The Stuff of Legend
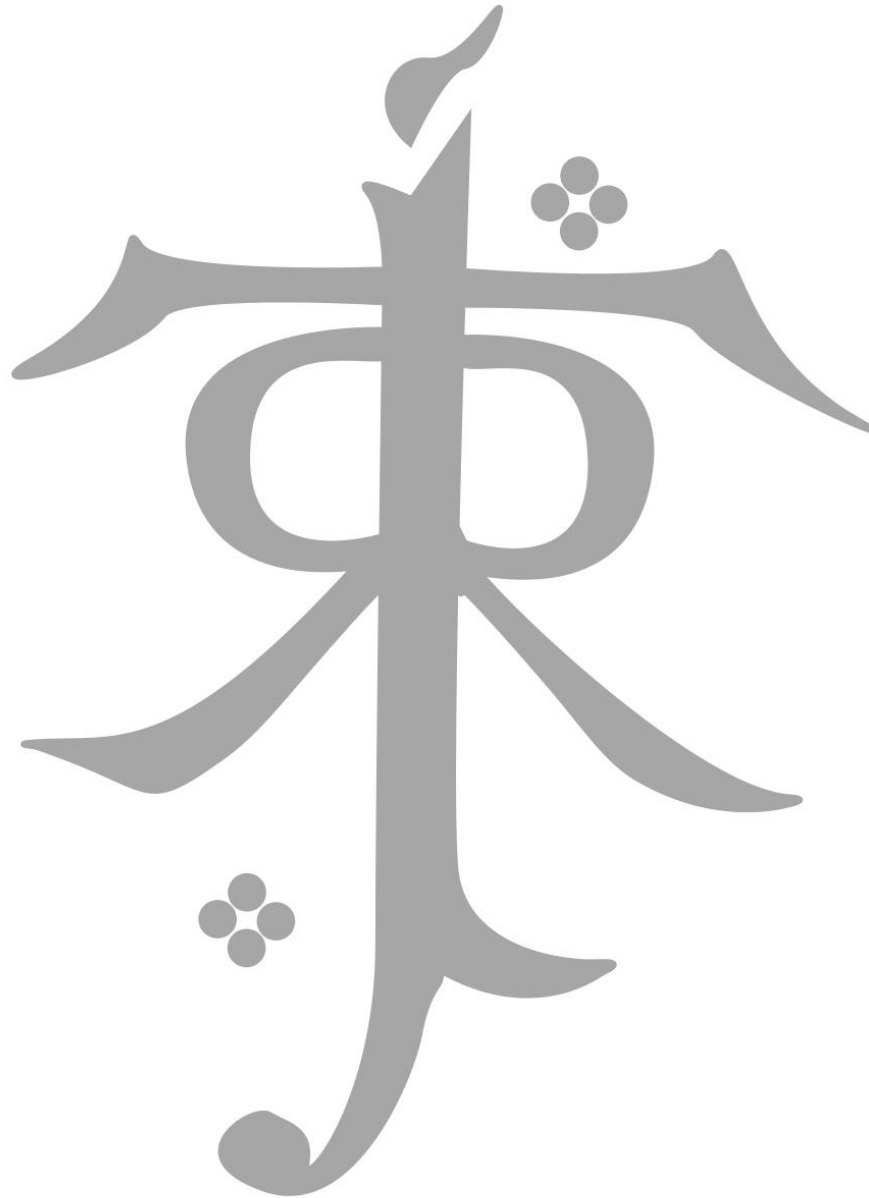
On source fiction in J.R.R. Tolkien's legendarium

Student: Erik Hendrix
Supervisor: Frank Brandsma
Reader: Paul Wackers

THE STUFF OF LEGEND

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Why Tolkien?

My earliest memories concerning *The Lord of the Rings* go back as far as 1995. In this year my mother finished reading *The Fellowship of the Ring* and had just started reading *The Two Towers*. She was deeply moved by Boromir's death and did not neglect telling her son about it in all its spectacular and tragic details. Somehow her account of Boromir's death always stuck with me, and I can honestly say that I don't know what made a bigger impression: her passionate account of the events or the actual thought of a fallen hero pierced by half a dozen arrows. In any case, a few years later Peter Jackson started his ambitious project of adapting *The Lord of the Rings* for the big screen. By this time I started going to high school but as a sixteen year old boy, with very little interest in girls (I guess I was a bit slow and in a way I still am), a world full of sword-fighting adventurers, wizards and epic battles was a lot more appealing than the dreary reality of a classroom. So I started reading the books and thus my passion for Middle-earth began. Now I am twenty-nine years old and I dare say that I probably enjoy the books even more than I did when I was a boy. *The Lord of the Rings* was my first literary love and no other fictional world has ever been able to arouse the same amount of enthusiasm in me. So it seemed only fitting that I would write my bachelor thesis on the subject. As I was still struggling to find the right topic Dr. Frank Brandsma suggested that I should write my thesis on source fiction in Tolkien's work. This idea appealed to me very much, because it allows me to explore that which I love most: Arda, Middle-earth, Tolkien's fictional world itself.

1.2 What is source fiction?

On March 27th, 2013, Frank Brandsma gave a lecture at the Albion Symposium 'Swords & Dragons' entitled *Kvothe, Tyrion and Lancelot*. In this lecture, Brandsma demonstrated some similarities between medieval literature and contemporary fantasy. Among other things he considered the role of the eye-witness in relation to the character-narrator:

> Around 1200, many new developments in storytelling become evident, in the context of a discussion on the veracity of fiction and on the use of prose as the proper medium for 'true' texts. Much attention is given to how the story came to be, the source fiction. The [...] Lancelot-Grail Cycle, which is fictional in nature yet presents itself as a true and complete chronicle of Arthur's reign, has a whole series of source fictions in play.[1]

As we can see, the phenomenon of source fiction is used to present the story as 'true', even though it is not. Source fiction deals with sources as a part of the fictional world and its truthfulness ends at the edge of the page or, in a broader sense, the imagination of the reader. At

---

[1] Brandsma, F. – *Kvothe, Tyrion and Lancelot* – Lecture at the Albion Symposium, 2013.

first glance, source fiction has an explicative and decorative function. In the case of the Lancelot-Grail Cycle, Brandsma gives the following example:

> The prequel on the history of the Grail even features as its source a little book that Christ himself gives to the scribe.[2]

In other words: source fiction is presented within the fictional world as a vehicle of truth in order to explain the origins of the story. But by its very nature source fiction thus also grants the story more depth by providing it with a historic context or décor. In Brandsma's example, we can see how the little book given by Christ is presented by the scribe as a *real* source and in that respect as an authority within the fictional realm. Those who are familiar with *The Lord of the Rings* can probably already think of a dozen examples.[3] After all, the fictional world of Tolkien is enormous and the bigger part of his sixty year labor[4] was not spent on his two most famous works, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings,* but on the creation of Arda (the fictional world of Middle-earth). *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are really only two expressions of something much bigger which Tolkien called his 'legendarium'. I will consider this concept in more detail in the next chapter.

In his lecture, Brandsma illustrates Tolkien's use of source fiction with the example of the Red Book of Westmarch. This is probably one of the most interesting examples, for it suggests that the stories of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are really just 'translations' of the Red Book. Further on in my thesis, I will consider the Red Book in more detail. For now, it will suffice as an example of the kind of source fiction I want to investigate here. Now that I have explained what source fiction is, I would like to consider some of the different forms in which source fiction is presented in Tolkien's legendarium.

