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THE NOTION OF POWER IN
THE LORD OF THE RINGS

WORK REALISED WITH THE COLLABORATION OF
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THE NOTION OF POWER IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

PART ONE

POWER of symbols

1 . A definition of THE THREE BASIC FORMS of POWER AND THE PATTERN of THE CREATOR FACED WITH HIS CREATURE

a- WHAT SORT of POWER INSPIRED Tolkien for t HIS TRILogy?

b- THE ORIGINS of THE RING: looking back in THE Silmarillion

c- POWER THROUGH THE MAIN CHARACTERS AND CIVILIZATIONS: FROM THE Silmarillion TO THE LORD of THE RINGS

c. 1 POWER of THE NOBLE: THE STORY of THE ELVES

c. 2 ELROND, THE FATHER figure

c. 3 GALADRIEL, THE ORACLE AND THE MOTHER figure

c. 4 LEGOLAS, YOUTH, WISDOM AND VIGOUR inside THE Fellowship

c. 5 NÚMENOR: AN ANALOGY of THE MYTH of ATLANTIS AND THE falling of ADAM AND EVE OR HOW THE NEED for POWER AND KNOWLEDGE DROVE TO PERISH.

c. 6 POWER of CREATION: THE CREATION of THE Kingdom of Gondor, A REPRESENTATION of OUR world AFTER THE falling of ADAM AND EVE. ARAGORN APPEARS AS CHRIST.

d/ NEGATIVE POWER VERSUS GOOD: SAURON'S will TO CREATE AN EMPIRE of BAD INTENTIONS.

d. 1 POWER of DESTRUCTION: WHAT ARE SAURON'S projects in THE lord of THE RINGS? DESTROY NATURE?

d. 2 POWER of NUMBER: SAURON NEEDS ALLIANCES TO BE STRONG. IS HE JUST AN EYE? WHAT IS THE ROLE of SARUMAN?

d. 3 SAURON AND SARUMAN'S WEAPONS: THE ORCS AND THE URUK-AI

e/ STRENGTH AND POWER IN THE SMALLEST of THINGS: THE HOBBITS AND THE ONE RING.





e. 1 Why SO MUCH POWER CONTAINED ONLY IN A SO SMALL JEWEL? WHAT DOES THIS RING SYMBOL MEAN?

e. 2 POWER OF PURITY: THE UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE OF NOT TWO "POOR" HOBBITS BUT TWO PURE HOBBITS, WHICH MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

PART TWO

POWER OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

2. HOW THE UNCONSCIOUS CAN BE REVEALED THROUGH THE RISE OF INTERNAL POWER WITH THE RING

a- WHAT IS THE UNCONSCIOUS?

a.1 THE DEFINITION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS: FREUD

a.2 HOW DOES IT APPLY TO THE LORD OF THE RINGS?

b- A MODERN "MYTH OF THE CAVE"?

b.1 GOLLUM: REGRESSION AND ANTI-DARWINIAN THEORY – THE POWER TO DESTROY FROM THE INSIDE

b.2 ARAGORN AND THE PATH OF DIMHOLT – THE POWER OF A BAFLED KING

b.3 FRODO AND THE CAVE OF SHELOB – THE POWER OF THE RING OVER FRODO'S MIND

c- FRODO, SAM AND GOLLUM: LIVING INCARNATION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS CLOCKWORK

c.1 FRODO, SAM AND GOLLUM AS THE METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF A SINGLE MIND?

c.2 GOLLUM: THE POWER OF THE RING MADE FLESH?

c.3. IS THE INCREASING INFLUENCE OF THE RING OVER FRODO'S MIND AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HIS OWN UNCONSCIOUS A RITE OF INITIATION TO LIFE?

d- IS THE LORD OF THE RINGS A TALE OF TEMPTATION FOR THE DARK SIDE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS?

d.1. IS EVERYONE TEMPTED BY THE DARK SIDE OF POWER?

d.2. THE RING AS THE SINGING OF THE SIRENS FROM HOMER'S ODYSSEY: THE NEED TO KNOW.

d.3. THE WRITINGS ON THE RING: A SYMBOL FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH THE DEVIL?

d.4. FATE VERSUS Will: UNCONTROLLABLE PARTS OF LIFE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS.





d.5. Why ARE Frodo and Bilbo able to escape and recover from the irreversible power of the ring?

e/ THE RING IS THE INCARNATION OF THE PACT WITH THE DEVIL: POWER OF THE DEVIL OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS

e.1 THE RING IS A WINDOW TO HELL

e.2 THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP AGAINST THE SOLITARY EVIL FORCES. WHEN THE MIND CREATES UNCONSCIOUS BOUNDS BETWEEN PEOPLE, IT GIVES THEM AN EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH.

e.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE RING TRIGGERS A NEED FOR REDEMPTION OR SALVATION: EXPIATE AND CLEAR THE UNCONSCIOUS

e.4 THE SALVATION OF THE READER HIMSELF: THE POWER OF THE WORD REACHES THE UNCONSCIOUS

PART THREE

POWER OF DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

3- NOTHING IS THE SAME AFTER DESTRUCTION HAS TAKEN PLACE

a- Tolkien's vision of the philosophical question: NATURE V.S CULTURE

a.1 WHAT DOES NATURE REPRESENT?

a.2 THE WARM FORCE OF NATURE V.S THE DOMINATION OF COLD INDUSTRIAL METAL:

GANDALF AND SARUMAN

a.3 IS TOLKIEN PRAISING A PHILOSOPHICAL "RETURN TO NATURE"? IS THERE A PARADOX WITH THE BIBLE AND THE STORY OF GENESIS?

b- THE POWER OF NATURE: WHEN THE NATURAL ELEMENTS UNLEASH THEIR POWERS

b.1 NATURE IS DESTROYED. DOES IT REPRESENT THE GRADUAL DESTRUCTION OF THE SOUL?

b.2 TOLKIEN GIVES NATURE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE BACK

b.3 NATURE SEEMS TO BE ON THE HEROES' SIDE





c- **DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION: A SINGLE ENTITY AS THE YING AND THE YANG?**

c.1 Narsil becomes Anduril, the symbol of construction / deconstruction: the return of the king.

c.2 Destroying the Ring: symbol of the destruction of a materialistic world

c.3 The ring gone: the end of all things?

d- **RECONSTRUCTION: *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* IS AN INITIATION TRAVEL**

d.1 WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INITIATION TRAVEL?

d.2 ARAGORN, FROM STRIDER TO ARAGORN, KING OF GONDOR

d.3 FRODO GOES IN "HAVEN"

Conclusion





INTRODUCTION

The Lord of the Rings is known today as one of the best and remarkable novels that were written in the 20th century. It would be difficult to say that this novel is not in many aspects a masterpiece of contemporary literature. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien wrote this story to continue the children's book *The Hobbit* published in 1937. It was first supposed to be the simple sequel that his editors asked him to think about. But, instead of writing a simple sequel, he decided to add a style to this new story that would make it more serious and perhaps more literary. Following his desires, he put in *The Lord of the Rings* many aspects that are to remind us of the famous classic *Beowulf* which clearly inspired Tolkien. In 1954 and 1955, while he was a teacher of English language and literature at Oxford, he published his new great epic story. The public reacted positively and the myth began.

The Lord of the Rings is a story that follows a clear pattern, the fight between Good and Evil. This kind of Manichean story comes directly from the ancient mythological stories such as the Greek or Roman mythologies and epic stories. As said earlier, Tolkien got clearly inspired by the tale *Beowulf* which stands for being one of the first stories ever written in English, even if the English of *Beowulf* is old English. Consciously or not, Tolkien was inspired by this myth and no doubt by others.

To begin with, the whole story is an embodiment of the eternal fight between Good and Evil forces. Frodo becomes the hero to whom a great task is given. He has no particular potential except a pure heart and soul. This will save him all along the story since he is seen as the only one who can bear the ring without being too tempted to use it for him.

Frodo then seems to have the best jewel inside his soul, that is to say a pure and devoted soul. He will do exactly what Gandalf tells him to do. Frodo is neither the smartest nor the dumbest of the characters, he is neither handsome nor ugly; he actually embodies anybody and everybody. The reader could easily see in Frodo a reflection of himself and that makes this character even more attractive for the story. Beyond what the characters represent, the story in itself is composed of key elements that are not wrongly understandable. Sauron, Saruman and the other dark forces seem not to be very witty. Indeed, for a power such as Sauron or Saruman who is like a god, finding a hobbit and





killing him should not be a difficult task. But here, it seems that a simple hobbit and his gardener are more intelligent and smartest than the great dark lord himself. This pattern is classical in this kind of story. Evil forces are seldom really intelligent, with the exception of the Devil himself. They represent brutality and pure evilness.

So, with these mechanisms, the reader can never be lost. The plot is simple and the characters not possibly confusable. Everything is clear, and that is one of the forces of the text. Tolkien managed to create a world very far from us, a world that would make the reader travel through many landscapes and see many great battles but which remains close to our perception of what a world is composed of.

In the first part of our work, we will see all the major symbols of power which seem relevant and interesting for the subject. This will help understanding how Tolkien's world is created and how it internally works. All these symbols are important since they build the internal structure of the story. They are hints given to the reader to help him understand what the characters are going through. There are an incredible number of different symbols in the story. Our study will only focus on those which are linked with the notion of power.

Then, in a second part, the "real work" begins with the introduction to the theories of the unconscious of Freud which will show how the ring becomes a prism and an accelerator for the unconscious desires to come to the surface and transform anyone who is in contact with it. We will see what the consequences of such a power are and what happens when a character is faced with this internal battle.

The Third part will explain how the story shows an incredible power of deconstruction, destruction, and reconstruction through a very precise vision of nature, of redemption and through a long initiation travel that the characters have to undergo.





PART ONE

POWER OF SYMBOLS

THE SYMBOLS OF POWER IN THE TRILOGY AND WHAT THEY CONVEY

This first part will deal with the abundance of symbols of power in the Lord of the Rings. It will guide us through Tolkien's world and will allow us to understand why the story is so captivating. This account of symbols is necessary to get on with the second and third part of our work which will use all these symbols to examine other levels of the story, the unconscious and its consequences on the characters and the storyline. The problematic which is defend in this work is that power can take many different forms, and that it always leads to an internal, external and psychological change after his influences have taken effect. In a few words to take an example, we will explain how it becomes possible for a little hobbit to become the saver of the world after he has been penetrated by an Evil power beyond his comprehension.

1. A DEFINITION OF THE THREE BASIC FORMS OF POWER AND THE PATTERN OF THE CREATOR FACED WITH HIS CREATURE.

Before talking about Power, it is important to take some time to explain what it means. First of all, the official definition gives a view of the complexity of this notion:

Power/ noun, verb: 1-CONTROL: the ability to control people or things. [...]
2-ABILITY: the ability or opportunity to do something
3-AUTHORITY: the right or authority of a person or group to do something.
(*OXFORD Advanced Learners Dictionary: 988*)

Basically, power can be split into three major categories:

- 1- *power which comes from a divine being and which is applied to the world with no particular explanation or proof*
- 2- *power which is shared and accepted in a hierarchy or society*





3- *power which is imposed by one person or a group of people over someone or an entire population*

Indeed, a power can work only if there is at least one person to hold it and another to be submitted to it. If not, power would have no reason to exist alone by itself.

In this work about *the Lord of the Rings*, we will try to demonstrate that this notion of power is present in many aspects of the novel and that the three kinds of powers are represented. This notion is what links the whole story together with the genesis of *the Lord of the Rings* called *the Silmarillion*. When the story of the third age begins with the finding of the ring by Gandalf and the leaving of Bilbo, Sauron is already present and the situation is already there. Tolkien took a great pleasure imagining what could have triggered this war and it appears to be in majority power which started it all.

When a creator imagines and gives life to a being, there is always a time when the creature is submitted to his master but arrives the time when she wants to understand how she came to life and she wants to do the same and acquire the same abilities and power. This pattern is famous; the apprentice always wants to be greater than the master. A great example in English literature is gothic novel *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley and first published in 1818. Dr Frankenstein first thinks to create a perfect being which would have come back from the dead. He wants to play God. But soon enough, he discovered that what he did was everything but a divine creation. The creature if Frankenstein wanted to understand why she was created and then turned to Dr Frankenstein to ask him to create a similar creature. The creature then becomes the initiative to the other creation. In other words, he becomes the supreme creator since he decided to accomplish his will. In the second creation, Dr Frankenstein is only the executor and the creature the real master.

The oldest recollection of a myth of creation is taken from the ancient Babylonian tales and one called Gilgamesh where a goddess creates a man from clay. Men have always wanted to be able to gain the ultimate power of creation, to be able to create as the gods were told to have done.

In *the Silmarillion*, the same happens but to a much larger extend. The story of the creation of Arda and the jealousy and rivalry between gods started the conflict for power. The one almighty god Ilúvatar does not share his creative powers and this is precisely what



created the need for competition to do better than what has been done. This battle never ended.

A- WHAT SORT OF POWER INSPIRED TOLKIEN FOR THIS STORY?

It was well known from everybody who knew him and also by his students, Tolkien loved mythologies. He liked to imagine that a hero had a destiny already written by some external higher power. He was strongly inspired by the Finnish mythology called “*Kalevala*”, which means “district of Kaleva” and which is half-way between mythology and real history. It was created during hundreds of years but recollected only a single century and a half ago by Elias Lönnrot. The world which is presented here is full of songs, charms and music. It explains how the world was created and tells about the origins of the forces of nature. It counts the story of Kaleva, the first man to come and live in Finland. He became a national hero.



1. Cover of Kalevala

Image taken from www.digital.library.mcgill.ca





He never hid it, Tolkien wanted to rewrite *Kalevala* and to improve it. In many ways, the stories could be said to be similar. Tolkien was strongly influenced by the language itself in which *Kalevala* was written: Finnish. Tolkien himself wrote years later that studying this work had triggered his own future works. The old language of the Elves called the *Quenya* was clearly influenced by what Tolkien had discovered. He liked the sounds, the alphabet and everything concerning it. He even said that he studied these languages more than his own exams when he was an Oxford student. He was a passionate.

Tolkien loved that language so much that he even used some consonants of names from *Kalevala* for *the Silmarillion*, hence the name “Ilúvatar” which comes from “Ilmatar”, the spirit who created the earth in *Kalevala*. Ilúvatar is the god who created Arda (Eä). Other names and consonants came from what he learned in *Kalevala*. As in the Greek mythology, *Kalevala* is composed of many “gods” who are assigned to certain tasks. Tolkien loved this way of seeing stories and he did just the same in his own. Another parallel is interesting about *Kalevala* and *the Silmarillion*. Indeed, in *Kalevala*, the blacksmith of Gods creates the “Sampo”, a mill which is able to grind infinite quantities of salt, grain and silver. This gives its owner a great power. The conception of the Sampo was not easy and it gave way to a ferocious war between different regions to own it. Just like the One Ring, it has very dark corrupting effects. Just like the One Ring, its conception was difficult and just like the One Ring, it was created indirectly by the Gods.

b- “THE ORIGINS OF THE RING” – LOOKING BACK IN THE SILMARILLION

To understand correctly *The Lord of the Rings*, it is strongly recommended to read *the Silmarillion*. It was not supposed to be published as a book but Christopher Tolkien decided to recollect his father’s notes about the story of Middle Earth and to publish them under this title. The book it became might be what Tolkien first wanted to write after *the Hobbit*. He had first intended to write a more serious story that would explain how the world in which Bilbo evolves had been created. It would have been literary the Bible of *the Hobbit*. *The Silmarillion* is now considered to be the Genesis of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Before explaining how the ring was created, it is important to underline that this story follows two clear patterns. First, there is the Almighty God who created Arda, Ilúvatar or Eru. He will then create the Ainur, to help him create the world. And only after them, he





will create the children: the Elves and the Humans. At first size, it looks like a monotheist pattern. But then it becomes a little more blurred when Tolkien explains that there are different missions and tasks assigned to the Valar. Indeed, each of them is given a singular task. It reminds now of the Greek mythology.

