

“The Potency of Words and the Wonder of Things”
Archaic Pronouns in *The Lord of the Rings*

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Abstract

This study examines how archaic second person pronouns are used in JRR Tolkien's fantasy epic *The Lord of the Rings*. In particular, this paper analyses how Tolkien uses archaic pronouns to support the three literary requirements for fantastical realism, as outlined in his lecture "On Fairy Stories" (1939), by using the unmarked/marked archaic second person pronoun distinction described by Wales (1983). This paper demonstrates that archaic pronouns are used (1) intricately in character interactions to create emotional complexity in the story and immerse the reader; (2) in the invocation of oaths and traditions which creates the depth associated with good worldbuilding as well as in teaching readers the importance of language for the recall of the past; (3) to symbolically link the events of *Rings* with the defeat over evil by Jesus, which Tolkien considers the most "true" of all stories. Ultimately these three tenets give the story emotional, historical and spiritual depth, which creates a more realistic and immersive world.

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Introduction

The study of the archaic and medieval influences in JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (henceforth *Rings*) has become a staple of Tolkien studies. Giants in the field like Tom Shippey and Verlyn Flieger have consistently painted a picture of the influence of medieval texts on Tolkien's writing as one of the primary factors underlying his works and use of language. Given this interest in Tolkien's love of the archaic and in his language use, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to his use of second person archaic pronouns. Archaic pronouns are the singular "thou", "thy", "thee", "thine" and plural "ye" pronouns ("ye" was also used as a polite/formular singular on some occasions) which were used in English between the 13th and 18-19th centuries, after which these forms were replaced by "you" in Modern English (although they still persist to some extent in Scottish dialects, Irish English, religious practices and in idioms) (Shorrocks, 433–438). In every interaction, speakers would mediate and consider which pronouns were appropriate for the scenario based on different social criteria such as the status of the speaker and addressee, "the degree of social distance between them [...], their social role [...], the level of emotion, the level of formality, and the specific context (location/purpose) of the dialogue" (Walker 2). The use of these pronouns in *Rings* reflects these same nuances. Throughout *Rings*, the characters consistently use "ye", "thee", "thy" and "thou" in ways reminiscent of the Middle and Early Modern English periods. The reader sees Denethor refute Gandalf by using "thou" and "thee", yet also sees Éowyn entreat Aragorn by switching to the same second person pronoun. The present paper explores the use Tolkien made of the archaic pronouns "ye", "thee" and "thou" based on close reading of the primary text and comparative analysis with how these pronouns were used in Early Modern English. Particularly, this paper examines how Tolkien uses these pronouns to enhance the consistency and realism of his world. This will be demonstrated through Tolkien's literary theory for fantasy realism, which he outlined in his 1939 lecture "On Fairy Stories". It maintains that there are three tenets for fantastical realism- (1) it must be consistent and immersive in its quality, (2) it must teach it's audience something when they "return" to the real world, (3) the climax of the story must point towards Jesus' defeat over evil (eucatastrophe). Each of these tenets highlight the realism of the fantasy world. It will be demonstrated that in *Rings*, the use of archaic pronouns support these three tenets. First, the use of archaic pronouns in character interactions creates an emotional complexity in Tolkien's world that is immersive in its quality. Second, archaic pronoun usage teaches *Rings'* audience the value of archaic language in the transmission of the past, as well as aiding the book's worldbuilding. Finally, archaic pronouns are

used to link *Rings* to the Psalms and Jesus' victory over evil. Through these three tenets, Tolkien infuses his world with emotional, historical and spiritual depth, which heightens the realism of the world.

