has described him as, "under the sign of the ruthless capitalist investor who values things, even living beings, only in terms of how they may advance his 'cause'" (p. 102). His lust for domination leads to war, enslavement of the Hobbits of the Shire, and environmental

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<sup>30</sup> One thing that makes Saruman's fall to the dark side so awful is that the Istari (Wizards) were sent to Arda by the Valar to combat evil.



destruction akin to “the blasted landscapes of Eastern Europe” which he leaves behind where he reigns (Shippey, 2001, p. 170). This lust for domination is integral to the current environmental problem, and this mindset must be changed if we are to survive or abate what Wilson (1992) calls the “Sixth Great Extinction on Earth” (p. 343).

The next poem to be discussed in Tolkien’s *TATB* (1990) is “The Sea-bell” originally published as “Looney” in *Oxford Magazine* in 1934 (Hargrove, 2007). Critics claim it is a second-hand recollection of a dream of Frodo’s written at the dawn of the Fourth Age of Middle-earth, at least according to being part of Tolkien’s mythology, and it is caused by his wander-lust and his inability to ever totally recuperate from being stabbed by a Ring-wraith with an enchanted Morgul<sup>31</sup> blade (Hargrove, 2007; Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 1999). In the poem, Frodo is no longer able to interact with other living beings and goes on a voyage in a mysterious ship.

As mentioned earlier, the famous Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden greatly admired this poem, and though he and Tolkien were friends, they had a precarious relationship. Both were Oxford graduates, devout Christians, skeptics of modernity, and lovers of Old English literature. Auden who was younger than Tolkien was also his student who was enamored by his mental faculty, and Auden became the first important critic of Tolkien’s high fantasy to regard it as a great literary achievement via a 1956 *New York Times Book Review* (Jellema, 2007). However, their nervous relationship resulted in such things as a never sent 8 page letter to Auden penned by Tolkien, full of annoyance at his reviews of *TLOA*, despite their positive tenor (Jellema, 2007).

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<sup>31</sup> Morgul refers to the strong-hold of Sauron, Mordor.

One rather humorous incident tells of their shaky friendship. In the late 1960s, Auden arrived at Tolkien's home uninvited, very drunk, and pestered the annoyed Tolkien. Next, he proceeded to write in *The New Yorker* that Tolkien's house was: ". . . a hideous house---I can't tell you how awful it is---with hideous pictures on the wall" (Auden cited in Jellema, 2007, p. 42). Obviously, Tolkien, as has been mentioned earlier, was a very private man in regard to home and family, and he was greatly offended. From the aforementioned unpublished letter to Auden concerning his 1956 review, Tolkien (1981) has written:

I am very grateful for this review [sarcasm]. Most encouraging, as coming from a man who is both a poet and a critic of distinction. Yet not (I think) one who has much practiced the telling of tales. In any case I am a little surprised by it, for in spite of its praise it seems to me a critic's way of talking rather than an author's. (p. 239)

One can easily discern from these few lines that Tolkien disliked criticism, even if it was positive overall which also shows his dislike of allegory and trying to know authorial intent which he claims is unknowable. That being said, source criticism is still a valuable tool in trying to understand a work of literature. Further, though Tolkien vociferously claims his disdain for it, he too hypocritically engaged in it via his scholarly works on such matters as the writings of the fourteenth-century *Pearl* Poet, semi-legendary author of canonical Anglo-Saxon poetry such as *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Returning to Tolkien's poetry, the theme of isolation is prominent in Tolkien's "The Sea-Bell." As he walks by the sea, Frodo sees a mysterious ship:

Then I saw a boat silently float  
on the night-tide, empty and grey.  
'It is later than late! Why do we wait?'  
I leapt in and cried: 'Bear me away!'  
It bore me away, wetted with spray,  
wrapped in a mist, wound in a sleep,  
to a forgotten strand in a strange land.  
In the twilight beyond the deep  
I heard a sea-bell swing in the swell,  
dinging, dinging, and the breakers roar  
on the hidden teeth of a perilous reef;  
and at last I came to a long shore.  
White it glimmered, and the sea simmered  
with star-mirror in a silver net;  
cliffs of stone pale as ruel-bone  
in the moon-foam were gleaming wet.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 65-66)

As one can see, as a result of his injury, Frodo has become alienated from all life, much as mankind has alienated himself from nature, and he cannot abide in Arda anymore. So, as he does in Tolkien's *The Return of the King*, Frodo abandons Middle-earth for the Grey Havens, West across the sea, which is representative of the spiritual world (Curry, 1997), with the last of the Elves who too have become alienated from the world since the beginning of the Fourth Age is the time of Men and the time of Elves has passed (Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 1994).

Frodo's alienation is most poignantly shown in the following final verses:

Houses were shuttered, wind round them  
muttered,  
roads were empty. I sat by a door,  
and where drizzling rain poured down a drain  
I cast away all that I bore:  
in my clutching hand some grains of sand,  
and a sea-shell silent and dead.  
Never will my ear that bell hear,

never my feet that shore tread,  
never again, as in sad lane,  
in blind alley and in long street  
ragged I walk. To myself I talk;  
for still they speak not, men that I meet.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, p. 69)

This alienation and isolation from the world, even from his dear friends who adventured with him during the War of the Ring, is mirrored in the final pages of Tolkien's *The Return of the King* which was foreshadowed in the portentous dream he had in the House of Bombadil. Despite the dreary tone of the final pages of *The Return of the King*, it is also tinged with hope:

Then Frodo kissed Merry and Pippin, and last of all Sam and went aboard; and the sails were drawn up, and the wind blew, and slowly the ship shipped away down the long grey firth; and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost. And the ship went out into the High Sea and passed on into the West, until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed to him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise. (p. 339)

Though Frodo and others, like the Elves, have been alienated from Middle-earth, as mankind has alienated and isolated himself from nature, Tolkien still offers a ray of hope for the future. Tolkien, through characters like Bombadil and others, in his vision of *TLOR*, "is one of the cosmos as an organism at once real, living and sacred" (Curry, 1997, p. 159). It calls for our redemption with nature via a resacralization of living nature as an integral part of us or re-enchantment (Curry, 1997). But to do so, we must surrender

our anthropocentric mindset obsessed with power for a biophilic weltanschauung that seeks not to dominate but to live in harmony with the rest of creation as does Bombadil.

### **A Brief Comparison of Opposites: Bombadil and Saruman**

The Wizard Saruman the White and Tom Bombadil can be viewed as possessing two divergent environmental models, or approaches to the environment, and they are inverses of each other. Saruman was originally one of the five Istari (Maiarian Wizards) sent to Middle-earth to combat Sauron's evil during the early Third Age by the Valar who decided on a more subtle and less direct approach to fight evil than in previous Ages. They can be thought of, originally that is, as benevolent mercenaries.

They are as follows with their unique powers listed with them: Saruman the White, the wisest and most powerful of them; Gandalf the Gray, the second most powerful wizard and the most inquisitive; Radagast the Brown, who is not a character of much consequence in Tolkien's books as he is in Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy of films, with his deep knowledge of flora and fauna, though he becomes a traitor to all the good powers via he without knowledge of what he does and allows Saruman the White to use his birds for vile purposes; and two Blue Wizards, weakest of the five, who traveled far to the East beyond the geographic scope of the setting of *TLOR* and who play no role in the story (Stanton, 2007). Saruman soon adopted the fortress Isengard as his home. Gandalf remained semi-itinerant among the hominid races. Radagast lived in Rhosgobel on the edge of Mirkwood close to his animal friends. Then there are the two Blue wizards who went to the East to assist who knows what but maybe to fight against Dragons who came from the East according to Tolkien's lore. Also, soon after their arrival, each Wizard

became obsessed with their own niches in Arda: For example, Gandalf concentrates on the races of Middle-earth; Radagast with animals; and Saruman with Sauron's ruling Ring of Power and domination of others (Stanton, 2007). However, according to Tolkien (1999) they never let their true names be known, except amongst certain Elf lords such as Elrond and Galadriel (both of these chief Elves were bearers of lesser Rings of Power than that of Sauron's One Ring and allies of the forces of good). By letting their real names be widely known that would give, I think, the well-known power of naming to the dark forces and diminish the potency of the forces of good in Tolkien's epic.