There is no possible distinction between a polytheist or a monotheist vision. The Valar are not exactly as powerful as Ilúvatar himself. They are not the same kind of god. So, it would be possible to say that Ilúvatar is the One God and the Valar His angels. But the other vision would be to compare Ilúvatar to Zeus or Chronos. Then, it becomes just like the Greek mythology, that is to say a polytheist vision. Both interpretations are possible. The answer lies in Tolkien's heart who was a fervent catholic but who loved mythologies of all kinds. It seems to be clear that Tolkien wanted to mix his religious convictions with his dreams. It gave birth to the system of *the Silmarillion*.

In this system, Tolkien gave a part to darkness and evilness. He created the two dark lords whom he called Morgoth and Sauron. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron wants to find the One Ring which he melted in the cracks of Mount Doom. This ring was created to deceive and control all the other cultures and races of Middle Earth. Seven rings were forged for the Dwarfs, Nine for the Men and Three for the Elves. It was first meant to unite powers in order to be more powerful if bad times were to come. But in secret, Sauron forged the One Ring which controlled all the others. The Elves understood what he had done and never used their rings again, the Darfs were deceived and the Humans became servants to Sauron. They became the Nazgul, the Black Riders to whom Frodo and Sam must escape.

Sauron was only the apprentice of another dark lord: Morgoth. Morgoth was jealous of the creation of Ilúvatar and wanted to defy him by creating a world to his own image. So, the power that Ilúvatar possessed was desired and appeared as the only thing Morgoth was interested in. He wanted the "power to create". To get what he wanted, Morgoth (Melkor) did not hesitate to destroy the creation of the great god Ilúvatar. It was power and only power that seduced Morgoth. If he had been interested in life for what it was, he would never have defied the great god Ilúvatar. Morgoth appears as a fallen angel who was created and brought to life by Ilúvatar but who, jealous of his creator, decided to destroy until he had the same power as his creator's. This pattern of the apprentice who turns against the creator is quite known and developed. From the great ancient mythologies to the modern stories, this pattern is always present since it presents the story of mankind. Indeed, it is





simply the story of Adam and Eve who wanted to get access to the powers which were in the hands of their creator. More recently, in the modern mythologies of the screen, *Star Wars* shows how Anakin the apprentice becomes seduced and twisted by the dark side of the force and turns against his master.

This falling is shown and explained in *the Silmarillion* with the story of men and the creation of Gondor. After Ilúvatar created the world, he gave the “children” a land of their own which was an island. This island was the property of men and everything was fine until the day when, seduced by powers which Morgoth had told them about, Men wanted to acquire them. Deceived and disappointed by their behaviour, Ilúvatar decided to flood their island in order to get rid of Men. The only survivors of this terrible event went to Middle Earth ruled by Morgoth and then Sauron and created Gondor. The story of Gondor reminds us of course of the creation of the world in the Bible, but also of the myth of Atlantis. Once again, power was at the core of the decadence of an entire population. Power is seen in these stories as a poisoned gift which seems very useful and sometimes indispensable, but once you have it, you cannot control yourself and remain the one you were before. In a few words, power turns us all to the dark side since we are not capable of detaining it. That is the whole story of mankind which according to the Bible explains why today men suffer all around the world. They suffer of their “need to know”. Sauron and Morgoth could not do their job alone and needed to pervert masses of people to achieve their aim. In the first ages, they did it.

The ring of power symbolizes all this frustration and all this power. The one who will own the ring will also own the power of Sauron. But what is of an extreme importance in the story is that the ring was forged by Sauron and destined to accomplish his wishes. It cannot be used for good reasons. The message Tolkien gives here is clear. No great power of destruction can bring good. Even if you wish to use it for good, you will be cursed and twisted by it. Gandalf understood it as well as Galadriel and that is why they both refused the ring that Frodo offered them.

c- POWER THROUGH THE MAIN CHARACTERS AND CIVILIZATIONS: FROM THE SILMARILLION TO THE LORD OF THE RINGS

c. 1 POWER OF THE NOBLE: THE STORY OF THE ELVES





The Elves of Tolkien are half way between gods and men. They seem to live forever and possess an extremely great knowledge. They were the best creation of Ilúvatar who made them perfect. The story of the Ring actually started with Feänor, who created the three Silmarils. The Silmarils were three beautiful rings which contained the light of Valinor, the great power coming from the land of gods, from the two trees of Valinor. They were supposed to give the Elves a great power and a means to unite and be strong if faced with the enemy. The Elves had always been very close to the gods from the beginning. They liked each other and shared the same views. The Elves are in the story the only race which possesses the distinction and the look of gods. But a threat was not far. Morgoth was again jealous of this power which he did not have. He wanted the Silmarils more than anything else. In the genesis of this story, it can be said that the Silmarils were at the core of the War of the Ring. Indeed, they were the first rings of power. Even if they were not made for bad reasons, they brought with them the jealousy and all the bad intentions of Morgoth. Everything started with Feänor who forged the first weapons after Morgoth poisoned his mind with doubts and bad intentions. The Silmarils escaped Morgoth but the desire to possess such a power remained important and went to Sauron who created his own rings which he could control.

We have seen that the Elves are, with no doubt, the more powerful beings living in Middle Earth. They represent purity and confidence. Indeed, when Sauron was first defeated, Isildur had the occasion of throwing the Ring in the cracks of Mount Doom, but he did not do it while Elrond urged him to do it. In this precise situation, men appeared once more corruptible and Elves confident. The Ring was too seductive to be destroyed forever. The wisdom of the Elves makes them the more respectable of all in the story. Tolkien himself said that he liked these creatures because they represented all the qualities and values which the Catholic Church defends.

c. 2 ELROND, THE FATHER FIGURE

Elrond is in the story one of the more present Elves. With Legolas and Galadriel, he represents a trinity, a deep core which brings wisdom and confidence to the fellowship.





Elrond is clearly a father image. He is the father of Arwen and the reader can see him behaving as a father, protecting his daughter from the world of mortals. It is the Council of Elrond which decides of the fellowship. Frodo, Sam, Pippin, Merry and Aragorn find a refuge in his house. He is a reassuring character with a strong presence due to the fact that he was part of the first war of the Ring against Sauron. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Elrond is not in the fights as Aragorn or Legolas. He has become a mentor, like Gandalf. Rather like a god, he is above the fights.



2. Elrond

Image taken from
www.alleycatsctach.com

What make a treasure of his life are his experience and the look he can have upon the situations which Frodo and Sam must undergo. It is obvious that Gandalf does not have the same kind of discussion with Elrond than with Aragorn or Frodo. His sense of understanding and his faculty to compromise makes him a very important character of the story even if he is not part of the fellowship. He does not refuse the relation between his daughter Arwen and Aragorn the mortal. This aspect of the story was much more underlined in the movies rather than in the books. Indeed, the love story between Aragorn and Arwen is far less important in the books. But the vision which the movie develops is also very interesting since it takes many elements from the appendices and mixes it into the whole story. The vision of Elrond is also very faithful to what Tolkien must have imagined. Elrond is a sympathetic character whom everybody would like to know. As said earlier, he embodies the perfect father: strict and loving.

All these elements make of Elrond one of the most reassuring characters of the story, along with Gandalf. There is though a very interesting element about this character. Indeed, Frodo projects to give the ring first to Gandalf and then to Galadriel, but never to Elrond. It might just be a coincidence but why would Frodo not think about this possible issue when he arrives at Rivendel? Elrond knows the way to Mordor and has already been faced with Sauron. So, why could he not be the ring bearer? The answer is not clear since the situation did not come up. One of the possible answers would be that Elrond does not want to fight again and be part of another war against Sauron. He failed with Isildur because he was not able to convince him to drop the ring in the crack of Mount Doom, so he must feel powerless concerning the issue of destroying the ring and knows that he would fail again.





c. 3 GALADRIEL, THE ORACLE AND THE MOTHER FIGURE

Galadriel is a mystery. She is the most intriguing character among the Elves. Far from being as perfect as Elrond, Galadriel is at the same time an image of a mother and of a potential dark queen as she says herself. She embodies the duality which can be part of anybody. She cares for the fellowship when they arrive in the woods of Lothlórien. She seems to have a greater power than Elrond and the other Elves in the story since she can read in the minds. Frodo was puzzled by this power and even Gimli the dwarf was deeply moved by Galadriel. Tolkien even let the reader believe that Gimli was in love with her.



3. The Mirror of Galadriel

Image taken from
ziljin.newmail.ru

of them.

We mentioned earlier that Elrond, Galadriel and Legolas formed a kind of trinity in the novel. But it would be wrong to compare it exactly with the one in the Bible. Tolkien was far from being that simple minded. He recreated his own religion with his convictions but also with his passions for ancient mythologies. That is why it not recommended searching for exact parallelism between Catholicism and *The Lord of the Rings*. What would be more accurate would be to explain that Tolkien took some obvious patterns from the





Bible and from ancient mythologies and mixed them altogether to create what we read in *the Silmarillion* and in *The Lord of the Rings*.

One obvious and important symbol of power is the mirror of Galadriel which is present during a whole chapter in *the fellowship of the ring*. Galadriel faces Frodo and Sam with this magical object. In literature, it often symbolizes a passage to another level or situation. It is also the image of our unconscious which comes to the surface. In many ways, it is a very dangerous object which always marks a change. But why is a mirror so dangerous? To explain, it takes us back in very ancient times when mirrors were very rare and expensive. People used to spend their entire life never seeing their real image or reflection. And it would have been very disturbing and scaring to be faced with one's own perfect reflection. Some believed that the mirror would steal their soul inside the image. One of the best examples of mirrors in literature is the use in *Snow White* where it becomes a whole character.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, the mirror of Galadriel is an oracle, a very powerful tool which was used to see the future. This power has always been very intriguing and mystic. It is common that a hero must see an oracle to complete his journey. A very recent example, which David Colbert uses, is in the movie *Matrix* where the hero Neo must see an oracle several times to see clearer in his own future.

This magical power actually comes from a very ancient custom. Before going at war, an oracle had to be summoned to know how the war would go. In Ancient Greece, there were at least two hundred and fifty of them. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Galadriel is this oracle whom the heroes must go and see to be aware of the dangers they will encounter on their path to their task. The only problem with this power is that it is not entirely sure. Indeed, before he uses it, Galadriel warns Frodo that he will see something which may not be true, but there is no way to know what is true and what is not. The attraction is too strong for Frodo. He wants to know his destiny. The mirror becomes a tool against Sauron since it may allow Frodo to know in advance what his future is made of.

Frodo is captivated by what he sees. He discovers himself through the mirror. When he sees Sauron, Frodo feels the ring becoming heavier and heavier. He is attracted by this image but cannot look aside. He must know what it means. But when he finally leaves the mirror, Frodo feels like he has learned something.





Frodo gazed at the ring with awe; for suddenly it seems that he understood. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*: 479)

It is clear that the mirror situation brings a new level to Frodo who has passed the test. He has been faced with his interior fears and he will now be able to face them. This is precisely what Galadriel wanted. She wanted Frodo to be aware of what his journey would be made of. Sauron is more deadly than he seems. The ring is not simply a jewel but a gate to Mordor. Frodo understands thanks to Galadriel that all the powers in Middle Earth depend on this one ring which he carries. At this precise moment, Frodo tempts Galadriel with the ring. He decides to offer her the precious object.

Galadriel's greatest power lies within this very important moment. She explains Frodo that if she owned the ring, she might be even worse than Sauron. She has a similar reaction to Gandalf's.

I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer [...] In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lighting! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair! (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*: 480)

She explains that even if the wisest of all used a dark power, this power would be stronger and would corrupt the will of its owner. This situation is a test for her and she passes it well.

I pass the test, [...] I will diminish, and go into the West, and remain Galadriel. (Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*: 480)

At this moment, the ring of power takes on a new importance. That is to say that it becomes more deadly and threatening for Frodo. Until this moment, he did not imagine to what extent this ring could modify and influence the souls. Now, Frodo knows that his task will be much more difficult than what he had imagined. Galadriel played her role perfectly and gave Frodo all the weapons he needed to resist the ring now that he knows what it is capable of.

Her role is over now. She is in *The Lord of the Rings* a very ephemeral character but of a great importance for Frodo and for the reader to understand the threat lying on Frodo.





c. 4 LEGOLAS, YOUTH, WISDOM AND VIGOUR INSIDE THE FELLOWSHIP

Legolas brings to the Fellowship a great force. He is different from Elrond and Galadriel and gives the Fellowship some kind of serenity and reassurance. He is in the story one of the only characters who does not look for any kind of power. He only follows his destiny and stays away from the influence of the ring. He seems above the need to control or the seduction of the ring. Along with Sam and Gimli and perhaps Aragorn, he is never tempted by the ring. He is part of the core of the fellowship. Merry and Pippin are not at the same level. In the third volume, *Return of the King*, Pippin is tempted by the palantír, an object directly linked with the ring and its bad intentions.

So, Legolas is really a “pure” character. Elrond represents the father, Galadriel the mother, and logically Legolas is the impetuous son. Brave and talented, his main power is his purity of mind. Tolkien did not want Legolas to be a tortured character as Galadriel is. He wanted a character which would symbolize power of will and determination in the way Elves are. Perhaps the greater power of Legolas is that he is not interested in at all.

c. 5 NÚMENOR: AN ANALOGY OF THE MYTH OF ATLANTIS AND THE FALLING OF ADAM AND EVE OR HOW THE NEED FOR POWER AND KNOWLEDGE DROVE TO PERISH.



4. Map of Númenor

Image taken from www.tolkien.lo.pl

The story of Númenor is fascinating in many points. It embodies perfectly what sort of consequences power can drag.

The study of the Elves cannot really illustrate what power can trigger since the Elves are known for being able to resist temptation since they are most like the gods who created Arda. To the contrary, Men were not given the gift of immortality

and behave in the same way as Adam and Eve did in the biblical story of the creation of the





world. When Ilúvatar created the “children”, that is to say the peoples who would live on Middle Earth, he first created the Elves and then Men. Men were first supposed to live on an island called Númenor. There, they would be able to live happily. They were called the Númenoreans or the Dunedain. But Sauron, Morgoth’s apprentice, wanted to destroy Númenor because it represented a threat for his kingdom in Middle Earth and because he was jealous that they were so prosper.

With all his wit, he turned the major part of the Númenoreans against the Valar, the gods of Valinor by pretending that the great god Eru or Ilúvatar did not exist. The only great god was Melkor (Morgoth). He told them that Melkor would give them immortality if they succeeded in attacking the gods in Valinor, the immortal lands. Men were corrupted by the need to know why they were not immortal whereas the Elves were. And they wanted to acquire the same powers. When he saw that his lands were to be attacked, Ilúvatar decided to sink the island Númenor with all his inhabitants, except those who had remained faithful to the gods. They landed on Middle Earth where they created Gondor.

The story is in many ways similar to the myth of Atlantis in which Zeus decides to sink the island of Atlantis after the inhabitants had become threatening and immoral. The gods like to see their creations evolve in the world they created for them but they must never cross the line which separates them from the gods. The power which is applied on them is the simplest, the first mentioned in the first part of this work. The great God decides of everything. It is not the place of a human to know about things which he is not concerned about. Men thought they could be greater than the gods and this belief made them make an enormous mistake.