Theoretical Framework

Linguistic Background

There is a long history of scholarship that attempts to determine the nature of pronoun addresses in the medieval and early modern periods, and how they should be interpreted. Brown and Gilman are noted for their influential 1960 article where they explained the dimensions of Latin *tu* (T) and *vos* (V) in terms of the parameters of ‘power’ and ‘solidarity’ (“The pronouns of power and solidarity” 256–257). A person’s level of power is determined by how you refer to and were referred to by an inferior or superior; a superior uses T but receives V from an inferior, solidarity amongst equals increases the likelihood of T being used to express intimacy and V to express formality. Switching between pronouns was used to express contempt, irony or mockery (Brown & Gilman “The pronouns of power and solidarity” 254). However, this view has been criticized by Wales (1983) who argued that “a theory based on universals can be too ‘powerful’, to the point, paradoxically, of crudity” (122). She argues instead for a model which allows room for “individual variation or development on the part of specific speech communities” (122). According to Wales, the pronoun forms gradually went from a gradient of polite or impolite usage, to an unmarked versus marked distinction, until eventually “you” replaced “thee/thou” altogether (Wales 116-117). There is some consensus that an unmarked versus marked distinction governs pronoun use. A marked distinction is defined as when the expected pronoun is replaced by the unexpected pronoun, thus making the exchange additionally meaningful or exciting:

“[i]n cases where you is expected, the occurrence of thou indicates that the speaker is emotionally aroused, and thus thou is marked for affect, making you the unmarked or default form” (Brown & Gilman “Politeness theory” 177-8).

The marked/unmarked model has been criticized by many scholars (Calvo 1992, Hope 1993, Jucker 2000) who argue that our interpretation of pronoun usage should not be over-generalized and instead should be considered on a case-by-case basis. While this paper agrees that in essence, the marked/unmarked model often hinders correct analysis of pronoun usage in medieval and early modern texts, for Tolkien’s work it is suitable. In Tolkien’s works, archaic pronouns such as “thou”, “thee”, “thy” and “ye” are only uttered 78 times across 24 different exchanges; as Tolkien describes it, the “deferential” “thou/thee” forms had receded out of the Common Speech, with only the most skilled and learned characters adopting them in specific contexts (Tolkien, *Rings* 1489). Instead “you” in *Rings* is

the unmarked, default form for discourse, making any archaic pronoun by extension deviant, or “marked”. This is noticed by Irwin (1987), who wrote a brief article on the topic of archaic pronoun usage in *Rings*. Irwin writes: “Tolkien's use of [archaic pronouns] is effective for the simple reason that he does not use the form often; when he does use this archaic pronoun, the reader is alerted to some significant and serious event” (46). Irwin’s study primarily focused on identifying which type of archaic pronoun is used and to what effect (derogatory, referential, expressions of affection etc.), but she does not address the potential contribution the use of archaic pronoun makes to the themes discussed in *Rings*. The one other Tolkien scholar who (briefly) addresses the topic is Tom Shippey in his work *The Road to Middle Earth* (1985). Shippey briefly notes how the different functions of pronoun use coincide with the different “styles” of *Rings*, from the low style of the Hobbits (who do not use archaic pronouns) to the high style, to the brief instances of the sublime (240-2). This will be examined in more detail below. To correctly fill this gap in the literature, this paper aims to study pronoun usage in *Rings* from a marked/unmarked linguistic framework, treating each occurrence of an archaic pronoun as significant and as a window into the dynamics of the characters and the realism of the world that they inhabit.

Literary background

This paper combines the unmarked/marked linguistic framework with a literary theoretical framework proposed by Tolkien himself in his lecture “On Fairy Stories” (1939). In “On Fairy Stories”, Tolkien outlined his belief that the kinds of stories his theory describes first led him, in his childhood, to divine “the potency of words, and the wonder of things” (Tolkien *On Fairy Stories* 69). It is therefore essential that this theory be used to analyze language in his works. First, a true fairy story should primarily be escapist. They cannot be a “dream story” like, for example, *Alice in Wonderland*; they must be internally consistent and convince the reader they exist. He describes this as “the inner consistency of reality” (Tolkien *On Fairy Stories* 110): the “successful ‘sub-creator’ [...] makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside” (Tolkien *On Fairy Stories* 52). The second tenet of this theory holds that, by extension, when the reader “returns” to the real world, they have gained a new “perspective” on their own world by virtue of comparison. Finally, fairy stories should offer moral consolation through their happy ending; they should be “eucatastrophic”. For an ending to be eucatastrophic it must ultimately point to Jesus’s victory over evil (Tolkien *On Fairy Stories* 33). This is because eucatastrophe “has pre-eminently the ‘inner consistency of reality’.