In his obsession with the One Ring and domination of others, Saruman became corrupted believing he could use its power to stop Sauron. Day (Day cited in Campbell, 2011) has stated:

In his attempt to overthrow the forces of the evil Sauron, Saruman gathers forces that in themselves are just as evil, and is himself corrupted by this desire for power. Unwittingly, Saruman becomes a mirror image and ally of the evil being he initially wanted to overcome. (p. 38)

In Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1994), Saruman tries to entice Gandalf to become an ally in his plans to rule, or co-rule, Middle-earth:

'And listen, Gandalf, my old friend and helper!' he said, coming near and speaking now in a softer voice. 'I said we, for we it may be, if you will join with me. A new Power is rising. Against it the old allies and policies will not avail us at all. There is no hope left in Elves or dying Númenor [the ancient great kingdom of Men in the Second Age that has been reduced but to a shadow of its former greatness]. This then is one choice before you, before us. We may join with that Power. It would be wise, Gandalf. There is hope that way. Its victory is at hand; and there will be rich reward for those who aided it. As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow; and the

Wise such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses,  
to control it . . . (p. 291)

Again, we see the problem of domination, and in the case of Saruman, it has devastating ecological consequences; hence, his decimation of Fangorn Forest which brings forth the enmity of the Ents led by Treebeard (Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 1994). In fact, Saruman and his Orcs ravage Fangorn so badly that it becomes a hellscape as nightmarish as the worst devastation humans have inflicted on this Earth:

Beneath the walls of Isengard there still were acres tilled by the slaves of Saruman; but most of the valley had become a wilderness of weeds and thorns. Brambles trailed upon the ground, or clambering over bush and bank, made shaggy caves where small beasts housed. No trees grew there, but among the rank grasses could still be seen the burned and axe-hewn stumps of ancient groves. It was a sad country . . . (Tolkien, *The Two Towers*, 1994, p. 173)

Saruman's ascension to power and unrelenting pursuit of more power takes on a clear, modern industrialized form in Isengard and in his scouring of the Shire under the guise of Sharkey, as it did Tolkien's beloved England in the nineteenth-century (Tolkien, *The Two Towers & The Return of the King*, 1994). Saruman's moral side fell to the corruption by power:

. . . and in environmental terms, [he is] a representative of technologies, powers, and industries in our world that have eyes fixed firmly on the 'prize' of desired outcome whilst ignoring the damage caused to the natural world that is served up as a by-product of their endeavors (Campbell, 1997, p. 98).

Saruman, despite initial good intentions, becomes another version of Sauron. Shippey (2001) states that the Sarumans of this world, as in Tolkien's Middle-earth, rule by

tricking others into believing in a modernist paradise driven by inexpensive and miraculous technology, and to tie this into education which will be done explicitly in the next chapter, it is as some in education would have us believe computer-aided courses can do “in which one professor can be responsible for an online course with an enrollment of tens of thousands of students” (Bowers, 2013, p. 94).

In essence, Saruman’s faults lie in his desire for power and to possess and dominate others and the environment for his own ends. He has an acute anthropocentric mindset, and its repercussions are as evident in Tolkien’s works as they are of those with similar viewpoints in the real world. Again, Saruman is the diametric opposite of Bombadil in his *weltanschauung*. In summary, I will point by point list the differences between Bombadil and Saruman to conclude this chapter.

#### Tom Bombadil: Ecologically Positive

- Seeks to understand nature on its own terms.
- Renounces domination of his environmental domain.
- Is in harmony with nature.
- Is representative of nature.
- Unaffected by the lure of the power of the One Ring.
- Utilizes his voice to sing, share his extensive knowledge of nature and history, and to invoke simple, natural power without domination.

#### Saruman the White: Ecologically Pernicious

- Exploits nature and other creatures for his own gain.
- Dominates the environment in pursuit of power.



- Aggressor to nature.
- Represents environmental destruction via technology and industry.
- Corrupted by the lure of power by the One Ring.
- Uses his voice to beguile and deceive others.
- Does not share his formidable knowledge. (Campbell, 1997)

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, both fans and critics of Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature agree they are ripe with environmental themes and tropes. These implicit infusions stem from his love of nature, abhorrence of modern industrial capitalism, his readings, maternal influence, work as a philologist and professor, and his profound Catholicism. As Morgan (2010) has said about Tolkien's ecology: "[it is grounded in a] creation-centered ethic of stewardship . . . that holds the potential to re-enchant the world" (p. 383). Further, Morgan (2010) also has said that and as mentioned earlier in this dissertation: "The story . . . possesses significant pedagogical potential, albeit implicit in nature . . ." (p. 383-384). Again, my thesis is that Tolkien's fantasy works, via the understudied and enigmatic character of Tom Bombadil, can be construed as being educative in regard to environmentalism, specifically in the forms of autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy.

As has been shown in the previous chapters,

[Tom Bombadil] represents the harmony of nature itself---the spirit of humanity as it was meant to be: in complicit union with the natural world, seeking understanding without control. Indeed his refusal to exploit or to rule the world about him casts him as 'an exemplar' of environmental ethics. Perhaps more than any other character in Tolkien's fiction, Tom Bombadil is an ideal--- a 'pacifist' expression of environmental harmony. (Campbell, 2011, p.80)

## **Bombadil and his Multiple Intelligences**

A predisposition towards biophilia is obviously a boon towards environmentalism, but it is not an absolute necessity towards being an advocate of changing the current ecologically pernicious weltanschauung. This predisposition can be described in Gardnerian terms. Let us foray into how Bombadil has this inclination.

Howard Gardner's *Frames of the Mind* (1983) on multiple intelligences was a groundbreaking work in education and psychology when it appeared over 30 years ago. In simplest terms, he has postulated that different people have different types of intelligences in which they excel. He listed seven originally. They are as follows: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1983). As his work on these intelligences progressed, he came to add new ones to the list. The ones of importance to the character of Tom Bombadil are naturalist, spiritual, and moral (Gardner, 1999).

A naturalist “demonstrates expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species---the flora and fauna---of his or her environment” (Gardner, 1999, p. 48). Further, the naturalist often exhibits Wilson's biophilia. This latter aspect of most naturalists follows with Naess's Deep Ecology (1973). Bombadil readily exemplifies both a love and reverence for all life throughout his appearances in Tolkien's high fantasy works. As an example of the first (knowledge of nature), through the entirety of *TATB*, he shows profound knowledge of all sorts of animals and plants from badgers to willow trees to various types of fish (Tolkien, 1990). Another example is found in *The Fellowship of the Ring* when the Hobbits are at his home, and he put them in awe and in

great self-reflection about their relationship with nature by telling them about the wonders of nature itself. As for an example of Bombadil's respect and reverence for nature, a prime one occurs in *The Fellowship of the Ring* once again. As Merry is being devoured by Old Man Willow in the Old Forest, Bombadil rescues him from the malicious tree without use of violence showing his respect for life without dominating it or being tempted to resort to violence (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994).

Next, let us turn to Gardner's spiritual intelligence as it applies to Bombadil. Though Gardner (1999) differentiates between several types of spirituality, the one that applies most closely to Bombadil:

. . . reflects a desire to know about experiences and cosmic entities that are not readily apprehended in a material sense but that, nonetheless, seem important . . . . If we humans can relate to the world of nature, we can also relate to the supernatural world---to the cosmos that extends beyond what we can perceive directly, to the mystery of our own existence, and to the life-and-death experiences that transcend what we routinely encounter. (p. 54)

We have seen throughout this dissertation how Bombadil cherishes nature, though it is in his power to control and possibly abuse it, as does the corrupt wizard Saruman, but he does not. This veneration of nature comes, in part, from Bombadil's perpetual contact with it and getting to know nature and all its facets on an intimate level. Hayes (2009) has agreed that being in contact with nature, not viewing it in abstract, solidifies in at least those with a penchant for nature, a nurturing for it. However, Bombadil is also in awe of nature and its mysteries, linking him to the greater enigmas of Creation as a whole. This can be exemplified by the poetry that permeates his speech:

Now let the song begin! Let us sing together  
Of sun, stars, moon and mist, rain and cloudy weather,  
Light on the budding leaf, dew on the feather;  
Wind on the open hill, bells on the heather;  
Reeds by the shady pool, lilies on the water;  
Old Tom Bombadil and the River-daughter!  
(Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 1994, p. 138)

Bombadil's spirituality has caused some scholars to liken him to a shamanistic wildman of the forests which is a popular motif in British Celtic/Irish literature such as the Welsh *Mabinogi* (Siewers, 2005). He could very well be Merlin of Arthurian Lore in another context.