5. Númenorean soldier
Image taken from
www.dartriver.co.uz

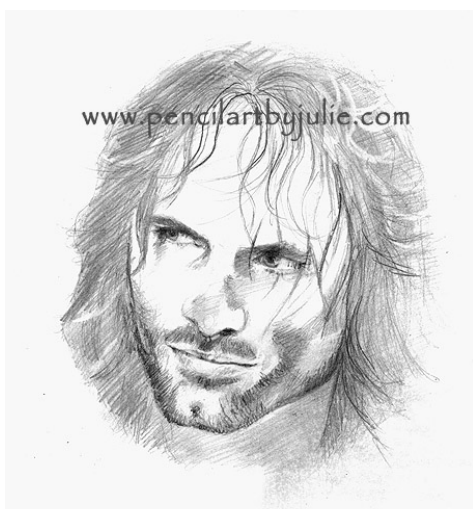




c. 6 POWER OF CREATION: THE CREATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GONDOR, A REPRESENTATION OF OUR WORLD AFTER THE FALLING OF ADAM AND EVE. ARAGORN APPEARS AS CHRIST.

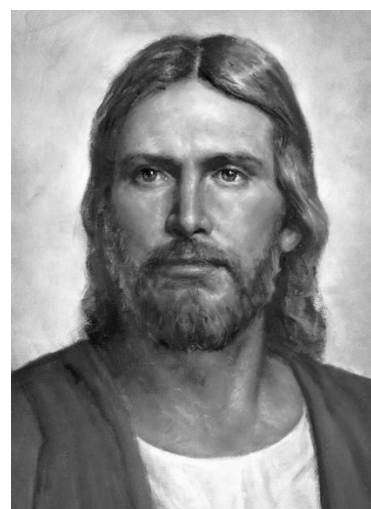
The creation of Gondor follows the same pattern as the falling of Adam and Eve in the Bible. Gondor was created by the survivors of the destruction of Númenor. The only ones who could survive were the ones who remained faithful to the gods while the others were twisted by the dark influence of Sauron. But since the island Númenor did not exist anymore, they had to find a shelter in Middle Earth where they had been debarked. The immortal lands were not for them since they did not share the power of immortality. Isildur created Gondor but was killed while he was wearing the ring. This is how it was lost for thousands of years. Since Aragorn represents the heir of the one who caused the fall of the power of men by the loss of the ring, the stewards took power and Aragorn had to flee. He became “Stalker”, an intriguing fugitive. But he does not want to be known for who he is.

So, he becomes in *the Lord of the Rings* the new heir who should come back on the throne but who has been rejected by the people. He becomes an image of Christ. Indeed, even if Aragorn is not told to belong to any particular religion, he clearly embodies Christian values by his brotherhood, his courage, his chastity and his fidelity. Concerning a more subjective aspect, all the representations of Aragorn go in the same way. The look which was given to this character is partly inspired by the holy representations of Christ. Even before the films were shot, many artists made sketches of Aragorn after reading Tolkien’s descriptions in the novel.



6. Aragorn

Image taken from www.pencilartbyjulie.com



7. Christ by Del Parson

Painting taken from www.erasmagazine.com





The results were appreciatively all the same.

The reason why Tolkien chose such kind of representation for this character is not surprising. Indeed, Aragorn represents Men's power in the best way. He helps Frodo and would give his life if it allowed Frodo to destroy the ring. Very calm and intelligent, he is also pious since he respects the gods through the image of the Elves. He speaks the elvish tongue and is very appreciated by them. When the fellowship arrives at Rivendell, the house of Elrond, he even seems to be part of them, his welcome being so warm.

Aragorn is the power of faith. He believes in justice and in the forces of Heaven in the name of Ilúvatar. In the same way as Christ, Aragorn was crucified. Even if it is not physically right, indeed he was not put to the cross, but he was rejected by his people after Isildur triggered the loss of Men by not destroying the Ring when he had the occasion to. Since this time, Gondor was no more ruled by the dynasty of the King. Only stewards took the throne. So, in a way, he was mentally crucified. Even when his true identity is revealed during the council of Elrond, Boromir, son of the actual steward of Gondor does not show any form of allegiance to his real king. He is not even impressed, just surprised that he is still alive.

Aragorn is what remains good in the world of Men. Tolkien showed him as the infallible man who would do anything for his land. He is truly the real king by blood and by his attitude. Contrary to the Elves, he is not immortal and does not share the knowledge of the history of Middle Earth as the Elves do. But his power lies in the fact that he is able to fight till death if he believes the cause is worth it. Elves are less courageous concerning lost causes. Aragorn fights even if he dies whereas the Elves prefer going back to the immortal lands where they can be in peace. It is the main characteristic that differs from them. That is why Aragorn represents all the Christian and Catholic values. He is the guide, the real chief and master of the fellowship. He saves Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin from the Black Riders in the *Prancing Pony*. And then, when the Nazgul attack Frodo he saves him again by asking Elves to help him. He seems to have a special relationship with them and in some way to be part of them. Moreover, he is in love with Arwen, the daughter of Elrond, which makes him part of the "Elvish family".





d- NEGATIVE POWER VERSUS GOOD: SAURON'S WILL TO CREATE AN EMPIRE OF BAD INTENTIONS.

d. 1 POWER OF DESTRUCTION: WHAT ARE SAURON'S PROJECTS IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*? DESTROY NATURE?

First of all, it is not needless to mention the name of the house of Sauron which is called "Mordor". Without going too far in searching complex etymology, this name rings a bell when we hear it. Indeed, it is easy to think about the word "Murder" which sounds the same and which contains everything Sauron does during the story of Middle Earth. It is very revealing about the mentality of the character and about what Tolkien wanted us to feel when hearing Sauron's name for his home.

Sauron wishes to destroy Middle Earth as it is and to create a world of his own, a world which would be as he wants it to be. Just like his former master Melkor, he is jealous of the creation of the gods and wants to have the creation of his own. He believes he is stronger than the gods and that he is able to achieve something better. His first intentions are to destroy any aspect that would remind him of the creation of Ilúvatar. This concerns people, civilizations and sometimes nature if necessary.



8. Isengard

Image taken from www.geocities.com





9. Rivendell

Painting taken from depts.washington.edu

Concerning this point of nature, Tolkien was very influenced by the industrial age in which he lived and grew up. Indeed, the novel shows industrial powers destroying nature and creating huge towers such as Barad-Dur or Orthanc. Nature is not respected by these people who create huge machines to make war and who do not care about environment. This is exactly what Tolkien could see by his window while he grew up. When his parents died, he had to be raised by Father Francis Xavier Morgan in Birmingham. He used to live in nature with his parents and suddenly he saw the dark and sad walls of the town. He saw people raising buildings where there had been grass and water. This marked him profoundly and can be seen in the novel.

Sauron represents this power of destruction and annihilation of nature. In a few words, it represents everything Tolkien loathed. When he describes the creation of the Orcs, it is simply an image of huge factories which destroy nature to create something “unnatural”. Indeed, the Orcs created by Saruman are nothing more than transformed Elves who have been tortured and readapted to become death machines.

The main goal of Sauron is to destroy. Tolkien wanted a very simple pattern for the reader to understand directly that there could be no good whatsoever in Sauron’s plans. In the novel, except taking control of the world and destroying it, Sauron does not seem to have a clear intention to create something after. It seems that the vision he has of his kingdom would be a kingdom of destruction and despair. He is the perfect villain with no





plan, just the will to destroy. As in many villain characters in literature, Sauron is not very smart. He fails at recovering the Ring which is carried by a simple and little hobbit. If he had wanted, he could have found it more efficiently. But the fact is that he cannot do so. He has to send an entire army which fails at finding two powerless hobbits. The pattern is recurrent in literature. Villains are always rather simple minded. Sometimes, the reader can even make fun of him his lack of ingenuity being so desperately weak.

d. 2 POWER OF NUMBER: SAURON NEEDS ALLIANCES TO BE STRONG. IS HE JUST AN EYE? WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SARUMAN?

In The Lord of the Rings, Sauron is represented under the image of an eye. The physical body of Sauron has been destroyed when the island of Númenor was destroyed. Since he could not die, his mind was regenerated into this image. This makes him a villain not very threatening at first sight since he cannot move and has to stay in Barad Dur, the tower built in Mordor. So, he cannot chase Frodo himself which makes the task even more difficult for him. Sauron is even just a spirit. He is a character without physical body which makes him stranger and as everybody knows, what is strange is often scaring. The Eye



10. The Eye of Sauron
Image taken from the movie

seems to know where Frodo is but is incapable of getting him. Even when Frodo and Sam are in Mordor, he is unable to feel them when they are climbing Mount Doom. Sauron is perhaps very strong but he is also not very ingenious. The man who really decides and cooperates the operations is the wizard (which Tolkien did not like to be called that way) called Saruman. He is a being

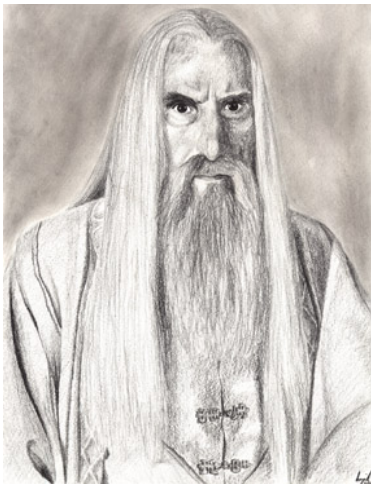
whom origins are the more blurred possible. They are neither Elves nor Humans. They came directly from the gods. They were meant to help the populations of Middle Earth to create and control the creations on Middle Earth. There were two wizards send by the gods. One was Saruman the White, and the other was Mithrandir, called Gandalf the Grey by the Humans. They were supposed to work together but once again, the attraction of power will separate them. Gandalf was the calm and quiet Wizard who liked spending time with the “Halflings”, the Hobbits whereas Saruman remained the great Wizard everyone respected





for his knowledge. But Saruman was seduced by the power of Sauron and decided to obey him and to help him get the ring and accomplish his dreadful plans. The attraction of power concerning Saruman is very surprising since at first sight everybody would have said that a god would never be tempted by the dark side. But Saruman was. The question is the following: if Saruman was seduced, why would anybody else not feel the same?

That is also one of the scary powers of Sauron. He seems to be able to seduce even the most untouchable. Saruman was one of the few who could never be touched by the dark and subversive talk of Sauron. But he did. That is precisely why Gandalf refused to touch



11. Saruman

Image taken from www.elronds-haus.de

the ring and to take it himself to mount Doom because he knew he could be tempted to use it for good, but sooner or later the power of the ring would even corrupt him because he knew what he could achieve with it.

Beyond the fact that he has become a servant of Sauron, Saruman possesses a great power of persuasion. He can indeed bewitch people just by talking to them. This gives him a great power. He uses it not for good reasons but only to serve Sauron's purpose.

This experience shows that the dark side of power can get anybody to do what only one person wants if that person owns a power greater than the one you have and if you desire to share it or even more, to have it for yourself. So, Sauron is just an Eye, but far more than that. He is within the minds of those he corrupted or those who are being corrupted by his most terrible achievement, the One Ring. Frodo and Sam will have to fight hard not to be too much influenced by the attraction of the ring.

d. 3 SAURON AND SARUMAN'S WEAPONS: THE ORCS AND THE URUK-AI

These creatures are made for bad. They were created by Sauron only to execute Sauron's dark deeds. At the beginning, as we said, the Orcs were Elves. But after many horrible tortures they became the Orcs. This changing of image is very important for Tolkien who finds a way to demonstrate how the power of a city which is growing faster and faster can erase one's personality and even one's appearance. Before industrialisation,





men used to live in harmony with themselves and nature. But after the big cities were built,



12. An Orc

Image taken from www.dartriver.co.uz

there were no more places for people who believed in true kindness and in harmony. This is why the Elves decided to quit Middle Earth where they do not find their place anymore.

In the Lord of the Rings they are monsters who should just be killed. But once again, if we think about what they represent, they are only the slaves who could do nothing but what they were made for. They feel revenge for what they are and want the “goods” to pay for what they are. They are like animals but keep a certain sense of hierarchy and military rigourness. Their face is monstrous but just like the monster of *Frankenstein*, but we never get to know what they feel and what they really think about the war. Their only purpose is to kill and die if necessary. This power is much like

the recent kamikaze who threw themselves in the towers on 9/11 or even lots of other suicide operations.

To make another analogy concerning the orcs and Uruk-Ai, even if Tolkien always rejected these opinions, it might be true to say that the minions of Saruman and Sauron are just like the Hitlerian Youths. That is to say people who do not know what they fight for, but who will make everything they are ordered. This makes them extremely dangerous. Their only aim in the story is to destroy. Tolkien did not spend time to explain what they feel, or even if they do feel something. All the reader has to know is present. They are killers and will remain killers whatever the situation. The power which lies within their hands is pure strength and brutality, the power of the strongest. They are like animals and impose themselves only by violence. This power is primitive but also very effective. Perhaps it can be said to be the first real form of power since animals cannot control others by talking to them. Violence might just be the first form of power which enables to get rid of one's counterparts. In the Lord of the Rings, only the orcs and Uruk-Ai represent this form of power, all the others are more refined.





E- STRENGTH AND POWER IN THE SMALLEST OF THINGS: THE HOBBITS AND THE ONE RING.

E. 1 WHY SO MUCH POWER CONTAINED ONLY IN A SO SMALL JEWEL? WHAT DOES THIS RING SYMBOL MEAN?

First of all, the ring symbolizes more than just a jewel one can wear or bear. In literature, it represents attachment to a religion, a person or even a belief. Sometimes magical, it is the symbol of things much more important than what can be seen. The example is obvious with Tolkien's first version of *The Hobbit* in which the ring was only a magical ring which possessed the power of making its owner disappear. That is why Gollum gave it up so easily after losing a game with Bilbo. But after rethinking about that, Tolkien understood that such a ring could be more interesting if it carried a story with him.



13. a seal
Image taken from
www.heraldic-arts.com

If we look back in time, rings have always represented some kind of power, a mark of dominance. Kings had their ring with their seal on it. It was a distinction to show the importance of their person and their condition. It represents the greater power which is showed by the fact that he is the only one who possesses such a jewel. Sometimes, in aristocratic families, people possessed their own seals but it had nothing to do with the Royal Seal.

In linguistics, the word “ring” is often used to designate a group of people linked with a similar belief or destiny. Synonym to “group”, “ring” symbolizes a group with a mystical or mysterious attitude. One would never talk of a ring concerning a group of pupils sitting in a classroom. But when terms such as “the ring of confidence” are used, it clearly shows that the word ring is synonym to unity and power in this same unity. In a more up-to-day vocabulary, some developers have created software intelligence to protect one's computer from viruses and potential intruders. Some of these ultra-high technology systems are called “protection rings”. It seems that the notion of “ring” symbolizes here the unity which allows protection, some kind of strength inside the computer; the image of the computer being unified against any potential intrusion.





Another very obvious use of the symbols of the rings is for the Olympic Games. It represents unity of the world through the different continents. But why have choosing the ring as symbol for unity? There would be thousands of different answers possible but the vision of a circle which never ends, which represents eternity and stability might be one crucial element.



14. the discovery of a silmaril
Painting taken from www.home.agh.edu

So, the choice of this jewel for the story was not trivial. Before the One Ring, lots of other rings were created and the lost famous of them are of course the three Silmarils which Tolkien talks about in *the Silmarillion*, hence the name.

They were created by Feanor and possessed all the power contained in the trees of Valinor, on the immortal lands. Once again, the rings were created to represent the powers of the gods and would not have an existence if not related to this power. The One Ring is in a way similar to the silmarils, but the power which was put in it was not god's power but Sauron's. This makes all the difference of course.

Moreover, a ring is very little, and so, cannot be easily destroyed. This makes of it a great weapon if it contains a power or anything else threatening. It is small, and very difficult to see. It is indeed the perfect weapon instead of magical sticks or other famous images of magic in literature. A ring knows how to be very discreet.

E. 2 POWER of purity: THE UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE OF NOT TWO "POOR" HOBBITS BUT TWO PURE HOBBITS, WHICH MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

Frodo is the only one who can carry the ring without being quickly caught by its power of seduction. Even Gandalf who could not take it is confident about Frodo carrying the ring to Mordor. Why such confidence in a little hobbit?