There is no tale [such as Jesus' victory of evil] ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits" (Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories* 78). These three requirements are met by the use of archaic second person pronouns in *Rings*.

Analysis

Characters

As mentioned before, the primary function of fantasy is to immerse, which, with regards to archaic pronouns in *Rings*, is most often achieved by creating emotional complexity in character interactions. An excellent example of the level of nuance created in character interactions is seen in the use of second person pronoun between the characters of Éowyn, Arwen, Aragorn and the Witch-king. The first interaction is one between Aragorn and Éowyn. After Aragorn announces that he's going to go to the Paths of the Dead, Éowyn confronts him and begs him not to go, as "I do not bid you flee from peril, but to ride to battle where your sword may win renown and victory. I would not see a thing that is high and excellent cast away needlessly" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1027). Before and throughout this exchange the tension between these characters has been rising and the reader is being primed to anticipate a confession of romantic feelings. For example, the reader is told that "[Éowyn's] eyes were ever upon Aragorn, and the others saw that she was in great torment of mind" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1026). Aragorn seems to be aware that the discussion is leading up to a confession, as he carefully tells Éowyn, "Were I to go where my heart dwells, far in the North I would now be wandering in the fair valley of Rivendell" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1026). Rivendell is, of course, the home of Aragorn's fiancé, Arwen Undómiel. This seems to fall on deaf ears as Éowyn was for a while "silent, as if pondering what this might mean. Then suddenly she laid her hand on his arm" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1026). With these interactions, Tolkien consistently increases the tension between the characters and heightens audience expectations. Yet, once the conversation reaches its climax, Éowyn rather cryptically tells Aragorn, "Neither cause [to go to the South] have those others who go with *thee*. They go only because they would not be parted from *thee* – because they love *thee*" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1026). To modern ears, this exchange seems to fall short of an outright confession of love, and yet it most certainly is one. Throughout this conversation Aragorn and Éowyn have been addressing each other using the unmarked "you", until this pivotal moment when Éowyn talks about love, and she uses the marked "thou". This instance parallels similar occurrences in Shakespeare's plays when high born lovers, prepared to declare their love, move from cautious "you" to ardent "thou". This is seen with Romeo and Juliet, Benedick and Beatrice, Portia and Bassanio, and Rosaline and Orlando (Byrne, 153). See, for example, how Benedick from *Much Ado About Nothing* switches from "you" to "thee" in this confession scene:

Benedick: I will swear by it that *you* love me, and I will make him eat it that says I love not *you*.

Beatrice: Will you not eat your word?

Benedick: With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love *thee*. (Shakespeare *Much Ado About Nothing* 4.2.272-277, emphasis mine).

Similarly, before Juliet and Romeo kiss, she tells him “Good pilgrim, *you* do wrong *your* hand too much” (Shakespeare *Romeo & Juliet* 1.5.96-97, emphasis mine), but afterwards she only addresses him with “thee” and “thou”. In fact, Tolkien even acknowledges this technique, writing in the footnotes of the Appendices: “Since this pronoun [“thee/thou”] is now unusual and archaic it is employed mainly to represent the use of ceremonious language; but a change from you to thou, thee is sometimes meant to show, there being no other means of doing this, a significant change from the deferential, *or between men and women normal, forms to the familiar*” (Tolkien, *Rings* 1490, emphasis mine).

However, right after Éowyn pronounces her love, she leaves and the interaction ends, which leaves the reader in the dark about Aragorn’s feelings. This question is resolved in the next scene, when Aragorn and Éowyn interact again. Here, the reader can see that Aragorn insists on referring to her with the unmarked and neutral “you”, despite Éowyn’s repeated use of only “thou” and “thee”:

But she said: ‘Aragorn, wilt *thou* go?’

‘I will,’ he said.

‘Then wilt *thou* not let me ride with this company, as I have asked?’

‘I will not, lady,’ he said. ‘For that I could not grant without leave of the king and of *your* brother; and they will not return until tomorrow. But I count now every hour, indeed every minute. Farewell!’

Then she fell on her knees, saying: ‘I beg *thee!*’ (Tolkien, *Rings* 1028, emphasis mine).