Finally, in this investigation of Gardner's intelligences as they apply to Bombadil, he lists a moral intelligence that Bombadil readily displays. Integral to this moral intelligence is a feature of it that has "recognition of the sanctity of life in its diverse facets" (Gardner, 1999, p. 70). Examples of Bombadil's moral intelligence abound. For example, in a generic sense, he does not rule or abuse life, though as we have seen he has the power to do so, in his own domain of the Old Forest and probably anywhere else. He is master of the Old Forest, but he lives in concord with it unlike Saruman, Sauron, or Melkor.

Though we may not all have the innate "intelligences" to be predisposed to revere and respect nature as Bombadil does, like many other things in life we are not genetically inclined to do, we can learn to do. Again, it is imperative that we learn to care for the Earth and its minions if we are to save it.

Further, before moving to the core of this chapter, it is necessary to define a term mentioned earlier; that is, educative, and it links back to what is written in the previous paragraph about learning to care for nature. In regard to the meaning of educative, I turn to an article by Wong (2007) about the philosophy of a paragon of American education, John Dewey. In his article, among other things, Wong (2007) notes that the most powerful educational experiences can never be fully explained in terms of learners' logic and self control. There is a degree of the non-rational or the aesthetic experience as can be found in being deeply moved by a work of art, a sunset, or literature such as Tolkien's works of high fantasy. Dewey advocated experiential and problem-based learning, and from his writings it can be extrapolated that the degree that any activity is educative is resultant from the relationship between doing and undergoing which are joined in perception (Wong, 2007). When something is educative, the pupil has new thoughts, feelings, and ensuing actions, and the world reveals itself in new ways. In other words, it is transformative in that "[both] the person and world are mutually transformed" (Wong, 2007, p. 203).

### **The Problem with the Prevalent Anthropocentric Mindset**

As mentioned several times in this dissertation, the core of the current environmental problem lays in the prevalent anthropocentric mindset that values human life, wants, and desires over all other life forms and at their expense; in other words, domination via exploitative capitalism (Devall and Sessions, 1985). This *weltanschauung* is diametrically opposite of Bombadil and exemplified in Tolkien's *TLOR* by antagonists such as Saruman and Saruon. As Shippey (1983) notes, ". . . he does not dominate" (p.

81), and as Campbell (2011) concurs, he has no desire to do so, though he could.

Veldman (1994) has explained this theme of domination in terms of Romantic protest:

In it [*TLOR*] the good and the heroic treasure the past and traditional wisdom, see themselves as part of the natural world, affirm the power of individual agency to transform the course of history, and seek to create a community in which each individual has a place and a purpose. In contrast, Tolkien's villains reject the lessons of the past, regard nature as a resource to be exploited, revel in technology, and work to obliterate individuality while creating a universe characterized by self-interest and alienation. (p. 80)

Bombadil's harmonious relationship with nature makes him a model of the ecological ethics that we desperately need to mirror if we are to salvage our planet (Campbell, 2011). Further, as Bowers (2013) has stated, one of the major flaws in the current mainstream environmental movement is that it is still rooted in the largely Western idea of human dominance over nature. Many only engage in conservation as means to preserve the planet's commodities so their exploitation can be protracted, as Leopold (1949) so long ago noted.

Another, more radical author, Kahn (2010) has said this of the anthropocentric world view and domination:

Our current course for social and environmental disaster . . . must be traced to the evolution of: an anthropocentric worldview in what the sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1993) refers to as a matrix of domination; a global technocapitalist infrastructure that relies upon market-based and functionalist versions of technoliteracy to instantiate and augment its socio-economic and cultural control; an unsustainable, reductionist, and anti-democratic model of institutional science; and the wrongful marginalization and repression of pro-ecological resistance through the claim that it represents a 'terrorist force that is counter to the morals of a democratic society rooted in tolerance, educational change, and civic debate. (p. 9)

So again, the problem of domination through a human-centered worldview stems from greedy capitalism and that which accretes from it. Without a radical shift in our current ecological policies, largely based globally on the Western marco-model of industrial capitalism and writers from the Enlightenment, like Bacon with his “*natura vexata*” and Descartes with his insidious taxonomic objectivism, the next generation may very well see the Earth’s last days (Berman, 1981; Freeman, 2009). For as Bateson (Bateson cited in Berman, 1981) has noted, the mind, and the larger human species itself, is interlocked with whatever we interact. To destroy the environment is to destroy ourselves in the process. We need a shift to not archaic animism or anthropomorphism to resuscitate our relationship with nature, but a post-Scientific mindset that unites the sacred and the secular (Berman, 1981). This can be done in many ways such as appreciating that which draws us back into a close and reverential relationship with nature like: getting in tune with our psychic landscape through dreams, body language, art, dance, fantasy, and myth such as exemplified by Tolkien’s character of Tom Bombadil (Berman, 1981). In fact, it can also be used to unify a disparate human race by having us all rally around saving the planet in a democratic fashion, while de-nuding the power of globalization, rapacious industrial capitalism, and Cartesian subject/object dichotomies.

In summary, Tolkien’s portrayal of nature in his works of high fantasy can be characterized as follows in regard to the prevalent anthropocentric mindset:

- It is respectful of qualitative local distinctiveness exemplified by his vivid descriptions of places such as the Shire of the Hobbits.



- It is disrespectful of any foundational distinction between nature and culture; they coincide with such characters as the Riders of Rohan living on plains requiring their mastery of horses who are to traverse great distances.
  - It is aware of its agency and subjectivity, as well as materiality and objectivity.
  - Its break with Modernistic Scientism for a return to Romanticism attacks the desacralization and the commodification of nature for the sake of human progress.
- (Curry, 2007)

Tolkien's work re-connects readers with nature that is enchanted, alive, and conscious as is the case with Treebeard and the Ents. For example, in Tolkien's *The Two Towers* (1994), Treebeard says representing his own sentience and those of other trees, and in regard to Saruman's destruction of Fangorn:

‘Curse him, root and branch! Many of those trees were my friends, creatures I had known from nut and acorn; many had voices of their own that are lost now. And there are wastes for stump and bramble where once had been singing groves. I have been idle. I have let things slip. It must stop!’ (p. 76)

The optimum world is one of equals for Tolkien, not between master and slave for greedy exploitation through domination. In his *Letters*, Tolkien (1981) has spoken of the pathological character of a mindset as is the case of the master: “the tyrants lose sight of objects, become cruel, and like smashing, hurting, and defiling as such” (p. 200).

Therefore, his work has interests that are attune to modern ecological movements such as Deep Ecology. And through characters like Bombadil, though not articulated well compared to the overtness of Deep Ecology, Tolkien it seems wanted his readers to

abandon human-centeredness and ecological utilitarianism driven by dominating, greedy capitalism.

### **Autodidacticism**

As previously mentioned in this dissertation, some Tolkien scholars believe his works of high fantasy literature can be efficacious as a tool for teaching and learning in terms of autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy. Morgan (2010) has agreed that Tolkien's works centered in mythopoetic imagination "hold the potential to re-enchant the world," and are applicable to the contemporary world and its problems, especially ecological ones, "and would therefore seem a fruitful topic for exploration in terms of environmental education" (p. 383); Dickerson and Evans (2006) have concurred on this matter too. His entire legendarium, especially after the success of Jackson's films and given the renewed interest in its literary forms too, "crucially continues to have a significant impact upon the environmental and moral imaginaries of many of its readers [and viewers]" (Morgan, 2010, p. 383). Morgan (2010) also has said specifically about its ecopedagogical potential that:

The story . . . posses significant pedagogical potential, albeit implicit in nature, and more likely to be efficacious through processes associated with 'self-education,' autodidacticism or 'free-choice' learning than with formal educational approaches (pp. 383-384).

Siewers (2005) has noted that Tolkien's major works of fantasy, such as *TLOR*, stand out from other works of high fantasy via their ability to engage people of variegated political and religious persuasions with their anti-modernist and pro-environmental perspectives "impacting a mass audience with an ecological message of valuing life

above global consumerism,” even if presented to them in a consumerist fashion (p. 140). For example, green/anti-modernist readings of Tolkien across disparate cultures are stronger than ever given the massive success of Jackson’s films, and “in wake of the recent film portrayals of Saruman’s Isengard as a forest-consuming industrial hellhole engaged in genetic engineering [the Uruk Hai]” (Siewers, 2005, p. 141). These biophilic themes are not only realized by Tolkien’s audiences, via film or literature, through negative and shocking examples like Saruman’s Isengard, Sauron’s Mordor, or Sharkey’s decimation of the Shire, but through positive examples too such as Goldberry, the Old Forest, Treebeard, Radagast the Brown, and Tom Bombadil. Ecocritic Lawrence Buell has noted the goal of ecoliteracy in this era of advanced environmental destruction is to counter such trends within the culture very similar to how Carson’s (1962) work and Leopold’s (1949) work did as well (Buell cited in Siewers, 2005). Though Tolkien’s ecological concerns are implicit, those embedded concerns are thinly veiled, and as suggested in his *Letters*, the destruction of the English countryside was a grave concern to him (Tolkien, 1981). Buell has gone on to state that “[Tolkien’s work] is a ‘textbook case’ for adapting ecocentric literature from the past for cultural restoration in the present” (Buell cited in Siewers, 2005, p. 142).