1.3 Typology of source fiction

In Tolkien's Arda the different types of sources the reader encounters are as varied as they are in reality. However, these sources are (mostly) still represented through the narrative of the text. In other words, when we read about Andúril in the story we are not confronted with a real sword, but only with the representation of a sword through the text. For any analysis this fact will have to stay in the back of our mind. And yet, for the text to function as a story there is a big difference between a utensil, like Andúril, and a landmark like the Argonath.

In a very interesting article[5] published by the Dutch Tolkien Society *Unquendor*, Ben Koolen differentiates between Tolkienistic and Ardalogical studies. According to Koolen, Tolkienistic studies consider the works of Tolkien outside of the fictional realm (in the Primary World), i.e.

---

[2] Brandsma, F. *Kvothe, Tyrion and Lancelot* Lecture at the Albion Symposium, 2013.
[3] I will discuss quite a few of these examples in chapter 3.
[4] Tolkien started working on his fictional world during the First World War and would continue to do so until his death in 1973.
[5] Koolen, B. 'Inleiding in de Ardalogie', 1986, *30 jaar Unquendor.*

how it relates to Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* or how the publication of *The Hobbit* affected the legendarium. In contrast, Ardalogical studies are studies performed within the fictional realm of Arda (or the Secondary World), and considers the cultures, peoples, histories (and indeed sources) as though they were real, mostly in an effort to deepen the understanding of the fictional world and to make the reading experience richer and more intense.

In my opinion, to study the application and effects of source fiction in Tolkien's work, we have to study the phenomenon in both ways; Tolkienistic as well as Ardalogical. Discarding either one of these would result in one-sided analyses in which either the author or the reader become over-privileged. We have to consider that which mediates between the author and the reader and which is, in the end, our only real object of study: the text. So, though we are all aware that we are merely dealing with text, we should also be aware that this text is, on the one hand, a literary product of an artistic mind and, on the other hand, a representation of a fictional realm where the difference between a sword and a landmark is definitely relevant. Because of this, I will also consider the sources in their function for the fictional world, i.e. *as though* they were real (that is after all how they are presented). For this purpose I will differentiate between the various types of sources in the way a reader would. Hence the following typology:

Oral sources	Songs, poems and histories told or sung from memory.
Written sources	Books and texts read, mentioned or referred to by characters.
Objects and utensils	Swords, doorways, rings, horns, jewels, hauberks, statues, etc.
Linguistic sources	Etymological information, hidden in the origins of certain words.
Cartographic sources	Geographical information presented through maps.
Narrative source	Diegetic information dispensed by the narrator.

In chapter three, I will be mapping and discussing all these types of sources, save the narrative source which I will consider in chapter four and which is probably the most important source of information on the fictional world.

After mapping these different types of source fiction, and their application within the story, I will consider their relevance to Tolkien's magnum opus *The Lord of the Rings* and to fairy stories as a literary form in general in chapter four and five, so that, at the end of my thesis, I hope to have found an answer to the following questions:

1. How is source fiction applied by Tolkien in his legendarium and *The Lord of the Rings* in particular?

2. What are the main functions of source fiction within Tolkien's theory of fairy stories as a literary form?

Chapter Two

Shaping Arda, creating the legendarium

Coining the term

In the introduction I have used the mysterious term 'legendarium' multiple times. The word, however, is somewhat problematic, as Tolkien never made an effort to explain what he meant by it. Therefore one can only reconstruct a definition of the term by looking at the way in which he used it in his correspondence. He first mentioned the legendarium in a letter to Peter Hastings:

> 'Reincarnation' may be bad theology (that surely, rather than metaphysics) as applied to Humanity; and my legendarium, especially the 'Downfall of Númenor' which lies immediately behind The Lord of the Rings, is based on my view: that Men are essentially mortal and must not try to become 'immortal' in the flesh. But I do not see how even in the Primary World any theologian or philosopher, unless very much better informed about the relation of spirit and body than I believe anyone to be, could deny the possibility of re-incarnation as a mode of existence, prescribed for certain kinds of rational incarnate creatures.[6]

According to Michael Martinez, the word legendarium combines the noun 'legend' with the suffix '-arium', denoting a place.[7] In the passage above, Tolkien contrasts this place with the 'Primary World', the place where theologians and philosophers work. Thus, the Primary World is the world of our day to day experience, while the legendarium is the 'place of legend'. The place where we can find the blessed realm Aman, the great sea of Belegaer, the city of Gondolin in the valley of Tumladen and the dark chasm of Moria in the Misty Mountains; it encompasses all of the geographical space of Arda, Tolkien's fictional world. However, it also contains all the stories, events and characters which are part of that fictional world and this is where it gets tricky, because which stories qualify as part of this fictional world? That the answer to this question is not at all evident is shown in the next diagram:

---
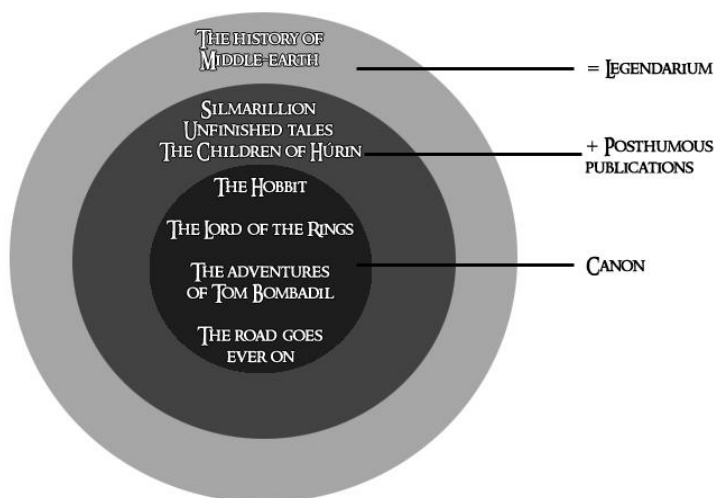
[6] Carpenter, H. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter No. 153* HarperCollins, London, 2006 p. 189.
[7] Martinez, M. *What is Tolkien's legendarium?* middle-earth.xenite.org.

For the diagram above I have used three concentric circles. The first or inner circle encompasses *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* and *The Road Goes Ever On*. These texts constitute the 'canon' and are the official texts which were published during Tolkien's life. In the second circle we can find *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales* and *The Children of Húrin*, texts which were written by Tolkien but had to be edited by his son, Christopher, before their posthumous publication. In the third and final circle we can find the twelve volumes of *The History of Middle-earth,* in which Christopher explains and defends his composition of *The Silmarillion*. But *The History of Middle-earth* also gives a unique insight into the whole process of the creation of Arda. All of these works together, plus Tolkien's maps and illustrations, is what constitutes the legendarium.

As I have mentioned before, Tolkien worked on his legendarium for nearly sixty years and most of the material he produced was never published during his lifetime. Because of this, a lot of these texts would stay subject to change, until his death in 1973, resulting in a lot of rewriting and reinterpreting, which were the cause of some inconsistencies and internal contradictions. One of the best examples of this problem is that of the lineage of Gil-galad. In *The Silmarillion* it is stated that he is the son of Fingon, while in *The War of the Jewels*[8] he is presented as the son of Orodreth. This problem led Michael Martinez to say that:

> The legendarium had become more detailed to him [Tolkien, red.] than its history. The legendarium of Tolkien's imagination was never fully composed in a coherent narrative. The various fragments and versions of his essays and stories were written according to different needs and scopes, those scopes were defined by the changing boundaries of his imagined legendary world at different periods in his life.[9]

An example of what Martinez describes above is the fact that, according to Tolkien, *The Hobbit* was never intended to be part of the legendarium, but eventually got 'drawn into it':

> But the beginning of the legendarium, of which the Trilogy is part (the conclusion), was in an attempt to reorganize some of the Kalevala, especially the tale of Kullervo the hapless, into a form of my own. (...) I went on after return; but when I attempted to get any of this stuff published I was not successful. The Hobbit was originally quite unconnected, though it inevitably got drawn in to the circumference of the greater construction; and in the event modified it.[10]

Though the legendarium was thus partly shaped by 'interventions' from the Primary World, I think that Martinez puts too much emphasis on this. Although the legendarium was never fully composed as a coherent narrative, this was nonetheless Tolkien's intent. After all, if this were

[8] Tolkien, C. *The History of Middle-earth, Volume XI* HarperCollins, London, 1994.
[9] Martinez, M. *What is Tolkien's legendarium?* middle-earth.xenite.org.
[10] Carpenter, H. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter No. 163* HarperCollins, London, 2006, p. 214-215.

not the case it would have made Christopher's entire exercise of editing (and indeed composing) *The Silmarillion* a pointless effort and that was clearly not the case.