For those unfamiliar with the books, and who did not pick up on the ambiguities of Aragorn’s reference to Rivendell earlier, Aragorn’s reasons for Éowyn at an arm’s length are not precisely clear. The truth behind Aragorn’s feelings is again only indicated using archaic pronouns. In an earlier scene Aragorn is seen talking to a fellow Dunedain who brings a message to Aragorn from the Lady of Rivendell, which reads: “The days now are short. Either our hope cometh, or all hope’s end. Therefore I send *thee* what I have made for *thee*. Fare well,

Elfstone!” (Tolkien, *Rings* 1015). For first time readers of *Rings*, this is the only indicator that Aragorn and Arwen have a romantic relationship until she marries him near the end of the book. Attentive readers will link “the Lady of Rivendell” and her use of a “thou” pronoun with Aragorn’s earlier attempts to dissuade Éowyn from proclaiming her love using that same “thou” pronoun by mentioning how his heart longs to be in Rivendell. Meanwhile, Aragorn’s insistence on referring to Éowyn with the unmarked “you” shows he does not return her affections. Yet he *does* respect her. In analogous scenes in Early Modern English plays, readers find that often the person turning down the adamant suitor will refer to them with the contemptuous “thee”. For example, see how in *Midsummer Night’s Dream* Demetrius tells Helena, “I love *thee* not, therefore pursue me not [...] Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit; For I am sick when I do look on *thee*” (Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream* 2.1.173-196, emphasis mine) or how Hermia tells Demetrius “Out, dog! out, cur! *thou* drivest me past the bounds Of maiden’s patience” (Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream* 3.2.65, emphasis mine). In direct contrast to these traditional scenes, Aragorn does not use derogatory “thee”, preferring an unmarked “you”. This is undoubtedly because Aragorn is a noble character and would not speak contemptuously to a lady, but even more than just respect here, he also cares about Éowyn, albeit platonically. The reader comes to understand this by reading the interaction between the two characters after Éowyn is throthplighted to Faramir:

Then Éowyn looked in the eyes of Aragorn, and she said: ‘Wish me joy, my liege-lord and healer!’

And he answered: ‘I have wished *thee* joy ever since first I saw *thee*. It heals my heart to see *thee* now in bliss.’ (Tolkien, *Rings* 1028, emphasis mine).

Clearly, before Éowyn was linked romantically to someone else, Aragorn could not safely refer to her with an affectionate “thee” (despite undoubtedly caring about her) because of her feelings for him. Once she is betrothed to someone else, he refers to her with an affectionate “thee” *three* times; a repetition so overt it is almost impossible to miss. Aragorn is depicted as a nobleman who acts wisely and kingly in both personal and diplomatic situations. At the same time the nature of Éowyn’s feelings, in spite of appearing to be a simple crush, are equally as nuanced as Aragorn’s, which is more clearly revealed in her interaction with the Witch-King.

The Witch-King is another character who employs archaic pronouns when addressing Éowyn, and in doing so reveals some underlying commentary regarding the nature of her feelings for Aragorn. This exchange is

different to Éowyn's other interactions because she has undergone a class and gender transformation; instead of the Lady Éowyn, she has become Dernhelm, a low ranking soldier. The infamous gender swap is of course seen in Shakespeare plays such as *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which often feature high born ladies transforming into lowly page boys. Often in Early Modern English plays, an adoption of a disguise is reflected in the character's second person pronouns changing. Note for example the play *The Covntrie Girle* by Anthony Brewer, where when a young chambermaid assumes the disguise of her lady, she is addressed as "you" (twenty two times), yet when she is a lowly servant she is usually addressed with the derogatory "thou" (Walker, 199). Similarly, Dernhelm is referred to by the Witch-King with the derogatory "thou" to reflect his low status.

'Come not between the Nazgul and his prey! Or he will not slay *thee* in *thy* turn. He will bear *thee* away to the houses of lamentation, beyond all darkness, where *thy* flesh shall be devoured, and *thy* shrivelled mind be left naked to the Lidless Eye.'

A sword rang as it was drawn. 'Do what you will; but I will hinder it, if I may.'

'Hinder me? *Thou* fool. No living man may hinder me!' (Tolkien, *Rings* 1010-11, emphasis mine).