Tolkien showed Hobbits as the most peaceful people and also the most pure since they do not wish to make war to anyone and are very far from the Ring's power when the story begins. They represent the people of England, in the way Tolkien would have liked them to be. Indeed, he was as we said earlier a defender of nature and he liked to imagine





England without the industrial revolution which transformed landscapes and destroyed the beauty of his country. Hobbits live inside holes in the ground, as said Tolkien when writing the first sentence which would trigger his whole work: “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, p1)

The choice of two hobbits to carry the ring was very important. It symbolizes the fact that fighting evil can be triggered just for the sake of it and without any interest. That is to say that the hobbits do not fight Sauron to win the war, but simply to keep what they have, and to remain in peace in their lands, contrary to Aragorn who wishes to recreate the kingdom of Gondor after the fall of Sauron or the Elves who wish to depart for the immortal lands after the war is over. Hobbits are “pure”, in the catholic sense. They never commit sins, they are faithful to Gandalf throughout their adventures, and finally come back to their lands at the end when Sauron is dead. It is precisely this strength, this power of purity which allows Frodo and Sam to defeat the attraction of the ring and to succeed their task.





PART TWO

POWER OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

THE RING BECOMES A PRISM OF THE MOST UNCONSCIOUS DESIRES AND TRANSFORMS THE BATTLE
AGAINST SAURON INTO A BATTLE AGAINST ONESELF

Now that we have enough background to work on, we are going to examine very precisely the meanings of all these symbols and how they create a whole problematic. To begin with, we will see how the ring becomes a prism of the unconscious, how it makes it come to the surface more or less quickly and how the mind can be seduced by Evilness. The greater the power is, the bigger the transformation will be. To help us analysing these facts, we shall look through some theories from Freud which apply here to the situation.

2. HOW THE UNCONSCIOUS CAN BE REVEALED THROUGH THE RISE OF INTERNAL POWER WITH THE RING

A- WHAT IS THE UNCONSCIOUS?

A.1 THE DEFINITION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS: FREUD

First of all, Freud explained in many of his essays on the unconscious that it is linked with any “ordinary” human being. He thought that some elements could be taken as proofs of the existence of this another level of existence. It is not to be confused with the “subconscious” which is only a merely autonomic function of the brain. Freud believed that the unconscious was a “sentient force of will influenced by human drives and yet operating well below the perceptual conscious mind”. (*Wikipedia*, definition of the unconscious mind)

The “Ego”, the “Super-Ego” and the “Id” have a crucial importance in *The Lord of the Rings*. This pattern will be helpful to explain what part of the unconscious is mentioned





in our study to come. It would be indeed too easy and inexact to mix all these elements together into a general “unconscious” word which would mean nothing then.

Ego: It is an important part of the unconscious but can be modified or changed in part. It establishes a balance between the forbidden, the Super-Ego’s repressions, the desires of the Id and the necessities of action on the outside world.

Super-Ego: it is the rules. It is part of the unchangeable unconscious. It represses and censures. It is the internalization of the parental desires.

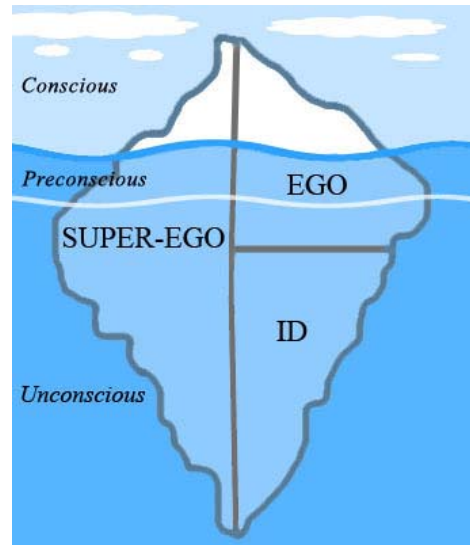
Id: also unchangeable, it is the most primitive aspect of the unconscious. It contains all the desires: sex, domination, power, need for knowledge etc. It is looking for immediate satisfaction.

With this image of the construction of the unconscious, we will add three more major elements which will make our tools of investigation for the story: the *condensation*, *displacement*, and *repression*. These three mechanisms of the unconscious are necessary to understand how the previous schema works and helps explaining why the characters behave this way and not another.

Condensation is the fact of representing with one single element a multiplicity of elements. It works the other way around. It can be seen through slips of the tongue or some involuntary omissions.

Displacement is the fact that an apparently insignificant fact will take enormous sense through the eyes of one person. It can be a reminiscence of the past and becomes a central value.

Repression is a manifestation of defence against drives. The subject represses desires and what he feels as bad drives from his conscience because they cannot match with the Ego.



15. Schema of the unconscious
Image taken from www.wikipedia.org



Now that we have taken a brief look upon the major notions concerning the unconscious, we shall explain the symbols which we have seen in the first part of our work.

A.2 HOW DOES IT APPLY TO THE LORD OF THE RINGS?

In *the Lord of the Rings*, there is an abundance of multiple symbols in which the reader has to find his way. Many of these symbols were not put consciously in the story but are there. Some others were deliberately inserted to give the story an even deeper core. What is important is the use of those symbols to explain a whole thematic. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the thematic is clear. The Ring appears to modify the characters in a more or less important way. There is only one character which cannot be included into this study, Tom Bombadil. Indeed, he is the only one who can wear the ring and still be visible as well as seeing the people who wear the ring. Tolkien surely wanted to show the fact that even to a great power, there are exceptions to the rule and they can even come from the smallest of beings.

But this is only one single element; there are more important facts to be studied in the story. The example of the fate of Gollum is perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the power of the ring over the unconscious. The myth of the sword of Damocles which threatens to fall is present through the image of the dangerous unconscious which would have the effect of the sword if it happened to fall and to be put to the surface. The characters that are in contact with the ring must follow their path with this threat present in their minds. The threat itself becomes a new trial for them.

There is also the “myth of the cave” which Plato used to show that a character has to be faced with his unconscious to learn life and to achieve the task which is to be done. All these elements are present in the Lord of the Rings and that is why the theories of the unconscious are very important now in our work.

b- A MODERN “MYTH OF THE CAVE”?

b.1 GOLLUM: REGRESSION AND ANTI-DARWINIAN THEORY – THE POWER TO DESTROY FROM THE INSIDE





In the case of Gollum, the myth of the cave of Plato is reversed since it happens the opposite way. Sméagol was a free hobbit before he touched the ring. It is only when he encounters the ring that he becomes enslaved to it and enters the cave to hide from the outside world. Generally, the myth of the cave explains how a character must go through a cave and be in the darkness to be able to “listen to his mind”. In the ancient myth of Gilgamesh, the hero must go through an extraordinary long tunnel to access a land where he could find an answer for immortality. The symbolic is very important. The same happens to Harry Potter and even to Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*. Heroes are often faced with their unconscious.

There are in *The Lord of the Rings* many moments when the characters are faced with darkness: the mines of Moria, the cave of Shelob, the cave of Gollum and the path of Dimholt. In the case of Gollum, we said that the important fact is that it happens the opposite way as it should be. Tolkien shows in this metaphor that the power of the ring is with no doubt linked with the minds of those who encounter it. Faramir sees the evil part of Gollum and tells it to Frodo:

“[...] malice eats it like a cancer, and the evil is growing.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book II, p 301)

Sméagol, even if he was a hobbit, had already a dark mind. In the movie by Peter Jackson, the scene is very obvious and gives a very good view of the influence of the ring



16. Gollum

Image taken from www.elronds-haus.de

when he discovers it. The ring has an effect on the Id. It is a catalyser which annihilates the power of the Super-Ego which would normally repress the drives of the Id. The result is an Ego which becomes the reflection of the Id. Just like a virus, the ring operates from the inside to seduce and kill. Gollum regresses to become an animal addicted with the power of the ring. He is no longer human. The myth of the cave should bring a character to a more important knowledge whereas here, Gollum restricts his world to a cave. The cave becomes the symbol of his mind, more, darker and darker. He is alone. The ring has become the anti-





evolution tool which turns people into animals. Another way to explain it would be to say that it is a reverse Darwinian evolution theory. The man becomes ape; and in this case, even worse than an ape. Man - through the image of a hobbit – becomes a monster of greed and primitive instincts. The Ego and the Super-Ego do not operate or do not exist anymore.

Even the look of Gollum is affected by this transformation. This marks a link between the mind and physical health. He becomes a living corpse. Everything happens to destroy his hobbit or “human” nature. With this loosing of his human characteristics, this makes him a terrible monster since the mind is frightened of what is not like itself. This means that we are always afraid of “the other”, afraid of what is not like us. Gollum becomes something different and embodies the ring itself. Gollum has become the ring in flesh and blood.

b.2 ARAGORN AND THE PATH OF DIMHOLT – THE POWER OF A BAFLED KING

Aragorn has to enter a huge cave where stands the army of the dead which betrayed Isildur. He is not alone, whereas in a normal pattern of the myth of the cave the hero is alone, but Gimli and Legolas do not play an important role. This time, the myth works the right way. Aragorn will fight against his past and will finally become the king through this scene. By taking contact with this army, he comes back to his past and recreates the link which was broken after Isildur was killed. It is a path into his mind which gives him more power than ever. It represents the progressive reconstruction of the mind.

Power is clearly the triggering point of this situation. For once, it is not the power of the ring which is at the core but the power of good, and the need for victory.

b.3 FRODO AND THE CAVE OF SHELOB – THE POWER OF THE RING OVER FRODO'S MIND

When Frodo is in the cave of Shelob, it is clearly the ring which created this situation. As we said earlier, Gollum *is* the ring. Since the ring cannot talk; its influence has to be seen through something. In this case, Frodo was perverted by the ring and abandoned Sam. The Id created a conflict of interest and Frodo was not able to refuse the will of the ring. His departing is symbolic since he stays with Gollum and leaves Sam behind.





Frodo is abandoned by Gollum which symbolizes the effect of the ring over Frodo. The ring betrays him little by little and gets him closer and closer to death. Shelob is the representation of the negative influence which creeps inside his mind and which devours it piece by piece. The cave is not dark but completely black. Frodo has mentally become blind. The web of the spider is the incarnation of his multiple conflicts and of the mess between the three parts of his unconscious. Only the gift of Galadriel can allow him to see clearer. This gift symbolizes the advices Galadriel told him. She is the Super-Ego, the good, the light. But even if has this gift, he finally loses against Shelob, gets trapped and nearly killed, filled with poison. This symbolizes his future loss, the fact that he will not be able to throw the ring inside the Crack of Doom. It is an oracle which unconsciously tells him that he has already lost. The ring has won his mind and is getting what it wants, that is to say returning to his master in Mordor.

c- Frodo, SAM AND GOLLUM: LIVING INCARNATION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS CLOCKWORK

c.1 Frodo, SAM AND GOLLUM AS THE METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF A SINGLE MIND ?

Frodo, Sam and Gollum travel together. They seldom separate. The three characters could be seen as representing simply a mind travelling. Frodo is the incarnation of the Ego, the compromise between the desires and the rules. He is the one who decides, and is the one to whom is given all the responsibility of the victory or the defeat. Little by little, as the Id corrupts the Ego, Frodo gets corrupted and cannot draw his way back. When the damage is done, practically nothing can get it back, the way it was. This is the theory of Freud concerning the Ego. This is the only unstable part of the unconscious. Frodo is in this way the only unstable character of the story. He is the only one who really changes from the hobbit he was to the corrupted being at the end at Mount Doom. But when the task is over and the Id gone, his Ego can find a new balance in his mind.



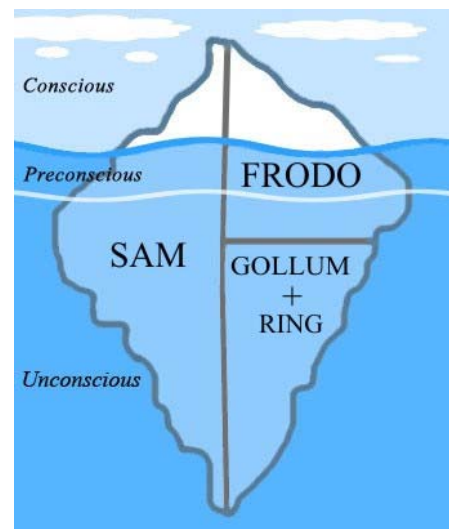
17. Gollum, Sam and Frodo
Image taken from the movie





The Id is represented by Gollum. The Id can never change and this is the case of Gollum. Sméagol is no more, Gollum is unchangeable. He will never become Sméagol again and will never change his mind. Gollum is always there to tell him that the ring is more important than anything else. The double personality of Gollum is interesting in this way since it shows the damage of the Id over a corrupted soul who tries to regain autonomy but will never achieve this goal. He becomes schizophrenic which is a serious pathology which alters and destroys the stability of the unconscious. Schizophrenics do not know anymore who they are and do not feel the barriers of the Super-Ego. It is exactly what the ring has done to Gollum and what it starts with Frodo.

Sam represents the Super-Ego, the rules. He never abandons Frodo, even in the stairs of Cirith Ungol when Frodo decides to go to Mordor alone. He remains faithful and seems to be less influenced by the ring. Gollum does not achieve what he has done with Frodo and that is why he wants to get rid of Sam who represents a threat for the success of the Ring to come back to Mordor. From the beginning to the end, Sam knows that Gollum is perfidious and that he will not bring anything good to the mission. He is strict and asks Frodo not to believe this creature. But Frodo seems seduced by the knowledge of Gollum and believes that only he can drive them to Mordor. The vision of Sam as the Super-Ego is enforced since, as Freud said, he never changes his position and his point of view. Only the Ego can be modified.



18. Schema of the unconscious through the Lord of the Rings

Image personally retouched from image 15

c.2 GOLLUM: THE POWER OF THE RING MADE FLESH?

Of course, Gollum does not possess the Dark powers which Sauron put inside the ring. But we are talking about the powers of persuasion and the power of manipulation by the art of seduction. Gollum speaks for the ring and in many ways *is* the ring. After explaining his unconscious part in the metaphor of the single mind, Gollum appears as the incarnation of the need for power to survive. He shares this need with Sauron who looks for





his ring desperately; but not for the same reasons. Gollum wants it for him to continue living with it and for it whereas Sauron wants it to use it against the peoples of Middle Earth.

Both Sauron and Gollum are physically diminished. The ring and the need for more power made them what they are. Sauron's Id is enormous. He is though more able to control it since he was able to drive Numenoreans to fight against the Valar. He controls his Id but seems to love it. This makes this character extremely dangerous whereas Gollum is a victim of this power. He did not choose to become what he is. That is why Frodo seems to feel compassion for this creature. But still, Gollum is unconsciously the tool of the ring. The famous sentence which is written on the ring is exactly what Gollum helps Sauron to achieve:

“One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, one ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them, in the land of Mordor where the shadow lies”.

Gollum seems to be the one who will help Sauron to “bring them all and in the darkness bind them”. His unconscious drives him to do what the ring wants him to do. In this way, Gollum has become in part the ring itself, or the ring has integrated Gollum which is appreciatively the same.

C.3. IS THE INCREASING INFLUENCE OF THE RING OVER FRODO'S MIND AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HIS OWN UNCONSCIOUS A RITE OF INITIATION TO LIFE?

As we said in the title, the influence of the ring makes the task of the fellowship, and more precisely Frodo's, a battle against his own mind. Gandalf believes in him but fears the power of the ring. The path Frodo must follow is a classical path of initiation. Through his adventures, he will learn who he is really and will plunge inside his own mind; something impossible to do in the peace of the Shire.