2.1 Relevance for source fiction

Why is all of this so important for the way in which Tolkien used source fiction in his works? That is because, in the legendarium, everything is interconnected. *The Lord of the Rings* is not merely a story which happens to take place in Middle-earth, but everything that happens to the fellowship is woven into the fabric of Middle-earth, which in turn is part of the larger tapestry of the legendarium. I would like to illustrate this with an example from *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

> 'Then tell us some other tale of the old days,' begged Sam; 'a tale about the Elves before the fading time. I would dearly like to hear more about Elves; the dark seems to press round so close.'
> 'I will tell you the tale of Tinúviel,' said Strider, 'in brief – for it is a long tale of which the end is not known; and there are none now, except Elrond, that remember it aright as it was told of old. It is a fair tale, though it is sad, as are all the tales of Middle-earth, and yet it may lift up your hearts.'
> He was silent for some time, and then he began not to speak but to chant softly.[11]

In this passage Aragorn refers to the story of Beren and Lúthien. In 1954, when *The Fellowship of the Ring* was first published, no one knew this story, except for what was sung by Aragorn in this passage. It would take until 1977, with the publication of *The Silmarillion*, for readers to actually learn what it was all about.[12] This example is not unique, in fact, *The Lord of the Rings*-trilogy is packed with these kinds of examples and because of this we cannot limit ourselves to investigating source fiction solely within the story of *The Lord of the Rings*. Every work of Tolkien has internal references to the legendarium, which is a body of texts on the history of Arda.

Now that we understand what the legendarium is, we can see how important source fiction is for the greater structure of *The Lord of the Rings*. In one of his letters, Tolkien expressed his original intentions when he started working on his legendarium thus:

> Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story – the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths (…).[13]

Here Tolkien already gives an accurate description of the inner workings and mechanics of the legendarium and I would like to pose that source fiction is the main literary vehicle through which he was able to exhibit this 'body of more or less connected legend'.

---

[11] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, 2004, p. 191.
[12] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion*, HarperCollins, London, 2007, p146-170.
[13] Carpenter, H. *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, Letter No. 131* HarperCollins, London, 2006, p. 144.

Chapter Three

Source fiction in Tolkien's legendarium

3.1 Before we start

In the previous chapter I have discussed the legendarium as a web of texts or, as Tolkien called it, 'a body of more or less connected legend'. In this chapter I want to investigate the application of source fiction within the legendarium to find out more about its function. I will do this by discussing the different types of source fiction in their presentation and application, primarily within the *The Lord of the Rings*. But before I start, I will have to make a few more remarks.

Firstly about the organisation of the different types of sources. At first glance it may appear quite rigorous, but in fact it is mostly out of convenience. For instance, the Doors of Durin are an object, a doorway, which is a source of information through its design, but the inscription on the doorway also provides us with information. In this way it could be considered an object but also a written source. I have decided to discuss the Doors of Durin in paragraph 3.4. This is an arbitrary choice based on its main function within the story.

Secondly, as I have said before, everything within the fictional world of Arda is interconnected through the legendarium. However, the legendarium is simply too big for me to discuss in its entirety. The main problem is that a lot of source fiction is connected to *The Silmarillion* which is an extremely complicated patchwork, made up out of a variety of Tolkien's writings. In an interesting review of *Arda Reconstructed,* Jason Fisher observes that there are many possible Silmarillions and that the one we know, the one that was published in 1977, is Christopher Tolkien's in particular, based on his personal choices and preferences.[14] Many other versions of *The Silmarillion* could have been possible and all of these possible versions belong to the same legendarium. So, wisdom dictates that a mere undergraduate limits himself to one version and I will limit myself mainly to Christopher's version. However, when possible, relevant and/or exciting, I will try to mention other texts or apocryphal versions of a story.

3.2 Oral sources

The first example of source fiction I want to discuss are oral sources. Oral sources are presented within the story as information which is told or sung from memory. Characters presenting us with these kinds of oral sources should therefore be considered intradiegetic narrators.[15] These oral sources can either concern a song, a poem, a tale, a history, etcetera.

In book 1 of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the four Hobbits and their new found friend, the ranger Strider, are trying to make their way to Rivendell whilst being hunted by the Nazgûl. As they are discussing their route to the east, Aragorn mentions the watchtower of Amon Sûl and speaks shortly on the Last Alliance lead by Elendil and Gil-galad:

---

[14] But even then Christopher Tolkien made a selection from the material available to him at that time. While he was working on the *History of Middle-earth* he found a lot more of his father's texts.
[15] These terms are based on Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* New Accents London and New York, 2007 p. 87-117

The hobbits gazed at Strider. It seemed that he was learned in old lore, as well as in the ways of the wild. 'Who was Gil-galad?' asked Merry; but Strider did not answer, and seemed to be lost in thought. Suddenly a low voice murmured:

> Gil-galad was an Elven-king.
> Of him the harpers sadly sing:
> the last whose realm was fair and free
> between the Mountains and the Sea.
>
> His sword was long, his lance was keen,
> his shining helm afar was seen;
> the countless stars of heaven's field
> were mirrored in his silver shield.
>
> But long ago he rode away,
> and where he dwelleth none can say;
> for into darkness fell his star
> in Mordor where the shadows are.

The others turned in amazement, for the voice was Sam's.
'Don't stop!' said Merry.
'That's all I know,' stammered Sam, blushing. 'I learned it from Mr. Bilbo when I was a lad. He used to tell me tales like that, knowing how I was always one for hearing about Elves. It was Mr. Bilbo as taught me my letters. He was mighty book-learned was dear old Mr. Bilbo. And he wrote poetry. He wrote what I have just said.'
'He did not make it up,' said Strider. 'It is pan of the lay that is called The Fall of Gil-galad, which is in an ancient tongue. Bilbo must have translated it. I never knew that.'[16]

Here, Sam presents us with a source, a translation (probably from Quenya) by Bilbo, concerning the personage of Gil-galad and it gives us some information about who he was. For instance, this song tells us that he was an Elven-king, the ruler of a great realm on the coast of Middle-earth and that he fought in some kind of war against Mordor, where he 'rode away' and 'fell'. Yet, there something peculiar about this source.

This poem, better known as *The Fall of Gil-galad*, tells us about events long past, but it is not presented as an accurate or objective account of history. The source has a particular form and uses the literary art of poetry, specifically the lay. At the end of the poem, however, we realise that we are actually told very little. Aragorn's silence after Merry's request, as well as the melancholic and ominous overtones of Bilbo's translation, suggest a tragic past.