Nagy (2007) has explained how this is possible lending support to Morgan (2010) and others’ contention that a change in our anthropocentric mindset can be accomplished through autodidacticism<sup>32</sup>, and in regard to how Tolkien’s environmental ethos as found in his fantasy literature can be a vehicle for such change. He has noted that all works of

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<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Franklin is a well-known example of an autodidact from American history.

narrative literature are fictitious, but some more so than others. Tolkien's works of high fantasy have clear connections to real problems such as the environment (Nagy, 2007); therefore, characters that are good stewards of the environment such as Bombadil can be effective in self learning by providing us with an example of how nature should be treated.

Smith (2008) has taken this a step further by narrowing Tolkien's fiction down to modern, in the temporal sense, Romanticism.<sup>33</sup> Romanticism has a unique power of its own to be effective towards changing perceptions like the current pernicious human-centered *weltanschauung* by utilizing the imagination as a faculty that creatively connects us with reality as contrasted with reason or by uniting reason with feeling. It is also a means of overcoming the excesses of modernity that has grown to reduce everything to its usefulness to mankind, mechanistic principles, and disregard for the emotive by allowing both author and reader to find an analogue for his/her feelings often in the sheer beauty of creation (Smith, 2008). Romanticism "is a critical response to modernity, drawing on or echoing the legacy of nineteenth-century Romantics, that is being articulated in our own time" (Smith, 2008, p. 188). In its expressivity, the way it is written or spoken, it brings us close to the author's intentions, overt or not, and it can more effectively speak to "Things that demand to be said, but cannot be said adequately in terms of modern empiricism" such as the wonder of life and nature (Smith, 2008, p. 188).

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter III.

As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, the major premise underpinning the environmental problem is our anthropocentrism, but it is not alone in culpability. Cold, sterile empiricism has aided and abetted too in ecological destruction. Empiricism has managed to disenchant the world, turning everything into that which is quantifiable and measured only in terms of its utility to man. Even great works of art like Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel or Da Vinci's iconic Mona Lisa are often reduced to what they are worth monetarily or how much it costs to repair or clean them. Science has its place, but as Thomas Kuhn has noted it is not an end all. For example, science cannot teach mystery and awe that is needed to be reverential to life because they are qualitative and not quantitative constructs created in the enigma of the human mind or soul and not so much the physiological brain.

Scientism and its antecedent in Humanism arose out of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment as a reaction against religion and superstition, though it can be traced back to Greek rationalism as is the case when Socrates converses with Euthydemus and saw the telos of things as they serve man (Plato cited in Bonnett, 2003). As the decades that encompass the Enlightenment grew, a gulf was created between man and nature, and was exacerbated by the likes of Descartes's body/mind dualism, Bacon's subjugation of nature, Kant's rationality, and even a twisting of Darwin's work (Bonnett, 2003). But now, somewhere in the flux of post-modernity, mankind has begun to see the error of its ways, though the aforementioned Romantics probably were the first major group to see this.

We need to move to a Naessian view of life, a biocentric view that realizes that there is no great divide between man and nature; there are no privileged species beyond those who manage not to go extinct. Darwinism supports this in that

One of the central tenets of Darwinism is that we are not only ecologically, but genetically related to the rest of nature, not to mention the fact that, on the Big Bang Theory of creation, all of terrestrial nature is constituted of a common material, 'the ashes of dead stars' (Bonnett, 2003, p. 660).

This Earth is a living organism with mechanisms to create life-yielding conditions, and it deserves respect as exemplified by Tom Bombadil with his Schweitzerian reverence for all life. Taylor (1986) has eloquently stated that:

And just as we humans place intrinsic value on the opportunity to pursue our own good in our own individual ways, so we [should] consider the realization of the good of animals and plants to be something that should be valued as an end to itself. As moral agents we see ourselves under an ethical requirement to give equal consideration to the good of every entity . . . . Since all [should be] viewed as having the same inherent worth, the moral attitude of respect is equally due to each. (p. 157)

This can be achieved, I and scholars like Kahn (2010), Orr (2011), Wilson (1992) and many others argue through education, especially when couched in its ecologically-minded sub-genres such as some literature, history, biology, philosophy, and critical pedagogy. One of these sub-genres stemming from education can be simple autodidacticism or self-learning by reading such works as those of Tolkien and paying attention to examples of good stewardship and reverence for all life as embodied by Tom Bombadil. Paulo Freire in his posthumously published *Pedagogy of Indignation* (2004) concurs in the urgency to do this (Freire cited in Kahn, 2010).

## **Ecopedagogy**

Before beginning, an item needs to be clarified first. I have distinguished autodidacticism from ecopedagogy, but the boundaries are artificial. Autodidactic literally means self taught. I have separated the two because I want to make a distinction between only reaching the learning audience of one person versus teaching an audience of one or more because it has different pedagogical ramifications too complex to discuss in the scope of this dissertation.

That being said, ecopedagogy needs to be defined and its goals enumerated.

Kahn (2010), a radical ecopedagogue, has said this of ecopedagogy:

Ecopedagogy is not just another pedagogy among many other pedagogies. It not only has meaning as an alternative global project concerned with nature preservation (Natural Ecology) and the impact made by human societies on the natural environment (Social Ecology), but also a new model for sustainable civilization from the ecological point of view (Integral Ecology), which implies making changes on economic, social, and cultural structures. Therefore, it is connected to a utopian project--- one to change current human, social, and environmental relationships. (p. 18)

So, in précis, ecopedagogy, at least according to Kahn (2010), and I agree with his definition of it, is a radical educational tool to change the dominant and environmentally detrimental anthropocentric mindset.

Ecopedagogy is based not on the First World values of North America, Europe, or Australia, but the Latin and South American ethos as promulgated by Paulo Freire (Kahn, 2010). According to Bowers (2003), critical pedagogy itself is notoriously silent on environmental matters in the North because of its insufficiency to deal with planetary

crisis largely due to its close ties with mainstream, and too often, corporate interests in education. This contention is supported by LaDuke (2005) in that she avers that our laws (at least American ones) “no longer secure the blessings of liberty; to ourselves and our posterity” but cater to corporate or elite interests in society (p. 494). So, ecopedagogy has looked to the South, to people like Freire, for inspiration. Its aims are as follows: humanization of experience, a just and free world for all, future-oriented ecological politics, opposition to neo-liberal globalization and imperialism, promotes ecoliteracy, and realizes culturally distinct and relevant knowledge forms as advocated by Shiva (2005), is rooted in sustainability, planetary survival, and biophilia (Kahn, 2010).

Ecopedagogy is not a strict doctrine or methodology that can be universally applied; it must be applied within the respective socio-cultural context (Kahn, 2010). It is not without its problems though. The main problem is that it is being ignored by First World educators because it does not quite fit into their pedagogical paradigm of: universality, their often limited knowledge of other cultures, corporate capitalist interests in education, and their inability to relinquish their dominate status and addiction to wasteful consumerism. That being said, if ever whole-heartedly adopted by the North (First World Nations), as it militates against and critiques Northern hegemonic forms of power such as globalization, imperialism (both outright and cultural), patriarchy, racism, and other forms of oppression, it could be efficacious in changing the dominant mindset (Kahn, 2010). In fact, it should be a welcomed addition to educators’ arsenal because as Kellner (1998) has pointed out given the incessant global social and technological changes, there is a need, not only for multiple literacies such as ecoliteracy, but a means



to teach effectively to empower students, especially concerning ecological issues. Kahn (2010) has taken Kellner's call for multiple literacies a step further in regard to the environment, though seemingly against Bowers's (2013) disdain for such distant, in the physical sense and the lack of real human interaction, computer-driven MOOCs (Massively Open Online Courses) that have become so popular in recent years. Kahn (2010) has stated that he believes contemporary information/communication technologies driven by the Internet offer a plethora of resources to expand ecopedagogy and promulgate biocentric values. His only foreseeable problem with such a resource is the potential to spread neo-liberalism (in the classical sense of the term). He thinks multiple techno-literacies can be used to understand, critique, and undo oppressive social, cultural, and environmental conditions, as people exposed to these technologies become more ecoliterate, ethical, and oppose bastions of domination and manipulation (Kahn, 2010).