The fact that Frodo becomes the ring-bearer is important to understand. Indeed, it shapes the whole story. If the ring-bearer had been someone else, the fate of Middle Earth would certainly have been completely different. He is afraid of danger and does not possess the intelligence of a chief. He is not even able to keep his false identity secret for long. He is everything but a hero. That is why his greater power is to resist the temptation of the ring.





This is his only real task at the beginning of the story. But when he is left alone by the fellowship, he is not able to keep going. He needs the help of Sam and Gollum.

At the start of his journey he is “pure” of any influence of the outside world. John Locke would talk about “Tabula-Rasa” concerning his knowledge of the outside world. He is like a baby-born. Moreover, we do not know about his parents in the story. He is also the image of the orphan. So, except Bilbo, he is not linked with anybody. That is precisely why he needs to be initiated to life. He will have to find courage and have a strong will to achieve his journey. In certain points, this story can be said to be didactic. It shows the reader what is good and what is not.

d- Is *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* A TALE OF TEMPTATION FOR THE DARK SIDE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS?

d.1. IS EVERYONE TEMPTED BY THE DARK SIDE OF POWER?

It appears that *the Lord of the Rings* shows the importance and the power of seduction of everything which is said to be bad on our society. The characters are merely all influenced and tempted by a dark side of their mind. The unconscious shows its powers and demonstrates that it is often the easiest and most seductive path.

Power has an aura which everyone would like to feel and to have. That is to say that power is and has always been tempting. From Adam and Eve to *Star Wars*, *Frankenstein* and many others, most of the heroes are or will be in contact with a great power. Even in novels such as *The Great Gatsby*, the central character possesses a power of seduction over women. Power has always been fascinating and in *The Lord of the Rings*, this fascination is exaggerated to become the central character: “the ring of power”.

Power is something which we do not control. It is not our conscious mind which desires power but the Id which finds a way to express itself through it. In this story, Saruman and Sauron are two good examples of the embodiment of power and corruption. Sauron is very seductive and knows how to bring people to him by offering them false hopes. Saruman is the other face of power, it is the intelligent and effective power. He coordinates the attacks and directs the armies.





Tolkien shows that everyone is tempted by the dark side. Even Galadriel refuses the ring because she knows she would use it. She would use the tool of the demon, that is to say, she would agree to pass a pact with Sauron in order to defeat him with his own weapon. But still, wanting to use the ring is a way to see that everybody can be seduced by a dark power, even when knowing it.

d.2. THE RING AS THE SINGING OF THE SIRENS FROM HOMER'S ODYSSEY: THE NEED TO KNOW.

The ring seems to have a voice. The voice of Sauron in the movies by Peter Jackson but it could also be the voice of the mind. It can be the internal voice of the Id which tries to make itself be heard. As Homer illustrates it in his *Odyssey*, the mermaids are very tempting but Ulysses knows what is hidden behind this seduction. Still, he wants to know, he wants to hear the voice of the mermaids to know what it is like to feel this temptation. It can be linked with the ring since the same happens. An internal voice tells the characters to use the ring for their battle. But unlike Ulysses, they cannot close their minds when Ulysses was attached to the boat.

“First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. There is a great heap of dead men's bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them.” (Homer, *The Odyssey*: Book XII)

This extract from the *Odyssey* shows and explains in a few lines how the power of seduction which lies within the ring is like. First seduce and then kill. This pattern is as old as the world since it is already present in this famous myth from Ancient Greece. The worst is that even if people know about the bad aspirations of this power they still want to know about it and to feel it. They think they can control it. Even Ulysses could not



19. The Odyssey

Image taken from www.odysseus-unbound.org





control the attraction of the “Sirens” and urged his companions to detach him because at that moment he thought he had been mistaking about the mermaids.

Just like Ulysses, Frodo cannot resist the attraction of the ring. He is not attracted by the material beauty of the ring but by the by the darkness which emanates from the ring and the black riders and the Nazgul. In the Greek Mythologies, the desire for knowledge is seen as a good thing whereas in the Lord of the Rings, it is seen as a misplaced curiosity and is severely punished: when Frodo wants to get too close to the gate of Mordor, he misses to be caught.

What is seductive about the ring is not its aspect like the beautiful Sirens of Homer, but the dark and brutal image of the black riders, that is to say death and destruction. Tolkien replaced the seduction of beauty by the seduction of death. Obviously, it shows how the unconscious prefers this dark aspect of the world, this hidden and taboo part of the world.

d.3. THE WRITINGS ON THE RING: A SYMBOL FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH THE DEVIL?

The writings of the ring appear only through the fire, as letters of fire. Frodo can read them when he takes the ring off the fire where Gandalf had thrown it.

“As Frodo did so, he now saw fine lines, finer than the finest pen-strokes, running along the ring, outside and inside: lines of fire that seemed to form the letters of a flowing script. They shone piercingly bright and yet remote, as if out of a great depth.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book 1, p 66)



20. Frodo discovers the writings of the ring

Image taken from the movie

In many myths, the power of the fire is attributed to the Devil. Hell is often represented in flames and every catholic knows the fact that if one is not good on earth, he will “go and *burn* in Hell”. So, in this case, the ring becomes the symbol of a pact with the Devil.

In *Faust*, the same pattern is used. When selling is soul to the Devil, the Devil asks Faust to sign with his blood. This is the only solution to seal

the pact.





“To sign your name you will use, says Mephistopheles to Faust, a drop of your blood.” (Goethe, *Faust*: p 78)

The letters of fire of the ring allow drawing a parallel between these two conceptions of a pact with the Devil. Tolkien wanted the ring to be a symbol of a pact with the Devil. But Frodo is not like Faust. He did not choose to carry the ring. He did not accept any pact whatsoever.



21. Mordor

Painting taken from www.tlotr.com

Contrary to Frodo, the wizard Saruman was one of the first to come and rejoin Sauron to the dark side. Like Faust, Saruman is a very cultivated man who decides to call for the Devil deliberately. He shares his views and helps him in his plans. He has become a slave of Sauron. Even when Gandalf asks him to choose to come back to reason, to be “free from bond, of chain or command: to go where you will, even, even to Mordor, Saruman, if you desire” (Book II, 188), Saruman refuses. He has gone too far and cannot come back. The ring has already destroyed him.

Sauron is the perfect image of the Devil. We have just seen that the fire is the main aspect of the Devil; Sauron has also kept the fire for himself. Mount Doom is a volcano and





the ring was melted and cannot be destroyed by another fire than the one of Mount Doom. Mephisto explained what his desires in *Faust* were; they happen to be the same as Sauron's.

“I am the spirit who always denies; and it is in justice; because anything which is worth destroying. It would have been better if nothing had existed. So, what you name sin, destruction, in a word, everything said to be bad, is my element.”

(Goethe, *Faust*: p 67)

Sauron is exactly the same. He wants to destroy. Saruman helps him in this way by preparing the army and destroying the forests. Our unconscious integrates all these elements and the result is a metaphorical vision of Hell. Mordor is simply a depiction of Hell.

Patricia Meyer Spacks, who wrote an essay called *Power and meaning in the Lord of the Rings*, published in 1968, explains that “the progress of evil in an individual cannot be reversed without a specific, conscious act of will, an act that Gollum, like other characters devoted to evil, is quite incapable of performing”.

d.4. FATE VERSUS Will: UNCONTROLLABLE PARTS OF LIFE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS.

All the characters are linked with the same will but do not share their fate. Will is an important notion which comes from the works of the unconscious mind, and which decides of our becoming. In *the Lord of the Rings*, free will seems to be twisted by the ring which comes and decides for the characters who are most influenced by it.

Gollum is the one who is the most influenced and his will is melted with that of the ring itself.

“He hated it and loved it, as he hated and loved himself. He could not get rid of it. He had no *will* left in the matter.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book 1, p 64 – italics mine)

Here appears the conflict between Sméagol and Gollum, the double personality, the Evil and the rests of Good. His free will has vanished. And it is precisely free will that makes us human. This consideration allows concluding that Gollum is no longer human, but a slave, a tool of Evil.

In the same way, Frodo is corrupted and abandons his free will at the end of his journey when he overlooks the crack of Mount Doom. He is at the end of his quest but





though, he does not wish to separate from the ring. What seems to be his will is in fact what the ring tells him to do.

“I have come,” he said. “But *I do not choose* now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 223- italics mine)

He says that he does not choose, but the unconscious has already been corrupted and his choice is not his choice anymore. At this moment he has come to where Saruman and Gollum were.

But Frodo is where all powers are inexistent. He has come to the place where Evil was born and where it can be destroyed. Still, even if at this precise moment he is the most powerful of all, he “chooses” not to fulfil his task but to give in to temptation.

“[...] he was come to the heart of the realm of Sauron and the forges of his ancient might, greatest in Middle Earth; all other powers were here subdued.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 222)

What changed Frodo’s destiny and what allowed the power of the ring to be destroyed is not an act of will but an act of fate. Indeed, “it is when Gollum, corrupted by the ring, leaps on Frodo bites his finger and takes the ring from Frodo that he falls in the crack of Doom with it and the quest is accomplished”. (P.M. Spacks)



22. Frodo finally gives in to the attraction of the Ring
Image taken from the movie

d.5. Why ARE FRODO AND BILBO ABLE TO ESCAPE AND RECOVER FROM THE IRREVERSIBLE POWER OF THE RING?

Tolkien says that “heroism, in legend and in fact, consists of making repeatedly and freely the choice of good” (Book II, p 321). Frodo does not accomplish his mission by a choice but by chance, by an act of fate. He is not conscious of what happens when the ring is destroyed. It is only when the ring is destroyed that he loses this attraction for Evil. But what made this recovery possible is the fact that he did not choose to take the ring. This





mission was *devoted* to him. Gandalf explains to Frodo that he has been chosen for this task even if Frodo did not wish it.

“You have been chosen, and you must therefore use strength and heart and wits as you have” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 69)

““I wish it need not have happened in my time” says Frodo. ““So do I”, said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 60)

His heart was pure and free of any bad feeling when he first took the ring, contrary to Gollum who saw in this ring his “precious” and decided to steal it for greed.

Frodo and Bilbo are saved by their fate. Unconsciously they recover from Evil and become a representative aspect of redemption. Moreover, Frodo has always been merciful to Gollum, he never treated him bad and that determined his final fate.

On the other hand, Gollum was never good willed and so, his fate is determined in the opposite way, logically in death because he made this choice from the beginning when he stole the ring and betrayed Frodo. He has become a representative of Evil and dies exactly when the ring is destroyed and in the same way, as if it symbolizes that only this could destroy the rotten mind of Gollum and once again shows his paralleled destiny with the ring since they dies in the same way. Gandalf explained Frodo that the role of Gollum was important and that Fate would determine the end of events.

“Gollum is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many – yours not least.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 69)

At the end, Sam realises that Frodo has become Frodo again, that is to say the Frodo from the Shire, before he was twisted by the dark powers of the ring. He seems to have recovered his unconscious structure.

“[...] his master had been saved; he was himself again, he was free.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 225)



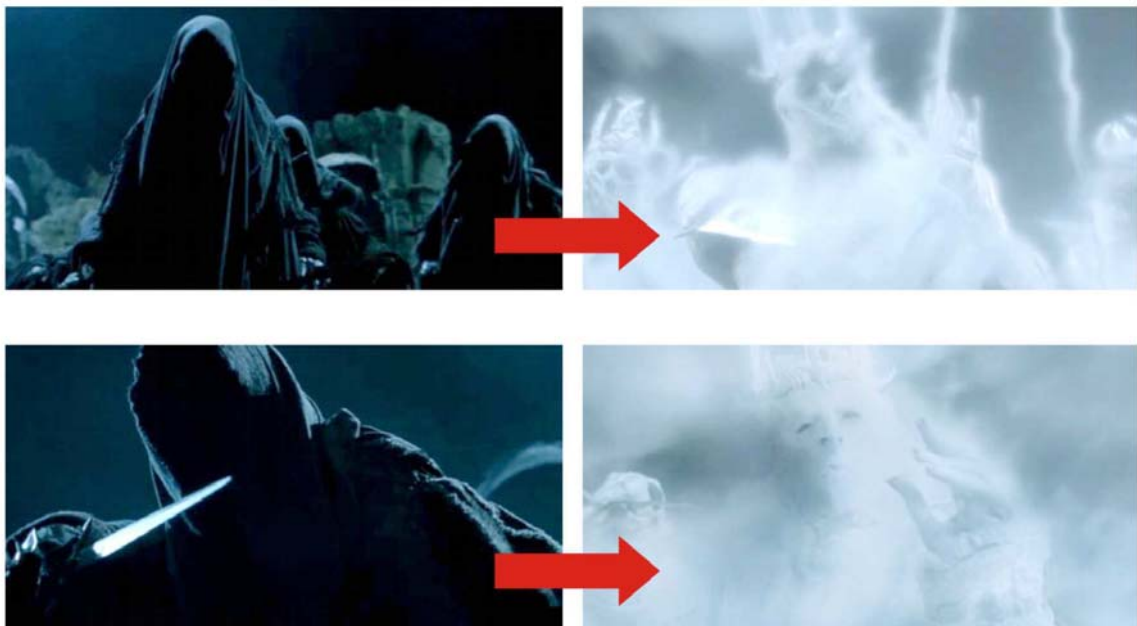


The story ends with the hero winning, but what is here different from the other myths, is the fact that it is not Frodo who accomplishes the task but Gollum. It is Evil who, in a way, brings itself to death. Frodo is not a hero as P.M. Spacks defines it, but a hero of courage.

E- THE RING IS THE INCARNATION OF THE PACT WITH THE DEVIL: POWER OF THE DEVIL OVER THE UNCONSCIOUS

E.1 THE RING IS A WINDOW TO HELL

As said in the previous part *d.3*, *the Lord of the Rings* shows an alliance with the Devil. When wearing the ring, Frodo is passing a pact with the Devil.



Frodo does not wear the Ring Frodo is wearing the Ring

23. Comparison between wearing and not wearing the Ring
Composition personally realized from captures of the movie by Peter Jackson

As it can be seen in the photographs shown above, the wearing of the ring completely alters reality as the character knows it. Frodo does not even think that by putting on the ring he will be able to escape, he just feels that he must do it. When he does not wear the ring, the black riders are only shapes of dark and black. His mind refuses to





see Evil. The good that emanates from Frodo acts as a barrier, a wall between the world of good and that of darkness. When he has the ring on his finger, he becomes invisible to his companions but visible to Sauron and by extension, to the black riders and the Nazgul.

“Not with hope of escape, or of doing anything, either good or bad: he simply felt that he must take the Ring and put it on his finger. He could not speak. He felt Sam looking at him, as if he knew that his master was in some great trouble, but he could not turn towards him. He shut his eyes and struggled for a while; but resistance became unbearable, and at last he slowly drew out the chain, and slipped the Ring on the forefinger of his left hand.

Immediately, though everything else remained as before, dim and dark, the shapes became terribly clear. He was able to see beneath their black wrappings.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 257)

Something is indeed very strange in what Tolkien explains when Frodo is wearing the ring. Notice the paradox between “*He shut his eyes*” and a few lines after, one can read “*He was able to see*”. So, Frodo sees though his eyes are closed. His unconscious is then clearly at work.

The sliding of the ring is a representation of Frodo selling his soul to Sauron, to the Devil. When he is wearing it, his thoughts are altered, and his physical appearance is no longer the same. He disappears from the conscious world to fall into the unconscious, the unknown, and the mysterious. The ring is like Faust’s contract with Mephisto. But here, the temptation is even worse. It is as if Frodo was wearing his own contract and the voice of the Devil was trying to make him sign each and every second.

The ring also appears very heavy to Frodo. This heaviness is that of the Id over his soul. The temptation becomes more and more persistent as the ring becomes heavier and heavier. Finally, the temptation is so heavy that it seems to come out of the ring under the appearance of Gollum, which literarily gives a voice to the ring. The heaviness can also be compared with the heaviness of the cross which Christ had to bear until his crucifixion. It is the same pattern. Frodo is already condemned. His ring is his cross and the temptation of the ring over his unconscious is the way to make his crucifixion happen the more quickly possible.