Here we can see how the source has an explicative and decorative function: It tells us about

---

[16] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, p. 185.

the history of Middle-earth while, at the same time, providing it with more depth. However, for Tolkien it was also a reference to a variety of other texts, which were also part of his legendarium, even though these texts were never published during his lifetime. For example, let's consider the following passages from the extradiegetic narrator in *The Silmarillion*:

> In the east, in Ossiriand, the walls of Ered Luin were broken, and a great gap was made in them towards the south, and a gulf of the sea flowed in. Into that gulf the River Lhûn fell by a new course, and it was called therefore the Gulf of Lhûn. That country had of old been named Lindon by the Noldor, and this name it bore thereafter; and many of the Eldar still dwelt there, lingering, unwilling yet to forsake Beleriand where they had fought and laboured long. Gil-galad son of Fingon was their king, and with him was Elrond Half-elven, son of Eärendil the Mariner and brother of Elros first king of Númenor.[17]

As we can see, the first stanza of Bilbo's translation roughly corresponds to the passage above. Yet instead of a lyrically stylistic account, it tries to give an accurate and objective description of the region of Gil-galad's realm 'between the Mountain and the Sea'. The second stanza is a description of his appearance, presenting Gil-galad as a warrior and a hero of the Last Alliance. The third stanza, which would eventually give the poem the name *The Fall of Gil-galad*, is described in the following passage:

> Then Gil-galad and Elendil passed into Mordor and encompassed the stronghold of Sauron; and they laid siege to it for seven years, and suffered grievous loss by fire and by the darts and bolts of the Enemy, and Sauron sent many sorties against them. There in the valley of Gorgoroth Anárion son of Elendil was slain, and many others. But at the last the siege was so strait that Sauron himself came forth; and he wrestled with Gil-galad and Elendil, and they both were slain, and the sword of Elendil broke under him as he fell.[18]

Here we can see how the oral source interconnects within the secondary world to other legends in the world of Arda and how it refers to its own mythological past. Also, in the primary world the source connects to other texts within the legendarium. In an interesting article called *The parentage of Gil-galad – a textual history[19]*, Renée Vink[20] gives a wonderful textual overview of Gil-galad:

> This information can be gained from The Fellowship of the Ring. Appendix B to the Lord of the Rings, "The Tale of Years", contains some additional facts: in SA [Second Age, red.] 1200 'Gil-galad refuses to treat with Sauron'. He was also the guardian of one of the three Elven rings until he gave it to Elrond before his death. This is all the information about Gil-galad published during

---

[17] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion* HarperCollins, London, p. 263.
[18] Ibid, p. 271- 272.
[19] Published in *Lembas,* #145 by Tolkien Society, *Unquendor.*
[20] Renée Vink is a founding member of the Dutch Tolkien Society and translator of two of Tolkien's writings: *The Legend of Sigurd & Gudrún* and *The Fall of Arthur.*

Tolkien's own lifetime, and therefore the only strictly canonical information we possess about this character. Several of the texts published after Tolkien's death tell us a great deal more about this Elvenking: The Silmarillion, Unfinished Tales and five of the twelve volumes of The History of Middle-earth (not counting those that merely mention him in passing). All these texts provide information about Gil-galad's history, his background and his life at the end of the First and during the whole of the Second Age.[21]

As we can see, the information about Gil-galad is spread out across the whole of the legendarium. Not only in the canonical texts like *The Lord of the Rings*, but especially in the posthumous publications. In relation to this, Vink makes a very keen observation:

> From the legendary but elusive hero he is in LotR, Gil-galad now becomes a character firmly embedded in the history of Middle-earth.[22]

Vink's remark accurately illustrates how Gil-galad is presented within *The Lord of the Rings*; as 'legendary' but 'elusive'. But it also shows us how the source that mentions him is 'drawing splendour from the vast backcloths'.

Unfortunately I can't discuss more than one example of oral sources here. But virtually all other oral sources have a similar function within the legendarium: They deepen the fictional world of Arda, by providing it with a historical backdrop, and they link all the texts within the legendarium together. Just a few examples which I would still like to mention are *Song of Eärendil* by Bilbo, *Lament of the Rohirrim*, with its reminiscent of Eorl the Young and *Song of Beren and Lúthien,* which is linked also linked to *The Silmarillon* and the apocryphical *Lay of Leithian.*

3.3 Written sources

Written sources are books and texts read, mentioned or referred to by characters. Most of these sources function in the same way as oral sources. Good examples of this are Gandalf's citation of the 'account of Isildur' in *The Council of Elrond*[23] (book 2, chapter 2) and the book of Mazarbul[24] in *The Bridge of Khazad-dûm* (book 2, chapter 5). However, in this section I would like to discuss an example of source fiction which seems to be an anomaly; the Red Book of Westmarch (hereafter referred to as the Red Book), as mentioned in *The Grey Havens* (book 6, chapter 9).

In his aforementioned lecture, *Kvothe, Tyrion and Lancelot*, Brandsma considered source fiction in relation to the eye-witness as the most ideal medieval narrator. In the previous example, I considered Sam as the intradiegetic narrator of *The Fall of Gil-galad*, as a source that (in the fictional world) has been passed down through the ages and has thus become stylized

---

[21] Vink, R. *The parentage of Gil-galad - a textual history* Lembas #145.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, p. 252- 253.
[24] Ibid, p. 321- 322.

and, as it were, 'mythologized'.

With the Red Book, however, we are presented with a form of source fiction which 'escapes' its own fictional world. According to Brandsma, the final volume describes how the main eyewitnesses (Bilbo and Frodo) play the role of the scribe, how Sam finishes the book and how we (the readers) read what they wrote. Let's consider the passage that Brandsma referred to:

> In the next day or two Frodo went through his papers and his writings with Sam, and he handed over his keys. There was a big book with plain red leather covers; its tall pages were now almost filled. At the beginning there were many leaves covered with Bilbo's thin wandering hand; but most of it was written in Frodo's firm flowing script. It was divided into chapters but Chapter 80 was unfinished, and after that were some blank leaves. The title page had many titles on it, crossed out one after another, so:
>
> *My Diary. My Unexpected Journey. There and Back Again. And What Happened After. Adventures of Five Hobbits. The Tale of the Great Ring, compiled by Bilbo Baggins from his own observations and the accounts of his friends. What we did in the War of the Ring.*
>
> Here Bilbo's hand ended and Frodo had written:
>
> THE DOWNFALL
> OF THE
> LORD OF THE RINGS
> AND THE
> RETURN OF THE KING
>
> (as seen by the Little People; being the memoirs of Bilbo and Frodo of the Shire, supplemented by the accounts of their friends and the learning of the Wise.)
>
> Together with extracts from Books of Lore translated by Bilbo in Rivendell.
>
> 'Why, you have nearly finished it, Mr. Frodo!' Sam exclaimed. 'Well, you have kept at it, I must say.'
> 'I have quite finished, Sam,' said Frodo. 'The last pages are for you.'[25]

The Red Book of Westmarch as portrayed in Peter Jackson's adaptation of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

---

[25] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King* HarperCollins, London, p. 1026- 1027.

As we can see in the passage above, Bilbo and Frodo are credited as the authors of most of the canonical works of Tolkien. With *There and Back Again* as the Ardalogical version of *The Hobbit*, *The Downfall of the Lord of the Rings and the Return of the King* as the equivalent of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Books of Lore* as *The Silmarillion*.