Specifically, Kahn (2010) has said:

Theorizing an ecologically democratic and multicultural reconstruction of education in the light of Freirian and Illichian critique demands that we develop theories of multiple literacies needed to empower people in an era of expanding media, technology, and globalization . . . . This means that if we choose not to abandon it all together [technology] (and alluding to Illich, why not?), we should at least make sure that it works to enhance sustainability and the democratic empowerment of people, not just the corporate sector and privileged techno-elite who are generating ecological crises on a vast scale at present. (p. 98)

I concur with his opinion of the use of technology to reach others and teach environmental sustainability, but like Bowers (2013) I am also leery of it because like all things it can be abused by education becoming overly reliant upon it and losing much

needed human interaction. At least, though, it could be used to spread works that promote ecology like those of Tolkien, Orr, Carson, and Leopold.

One of the great values of studying Tolkien's works of high fantasy is their universality in regard to ecological themes. In fact, as Barker and Mathijs (2008) have shown in their statistical analyses of the *TLOR* movies (the effect of the books is less well-researched but seems to produce similar results) that they have been well-received in terms of gender, age group, and myriad nations as diverse as the United States, Slovenia, Chile, and Colombia.

Though the modern ecopedagogical movement owes much to Freire and Southern nations, it is not unfounded in First World education. According to Colwell (1985), John Dewey, a paragon of American education long before ecology became popular, made human membership in the natural world the center of his philosophy and likened it to being revolutionary in that it freed humankind from the anthropocentrism robbing from nature to suit our own means. Specifically, Dewey has called for a move away from human-centeredness to biocentrism in education (Colwell, 1985). In his own words, Dewey has stated:

The old center was mind knowing by means of an equipment of powers complete within itself, and merely exercised upon an antecedent external material equally complete within itself. The new center is indefinite interactions taking place within a course of nature which is not fixed and complete, but which is capable of direction to new and different results . . . . Neither self nor world, neither soul nor nature (in the sense of something isolated and finished in its nature) is the center . . . . There is a moving whole of interacting parts; a center emerges wherever there is an effort to change them in a particular direction . . . . Mind is no longer a spectator beholding the world from without . . . . The mind is within the world as a part of the latter's own on-going process. (Dewey cited in Colwell, 1985, p. 255).

Others like Bowen have concurred with this in that he urges modern education to return to holism since we are all equal members of the Earth, with its limited resources, and the interconnectedness of all life into a great, wondrously complex web of existence (Bowen cited in Colwell, 1985).

Wilson (1992) has taken this idea to a more philosophical level. He has argued that the great philosophical divide in moral reasoning about living species revolves around whether or not other species have the same right to exist as humans do. He claims that right, which I believe they do have, is the most fundamental question of all. He has pondered whether or not moral values exist aside from humanity, in the same way that mathematical laws are universal, or are these uniquely human constructs that evolved in the human mind via natural selection? He does not reach a solid conclusion excepting his oblique statement on the matter that states that if other species had reached our level of consciousness and culture, then they would probably have developed a different set of morals that is more kind to the environment (Wilson, 1992).

Orr (2011) in advocating biophilia lists five laws which could be useful to ecopedagogy, especially when investigating ecocritical texts like Tolkien's works of high fantasy. They are as follows:

- Humankind pays for the conservation of biological diversity, climate stability, and environmental quality, whether we get it or not. In other words, through our selfishness and greed, we will pay for our dereliction.
- Ecological problems are really political problems having to do with who gets what, when, how, and how much. In that vein, what is erroneously hidden as a

form of super-patriotism or conservatism is merely reckless demagoguery that serves corporate interests.

- Humans are more ignorant than smart, and many in the echelons of power prefer it that way as a means to maintain control of the masses. We are not so much rational beings. We are those with the capacity to do a lot of rationalizing at the planet's expense and for our own gain.
- Humans are greatly spiritual beings but only intermittently are we religious. We need to be moved by the arts and humanities rather than dry statistics as with some cases of environmentalism that has been overly quantified.
- Human stupidity is randomly distributed up and down the socio-economic-educational ladder. This means, "there are likely as many thorough going, fully degreed fools as there are un-degreed fools" (Orr, 2011, pp. 47- 55). For example, in regard to Tolkien, his character Saruman is well-educated, but only in a narrow, empirical sense when compared to the holistic, profound nature-knowledge possessed by Bombadil.

Despite his somewhat negative view of humanity, or rather its effect on the planet, Orr (2011) does offer hope, though. He has claimed we can fix the current ecological problems by fixing the prevailing, proverbial system; that is, a move away from capitalism and anthropocentrism and educating ourselves and future generations broadly to create conscience driven, discerning people who treat our world and other species with wisdom, compassion, and reverence as is the case with Tolkien's Tom Bombadil. If we do not do more to create a sustainable world, Orr (2011) sees three crises

that loom in the near future: famine caused by loss of soil and overpopulation, the end of inexpensive fossil fuels which drive our capitalist economy, and the creation of an Earth that is no longer bountiful, stable, and hospitable to human civilization.

### **Ecoliteracy**

Recovery from the damage, ecological and otherwise done by Sauron, Saruman (a. k. a. Sharkey), and their evil, destructive hordes began after their ultimate defeat and the restoration of the King of Gondor, Aragorn (Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, 1994). As Hazell (2006) has said, the destruction of plant life, especially the forests like Fangorn, was one of the worst acts of the Enemy, so it follows that their restoration and rejuvenation are symbolic of good's triumph over their evil power. However, all losses could not be restored in Tolkien's Middle-earth such as: Frodo's wounds from the Morgul blade and his ensuing psychological damage, the leaving of the Elves and Wizards from Arda, the demise of magic, and the rise of the Fourth Age that is dominated by mankind. Just as in Tolkien's world, humankind cannot undo all the damage we have done to the world either (Hazell, 2006). Orr (2011) concurs with the latter when he has stated:

The argument, then, that humankind has always triumphed over adversity in the past and will therefore automatically meet the challenges of the future has the distinction of being at once bad history and irrelevance (p. 90).

History is written by the victors, so little is known about losers in former ecologically sustainable, pre-literate societies except through archaeology. For example, the philosophy of the Enlightenment could not overcome ancient hatreds culminating in the

atrocities of the French Revolution, nor could Karl Marx's utopic vision of a more humane society be overcome by the horrors of Stalin's gulags where untold millions perished (Orr, 2011). Those historic facts, however, do not allow for us to overlook something as important as universal ecoliteracy.

As Kahn (2010) has pointed out, not only is there an ecological crisis caused by globalization and greed, but there is also a crisis in environmental education over what needs to be done to make it more effective and universal. Despite recent, great achievements in formal education and legislative accomplishments to foster better education, Americans continue to have a shameful misunderstanding of the most basic of environmental tenets (Kahn, 2010). For example, Kahn (2010) has noted some grievous, ignorant ideas about the environment held by Americans:

- 45 million think the ocean is a source of fresh water.
- 125 million think aerosol spray cans still contain chlorofluorocarbons, which have been banned since 1978 due to their pernicious effect on the Ozone Layer.
- 123 million think disposable diapers are the major cause of landfill problems when they represent only 1% of the trash in them.
- 130 million think hydropower is our major energy source when it only represents 10% of power production (Coyle cited in Kahn, 2010).

Further, mere environmental education cannot adequately deal with social and ecological disasters due to unsustainable economic practices ingrained in our anthropocentric mindset. Again, according to Kahn (2010), for these issues to be eradicated a deep ecoliteracy is needed between mankind and nature. Current environmental literacy

standards fail to develop in students the type of radicalization needed to deconstruct the socially and ecologically forms of hyper-individualism, government sanctioned competition, reverence of greed, overconsumption, and market globalization that are so deleterious to nature (Kahn, 2010). Also, according to Kahn (2010) this has become worse given the legacy of the Bush Administration, when being ecoliterate is taken under suspicion and means ignoring the problem by letting others deal with it or finding ways to capitalize upon it. Environmental literacy in latter sense has become Ivan Illich's "prison of the global classroom" where "an opportunity exists to turn the ecocrisis into a rallying venture for 'money, manpower, and management'" (Illich cited in Kahn, 2010, p. 13-14). Are ecological endeavors to make real change or become another arm of Klein's disaster capitalism with an environmental bent (Klein cited in Kahn, 2010)? To be cynical, ecological endeavors can fall prey to exploitation but on what scale is yet to be seen. For example, according to Rahaman, Everett, and Neu (2013) many Third World Nations such as Ghana are experiencing a privatization of water resources by multinational corporations under the guise of conservation of scarce resources. The reality is the decreased ability of the poor to have access to this precious element necessary for all life.