The fact that the ring appears heavy is important, as well as the size of the ring modifies itself according to its wearer. Indeed, the ring fits everybody. It shows that everybody can be tempted and twisted by the dark side and by Evil. The heaviness is a symbol of the degree of corruption in which the owner has fallen. On Mount Doom, when





Frodo can no longer walk after Gollum attacked him, Sam is able to wear carries him with surprising ease. This is the symbol of the strength of a “pure” soul. Sam has not been corrupted and so, he can fight more easily with the power of the ring. Once again, Sam is the incarnation of the Super-Ego since he does what is to be done by carrying Frodo to where the ring must be destroyed. He is never tempted to wear the ring and never tempted to use it. He does what “must be done”. It is the rule of goodness, the path of rightness, the Super-Ego.

The ring is a window to Hell since when the owner wears it, he can see the Eye, the physical incarnation of Sauron. Once again, the image of Sauron is an image of flames and darkness, the perfect illustration of Hell. Only one other tool can have this power in the story, it is the *palantir*. That is a magical sphere, like the one used by oracles, which is shared by Saruman and Gandalf. When Pippin looks into the Palantir in Book II, he is shocked and loses conscience. This shows that he was not able to resist the temptation of Evil. The passing between the world of light and the world of darkness is recurrent in the story. The ring and the palantir are tools which aim is to demonstrate that everyone can be tempted and can be caught into Evil’s trap.

Like Plato shows in the myth of the cave, the man who has not gone into the “real world” only shows shadows of the truth and thinks these shadows *are* the truth. The prisoners of the cave thought the shadows of the animals were actually the animals themselves. Here, it is the same. The Nazgul and the black riders are just dark shadows. Their face cannot be seen unless the ring is put on and the pact with the Devil is accomplished.

The passing to another world is common and very often used in stories to show the temptation and the conflict within the unconscious. In the movie *Matrix*, it is exactly the same. According to Morpheus, direct and deliberate allusion to the Greek myth, who had the ability to take any human form and appear in dreams, the world in which Neo, the main character, lives is a construction of his unconscious. In *Matrix*, the passing to another world is accomplished through computers and recent technologies; in the Lord of the Rings, it is accomplished with the Ring. All these images show the passing not between different worlds, but between different manifestations of our own unconscious.

The question which could be asked is the following. Is Frodo awake or conscious when he is wearing the ring? Is it not simply a fantasy which his unconscious is building?





Many scientists have shown that when someone is dreaming, his unconscious can react with his surrounding world. Indeed, sleepwalkers can walk and react with the outside world while they are sleeping. Is it not just the same which happens to Frodo, or is there really another world? The same happens in the *Wizard of Oz*. The passing to new worlds and the coming back to the first is a great fantasy of the human mind. Tolkien uses it to show the passage between reason and temptation.

E.2 THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP AGAINST THE SOLITARY EVIL FORCES. WHEN THE MIND CREATES UNCONSCIOUS BOUNDS BETWEEN PEOPLE, IT GIVES THEM AN EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH.

Unconsciously, Tolkien shows throughout the story that only a solid friendship can defeat and win against evil. The fellowship *is* the incarnation of friendship. Even if the fellowship is broken by an external force in the first book, the bond they have made remains stronger than ever.

Tolkien really believed in friendship and created clubs where he talked literature with his friends and even during the First World War, when they could not see them anymore; they still continued corresponding by letter. Tolkien was greatly moved and affected when some of his friends perished under the fire. But the idea of a fellowship of friends continued to live in his mind and this thought is transcribed in the story, consciously or not.



24. Sam is carrying Frodo to Mount Doom
Image taken from the movie

It is friendship which gives Sam the strength to carry Frodo to the gate of Mount Doom where another “myth of the cave” takes place. This time, Frodo is not alone; the voice of Sam is present and shows Frodo the right path to follow.

Friendship is something which conscience cannot control. It is part of our most internal and primitive feelings. One cannot choose his friends; this process is done unconsciously. So, what Tolkien tells the reader is that sometimes, the unconscious does things for a reason, and true friendship is one unconscious force which can turn out to be the strongest of all forces. The same spirit of unity is present when the army of Sauron





attack “Helm’s Deep”. The population of villagers is united against the wild Orcs. Tolkien loved this idea of friendship and gives examples of it throughout the story.

Against that, the minions of Sauron and Saruman never show any sign of friendship of anything which could be assimilated to that; not even a team spirit. They follow the orders and never listen to their heart, if they have one. The solitary minions appear quite powerless when faced with a fellowship of friendship.

E.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE RING TRIGGERS A NEED FOR REDEMPTION OR SALVATION: EXPIATE AND CLEAR THE UNCONSCIOUS

In *the Lord of the Rings*, redemption is a way to fight against Evil. It follows a clear Christian pattern which explains that redemption is the way to access to Paradise. Mercy is present throughout the novel and affects most of the characters. Frodo is merciful with Gollum even if Gollum betrays him. Frodo knows that he should not blame him for the influence the ring has on Gollum since he himself feels the same and is affected by the same “pathology”. Frodo thinks that at the end of the journey, when the ring is destroyed, Gollum will turn back into Smeagol. In a way, he is trying to save his soul. He acts as a god or an angel who would have the power to offer redemption to a sinful soul. The end of the story shows that he was pretentious to think that and only greater powers can allow redemption. Never can a simple “Halfling” give redemption to someone else.

The rule is not applied to Aragorn who is able to give redemption to the army of the dead which he went to search in the dreadful cave of Dimholt. He has, in the name of the King of Gondor, the *right* to do so since traditionally the King is someone chosen by God. Still, the need for redemption is present through these people who were cursed by Isildur for having betrayed him. Mercy is one of the important rules of Christians. Tolkien applies it to the world of Middle Earth. A sinful soul cannot go to paradise before having paid for its sins.

The expiation of the sins is a way to come back to the originate soul, the “pure” soul, the “Tabula Rasa” which John Locke holds for being the state in which a baby born comes to life in our world. Aragorn is an example of that since he wears on his shoulders the weight of the ultimate betrayal of Isildur to the world of Middle Earth when not destroying the ring and keeping it for his own and personal use. This vision of expiation by





leaving its identity and the world of society is also a recurrent aspect which comes back in many stories and even nowadays.



25. Comparison between before and after the return of Simba to his lands

Composition personally realized from captures of the movie by the Disney© studios

The example of *The Lion King* by the Disney studios is clear. Simba feels guilty for the death of his father and decides to leave his lands and flee his society to live under a false identity. But this is not the way to expiate. He can only expiate his sin of having left his relatives and left his father's murderer free when he faces the truth and fights his father's murderer

and kills him. Then he is free and everything becomes right again. In the example given through the three photographs, it can be seen that before the King comes back, fire and darkness represent evilness, and when the sin is expiated, everything becomes colourful again. Simba has lived in sin, and when he expiates his soul is cleared as well as his lands.

So, this pattern is even present in children's movies, which shows the importance it has in the Anglo-Saxon world quite influenced by religion. Freud knew about that important part of stories which sometimes allow the reader himself to accomplish a certain kind of redemption.

“La véritable jouissance de l'œuvre littéraire provient de ce que notre âme se trouve par elle soulagée de certaines tensions. Peut-être même le fait que le créateur nous met à même de jouir désormais de nos propres fantasmes sans scrupules ni honte contribue t-il pour une large partie à ce résultat.” (Freud, *Le Seigneur des Anneaux ou la tentation du mal*, quotation of Freud from Isabelle Smadja p: 49)

E.4 THE SALVATION OF THE READER HIMSELF: THE POWER OF THE WORD REACHES THE UNCONSCIOUS





More than just redemption, such stories as *the Lord of the Rings* allow the reader to feel guilty no more about certain aspects of their desires. Indeed, the story presents what could first be a magnification of war and battles. Even the heroes seem to take some pleasure at fighting: Gimli and Legolas play a game which aim is to kill the more Orcs possible. But instead of being that kind of story, like a gothic style which would end in blood and despair, *the Lord of the Rings* shows that by battle, good emanates and that the heroes are avoiding much more terrible battles by defeating Sauron. So, the drives one can feel about violence are expiated and even encouraged since it represents here a solution to bring good.

Moreover, this story is a contradiction to the story of *Genesis* in which Man is seen as being just deceived by a disguised evil who took a good appearance. In *Genesis*, Man is seen as being able to learn how to recognize Evil and finally being able not to fall in his trap again. But in *the Lord of the Rings*, it shows that Man was not good at the origin but seduced by evil in its right form, not disguised. Indeed, everybody is seduced by the power of the ring even if they know its effects. The ring is not disguised and the characters are seduced by this power and this makes the ring fascinating. It shows that History can only be made of this pattern coming over and over again. The only solution to fight evil is then to destroy everything which has been made by human hands, that is to say everything that was corrupted by power and return to natural forces and in general to mother nature.

By inducing that, Tolkien reassures the reader explaining him that his drives for destruction are almost “natural” since they are part of the human kind. The main characters destroy only to protect what they have and above all, to avoid a more important conflict. So, to put it in a nutshell, Tolkien’s discourse is the following: if you think destroying something can bring good, then do it until it does not corrupt you and turn you evil.

This discourse is of course ambivalent and brings the reader to a state where he has to make his own opinion about the fact of destroying and even if Tolkien does not say anything clearly, everything is underlying. That is exactly the theory Freud explains in the previous quotation. *The Lord of the Rings* is a reassuring story for the reader’s mind since it stands on the verge of what could be worse but it never happens. Indeed, from the beginning of the story, every reader knows that the fellowship will succeed and that the ring will be destroyed, but Tolkien plays with the reader’s nerves by always pretending the worse is going to happen and finally make it avoid by some trick found by one of the





characters or simply by fate as it is the case for the final scene of Gollum, where it is him who destroys his *precious*.

The story becomes in a sense a therapy for the reader, half way between self confession and psychoanalysis. After reading *the Lord of the Rings*, the reader does not feel the same about his fantasies and his desires concerning the fascination for dark powers. Just as in the *Star Wars* movies, redemption always comes to save the hero: Darth Vader becomes Anakin again, after having served the Devil appearing under the image of senator Palpatine, the “Emperor”.



PART THREE

POWER OF DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

THE MIND IS DECONSTRUCTED AND THE LANDS ARE DESTROYED BY THE EVIL FORCES. WHAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE THAT *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* IS A STORY WHERE THE HERO IS A HERO BECAUSE HE MUST DESTROY SOMETHING? DOES IT BECOME AN INITIATION TRAVEL?

In this third and last part of our incursion into Tolkien's world, we will examine how a story can make a hero from a character whose destiny is to destroy! Indeed, Frodo has to destroy a creation of Evil, but still, it remains destruction. Moreover, the Evil forces of Saruman and Sauron destroy nature. What does it mean and what is Tolkien's message concerning the power of destruction? Finally, it appears that all the characters have changed at the end of their quest. How the Lord of the Rings becomes an initiation travel?

“The good possess the Boy Scout virtues; the evil are treacherous and cowardly. The good love nature, the evil destroy it. The good eats good food, the evil eat bad food. If this were all, one might agree with Wilson in his condemnation of Tolkien's trilogy for impotence of imagination, superficiality of conception. But simplicity of this ethical system is redeemed by the philosophic complexity of its context; simplicity does not equal shallowness.” (Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Power and Meaning in the Lord of the Rings*, p: 85)

3. NOTHING IS THE SAME AFTER DESTRUCTION HAS TAKEN PLACE

A- TOLKIEN'S VISION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION: NATURE V.S CULTURE

A.1 WHAT DOES NATURE REPRESENT?

In literature, and even more widely, Nature represents God's creation. The story of creation of the world relates the creation of a natural world without any form of industrialisation. This vision is considered “pure” and originate. The vision often





represented of Paradise is a “garden” full of trees, flowers and water. Do we not say “garden of Eden”? In the Mesopotamian myth Gilgamesh, when the hero comes out of his test through the depths of the myth of the cave, he enters a magnificent garden which represents eternal life, a god’s creation.

“Eleven leagues he travelled and came out before the sun(rise).
Twelve leagues he travelled and it grew brilliant.
... It bears lapis lazuli as foliage,
bearing fruit, a delight to look upon.”
(*Gilgamesh*, Tablet X)

It is clear that nature and light are positive elements shown as the award given to the traveller after his suffering inside the dark tunnel. Sweetness of nature appears reassuring and calm. Everything lives in harmony, in symbiosis. Indeed, one could not condemn nature for not being structured since it appears in the Bible as the work of the “Creator”.

When the United States were created and the lands exploited, many people thought of keeping lands “untouched” to keep a sign and a testimony of the fact that God had given them the “land of faith” to build a divine civilisation upon. This is one of the roots of the “Manifest Destiny” as well as the motivation for the creation of some natural reserves and



26. House of Bilbo Baggins
Image taken from the movie

national parks such as Yellowstone. Today, these beliefs have not faded and continue being the monuments of nature. In this way, a gigantic tree is in a sense as significant as an ancient cathedral in the *Old Continent*.

With this short explanation, one can quickly understand the importance of nature for the

Christian world. Since Tolkien was a fervent Christian, the link becomes obvious. The Lord of the Rings could even wear an ecological sense of claims. In the story, the “good” hobbits live in a land which respects nature more than anybody else. They live in harmony





with nature and their homes are hardly visible at first sight. They are mingled with the green and blue landscape.

This vision is what Tolkien loved and in which he spent the nicest part of his life when he was a child as he said. It is the shock of the death of his mother and the bringing to the city which caused a deep trauma in young Tolkien's heart. His most secret wish was to be able to give nature the right to defend itself physically against the mistreatments administered by the hand of mankind. One of his first sources was born in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* where he read Macbeth talking:

“That will never be
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! Good!”
(William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act4, Scene 1)

When reading those lines, Tolkien thought nature *must* be able to do what seems impossible to Macbeth. That is why he invented the Ents. We shall examine this aspect further in our study.

A.2 THE WARM FORCE OF NATURE V.S THE DOMINATION OF COLD INDUSTRIAL METAL: GANDALF AND SARUMAN

Something is striking about Tolkien's representation of nature and industry. After having described the Shire as the perfect land, the difference between the first and second vision of Isengard is very interesting. Before the dark powers of industrial corruption and destruction have taken effect, the tower of Isengard is surrounded by trees and stands in harmony with the landscape. Saruman is first seen as Saruman the “wise” by Gandalf before the treason. Why would Saruman be wise? Is it because he is connected with the power of industrialisation? In the 1930's, when Tolkien was writing the story, industrialism was said to be the better way of developing a country. Could that be called “wise”? Since many “developed” countries did not hesitate to conquer to establish their way of life as being the “good one”, the “wisest”, perhaps Tolkien is giving here an unconscious anti-colonialist message. After Saruman has given in to the powers of





destruction of Sauron, Isengard becomes the symbol of decadence and destruction of nature. It shows that there can be no industry without destroying the most sacred of jewels: nature.

The destruction of nature is a famous and often-used schema to condemn industrial revolution.



27. Gandalf the grey and Saruman “the wise”
Image taken from the movie and personally modified

Nowadays, people use the image of the destruction of the Amazonian forest to illustrate mankind’s decadence. It is the same in *the Lord of the Rings*. Gandalf is friend with the Ents while Saruman destroys their forest. Even the closest details can bring the reader and the viewer, in case of the movies, to denote the great difference between the two visions embraced by the two wizards. Gandalf is very close to the Hobbits while Saruman is alone in his tower of Isengard. Their sorcerer’s sticks are even a symbol of their unconscious structure. Gandalf possesses a wooden stick while Saruman’s is made in dark steel.