In appendix F of *The Lord of the Rings* it is quite clear that Tolkien uses a conceit[26] to present his work. The book the reader holds in its hands is actually a translation from Westron[27] to modern English. However, the prologue (the section 'Note on the Shire records') also states that the English translation is not the original version as it was written by Bilbo and Frodo. Instead, it is posed that the English translation was a revised copy of Thain's book, written by the human scribe Findegil and brought to the Shire at the request of Pippin's grandson:

> The original Red Book has not been preserved, but many copies were made, especially of the first volume, for the use of the descendants of the children of Master Samwise. The most important copy, however, has a different history. It was kept at Great Smials, but it was written in Gondor, probably at the request of the great grandson of Peregrin, and completed in S.R. 1592 (F.A. 172). Its southern scribe appended this note: Findegil, King's Writer, finished this work in IV 172. It is an exact copy in all details of the Thain's Book in Minas Tirith. That book was a copy, made at the request of King Elessar, of the Red Book of the Periannath, and was brought to him by the Thain Peregrin when he retired to Gondor in IV 64.[28]

By presenting the story in this way, the physical book that the reader is holding in the primary world (or the 'meat space') is practically claimed by the fictional realm. *The Lord of the Rings* is no mere fantasy book you bought in a store in Bristol or Utrecht; it is part of the history of Middle-earth and you are holding its secrets in your hands. In this way, the physical book itself becomes part of the lore and hence a form of source fiction. The last three types of source fiction I will discuss very shortly in the last paragraphs of this chapter.

3.4 Objects and utensils

Objects and utensils are probably the most varied category among the different types of source fiction: from swords, like Andúril, to statues/landmarks like the Argonath, the great horn of Helm Hammerhand and the One Ring itself. For this section, however, I have decided to discuss the Doors of Durin.

After the fellowship has been defeated by the mountain Caradhras, they decide to take the route through the mines of Moria. When they finally reach the entrance of the Dwarrowdelf, they find the entrance closed and the reader finds an illustration by the hand of Tolkien himself:

---

[26] An extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem. By juxtaposing, usurping and manipulating images and ideas in surprising ways, a conceit invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of comparison. Source: Wikipedia.org.
[27] A common speech or lingua franca derived from contact between Adûnaic and the languages of Middle-earth.
[28] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, p. 14.

Here is written in the Fëanorian characters according to the mode of Beleriand: Ennyn Durin Aran Moria: pedo mellon a minno. Im Narvi hain echant: Celebrimbor o Eregion teithant i thiw hin:[29]
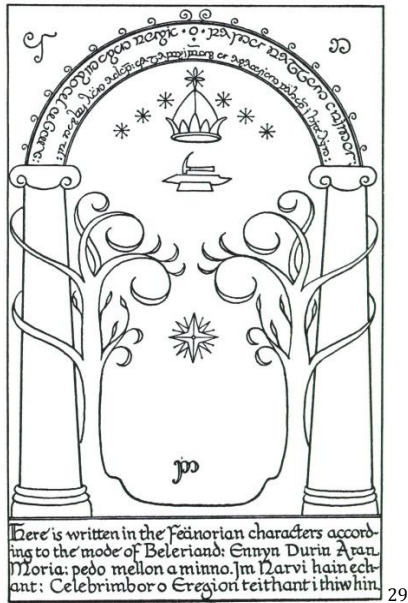
When the members of the fellowship see the doors, they immediately start analysing it:

> 'There are the emblems of Durin!' cried Gimli.
>
> 'And there is the Tree of the High Elves!' said Legolas.
>
> 'And the Star of the House of Fëanor,' said Gandalf. 'They are wrought of ithildin that mirrors only starlight and moonlight, and sleeps until it is touched by one who speaks words now long forgotten in Middle-earth. It is long since I heard them, and I thought deeply before I could recall them to my mind.'
>
> 'What does the writing say?' asked Frodo, who was trying to decipher the inscription on the arch. 'I thought I knew the elf-letters but I cannot read these.'
>
> 'The words are in the elven-tongue of the West of Middle-earth in the Elder Days,' answered Gandalf. 'But they do not say anything of importance to us. They say only: *The Doors of Durin, Lord of Moria. Speak, friend, and enter.* And underneath small and faint is written: *I, Narvi, made them. Celebrimbor of Hollin[30] drew these signs.*'[31]

Three aspects of the Doors design are explicitly noted. Firstly, the 'emblems of Durin'. Gimli refers to the anvil with the hammer and to the crown with the stars. As tools of renowed miners and craftsmen, the anvil and the hammer were symbols of the house of Durin. The emblem of the crown with the stars refers to the first stanza of the Song of Durin, sung by Gimli in *A Journey in the Dark* (book 2, chapter 4):

> The world was young, the mountains green,
>
> No stain yet on the Moon was seen,
>
> No words were laid on stream or stone

---

[29] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, p. 305.

[30] A different name for Eregion.

[31] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, p. 304- 306.

> When Durin woke and walked alone.
>
> He named the nameless hills and dells;
>
> He drank from yet untasted wells;
>
> He stooped and looked in Mirrormere,
>
> And saw a crown of stars appear,
>
> As gems upon a silver thread,
>
> Above the shadow of his head.[32]

It is assumed that the stars depicted above the crown (and referred to in the song) is the constellation of Valacirca (Quenya for 'sickle of the Valar').

Secondly, with 'the Tree of the High Elves', Legolas refers to Galathilion, the white tree, made by the Valië Yavannah, the queen of the earth. Galathilion was made in the image of another tree, Telperion, which was destroyed by Ungoliant.[33] Only one of Telperion's flowers survived the attack and afterwards the Valar set it in the sky, thus creating the moon. To depict Galathilion's descent from Telperion, the images of the tree on the Doors of Durin are hung with crescent moons as a reference to its predecessor.

Lastly, Gandalf mentions the star of the house of Fëanor, referring to the leader of the Noldor (or High Elves/Eldar) who led his people in their pursuit of Melkor who took the Silmarils to Beleriand.[34] The Noldor who still linger in Middle-earth were either contemporaries of Fëanor, like Galadriel, or are descendents of the Noldor, like Elrond. The Noldor had a great affinity for craftsmanship, and it was Fëanor himself who created the Silmarils.

With all this in mind, we understand better what is really depicted on the Doors of Durin. The High Elves, who lived in Eregion[35] during the second age, had developed a rare friendship with the dwarves and shared their mutual enthusiasm for craftsmanship. The Doors, in all their symbolism, embody and depict this alliance in its design and, in doing so, refer in every aspect of it to different stories within the legendarium.

3.5 Linguistic sources

Another form of source fiction are linguistic sources. Tolkien's fascination for languages started at a very early age and eventually culminated in a hobby of creating artificial languages. In fact, it can be argued that the entire creation of Arda started with the development of these artificial languages. In relation to this, the famous biographer of Tolkien, Humphrey Carpenter writes:

> He had been working for some time at the language that was influenced by Finnish, and by 1915 he had developed it to a degree of some complexity. He felt that it was 'a mad hobby', and he

---

[32] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Fellowship of the Ring* HarperCollins, London, p. 315-316.
[33] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion,* HarperCollins, 2007 London p.61-64.
[34] Ibid, p.65-77.
[35] An Elven kingdom West of the Misty Mountains near the Gates of Moria.

scarcely expected to find an audience for it. But he sometimes wrote poems in it, and the more he worked at it the more he felt that it needed a 'history' to support it. In other words, you cannot have a language without a race of people to speak it. He was perfecting the language, now he had to decide to whom it belonged.[36]

The passage above clearly shows that these languages were of pivotal importance for the creative process of shaping Arda. In this respect, it should be no surprise that they often contain a lot of information on the fictional world, especially in the origins of some of the words. Hence, the etymology of specific words should also be considered as source fiction.

The language referred to by Carpenter in the passage above is that of Quenya, the language of the High Elves, which was partly inspired by Finnish. In my example, however, I would like to discuss the word 'simbelmynë'.