This clearly parallels similar "disguise" scenarios in Early Modern plays, but this pronoun use also reflects the Witch-King's own character. As a microcosm of his character, this use of "thou" reflects both his very ancient nature, and his proud and disdainful personality, arguably the two most essential components of his character. As Walker writes, using "thou" as a derogatory mark of class was one of its most outdated uses, and quickly became antiquated by the 17th century. He writes:

There is some change over time with regard to address to servants: in the first period thou is clearly the preferred pronoun of address, but after 1600, thou is used more to others' servants (often when the servants are able to aid in a scheme) [...] Although not relating solely to servants, the evidence of a decline in thou to inferiors in my data is supported by the quantitative results of Johnson (1959, 1966) for the seventeenth century [...] as well as the qualitative results of Bock's (1938) study: he finds there is no thou to inferiors at all after 1705 (Walker, 234).

The Witch-king's antiquated use of "thou" shows he is both ancient and out of touch, which is reinforced by the fact that the only other characters to use derogatory "thou" in *Rings* are Denethor and The Mouth of Sauron, two characters who are either ancient or part of a generation on the way out, and who both have a proud and disdainful disposition. It is no coincidence that the Witch-King uses the derogatory "thou" form no less than six times in one exchange; the repetition emphasizes all these aspects of his character. Considering the Witch-king appears so briefly and says so little, his use of archaic pronouns tells the reader everything they need to know about him as an antagonist to Éowyn.

However, the "thou" in this scene between the Witch-king and Éowyn also recalls Éowyn's earlier conversation with Aragorn. In that conversation Éowyn repeatedly mentions how she desperately wants to fight and seek glory, partly out of a desire to follow Aragorn. She says "You are a stern lord and resolute [...] and thus do men win renown. [...] Lord, if you must go, then let me ride in your following. For I am weary of skulking in the hills, and wish to face peril and battle" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1026). Even Faramir notes this, telling her "You desired to have the love of the Lord Aragorn. Because he was high and puissant, and you wished to have renown and glory and to be lifted far above the mean things that crawl on the earth. And as a great captain may to a young soldier he seemed to you admirable" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1263). Éowyn projects all her hopes and fears for her life onto Aragorn and interprets it as love. So for Éowyn to receive her longed-for "thou" on the battlefield, and it appears not in an affectionate, but a derogatory form, is Tolkien weaponizing the complexity of his pronoun usages to a devastating ironic effect. This reversal of an affectionate term to derogatory exposes Éowyn's glorification of love and war as perverted and not holistic; instead of offering her the meaning she has been expecting and anticipating, she finds herself dehumanized by a shadowy entity who robs her of her father figure and, consequently, her will to live. It is no coincidence that the arc of Éowyn and Faramir's relationship is the dismantling of the idea of glory on the battlefield in favor of healing and home, as love and honor are entangled in Éowyn's mind.

Despite using these pronouns so sparingly, each instance marks the interaction as significant and crystallizes the dynamic between the characters more clearly. Through only five such interactions, Tolkien sets up a nuanced love triangle showing Aragorn's platonic affection and torn feelings, foreshadows his eventual marriage to the Lady of Rivendell, and artfully portrays the hollowness of Éowyn's complicated "love" for Aragorn, which is really a twisted desire for glory. The subtleties of each of these pronoun usages sets up Éowyn's arc for her eventual

crash, healing and romance with Faramir near the end of the book. The conflicts between the characters are complicated and unique, and the highly appropriate use of archaic pronouns all combine to create the impression of a world of emotional complexity, one which is so accurate it can become “immersive”.