This distinction is made to unconsciously represent the internal echo of their inner choices. That is to say that Saruman could not chose the right path after having chosen the path of steel and industry. After such a choice, he was doomed to go the wrong way while Gandalf respected nature from the beginning, and by respecting nature, he also respected God’s creation and so, he was saved.

Even their look is made to convey this structural essence. Saruman is pale and livid while Gandalf seems in good health. As we have seen earlier, the inner unconscious decisions can be seen physically. Gandalf is humble and does not share the need for industrially-made image of him through the choice of his stick. When Gandalf the grey becomes Gandalf the white, his stick is more refined but still made of white wood. This symbol is very important as a determining choice.

A.3 Is TolkiEN PRAISING A PHILOSOPHICAL “RETURN TO NATURE”? IS THERE A PARADOX WITH THE BIBLE AND THE STORY OF GENESIS?





“Ce passage de l'état de nature à l'état civil produit dans l'homme un changement très remarquable, en substituant dans sa conduite la justice à l'instinct, et donnant à ses actions la moralité qui leur manquait auparavant ”

(Rousseau, *Le contrat Social*)

Rousseau talks about nature V.S culture. His theory is that Man was not a man until he entered society since it is only when he entered society that he learned the “morality” of life. But were Adam and Eve part of a society? Were they immoral when they were in Eden? They actually became immoral when disobeying God and becoming mortals. The Bible shows that society was created from a sin. So, is it really a return to nature that Tolkien is defending, or simply a return to a civilized society? Actually, he is praising a return to a society which would respect nature and live with it, not destroy it.

He likes playing with the reader by mingling these conceptions. On the one hand, the hobbits live happily through nature, but still, they are a society whereas the orcs and other dark creatures are primitive and are not part of any society. Since Rousseau explained that nature is primitiveness and culture is society, which of the two is the most natural?

For Tolkien, nature is everything which is not industrialized. It is for him the sweetness of the grass and the calmness of the mountains. His nature is at the same time a regressive view of humanity and a looking into the future. Indeed, Tolkien's wishes are for a healthy earth in the future, hence the rejection of industrial forces which represent in his mind the negative and annihilating forces of the German armies during First World War.

Tolkien wants the reader to make up his mind alone and to find the way through the many allusions and symbols. His conception of nature is well praised in the story and no one could go against him, the images being so much influenced by the author. This is where he is skilful, he does not say what to think, but makes the reader come to the conclusion alone.

b- THE POWER OF NATURE: WHEN THE NATURAL ELEMENTS UNLEASH THEIR POWERS

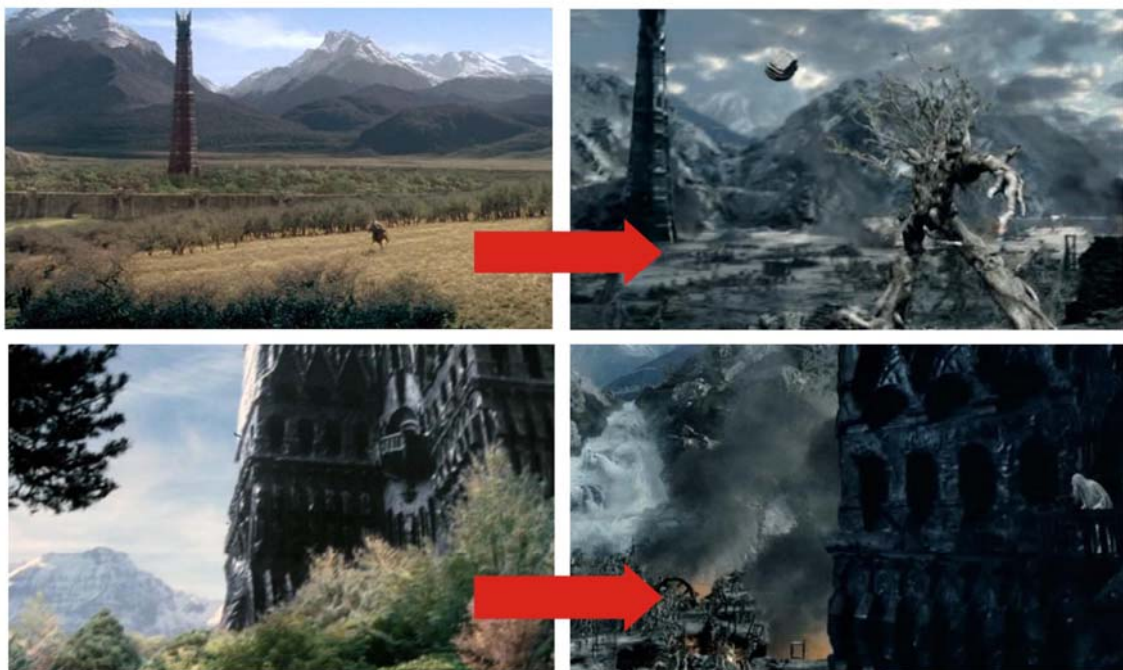
b.1 NATURE IS DESTROYED. DOES IT REPRESENT THE GRADUAL DESTRUCTION OF THE SOUL?





As we have just seen, nature is linked with our most primitive instincts. It represents the origin of mankind. This link establishes a direct connexion with the story of Genesis and God Himself. That is to say, when people praise nature, at the same time, they praise their origins, from the Garden of Eden. But when they decide to destroy this symbol, does it make them pagans?

The symbol of destruction is very present through the landscapes which do not stay the same during the story. The destruction is complete since it erases each and every form of life from the landscapes the power of Sauron touches. Isengard is a very good example of this categorical change.



28. The gradual destruction of Isengard

Composition personally realized from captures of the movie by Peter Jackson

On the illustrations above, one can see on the left the state in which Isengard is at the beginning of the story. The power of Sauron has not spread yet on the lands of Middle Earth. Nature is surrounding the tower which even becomes like the trunk of an old tree. It is not shocking and is perfectly well integrated in the landscape. Still, the distinction between wood, leaves and iron is made.

On the right, Isengard is completely destroyed and nature is no more present around the tower now that Sauron and Saruman have spread their powers. Isengard appears as a corpse. The sky is dark as the mind of those who are at the origin of this change. The





landscape takes on the degradation of Saruman and Sauron's mind. Now that their powers are spread, their real face is shown to the world which seems to be rotten by a mysterious and ominous power of destruction.

b.2 TOLKIEN GIVES NATURE THE RIGHT TO STRIKE BACK

The Lord of the Rings is one of the more ecological novels even if it is not striking at first sight. Indeed, it is one of the rare novels which gives nature a real power and a physical power against the oppression. Tolkien even gives nature a voice through the Ents. The Ents are the representation of what Tolkien loved about nature: calmness, strength, wisdom and longevity. They enter late I war since they are not a bellicose race. It is only when they feel threatened by the treason of Saruman that they decide to enter the war. Treebeard talks for nature and threatens Isengard.

“My business is with Isengard tonight, with rock and stone.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book II, p 206)

Treebeard is the most important Ent-character in the story. He represents the forest and the power nature can have when it becomes angry and revengeful. They do not fight to kill but to avenge the loss of the trees which were near Isengard and whom Saruman used and destroyed for his own purpose. This situation is clearly a reversal in the human pattern. Nature gives men what they deserve for having destroyed the creation of Ilúvatar which was the result of thousands of years of growing in peace and calm. Tolkien wants to show the strength that lies in nature and wants to show what should be possible for nature to do when men decide to destroy it coldly.

“It takes a very heavy axe-stroke to wound them seriously. They don't like axes. But there would have to be a great many axe-men to one Ent: a man that hacks once at an Ent never a chance of a second blow. A punch from an Ent-fist crumples up iron like tin.[...] An angry Ent is terrifying. Their fingers, and their toes, just freeze on to rocks; and they tear it up like bread-crust. It was like watching the work of a great tree-roots in a hundred years, all packed into a few moments.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book II, p 207)

This quotation is very important. It shows the rage in which nature can be dragged if men go too far and if they do not respect it. The strength of nature is almost linked with a





divine power since it overpasses men and orcs. The power of nature exists but can only be seen through the centuries as Tolkien explains in the last sentence of the quotation. What makes this power “terrifying” here, is the fact that the strength which normally spreads over centuries is condensed into a few minutes or hours which gives the impression of a great power of destruction whereas it is actually destroying the virus which took on the green valleys and forests, destroy it to build again.

Moreover, even if Isengard and the “white hand” of Saruman destroyed nature, Tolkien explains that whatever men can invent to destroy nature, it will always find the path to creation and recovering. Nature is immortal whereas men are only a brief passage on earth. Between the ephemeral and the immortal, there can be no arguing about who will win.

b.3 NATURE SEEMS TO BE ON THE HEROES' SIDE

Another element which shows the importance of the power of nature and its clear positive allusions is an episode which gives water an extraordinary role. When Frodo is about to go to Rivendell, he is pursued by the Dark Riders. At that moment, nature seems to come and help Frodo in the most spectacular way.

“At that moment there came a roaring and a rushing: a noise of loud waters rolling many stones. Dimly Frodo saw the river below him rise, and down along its course there came a plumed cavalry of waves. White flames seemed to Frodo to flicker on their crests and he half fancied that he saw amid the water white horses with frothing manes. The three Riders that were still in the midst of the Ford were overwhelmed: they disappeared, buried suddenly under angry foam. Those that were behind drew back in dismay.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 282)

This moment of spectacular strength shows that nature is capable of the most terrible powers. It also shows that nature is an intelligent power, since it decides what to destroy, and very precisely without hurting anyone else. It is not mere power, but like the hand of a god who would come and help the hero by giving him a supernatural help. In the movie by Peter Jackson, this scene was greatly realised but a bit modified since it is Arwen, Elrond's daughter who is the Rider of the white horse Asfaloth on which Frodo escapes. It allows showing an important symbol which could be talked about: the





importance of women in *the Lord of the Rings*. This scene is even more explicative in the movie since women have always been linked to the water element for its symbol of fertility. Arwen is able to command the waters to come and help her by coming and blowing the Black Riders away.



29. The power of water triggered by Arwen in the movie
Composition personally realized from captures of the movie by Peter Jackson

It appears very clear in the movie adaptation that the image of water is mingled with that of horses. Horses represent vigour and strength whereas water represents a more calm and threatening force. Nature seems to get suddenly really angry.

On the right side of the second image, it can be noticed that water does not affect Arwen. It shows intelligence and not pure and mere power of destruction. All these symbols tend to trigger what Tolkien wanted us to feel: nature is alive and thinks, it is not simply a passive force, but a terrible strength that can wake up at any moment and blow us



away, as little things as we are faced with this nature gone “angry” as Tolkien mentions several times.



30. Good V.S Evil – the fields of Pelennor

Composition personally realized from captures of the movie by Peter Jackson

Through this composition realised from the movie by Peter Jackson, it appears clear that Nature is on the good’s side. Evil is dark and cold whereas the armies of Théoden seem have the support of gods through this striking image of a Manichean nature.

c- DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION: A SINGLE ENTITY AS THE YING AND THE YANG?

c.1 NARSIL BECOMES ANDURIL, THE SYMBOL OF CONSTRUCTION / DECONSTRUCTION: THE RETURN OF THE KING.

Narsil is the sword that Isildur used to defeat Sauron and cut his hand to take the ring of power. It represents the first success of men over the dark lord. The destruction of the sword has become the symbol of men’s strength against the armies of Mordor since it allowed men to gain their freedom, for a time. But at the same time, the sword being destroyed coincides with the time when Isildur is killed and betrayed by the ring in the river. The heir of the king is no longer there to assure a descendant, and so, the steward of Gondor takes power. The breaking of the sword is then the symbol of the breaking of the dynasty.





At the council of Elrond, Aragorn's identity is revealed to Boromir and the fellowship in the same time as the sword of Narsil is cast.

“And here in the house of Elrond more shall be made clear to you,” said Aragorn, standing up. He cast his sword upon the table that stood before Elrond, and the blade was in two pieces. “Here is the Sword that was Broken!” he said.

“And who are you and what have you to do with Minas Tirith?” asked Boromir”, looking in wonder at the lean face of the Ranger and his weather-stained cloak.

“He is Aragorn son of Arathorn,” said Elrond; “and he is descended through many fathers from Isildur Elendil's son of Minas Ithil. He is the chief of the Dúnedain in the North, and few are now left of that folk.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 323)

Aragorn becomes the symbol of the King returned. He would not have that power without the bringing of the Sword – to which Tolkien gave a capital letter – and the royal dispositions to use it. That is what happens. The Sword of Narsil is re-forged by the Elves and given back to Aragorn under the name of Anduril. This remaking of the Sword is the symbol of the reconstruction of the Kingdom of Gondor and its belonging to the king and not to Denethor, the steward. More than just a sword, it is *the* Sword that Sauron fears.

“Sauron has not forgotten Isildur and the sword of Elendil. Now in the very hour of his great designs the heir of Isildur and the Sword are revealed; for I showed the blade re-forged to him.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 50)

Aragorn does not become King of Gondor at the end of the novel when he can at least wear the crown, but when the Sword is re-forged and given back to him. This represents the real power of the King. This is why the third tome of the novel is called after that important fact: “*The Return of the King*”, the sword being its symbol. One of the first deeds Aragorn does which really shows his power has been allowed as the King of Gondor is the giving of redemption of the Army of the Dead.

“Hear now the words of the Heir of Isildur! Your oath is fulfilled. Go back and trouble not the valleys ever again! Depart and be at rest!” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 175)

Aragorn is able to give redemption to the souls of those on whom Isildur had cast a spell on for having betrayed him. This power is a symbol of Aragorn as the King of





Gondor and not simply a very good and skilled fighter. While the kingdom of Gondor is being destroyed by the armies of Sauron, in secret, an internal reconstruction takes place which will affect the following events.

c.2 DESTROYING THE RING: SYMBOL OF THE DESTRUCTION OF A MATERIALISTIC WORLD

The ring symbolizes attachment and addiction to an object. Today, people would call that “materialism”. The materialistic society in which we live comes directly from the industrial revolution which created many new items for people to buy and use. This kind of society appears for some people as corrupted by the need for new objects and this becomes the addiction to the materialistic world.

Materialism/ noun: The belief that money, possessions and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values.
(*OXFORD Advanced Learners Dictionary*: 789)

Tolkien portrays in his story characters that are addicted to the ring and whose power depends on material objects such as the Sword of Anduril for Aragorn. The destruction of the ring itself is a destruction of an object. Indeed, it is the destruction of an object which can trigger the end of the war and not the killing of one man. Generally, heroes have to destroy people, kill a villain or monsters to win. But here, the villain is included inside the ring. Sauron is the ring as well as Gollum and the power of the orcs and Saruman. Everything is related to the ring. If Frodo manages to destroy the ring, then the war will be over.

This idea of destroying an object which would be the source of the war is relatively new when Tolkien was writing his story in the 1930's. There are not many stories which aim is to destroy an object. So, with this way of seeing society and the destruction of the ring, the reader is clearly influenced.

The ring is the perfect representation of a historical social object. Tolkien did not choose a ring by chance. He gave it a great weight which is meant to represent the new immoral materialistic and industrial society. Indeed, History became history only when mankind learned how to write. The word written became the symbol of the passage from pre-history to History. Tolkien created the ring with written words on it. The ring is the





symbol of addiction, of commitment, of a bond. The clearest example nowadays is the wedding ring. It symbolizes eternal attachment to someone else. The ring of power has not been chosen by chance. Moreover, the ring is made of iron, forged iron. The forged iron is the most important symbol of industrialisation. So, in a single little object, Tolkien manages to convey a lot more than it seems. The Ring becomes the symbol of a decadent society since the ring was forged in Hell, through Mount Doom of Mordor.

The one ring is associated with the other rings in a single “ring-symbolism”. All the people who are dependent on the power of the One Ring have a ring of their own: the Elves, the Men and the Dwarfs. This shows a society of the Ring based on the material aspect of its power. Tolkien demonstrates that even if it can deceive for a time, a society that is built on materialism is “Doomed” (Mount Doom).