Simbelmynë is a word from the language of the Rohirrim, spoken by the horse people of Rohan. In the fictional world, Rohirric is derived from the speech of the Northmen, a people who inhabit the north-eastern parts of Middle-earth (Rhovanion, Dale and Esgaroth). In the primary world, its structure is largely based on that of old English.[37] Simbelmynë is mentioned in book 3, chapter 8, *The King of the Golden Hall*:

> 'Look!' said Gandalf. 'How fair are the bright eyes in the grass! Evermind they are called, simbelmynë in this land of Men, for they blossom in all the seasons of the year, and grow where dead men rest. Behold! We are come to the great barrows where the sires of Theoden sleep.'
> 'Seven mounds upon the left, and nine upon the right,' said Aragorn. 'Many long lives of men it is since the golden hall was built.' [38]

As we can see in the passage above, the simbelmynë blossoms in all seasons of the year and Tolkien himself described the flower as a variety of the anemone.

Simbelmynë as portrayed in Peter Jackson's adaptation of The Two Towers.

---

[36] Carpenter, H. *J.R.R. Tolkien, A Biography* HarperCollins, London, 2002, p. 107- 108.
[37] Tolkien was a professor of Old English at Pembroke College for approximately 20 years.
[38] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London, 2004, p. 507.

As Gandalf explains in the passage above, the simbelmynë grows in places where the dead are resting in the ground, in other words: on graves, or (in this particular case) barrows. The word simbelmynë is composed out of two morphemes: 'Simbel' or 'symbel' which means 'ever' or 'always' and 'mynë', meaning 'mind' or 'memory', hence the name 'evermind'. So, even though this flower has the physical appearance of an anemone, its name is more like that of the forget-me-not. In this respect, Simbelmynë is a very suitable name, again with a clear decorative and explicative function, linking the origins of the word with the lore of the fictional world. Unfortunately I have to limit myself to only one example, but there are many other interesting words like Silmarillion, Elessar, Nazgûl, Meduseld and Imladris.

3.6 Cartographic sources

Whenever Middle-earth is mentioned in a conversation, most people will automatically think about the map at the beginning of the books. In this way, the map has always been somewhat of an icon for *The Lord of the Rings*. Both in the adventure of Bilbo and in that of Frodo, the route they walk and the locations they visit can be found on the map.

[39]

The map is an interesting addition to the fictional world of Arda and readers who take the effort of studying them closely while reading will soon find the activity very rewarding. And yet, the

---

[39] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings* HarperCollins, London, 2004

map has always had somewhat of an 'appendix quality' about it and it is interesting to see how, in different adaptations of the books, there is always an effort to draw the map more into the experience of the fictional world.

A few examples of this can be found in Peter Jackson's adaptation *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, the usage of the map is logical and believable, as the version in the book is the same one that Bilbo made for the Red Book of Westmarch. However, in the extended version of *The Two Towers* we can see Faramir actively using the map in the secret outpost of Henneth Annûn to explain the two front war that Gondor is fighting against Mordor and Isengard. Though, lore-wise, the usage of the map in this way is wrong (for indeed, there is no way that they could have acquired Bilbo's map in this period of time), it illustrates what an important role the map plays in the imagination of the readers and spectators.

Another interesting example of how the map is more drawn into the fictional world is that of the MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) *The Lord of the Rings Online*, where the players character uses the map to navigate his way through Middle-earth in order to complete his or her quests.

3.7 Preliminary conclusions

Of all the different types of source fiction I have discussed at least one example in this chapter, and I sincerely hope that they illustrate the enormous variety in which they are presented, but also the way in which they function. All the different types of source fiction I have discussed have a decorative and explicative function, providing the fictional world with much more depth, and most of them function as a link between the different texts within the legendarium. *The Silmarillion* takes a very special role in this linking, but due to its somewhat problematic origin it cannot be considered without taking *The History of Middle-earth* into account.

   In the next chapter I want to pay extra attention to the last form of source fiction which is linked to the example I discussed in paragraph 3.2, the narrative source.

Chapter Four

The writer, the narrator and the translator

4.1 Narrative sources

As we have seen in paragraph 3.2, *The Lord of the Rings* is presented as the Red Book of Westmarch on two occasions: in the prologue of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and in *The Grey Havens* (book 6, chapter 9). With this, it is suggested that it was not Tolkien, but Bilbo, Frodo and Sam who wrote *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolkien merely translated the text from Westron to modern English. Now that we have identified the main narrator of *The Lord of the Rings* as Frodo Baggins, let us consider the way in which this narrator is an important source of information:

> There agelong she had dwelt, an evil thing in spider-form, even such as once of old had lived in the Land of the Elves in the West that is now under the Sea, such as Beren fought in the Mountains of Terror in Doriath, and so came to Lúthien upon the green sward amid the hemlocks in the moonlight long ago.(...) Far and wide her lesser broods, bastards of the miserable mates, her own offspring, that she slew, spread from glen to glen, from the Ephel Dúath to the eastern hills, to Dol Guldur and the fastnesses of Mirkwood. But none could rival her, Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant to trouble the unhappy world.[40]

Here we can clearly see that the extradiegetic narrator is dispensing information on the fictional world on a diegetic level, comparing events of the story with other stories and histories from the fictional world of Arda, thus placing it directly within 'a body of more or less connected legend' i.e. the legendarium.

Also, in *The Lord of the Rings* we are dealing with a character-author, an eyewitness, but the reader is not constantly reminded of this. In fact, the narrator (or Frodo) seems to be going through extreme lengths to avoid reminding the reader of his personal involvement in the story. First of all, he never refers to himself as 'I', there is no first person, instead he always refers to himself in the third person, 'Frodo'.

Secondly, the story is obviously written in retrospect, by an omniscient narrator, and though the legendary importance of the events (especially through comparison with other legends) is constantly emphasised, there is no personal testimony of the extradiegetic narrator on his role as a character-author, there is merely a implied author. All of these facts are interesting, for they are not obvious choices for a character-narrator and Frodo makes no effort whatsoever to explain or defend these choices ... Or so it would seem ...

4.2 Character-authors and the act of myth-making

Bilbo, Frodo and Sam are the authors of the Red Book of Westmarch, they are the scribes of the fellowship, recording their deeds and the events that have led to the War of the Ring, the destruction of the Ring and the return of Aragorn II: King Elessar. In doing so, they have become

---

[40] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London, 2004, p. 723.

myth-makers and within the story there is evidence of the fact that they are actively and consequently aware of their role. Let's consider some of these examples:

> 'Of course, it is likely enough, my friends,' he said slowly, 'likely enough that we are going to our doom: the last march of the Ents. But if we stayed at home and did nothing, doom would find us anyway, sooner or later. That thought has long been growing in our hearts; and that is why we are marching now. It was not a hasty resolve. Now at least the last march of the Ents may be worth a song. Aye,' he sighed, 'we may help the other peoples before we pass away.'[41]

In the passage above the Ents, under Treebeard's leadership, have decided to wage war against Saruman. As they march to Isengard they do not know that the 'iron fortress' has emptied and that the armies of the traitor-wizard are preparing their attack on Helm's Deep. The Ents expect to find a large army and are very aware that they are probably going to die. But though their final act of resistance might seem hopeless, they find meaning in their struggle because it will be recorded in song and, in that way, pass down through history so that their fight will not be forgotten and will not be in vain. Here we can see that the narrator, the character-author Frodo, is very much aware of what he is doing and he is not only explicating the necessity of writing the story, but also defending his role as a scribe, and the activity of myth-making, as an inspiration for heroic deeds. These are the same kind of heroic deeds that all the examples of source fiction in Middle-earth are us telling about. This example of the Ents is not an isolated case, consider for example the following passage from book 3, chapter 5, *The White Rider*:

> 'Out he sprang, and even as I came behind, he burst into new flame. There was none to see, or perhaps in after ages songs would still be sung of the Battle of the Peak.' Suddenly Gandalf laughed. 'But what would they say in song? Those that looked up from afar thought that the mountain was crowned with storm. Thunder they heard, and lightning, they said, smote upon Celebdil, and leaped back broken into tongues of fire.'[42]

Here, again, we see how the hero, in this case Gandalf, reflects on his deeds and how the scribe is fulfilling his wishes by writing them down. This whole presentation of the narrator as the personal minstrel of the hero is not an invention of Tolkien and, like Brandsma already noted in his lecture, it is a medieval literary trick. For example, let's consider a passage from *Beowulf*:

> At times the brave warriors spurred their bays,
> horses renowned for their speed and stamina,
> and raced each other where the track was suitable.
> And now and then one of Hrothgar's thanes
> who brimmed with poetry, and remembered lays,

---

[41] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London 2004, p. 486.
[42] Ibid, p. 502.