For ecoliteracy to avoid these pitfalls, again, there needs to be a shift from the current *weltanschauung* to what Swimme and Berry call the "Eozoic Era," or a time when protection of nature becomes the ultimate priority (Swimme and Berry cited in Kahn, 2010, p. 36). Their paradigm shift is characterized by recognition of the

importance of differentiation of species, autopoiesis,<sup>34</sup> and communion since we are part of a universal community greater than ourselves (Kahn, 2010). This needs to be combined with *paedia* or the rearing and education of members of the polis in a broad sense of education that includes environmental literacy and real life encounters with nature. Orr (2011) has noted that almost all environmental activists' views were shaped early on by an intimate relation to a specific place, what Carson once called the "sense of wonder" towards nature that begins in childhood as a response to a place that exerts a magical effect on the imagination (Carson cited in Orr, 2011). This is the autogenesis of what Berman (1981) means when he has spoken of re-enchanting the world, and it is akin to Wong's (2007) non-rationality or aesthetic experience in learning. As has been previously discussed, this emotional childhood ecological tie to a specific place is probably what inspired Tolkien via the Berkshire countryside of his youth, the influence of his beloved mother, and his profound sense of Catholic stewardship; Dickerson and Evans (2006) agree. If this magical effect of nature is rooted in place, then many become, in varying degrees ranging from moderates like members of the Sierra Club to Manes's (1990) radical Earth Firsters!, defenders of nature. Further, Wilson (1992) concurs when he has spoken of biophilia in that it "is the innately emotional affiliation of human beings with other living organisms" (p. 165). This also ties into Berman's (1981) Batesonian mindset in that we are connected to all living things, or what serves as a medium to connect us to those living things such as Tolkien's works of high fantasy that we encounter. Wilson (1992) again has agreed in that the human brain evolved, for the most

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<sup>34</sup> Autopoiesis is a system that explains the nature of living systems and their inter-relatedness.



part, in a biocentric world, not one regulated by machines and technology, and especially not one driven by rapacious capitalism. Such an intrinsic link of the human mind to nature makes our current anthropocentrism un-natural, a product of the Scientific Revolution and the rise of modern industrial capitalism. This Batesonian mindset, connection with place, and innate biophilia is also what Leopold (1949) has described in his *Sand County Almanac*. This fostering of a love and respect for nature is one of the main reasons Tolkien's works of high fantasy, though again they should not be considered ecocritical works but only having elements (ecotones) of ecocriticism, are so important. As Elder (2006) states: "Tolkien provides a deep and complex ecological vision incorporating many elements and spanning a broad spectrum of approaches, including positions compatible with both modern conservation and preservation" ( p. xvi).

In précis, Tolkien's vision for the environment, no matter how implicit, is three-fold: the sustainable agriculture of the Hobbits of the Shire, the horticulture of the Elves, and the Ents' feraculture (Dickerson and Evans, 2006). His ecoliterary contributions are in opposition to a technologically driven, capitalistic, polluting industrial society underpinned by what some feminist critics call "White Male Science" as it is complicit with Western imperialism, racism, sexism, and the domination of other humans and nature (Kahn, 2010, p. 104). Other authors such as Curry (1997) have agreed with Kahn in that he claims that scientism has become almost inseparable from greed, profit, and power to dominate, and "sometimes has become an object of worship in its own right" (p. 76). This is direct opposition to Bombadil and his naturalness.

Ecoliteracy is not just some concept that is almost an abstraction related to such macro-environmental issues such as global warming and species loss. As Shiva (2005) and others have noted, ecological issues can take on a more local flavor, and he argues that local environments suffer “[from] a singular, capital driven idea . . .” (p. 461). Though Shiva (2005) is primarily concerned about Third World Nations, specifically India, his arguments apply in First World Nations too. In this instance, I am referring to an environmental fiasco in my home state of North Carolina.

In February 2014, a security guard at the Dan River Steam Station owned by Duke Energy discovered a damaged pipe running under a 27 acre coal ash pond used to dump toxic leftovers from one of their coal-powered electrical plants. Over 82,000 tons of coal ash and 27 million gallons of contaminated water spilled into the Dan River making it a murky toxic mess for miles. This would become the third largest coal spill in American history. It is comparable to the 2008 Kingston, Tennessee, disaster which cost in excess of 1.2 billion dollars to clean up. (Biesecker and Weiss, 2014)

According to Biesecker and Weiss (2014), environmental groups spearheaded by the Southern Environmental Law Center have tried multiple times over the past year via the judicial system to use the federal Clean Water Act to force Duke Energy to clean out its leaky, and nearly unregulated, coal ash dumps but with limited success until recently. The environmental groups claim to have been stymied by the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as the administration of Governor Pat McCrory. It seems that McCrory, a 28 year long former employee of Duke Energy, has been protecting his former employer, according to environmental groups, and not just

seemingly out of a misguided sense of corporate loyalty, but probably because Duke Energy donated in excess of 1.1 million dollars to his 2012 campaign for governor. McCorry has said with unconvincing ardor that “My administration is the first in North Carolina history to take legal action against the utility regarding coal ash ponds” (Biesecker and Weiss, 2014, n.p.).

As has been discussed at length in this dissertation, the underlying problem with this ecological catastrophe like so many others is industrial capitalism, greed, and domination of the environment. These are in opposition to Tolkien’s character of Tom Bombadil who respects the environment, refuses to lord over nature, and has no use for financial gain. Amy Adams, a former regional director at the North Carolina agency that oversees water protection, and who resigned her position in protest to the lack of action to the issue at hand has said:

Under the new administration [Governor McCorry’s], North Carolina has changed the definition of who its customer is from the public and the natural resources it is supposed to protect to the industries it regulates. There’s been a huge push away from environmental protection and toward promoting economic growth. (Biesecker and Weiss, 2014, n.p.)

The Danville site is not the only one with coal ash ponds. Duke Energy has 14 other coal fired power plants. Other sites with problems include Riverbend Steam Station in Gaston County and Sutton Power Plant near Wilmington (Biesecker and Wess, 2014). There is a mixed ray of hope in all this stemming from the judicial branch of North Carolina government. In March 2014, Wake County Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway ordered Duke Energy to clean up their toxic mess immediately (McCloskey,

2014). In August 2014, the North Carolina General Assembly said it would allow Duke Energy to use a “cap-in-place” method to cover the noxious ponds, and Duke Energy has voluntarily agreed to do so. Ridgeway’s order has been nullified. This means it could take some while to complete the project. At the juncture of this writing (December 2014) it is unsure who will foot the 2.5 billion dollar bill, and to worsen an already bad situation, cap-in-place resolutions are prone to more leakage (Gutierrez, 2014). Most environmental activists concerned with this matter advocate a complete excavation of the coal ash pits, but that would cost up to 10 billion dollars (Duke Energy’s operating capital for 2013 alone was almost 25 billion dollars, though). Further, as an owner of Duke Energy stocks, which I inherited, I can personally attest to the company’s financial prowess. One General Assembly Member called the legislation a “. . . work in progress” (Gutierrez, 2014, p. A8). One way or the other, the environment has suffered yet another deadly blow driven by the greed Tolkien warns his readers about. Though Tolkien (1981) is focusing his environmental tropes on the demise of his beloved Berkshire countryside in England, his notions apply elsewhere on a local level too, as is the case in North Carolina. By people becoming more ecoliterate and embracing a Naessian reverence for life, ecological disasters such as this one in North Carolina could be averted. Knowledge is power in that it can lead to public action to prevent against ecological maladies and to respond effectively to those that do occur.

### **A Few Final Thoughts**

Reading, watching, and studying the works of high fantasy by the late and highly successful author/scholar J. R. R. Tolkien can be advantageous in protecting our ailing

planet. This is especially true by scrutinizing the life ways of the enigmatic character of Tom Bombadil who shuns greed, domination of other living entities, and who shows a profound understanding and reverence for all life.