The Past & Recall

Outside of interactions between characters, archaic pronouns are often also used in order to recall oaths, sing old songs, or tell old tales. Not only does this create complexity in the worldbuilding, but it also highlights what the reader will “learn” when they come back from the immersive world into our own; the value of tradition and of the past. It is noteworthy, for example, that in *Rings* societies that do not value that which is ancient or are not ancient themselves do not use archaic pronouns. The Hobbits, who are “the most modernistic and novelistic characters in the book” (Shippey, 366), use the “low” style, and are therefore never seen to use archaic pronoun forms. Shippey comments that this is an “obvious consequence of the Western world’s fifteen-hundred-year long climb down the ladder of literary modes” (Shippey, 240). Instead, the users of archaic pronouns can be sorted into two groups: aristocratic (e.g. Aragorn, Éowyn, Faramir, Denethor) and ancient (e.g. Gandalf, the Witch-King, Arwen, Galadriel, the High Elves, Treebeard and the Mouth of Sauron). Both of these groups use the “high” style of discourse which is described by Kirk (1971) as being “the highly decorated [...] and the deliberately archaic, alliterative and sonorous, weighted with proper names from “other languages” and often inverting usual word order or adding, in apposition, information of no direct, utilitarian relevance” (14). (The final style, that of the sublime, will be examined in more detail later.) The distinction between the low and high styles and their relation to archaic pronouns is recognized by Tolkien, who writes, for example, how,

Peregrin Took, for instance, in his first few days in Minas Tirith used the familiar [pronoun] for people of all ranks, including the Lord Denethor himself. This may have amused the aged Steward, but it must have astonished his servants. No doubt this free use of the familiar forms helped to spread the popular rumour that Peregrin was a person of very high rank in his own country. (Tolkien, *Rings*, 1490).

This difference, Tolkien writes, “was intentional” as “all the enemies of the Enemy revered what was ancient, in language no less than in other matters, and they took pleasure in it according to their knowledge. The Eldar [...] spoke most naturally in a manner nearest to their own speech, one even more antique than that of Gondor” (Tolkien, *Rings*, 1490). Where the modern hobbits do not use archaic pronouns, ancient (reverting) cultures like those of

Gondor, Rohan and the Eldar, do. Using archaic pronouns in Tolkien's world is therefore intrinsically connected with having knowledge of the past and reverring it.

This is seen in one of the first significant encounters that the reader has with an archaic pronoun, which is the *Elven Hymn to Elbereth*. Elbereth is otherwise known as Varda Elentari, the Valar who is the Queen of Heaven. While it is being sung in Sindarin, the language of the elves of Rivendell, Frodo attempts to translate what he understands of it, which is what the reader reads. The song bears a notable resemblance to *A Elbereth Gilthoniel*, another Sindarin hymn. Indeed, it might well be that song, but mistranslated in certain parts by Frodo. The *Elven Hymn* reads:

Snow-white! Snow-white! O Lady clear!

O Queen beyond the Western Seas!

O light to us that wander here

Amid the world of woven trees!

Gilthoniel! O Elbereth!

Clear are thy eyes and bright thy breath!

Snow-white! Snow-white! We sing to thee

In a far land beyond the sea.

O Stars that in the Sunless Year

With shining hand by her were sown,

In windy fields now bright and clear

We see your silver blossom blown!

O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!

We still remember, we who dwell

In this far land beneath the trees,

Thy starlight on the Western Seas. (Tolkien, *Rings* 104, emphasis mine).

Tolkien describes this song as a hymn in a letter, writing, "these [invocations to Elbereth] and other references to religion in *The Lord of the Rings* are frequently overlooked" (qtd. in Shippey, 73). Indeed, according to Caldecott

(2002) and Burns (2011) it is very similar to John Lingard's Marian hymn *Hail Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star*, written in 1851. Caldecott writes that "Tolkien would have been familiar with one of the most popular Catholic hymns from his childhood, the tone and mood of which are markedly close to those of Tolkien's song to Elbereth" (22). Just like in the *Elven Hymn to Elbereth*, *Hail Queen* uses "thee" and "thy" pronouns. Unlike previous centuries, in the 19th century "thee" as a second person pronoun was primarily used in religious contexts, and in a venerable manner. Therefore, when comparing the use of "thy" in *Hail* with the use of "thou" and "thy" in *Hymn*, it is clearly meant to be venerable. As such, the reason why the elves desire to repeat such an old hymn is made clear to the audience- it is a (religious) tradition. In terms of its contents, the hymn recalls the events in the Silmarillion where Varda creates the stars, as seen in the line "O stars that in the Sunless Year With shining hand by her were sown". According to Agan (2008): "through these allusions, Tolkien establishes another kind of 'reality': a 'temporal layering' of ancient stories, both oral and written, which add weight not merely to the world of Middle-earth but also to its aesthetic creations: *its languages, its songs, and its literary transmission of history*" (44, emphasis mine). To Tolkien, the iteration of old language (such as archaic second person pronouns) facilitates the transmission of the past and a society's history. They also demonstrate the recurring cycles of Tolkien's legendarium. This song recalls explicitly the "themes of 'passing' associated with elves in all texts" (Agan, 44), as seen in the line "we still remember, we who dwell In this far land beneath the trees Thy starlight on the Western Seas." Veneration of that which is lost is linked intrinsically to the Elves' exile and their memory of older days, and using the archaic "thee" conveys both of these functions.