> a man acquainted with ancient traditions
>
> of every kind, composed a new song
>
> in correct metre. Most skilfully that man
>
> began to sing of Beowulf's feat,
>
> to weave words together, and fluently
>
> to tell a fitting tale.[43]

In the passage above, we can clearly see that it is of the greatest importance that the deeds of the hero are recorded in songs, poems and tales. *Beowulf*, a poem which was written by an anonymous author between then 8th and 11th century, also shows how rhapsodies, minstrels, bards, skalds, fili and the like, saw the importance of their role, both for their work and for society. Let's compare another example. Here is a passage from book 3, chapter 7, *Helm's Deep*:

> 'The end will not be long,' said the king. 'But I will not end here, taken like an old badger in a trap. Snowmane and Hasufel and the horses of my guard are in the inner court. When dawn comes, I will bid men sound Helm's horn, and I will ride forth. Will you ride with me then, son of Arathorn? Maybe we shall cleave a road, or make such an end as will be worth a song if any be left to sing of us hereafter.'[44]

Here, we see how the heroic acts and sacrifices of Théoden and his companions are redeemed by the work of the scribe. The character of Théoden seems almost aware of his own textuality; of his own role in the story. A similar speech is made in the medieval work of *La chanson de Roland:*

> For his treason no longer is secret.
>
> Right great vengeance our Emperor will get.
>
> Battle we'll have, both long and keenly set,
>
> Never has man beheld such armies met.
>
> With Durendal my sword I'll strike again,
>
> And, comrade, you shall strike with Halteclere.
>
> These swords in lands so many have we held,
>
> Battles with them so many brought to end,
>
> No evil song shall e'er be sung or said.[45]

La chanson de Roland was written in the 12th century and again, in this passage, we see a hero contemplating his own role in a song. What is interesting about all of this is that the act of myth-making (the writing of these songs, poems and stories) is exactly what creates that which source fiction essentially is: a legend.

The narrator, in other words, is aware that he is making legends and myths, but the relation

---

[43] Author unknown *Beowulf* Oxford's World Classics, p. 30.
[44] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London, 2004, p. 539.
[45] Author unknown *The Song of Roland* Webster's Thesaurus Edition, p. 79.

between the narrator, the implied author and the character-author seems far too complicated to discuss in a mere paragraph. In my opinion, this subject deserves much more attention, more than I can give it in my thesis. For now, I would like to discuss what this 'myth-making' is according to Tolkien and what special significance it had for him.

4.3 Mythopoeia in theory and practice

In this chapter, we have seen a number of interesting similarities between *The Lord of the Rings* and medieval texts like *Beowulf* and *La Chanson de Roland*. I would like to argue that these similarities are not merely coincidental or a random product of a certain 'feel' that seems intrinsic to contemporary fantasy in the effort of an author to create an 'ancient atmosphere'.

Frodo's awareness of his own role as a scribe reflects the consciousness of the real author: Tolkien. As a linguist, a philologist and a writer, Tolkien was extremely aware of what he was doing and long before the publication of *The Fellowship of the Ring* he had already formulated an elaborate theory on myth-making and fairy stories.

In the autumn of 1931, C.S. Lewis invited Hugo Dyson[46] and J.R.R. Tolkien over for dinner.[47] During a discussion on myths, Lewis supposedly said that myths were 'lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver.'[48] Tolkien firmly disagreed with Lewis and in response wrote a poem called *Mythopoeia*.[49] In this poem, Philomythus (myth-lover) responds to Misomythus (myth-hater). In his defence of myths, Tolkien combines his catholic beliefs with his criticism of modern society and his literary theories on fairy tales. According to Tolkien, man is a sub-creator who, within the primary creation (i.e. the primary world) of God, rules his or her own fictional world (the secondary world):

> your world immutable wherein no part
> the little maker has with maker's art.
> I bow not yet before the Iron Crown,
> nor cast my own small golden sceptre down.[50]

Tolkien continues to defend myths and myth-making as an opposition to the 'organized delight' of 'economic bliss':

> Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme
> of things not found within recorded time.
> It is not they that have forgot the Night,
> or bid us flee to organized delight,

---

[46] The actual name of this fellow Inkling and Shakespeare expert was Henry Victor Dyson Dyson.
[47] Carpenter, H *The Inklings* HarperCollins, London, 2006, p 42.
[48] Ibid, p. 43.
[49] Those who are familiar with Greek philosophy might recognize similarities with literary theories from the Classical age. See: Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics.*
[50] Online version of the poem *Mythopoeia*, found on: http://home.ccil.org/~cowan/mythopoeia.html

in lotus-isles of economic bliss

forswearing souls to gain a Circe-kiss

(and counterfeit at that, machine-produced,

bogus seduction of the twice-seduced).[51]

This poem was written in 1931 and *Mythopoeia*, which literally means 'mythos-making', should be seen as the first step in Tolkien's efforts to defend the fantasy genre. In his defence, Tolkien does not only respond to the accusations made against fantasy, but he also elaborates on what he thinks that fantasy (in its rudimentary function) is: a legitimate, necessary, but (above all else) a fun escape from reality. Tolkien's theory, in the presentation of a poem, is original but also rather inscrutable and for my purposes it unfortunately leaves too much to speculation. However, in 1939 Tolkien would quote from his poem in a lecture called *On Fairy Stories*. In this lecture, his theories are much clearer. I will discuss these in the next paragraph.

4.4 Beyond the walls of the world

Some people have said that, in certain literary circles, the mention of Tolkien's name is a 'kiss-of-death'.[52] And indeed, for a long time many academics and literary critics have considered Tolkien's work not to be worthy of their attention. However, I think that in the past few years there has been a large shift in these matters. For the new generations (i.e. those who have grown up with *The Lord of the Rings,* to whom it is not a 'new' phenomenon, but actually a work of prestige) the difference between this so called 'high' and 'low' culture is much more blurred and much more complicated, and I think that old-fashioned snobbism will surely not convince them otherwise.

In his time though, Tolkien had to put up with a lot of criticism, not only from literary critics, but even from some of his fellow-Inklings[53] and in the back of our minds we might even hear the rider next to Éomer cry out:

'Halflings! But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?'[54]

In the previous chapter we have seen how the theory of myth-making is not only limited to the primary world, but that even in the secondary world, Arda, myth-making constitutes a central theme in which source fiction is the main vehicle through which these legends and myths are created.

In 1939 Tolkien wrote an essay for a lecture at the university of St. Andrew, simply called 'On

---

[51] Online version of the poem *Mythopoeia*, found on: http://home.ccil.org/~cowan/mythopoeia.html
[52] Curry, P. *Tolkien and his critics: A Critique* in *Root And Branch: Approaches Towards Understanding Tolkien*, 1999, p. 81.
[53] According to Christopher Tolkien, Hugo Dyson supposedly cried out: 'Oh fuck, not another elf!' while J.R.R. was reading for them from his stories. Eventually he stopped reading for them all together due to the negative responses.
[54] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London, 2004, p. 434.