Tolkien's works are efficacious against ecological degradation because they can be used to foment autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy; all are invaluable tools in the arsenal to halt the continued destruction of the Earth and its species. One major reason for the power to change for the better is found in the environmental tropes of Tolkien's works of high fantasy with their success in print, the media, and the cinema (Barker and Mathijs, 2008). A second important reason is that works of high fantasy, some like Tolkien's driven by a Romantic impulse, have the power to change the environmentally pernicious anthropocentric mindset that is underpinned by greed and domination to one that is resacralized and reveres and respects all life for its own sake and not just for its utility to humankind. As Orr (2011) has noted, seminal books, such as Tolkien's works, can be catalysts of change especially when coupled with guidance from a mentor at an early age, as is the case with me and my grandparents. As Wong (2007) has stated, "[through effective education] the person and the world are mutually transformed" (p. 203).

Renowned ecologist David Orr (2011) has offered some further ideas on how this change from the dominant anthropocentric *weltanschauung* to a biophilic one can be accomplished. He calls for a broadened liberal arts education that includes more practical experiential ecological education, and one that is not so much grounded in narrow pedanticism (Orr, 2011). As the philosopher Whitehead has said, "First-hand knowledge

is the ultimate basis for intellectual life . . . the second-handedness of the learned world is the secret of mediocrity” (p. 51). And of course, pedagogue John Dewey has concurred: “The school has been so set apart, so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life that [children cannot] get experience---the mother of all discipline” (Dewey, 1990, p. 17). In that vein, Orr (2011) has said that the prime goal of education should be to inculcate in others how to live life to the fullest, and that the aim of liberal arts should not be to just teach classic works or marketable skills to be successful in a capitalistic society, but to develop whole, balanced, and critical persons.

Orr (2011) goes on to advocate an amendment to the *United States Constitution* to protect ecological rights of the planet’s species and the Earth for future generations.<sup>35</sup>

Orr (2011) also enumerates six items to educate about the environment:

- All education is in essence environmental education, but we need to teach students that they are part of nature and the great web of life and not above it.
- Environmental issues are complex and need to be taught using a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Education should be dialogic and not monologic, and we should converse with nature too.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In 1986 the Supreme Court of the Philippines made a provision that allows for children to sue in order to stop deforestation so future generations can enjoy a “balanced and healthy ecology” (Orr, 2011, p. 128).

<sup>36</sup> Renowned primatologist Jane Goodall not only named her chimpanzees after Tolkien’s characters, but she spoke often with them too making her link with them personal and not just participants in a scientific study.

- Education needs to be participatory and experiential, and not based on mere lectures and abstractions.
- Education needs to promote experience in the natural world---there is a need for less classroom learning and more field experience as is done by those trained in naturalist biology.
- Education should be considered relevant in building a sustainable world.

Orr's words of wisdom are beginning to be incorporated in more progressive forms of education, but there is still a long way to go if humankind is to ever change its deadly attitude towards nature, and become a bit more like Tolkien's Tom Bombadil.

Again, what is needed and what can be learned from Tolkien is that we are killing our planet and in turn killing ourselves via our own greed and lust for power to dominate and exploit. As Lear (2006) has stated, we need a radical hope that transcends our current understanding of its meaning. It is needed in this form so as to be flexible in the flux of post-modernity and our ever changing (worsening) global malaise. In all that, Tolkien offers his audience maybe the most important thing, he offers is hope for a better world, just as Middle-earth began to heal after the defeat of the Enemy. In the words of Brooks (2014), "Tom Bombadil is the green country and the sunrise, the light broadening quickly on the horizon, the hope and goodness, which defeated the varying evils and corrupting power of Sauron and his Ring [or humankind]" (p. 13).

## CHAPTER VI

### EPILOGUE

In retrospect, I have made some mistakes in this dissertation, and I have let my biases be known, as we all do in every endeavor that we undertake, in my analysis of Tolkien and his character of Tom Bombadil as he pertains to environmental studies. In this Epilogue, I will address them one at a time. *Nota bene*, this subsequent diatribe is more introspective than scholarly. I make this Epilogue so out of trying to be a good historian, philosopher, and educator. I think we all need to be self-reflective at some level.

The first matter that I would like to address is my lack of criticism directed towards Tolkien himself. I have been somewhat myopic in my treatment of Tolkien throughout this dissertation, and I may have come across as his having written a panegyric of him. This has occurred inadvertently because I hold such personal reverence for him as an author of high fantasy literature. In other words, Tolkien is my literary idol so it has been difficult for me to critique him as a person and his high fantasy works.

That being said, Tolkien is not without fault though. Many of his faults lie in his political views, staunch Catholicism, and his misogyny towards women. As I mentioned in the sub-section on Tolkien's political views, he was somewhat of an anachronism. He claimed to be a right-wing unconstitutional monarchist or Tory. Further, as exemplified by his correspondence with other people from his *Letters* (Tolkien, 1981), he disliked



many other political/economic viewpoints that are more mainstream than his Toryism. For example, Tolkien was anti-democratic, and “[He] did not believe in the rule of the people” (Tolkien cited in Carpenter, 1977, p. 178). He further had a vehement dislike of the following: Nazism, Communism, American cosmopolitanism, feminism, was an anti-globalism isolationist, anti-modernist, and neo-Luddite (Tolkien, 1981). In many sections of his *Letters* (1981), Tolkien rails against Churchill’s wartime government of Great Britain, and worse has written of Churchill, and bordering on sedition, “But I must admit that in the photograph[of the Allied Leaders at the Teheran Conference] our little cherub W. S. C. actually looked like the biggest ruffian present” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 65). Elsewhere he has equally negative words for Hitler and Stalin who did deserve his complaints, as he also does for many aspects of modern industrial society. Also, in his *Letters* Tolkien (1981) derides France as being filled with snobbish, rude people whose cuisine he could not stand. His Franco-phobia stems from his bad experiences there while serving as a tutor to two youths, his horrific experience at the Battle of the Somme, and his innate dislike of the French for crushing the Anglo-Saxons in 1066, their subsequent reign over Great Britain, and their de-basing of any modicum of an Anglo-Saxon mythology for the isles while replacing it with their own myths and legends (Tolkien, 1981). I here repeat material from Tolkien’s *Letters* (1981) that I cited earlier in this dissertation to describe his socio-political views:

My political opinion leans more and more to Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning the abolition of control not whiskered men with Bombs)---or to ‘unconstitutional’ Monarchy . . . . If people were in the habit of referring to ‘King George’s council, Winston [Churchill] and his gang,’ it would go a long way to clearing thought, and reducing the frightful landslide into Theyocracy . . . .

anyway the proper study of Man is anything but Man; and the most improper job of any man . . . is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek opportunity . . . . Even unlucky little Samoyedes [a group of people from Siberia], I suspect, have tinned food and the village loudspeaker telling Stalin's bedtime stories about Democracy and the wicked Fascists who eat babies and steal sledge-dogs. There is one bright spot and that is the growing habit of disgruntled men of dynamiting factories and powerstations; I hope that, encouraged now as 'patriotism,' may remain a habit! . . . . The bigger things get the smaller and duller of flater the globe gets. It is getting to be all one blasted little suburb. When they have introduced American sanitation, morale-pep, feminism, and mass production . . . [to then Third World nations] how happy shall we be. But seriously: I do find this Americ-cosmopolitanism very terrifying. Quâ mind and spirit, and neglecting the piddling fears of timid flesh which does not want to be shot or chopped by brutal and licentious soldiery (German or other), I am not really sure that victory is going to be so much better for the world as a whole and in the long run than the victory of [shit]. (pp. 63-65)

Tolkien was also a staunch Catholic who harbored great disdain for other forms of Christianity like Anglicanism. In fact his break with longtime friend and confidant C. S. Lewis came largely over Lewis becoming a Christian apologist and an Anglican who married a much younger divorcee, Joy Davidman, who was also a communist. Also, concerning Tolkien's religious beliefs, he suffered from a rather major streak of defeatism that contributed to his unsavory views on politics and women. In a letter to his son, Michael, he apologizes for the state of humanity in general blaming all human imperfection of the Fall of Mankind from God's good graces. This penchant for melancholy and defeatism would manifest itself many times in Tolkien's long life such as, most poignantly, when his mother Mabel died.

Tolkien was also a misogynist, and this fact is exemplified in his treatment of female characters in his works of high fantasy literature. This misogyny probably stemmed from his conservative brand of Catholicism, his traditional upbringing where

women were considered inferior to their male counterparts, his bad experiences with women like his Aunt Beatrice, and the status quo of the early/mid twentieth century.