So, for Tolkien, the destruction of the Ring is more than just the destruction of the ring of Sauron. It shows the unconscious attraction of people for material objects but which finally, little by little, come to deceive the very mind of those who agreed to be bent to such a power.

The destruction of the ring that all readers had been waiting for is very short in the book. Even the words “destruction” or “destroyed” are not written. Everything seems to happen quite calmly.

“Precious, precious, precious!” Gollum cried. “My Precious! O My Precious!” And with that, even as his eyes were lifted up to gloat on his prize, he stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell. Out of the depths came his last wail *Precious* and he was gone. (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 266)

What is very interesting is the way Tolkien manages to narrate the destruction of the ring. He never uses the word “Ring” but instead, as if they had definitely become one, he talks about Gollum. Gollum and the Ring are now a single entity. When coming back to Gollum, the Ring takes on its ultimate physical envelope before dying. The sentence that all readers were awaiting would have been “and the ring was destroyed”. But instead, it is “he was gone”, as if the ring had become someone. Only Frodo talks about a destruction of the ring a few lines later, even if the sentence is not affirmative.

“But for him Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring.” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 268)





The distinction between the ring and Gollum is impossible since they disappear in the same time. Gollum is holding the ring. The reader's mind is blurred and it cannot be told whereas Tolkien talked about Gollum or about the Ring.

When the ring is destroyed, it seems to Frodo that it is the end of the world. The symbol of society is no longer there, dark deeds have been defeated, and the materialistic world has been vanquished. So now, what to do?

“For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over. I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 266)

The destruction of the ring is symbolically synonymous to end of the world. Indeed, the destruction of the ring is the end of the world in which Frodo and all the other characters had lived in since the power of Sauron was there a very long time ago. But when Frodo thinks the end has come, Tolkien shows on the contrary the creation of a better world freed of the influence of the material, freed of the ring(s).

c.3 THE RING GONE: THE END OF ALL THINGS?

It would have been a dramatic ending if the world had to collapse after the ring was destroyed. Frodo and Sam are at the end only puppets of their destiny. They do not control anything anymore. It is fate which destroys the ring and it is not them who find their way out of Mordor. They were helped by Gandalf and Gwaihir the Windlord, a divine Eagle sent by Gandalf.



31. Frodo and Sam are rescued by Gwaihir the Windlord
Image taken from the movie by Peter Jackson

Once again, the distinction between the Evil and the Good is clearly made. Heaven seems to come and help Frodo and Sam. It is redemption. Now that they have fulfilled their destiny, they receive a help directly





from the gods through the image of Gandalf and the eagles.

The scene that follows the destruction of Mordor is the awakening of Frodo and Sam in the land of Ithilien. The contrast between the bloody battles and the fury of Mount Doom create a huge gap with this scene. The destruction of Mordor triggered the re-creation of the world as people used to know it. The world which Tolkien portrays is a world based on the Ying and the Yang, that is to say that good and bad are part of the world, and nothing is what it seems to be. With the destruction of Mordor comes the creation of the new kingdom of Gondor and with the destruction of the ring comes the re-creation of Frodo's mind. Creation and destruction cannot be separated. They are part of one single entity of life and evolution.

d- RECONSTRUCTION: *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* IS AN INITIATION TRAVEL

d.1 WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INITIATION TRAVEL?

First of all, the initiation travel is meant to change the hero. It transforms the hero from a simple and ordinary "somebody" into the hero. Generally speaking, there are three steps in the evolution of the initiation path. First, there are the numerous tasks to overcome. Then, in a second time, the hero has to undergo a symbolic death. Finally, he goes through a rebirth which makes him a real hero.

The story presents many aspects of this initiation travel through almost all the characters but to follow a more accurate study, we will focus on the destiny of Aragorn and Frodo which embodies perfectly how the initiation travel works.

d.2 ARAGORN, FROM STRIDER TO ARAGORN, KING OF GONDOR

The initiation travel often has the task to show the transformation from adolescence to real life. But it also shows how to get rid of all one's personal limits. It is the case of Aragorn. When the reader meets him in the first book, he is only described nearly as a beggar, a fugitive. He does not even have a name. Tolkien calls him "Strider". Frodo meets him for the first time at "Prancing Pony".





“Suddenly Frodo noticed that a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall, was also listening intently to the hobbit-talk. He had a tall tankard in front of him, and was smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 206)

No one could ever imagine at that part of the story that this character so strangely described would become a king and in a way save the world of Middle Earth. As we said, he has no name, and is known under a pseudonym:

“What his right name is I’ve never hear: but he’s known round here as Strider.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 207)

It is important to notice that the first encounter of the reader with Aragorn is very symbolic. Tolkien describes him as being in the shadows. It clearly shows his state of mind at that moment. He has disappeared from the consciences. The shade represents his inner blurred conception of his life. He does not recognize and accept him as the King of Gondor. But his destiny seems to be stronger than his will to remain unknown. When Frodo is exposed with the ring, and comes to hide by Strider’s side, Aragorn becomes forever part of the journey. He explains Frodo that Gandalf advised him to look after Frodo and Sam in a letter he gives to Frodo. Aragorn clearly knows his destiny when he asks Frodo to come with them on their journey.

“[...] you must take me along with you, until I wish to leave you.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 215)

He is not yet named Aragorn but Gandalf will explain it to Frodo and reassure him.

“You may meet a friend of mine on the Road: a Man, lean, dark, tall, by some called Strider. He knows our business and will help you. [...] Make sure that it is the real Strider. There are many strange men on the road. His true name is Aragorn.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book I, p 224)

The journey of Aragorn begins precisely here. It seems that Gandalf chose him and so, the journey of initiation is not wanted but underwent by Aragorn. It appears as a task given by Gandalf. Since Gandalf represents the gods through the image of the Valar,





Aragorn is given a task by the gods. To come out victorious of this travel, he will have to show incredible strength, endurance and intelligence.

As we have seen in the first part, many aspects come to build this initiation travel. His mind, his unconscious will be strongly tested. The symbols of his return will come little by little to finally get a physical appearance under the iron of the Sword of Anduril. He will be tempted by the ring but will always refuse to carry it. The travel is for Aragorn a way to justify his coming back to the throne. He must give a proof of his strength and his mental force. He must show his value.

“Les Mythes historiques ont pris naissance à l’apparition de la sédentarité et de l’organisation sociale. Ils servent de **justification au pouvoir en place**, le légitiment, en quelque sorte. Le voyage initiatique fait partie de ces derniers. Le Myste est, en effet, appelé à devenir un héros, un être hors du commun et donc **apte à régner**.”(Marie Bataille, *introduction au voyage initiatique*: <http://ecritsvains.com> – *bold letters mine*)

As Marie Bataille explains, the initiation travel is meant to *justify* a power by turning a mere somebody into a hero. Some steps are inevitable as we mentioned earlier. Each can be applied to Aragorn’s fate in *the Lord of the Rings*. The numerous tasks to overcome are quite obvious and it is needless to come back to explain them. The symbolic death is quite obvious also. Indeed, the path of Dimholt is for Aragorn the symbol of death since he goes visiting the cave of the dead armies. He speaks with the dead. Just as Orpheus who had to go down in Hell to take back his lover. Aragorn has to go down in Hell to take *his* army back.

Finally, the initiation travel is completed when he is given the Sword of Anduril and comes back to the throne as the King of Gondor. It would have been very long but finally, Aragorn has become the one he really was but who could not come to the surface unless by going into a perilous initiation travel.

d.3 FRODO GOES IN “HAVEN”

What stroke every reader is the ending of the story. Frodo leaves the Shire he so much wanted to go back to. The reason for that is simple and very clear. His initiation travel brought to him many internal questions. We have seen that his unconscious had been strongly mistreated. The carrying of the ring represents the tasks to overcome. Indeed,





Frodo had to fight against his own unconscious which is not an easy task. His symbolic death is seen through the episode of Shelob and his rebirth is at the end, when he becomes Frodo again, as Sam sees it on Mount Doom after the ring has been destroyed. But for Frodo, the initiation seems not to have been fully completed. He goes with Gandalf to the immortal lands where no man was ever accepted since the fall of Númenor.

When he finds himself back in the Shire, he feels that something is missing. He has become someone else than the Frodo of the Shire he once was. Now that he has travelled through the lands and through his own mind, and even if the Shire stood exactly the same, his perception of it has changed forever. He will never be able to appreciate the green valleys of the Shire again. He needs something else. The last page of the Lord of the Rings shows the leaving of Frodo at Grey Havens. Even the name of the place is a hint for the reader. There is a pun which Tolkien makes to unconsciously make the reader understand



32. The Leaving of Frodo
Image taken from the movie

Frodo's motivations. On the one hand, "Haven" means "refuge", but its pronunciation exactly corresponds to the one of Heaven. So, is Frodo's refuge in Heaven? That is what Tolkien wants us to understand. Now that he has gone through too many tasks for a young soul – he has gone through Hell and come back – he must find redemption and goes naturally to Heaven as a reward for

his courage and his endurance for resisting the Evil powers.

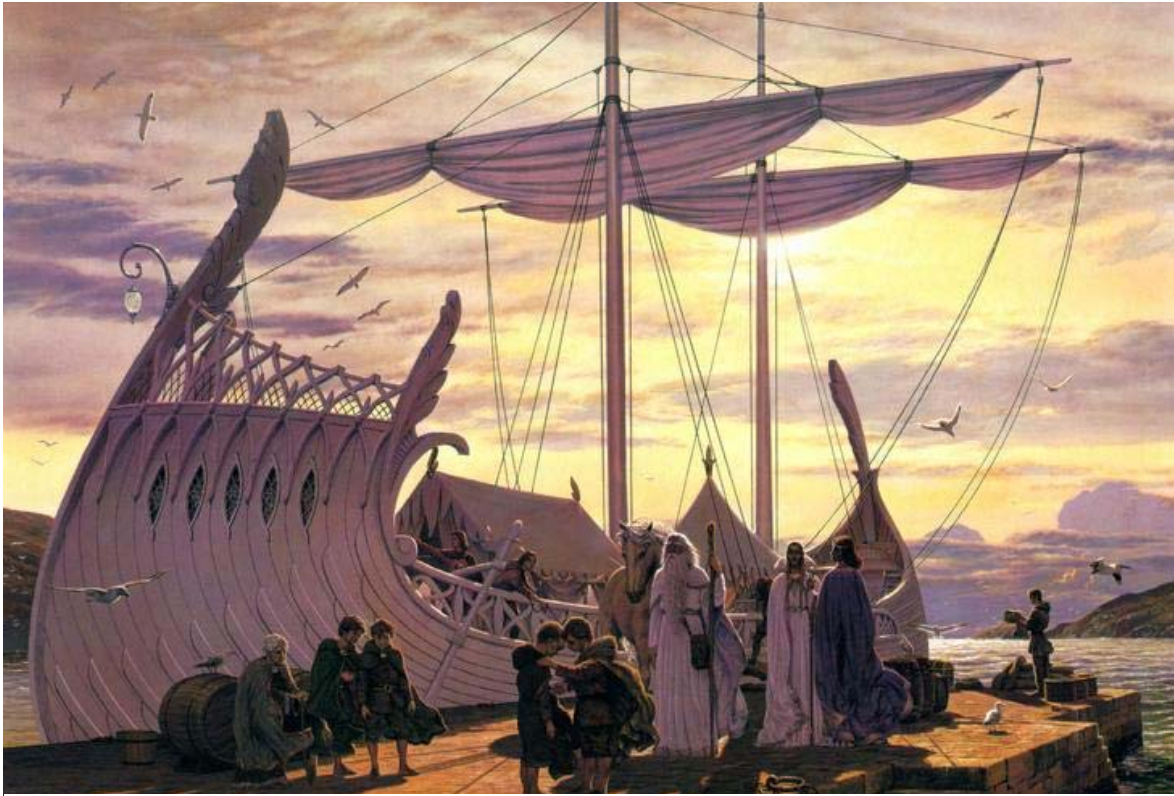
In a sense, Frodo's leaving is a way to symbolize his physical death. He leaves his friends never to see them again and when he leaves, on the boat, he sees a light which strangely makes the reader think about "that" light people are supposed to see when they are dying.

"[...] and the light of the glass of Galadriel that Frodo bore glimmered and was lost." (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 377)





At that moment, Frodo is dying for his friends and even for the reader who sees for the last times the name “Frodo” printed on the page. His initiation travel drove him in Heaven which is for Tolkien the best way to end after having suffered so much.



33. Grey Havens

Painting taken from <http://img-fan.theonering.net>

Frodo’s initiation path is not completely over. He has to go to the immortal divine lands.

“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 dreams 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.”(Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: Book III, p 377, 378)

Another symbol of death is present here. When he is on the boat, which symbolizes the “lighted tunnel” to Heaven, he remembers his ancient life with the emergence of Tom Bombadil. It makes us think of the scientific belief that before one dies, he sees images of





his life passing on his memory. It is another hint which can make us think that Frodo Baggins of the Shire is simply dying to become an immortal entity.

Finally, Frodo's initiation path is the condensed life of anyone whereas he has to live it through a few months and with a lot more pressure on his back. He lives a life but an accelerated life. Frodo's leaving for Heaven is a way to say to the reader that if, as Frodo did, one can overcome the temptations of Evil, even if sometimes it rots to the core, the outcome will be to go to Heaven and be at peace forever. The last symbol Tolkien gives is very strong since after having shown destruction and death for a long part of his novel, he ends by telling the reader that finally, Heaven is still here and will always welcome those who followed the right path to go there; the right path being a similar path of initiation.





CONCLUSION

Through our work, we have been able to see that *the Lord of the Rings* is a story which presents power through many forms and many aspects. The more striking about that is the fact that even if the story happens in a world very far from the reader, a Middle-Age-like world; the characters are incredibly human and close to the reader. Indeed, what happens to them can happen to anybody. Of course one would not have to take part into a war against an evil dark lord to experience that, but the internal fight against one's unconscious is part of our everyday life. Sigmund Freud based his psychoanalysis theories on this precise aspect of the human mind.

Tolkien manages to give a lot of elements to explain how the souls of sinners can be pardoned and given redemption. Power appears as both sided with on the one hand the possibility to give in to the most unconscious desires born with the Id, and on the other hand, power seems to be a weapon for freedom of mind. It seems that a weapon for freedom sounds like an oxymoron, but Tolkien explains that sometimes, the greatest weapon is our free will and our belief in mankind and friendship.

After reading the Lord of the Rings, the reader is no longer the same, and what happened to the characters seems to have an echo inside our very minds. That is what gives this story a particular power, the power to make us feel better. To finish with this study of the Lord of the Rings, I would like to quote one of Tolkien's closest friends, the writer C.S. Lewis, and writing about the epic trilogy of his friend.

“The book is too original and too opulent for any final judgment on a first reading. But we know at once that it has done things to us. We are not quite the same men. And though we must ration ourselves in our rereadings, I have little doubt that the book will soon take its place among the indispensables.”(C.S. Lewis, *Tolkien and the Critics, the dethronement of power*: p 16)





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UNIVERSITÉ DE PAU ET DES PAYS DE L'ADOUR

MASTER 1 - PSDDA

ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE NOTION OF POWER IN
THE LORD OF THE RINGS

2005 / 2006

The Lord of the Rings is full of symbols among which the image of Power. This work is meant to explain and illustrate the consequences of such a power first by looking through the different and various symbols of power and then in a second part, by plunging into the depths of the unconscious in order to reveal the most secret aspects of power once it has taken control over our mind. The third part shows how power is closely linked with the notion of destruction and reconstruction.

Being a literary study of the books by Tolkien, the aim is to show that power triggers many changes, be they material or psychological, and that nothing is the same after its effects have taken place.

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