Fairy Stories'. In this essay, Tolkien defends the fantasy genre against those who deemed it 'infantile' and 'escapist'. In his response to this criticism Tolkien said:

> I have claimed that Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories, and since I do not disapprove of them, it is plain that I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which "Escape" is now so often used: a tone for which the uses of the word outside literary criticism give no warrant at all. In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life it is difficult to blame it, unless it fails; in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds. Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought.[55]

For Tolkien, the negative connotation of the word 'escape' is not valid in relation to fairy stories. On the contrary, according to Tolkien this kind of 'escape' is a very natural fact of human existence:

> Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using Escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter. Just so a Party-spokesman might have labelled departure from the misery of the Führer's or any other Reich and even criticism of it as treachery. In the same way these critics, to make confusion worse, and so to bring into contempt their opponents, stick their label of scorn not only on to Desertion, but on to real Escape, and what are often its companions, Disgust, Anger, Condemnation, and Revolt. (…)But there are also other and more profound "escapisms" that have always appeared in fairy-tale and legend. There are other things more grim and terrible to fly from than the noise, stench, ruthlessness, and extravagance of the internal-combustion engine. There are hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death. And even when men are not facing hard things such as these, there are ancient limitations from which fairy-stories offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires (touching the very roots of fantasy) to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation.[56]

In the end, what Tolkien is defending, is not the 'right' to escape the world, but the freedom to dream of other places, strange peoples and heroic stories. Modern day society, with its coercive (and maybe even dictatorial and instrumental) rationalism, cannot provide us with an adequate décor for the creation of myths, and yet, the human soul craves for them. After all, *The Lord of the Rings* has sold over 150 million copies, second only to *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens.

To escape from reality, to experience a fictional world, which is both fantastic but at the same

---

[55] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Monsters and the Critics and other essays* HarperCollins, London, 2006, p. 147.
[56] Ibid, p. 148.

time believable, takes an enormous effort on the part of the literary artist and demands nothing less than excellent craftsmanship. To tickle (what Coleridge[57] called) the readers 'willing suspension of disbelieve', to transport him or her to the fictional realm and to immerse him or her into the stories events and the adventures of its heroes is a great accomplishment. Reality is a fact and the primary world is not called 'primary' for no reason, but fiction has a place in that reality and its shores have always been a safe haven of refuge and consolation to all.

---

[57] See: *Biographia Literaria* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

In chapter 1, I have defined source fiction with the help of the examples in Brandsma's lecture and formulated two main questions for my thesis:

1. How is source fiction applied by Tolkien in his legendarium and *The Lord of the Rings* in particular?

2. What are the main functions of source fiction within Tolkien's theory of fairy stories as a literary form?

In chapter 2, I have considered the lifework of Tolkien, the legendarium, as a body of texts. In chapter 3, I have discussed various forms of source fiction as they are presented in the story. Here, several properties of source fiction became evident, namely:

1. Source fiction has a explicative function. It tries to explain the histories and cultures of Middle-earth and its peoples.

2. Source fiction has a decorative function. It adds an aesthetic dimension of the fictional arts of Middle-earth by presenting the reader with songs, poems, images, sculptures and the like.

3. Source fiction, through its explicative and decorative function, provides the fictional world with much more depth in an effort to make it more believable and convincing.

4. Source fiction is the main vehicle of self-referentiality. It refers to its own stories, histories, legends and mythology, thus linking and/or interconnecting the different texts within the legendarium, binding them together in the fictional world of Arda.

In chapter 4, I have tried discussed Tolkien's theory of mythopoeia or 'mythos-making' and his ideas on the functions and merits of fairy stories. In this chapter, I would like to recapitulate for a bit and consider some of the implications of these conclusions.

In my opinion, mythopoeia, or myth-making, utilizes source fiction to conjure up a deep different world, not a world that is determined by the boundaries of reality, but one that is only determined by the endless horizon of the fantastic and the wealth of the readers imagination.

In this respect source fiction truly is 'the stuff of legend': it is that which creates the fictional world in all its forms and appearances.

With the Red Book of Westmarch, Tolkien has tried to win some territory for the fictional realm, even though he knows he is fighting a 'long defeat'. Fantasy, in its very essence, is trying to distance itself as far as possible from reality, but this does not mean that it wants to distance itself from life in general. Quite the contrary, it considers all kinds of themes which would otherwise have been pushed to the background and it implores the reader to use his

imagination, creativity and playfulness.

In one of the most beautiful dialogues in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo and Sam reflect on the stories and legends of Middle-earth and the role they have to play in it:

> 'Yes, that's so,' said Sam. 'And we shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them, because they were exciting and life was a bit dull, a kind of a sport, as you might say. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually - their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on - and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end. You know, coming home, and finding things all right, though not quite the same - like old Mr Bilbo. But those aren't always the best tales to hear, though they may be the best tales to get landed in! I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?'[58]

In his lecture *On Fairy Stories*, Tolkien makes the following analyses of what he considers to be 'a good fairy story':

> The consolation of fairy-stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous "turn" (for there is no true end to any fairy-tale): this joy, which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially "escapist," nor "fugitive." In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. It is the mark of a good fairy-story, of the higher or more complete kind, that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the "turn" comes, a catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality.[59]

In the same passage as I have quoted before, the two scribes (Frodo and Sam), reflect on the myths of Arda, their role as scribes and their role as participants in the story itself. Here, they answer directly to their subcreator and with this passage I would like to end my thesis:

---

[58] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London 2004, p. 711.
[59] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Monsters and the Critics and other essays* HarperCollins, London 2006, p. 153.

'I wonder,' said Frodo. 'But I don't know. And that's the way of a real tale. Take any one that you're fond of. You may know, or guess, what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending, but the people in it don't know. And you don't want them to.'

'No, sir, of course not. Beren now, he never thought he was going to get that Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours. But that's a long tale, of course, and goes on past the happiness and into grief and beyond it - and the Silmaril went on and came to Eärendil. And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got – you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you! Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?'

'No, they never end as tales,' said Frodo. 'But the people in them come, and go when their part's ended. Our part will end later - or sooner.'[60]

---

[60] Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers* HarperCollins, London 2004, p. 712.

Bibliography

Books

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan	*Narrative Fiction*	New Accents	2002
Humphrey Carpenter	*J.R.R. Tolkien, A Biography*	HarperCollins	2002
Humphrey Carpenter	*The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*	HarperCollins	2006
Humprey Carpenter	*The Inklings*	HarperCollins	2006
John Ronald Reuel Tolkien	*The Lord of the Rings*	HarperCollins	2004
John Ronald Reuel Tolkien	*The Silmarillion*	HarperCollins	2007
John Ronald Reuel Tolkien	*The Monsters and the Critics and other essays*	HarperCollins	2006
Unknown	*Beowulf*	Oxford's World Classics	1999
Unknown	*The Song of Roland*	Webster's Thesaurus Edition	2006

Articles

Ben Koolen	*Inleiding in de Ardalogie*	30 jaar Unquendor	1986
Michael Martinez	*What is Tolkien's legendarium?*	middle-earth.xenite.org	2011
Patrick Curry	*Tolkien and his critics: A Critique*	Root and Branch	1999
Renée Vink	*The parentage of Gil-galad - a textual history*	Lembas	2011

Other

Frank Brandsma	*Kvothe, Tyrion and Lancelot*	Lecture 'Swords & Dragons'	2013
John Ronald Reuel Tolkien	*Mythopoeia*	http://home.ccil.org/~cowan/mythopoeia.html	