Tolkien has written in his *Letters* (1981) that:

You may meet in life (as in literature) women who are flighty, or even plain wanton---I don't refer to mere flirtatiousness, the sparring practice for real combat, but to women who are too silly to take even love seriously, or are actually so depraved as to enjoy 'conquests', or even enjoy the giving of pain . . . (p. 50).

His misogyny is not just limited to his personal correspondence. Women in *TLOA* are presented as secondary to men. For example, the Elven princess Arwen, who could be a powerful warrior at some junctures in his tales, is more often than not portrayed as merely being Lord Elrond's daughter and as being hopelessly smitten with love for her future husband Aragorn (Tolkien, *TLOA*, 1994). Likewise, Eowyn's, the shield-maiden of Rohan, character is displayed as being weak though in some instances she was a powerful warrior in her own right. Even when she exercises her prowess as a warrior in her defeat of the Witch King of Angmar (Lord of Sauron's Black Riders), she does so disguised as a male warrior from Rohan. Bombadil's wife Goldberry serves the role of domestic housekeeper and was abducted by Bombadil for matrimonial purposes though some critics claim she had a reciprocal relationship with her husband (Hesser, 2007; Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990). The only woman in Tolkien's high fantasy literature who does not fit this stereotype is Galadriel the powerful queen of Lothlórien who, as I mentioned earlier in the text, is reminiscent of Elizabeth I of England in her power, wisdom, independence, and majesty (Tolkien, *TLOA*, 1994).

Tolkien's views on politics, social movements, religion, and his misogyny towards women are some of the major detractions from his works of high fantasy literature.

Another problem with Tolkien and his works of high fantasy literature is his elitism. Though he was poor for most of his childhood after his father's death and was bounced around to various caregivers, he still managed to take on an air of superiority. This great personal sense of being is most likely attributable to his elite education at Oxford where he consorted with Britain's upper classes. It was further compounded by his long tenure at Oxford as a Don or Professor, not to mention his successes as scholar, popular professor, and his great success as an author of high fantasy literature. In many ways, exemplified by his nocturnal activities in various discussion groups complete with butler service, he was a snob.

Related to his snobbery is Tolkien writing style and perfectionism. His works of high fantasy literature can be very difficult to read due to his complex, flowery writing style which is infused with equally complex allusions to other parts of his fictional universe and permeated by his elaborate poetry, as found throughout *TLOR* (1994) and *TATB* (1990). Prime examples of the complexity of his story lines and allusions can be found in his posthumously published work *The Silmarillion* (1999) which is a complete history of Middle Earth. Those aspects when fused with his love of created languages such as Elvish Quenyan can make reading Tolkien tedious.

The complexity of Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature segues into yet another problem with Tolkien; that is, how to translate his works into a pedagogical

setting. As I have mentioned in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, Tolkien's ecological tropes and examples as embodied by the enigmatic character of Tom Bombadil can be educative in terms of autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy. However, they are done so not without a good deal of difficulty for both pupil and teacher. Despite Tolkien's works' phenomenal success both in print and cinema form across the globe in various languages and cultures their pedagogical efficaciousness must still be addressed (Barker and Mathijs, 2008).

I am of the opinion that Tolkien's works of high fantasy as a classroom tool to teach such subjects as ecological conservation can be difficult for four core reasons: first, is the complexity of the works, second is that the works were not directly written to be ecocritical, third because of the massive amount of violence that occurs in them, and fourth because it is simulacrum. I will address these problems point by point.

As far as the complexity of Tolkien's works goes, many readers, including myself who is a staunch fan of his fantasy, have trouble with not only his verbose writing style, but the complicated and idiosyncratic allusions that fill his pages, and are found in the movies but to a lesser degree. Though *The Hobbit* was written for older children and while *TLOR* was written for even older, more sophisticated readers the intricacies of both works can leave the reader or teacher of them somewhat befuddled. Reading or viewing his works of high fantasy are an endeavor into the intricacies of the mind of a man who was a literary genius and who spent a lifetime developing his mythopoeia to a level of sophistication that is both awe inspiring and maddening in its richness. Probably a secondary reason that Peter Jackson left Tom Bombadil and some other characters out of

his cinematic masterpieces was not only out of budgetary and temporal constraints, but to lessen some of the burden on audiences who could have easily become irritated or bored with just how overwhelming Tolkien's fantasy works can be. Again, it is this complexity of his works that makes teaching Tolkien in the classroom difficult.

Secondly, and as scholars like Morgan (2010) and others have noted, Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature do have ecopedagogical potential, but conveying a message of environmentalism was not the reason for Tolkien writing them. He wrote them to create a mythology for his beloved England, specifically Anglo-Saxon England, which he felt had no proper mythology of its own. What exists has been too much tainted by other invading cultures such as the Celts, the Romans, and the Normans. So without such a distinct focus on environmental issues, the reader, teacher, or classroom pupil of Tolkien's works can easily get lost in the larger aspects of Tolkien's desire to create a comprehensive legendarium for England.

A third issue that makes Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature difficult to translate in classroom practice is its sheer violence. Both his works and Jackson's films are equally culpable in sensationalizing violence. I realize that violence sells books and movie tickets, but that in itself becomes problematic when using Tolkien's works to promote social justice and environmental justice, especially in such a place as a supposedly safe and sheltered venue as the classroom. By portraying such horrendous acts of violence as are done in Tolkien's works, it would be easy for the message to be studied to get lost in the gore and mayhem. So much violence could easily detract from trying to teach such life-embracing aspects of the books as environmentalism. By being

imbued with such a high degree of violence, young minds could easily come to believe that violence is the only alternative to eradicating wrong in the world though the world Tolkien describes is merely simulacrum.

Unfortunately in the world that we have made, violence is a great part of everyday life for many people, and other creatures too. One only has to glance at the news from places like Baltimore, MD, Syria, or the cruel mistreatment of animals to see that this is the case. To use Tolkien and his characters like Tom Bombadil effectively to teach environmental care and respect for all life, the issue of violence needs to be carefully investigated. At best it should be taught that violence should only be used as a last resort against socio/environmental problems.

In his defense, Tolkien seems to prefer peace to violence, but he also clearly views violence as a way to combat evil in both literary worlds and the real world. Examples of Tolkien's use of violence as a means to eradicating evil permeate his fantasy works. However, I turn to a poem of Tolkien's from *TATB* (1990) as an example of his use of violence in the battle against evil; in this case the evil is a dragon reminiscent of Smaug the antagonist of *The Hobbit* (1994). In "The Hoard," Tolkien has written:

There was an old dragon under grey stone;  
his red eyes blinked as he lay alone.  
His joy was dead and his youth spent,  
he was knobbed and wrinkled, and his limbs bent  
in the long years to his gold chained;  
in his heart's furnace the fire waned.  
To his belly's slime gems stuck thick,  
silver and gold he would snuff and lick:  
he knew the place of the least ring  
beneath the shadow of his black wing.  
Of thieves he thought on his hard bed,

and dreamed that on their flesh he fed,  
their bones crushed, and their blood drank:  
his ears drooped and his breath sank.  
Mail-rings rang. He heard them not.  
A voice echoed in his deep grot:  
a young warrior with a bright sword  
called him forth to defend his hoard.  
His teeth were knives, and of horn his hide,  
but iron tore him, and his flame died.  
(Tolkien, *TATB*, 1990, pp. 62-63)

As one can easily surmise from this poem, its overall message that is against greed can easily be lost in the violence that it portrays, even though that violence is used to stop evil.

A fourth problem with Tolkien's works that impede teaching ecological conservation is that it is simulacrum. Though we can learn much from reading or being taught, it is still not as effective as experience. Biologists such as Orr (2011) and others have pointed out that no matter how enticing a work may be that it is no substitute for real world application. Education needs to be taken out of the classroom and become more experiential. By moving out of the classroom and experiencing things like nature in the real world, people are more likely to develop a bond with it, and, therefore, protect it via the awe and mystery of life that learning about can only be maximized through participation.

The high fantasy works of J. R. R. Tolkien are not without their problems. I hope I have treated some of them adequately in this Epilogue. Though by no means perfect, I still feel Tolkien's works of high fantasy literature, and as embodied by the character of



Tom Bombadil, can be used to better the Earth's situation by being environmentally educative in the realms of autodidacticism, ecopedagogy, and ecoliteracy.

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