This phenomenon extends beyond this hymn into the invocation of oaths and stories characters tell about the past. Aragorn explains to his companions how Isildur, his forefather, cursed the Men of the White Mountains for turning their backs on him in the first battle against Sauron where "Isildur said to their king: '*Thou* shalt be the last king. And if the West prove mightier than *thy* Black Master, this curse I lay upon *thee* and *thy* folk: to rest never until your oath is fulfilled. For this war will last through years uncounted, and you shall be summoned once again ere the end'" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1024, emphasis mine). When Aragorn comes to recruit the Men, he asks them, "Oathbreakers, why have *ye* come?" They say they have "come to 'fulfil [their] oath,'" and Aragorn tells them that "The hour is come at last. Now I go to Pelargir upon Anduin, and *ye* shall come after me. And when all this land is clean of the servants of Sauron, I will hold the oath fulfilled, and *ye* shall have peace and part forever" (Tolkien, *Rings* 1034, emphasis mine). Here the use of archaic pronouns again shows the relationship between the past and the

present, and the cyclical nature of Tolkien's legendarium. When the Men of the White Mountains betrayed their oath to Isildur, Aragorn depicts Isildur using the derogatory "thou" and "thy" to curse them. This is reminiscent of curses in the King James Version (1611), where speakers also use the derogatory "thou" to curse other people, as seen particularly in Deuteronomy 28:15-20, which reads: "The LORD shall send upon *thee* cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that *thou* settest *thine* hand unto for to do, until *thou* be destroyed, and until *thou* perish quickly; because of the wickedness of *thy* doings, whereby *thou* hast forsaken me" (KJV, emphasis mine). Yet, when Aragorn, his descendant, invokes that oath again, he uses "ye", much like how later Théoden also uses "ye" to invoke the oaths of the Rohirrim by saying: "Oaths *ye* have taken: now fulfill them all..." (Tolkien, *Rings* 1094, emphasis mine). Irwin writes that "In both [the oath scenes with Aragorn and Theoden], the "ye" form is used both as the plural and as a formal term suggesting the strength and responsibility which the warriors must exhibit in the approaching battle" (46). Where once these men were cursed with derogatory "thou" for not fulfilling their oaths, now they are reminded of their responsibility as warriors, and called on to set in motion something that started a long time ago with the use of "ye". The use of archaic pronouns for direct recall of the past not only provides "a sense of history, or layers of 'reality,' to his created or 'Secondary' world, [but] some references appear to go beyond such a purpose to suggest a deeper connection between the stories of an ancient past and the 'now'" (Agan, 42). Archaic pronouns, by virtue of *being* archaic, are not only part of the past these characters recall, but they facilitate the recall of the past by marking it as venerable or derogatory and impact the present by demonstrating the cyclical nature of Tolkien's legendarium. This not only creates a world that has a rich lore and historical depth, but the reader is encouraged to appreciate archaic language in their own world, and reassess its power and ability to recall the past and impact the present.

Eucatastrophe

Finally, we turn to Tolkien's use of the sublime style in *Rings*. Shippey notes how in the use of the sublime style, seen in scenes, such as "the Anduril ones, the Fields of Cormallen, the Eagle's song", Tolkien reaches beyond romance "to what almost anyone might call 'myth'" (Shippey, 242). It has often been discussed that Tolkien desired to write a "mythology for England" but this left him with the same predicament as the *Beowulf* poet; *Rings* becomes a story of virtuous pagans, noble but doomed. However, as Shippey describes, "there is at least one moment at which Revelation seems very close and allegory does all but break through: naturally enough, a moment of 'eucatastrophe', to use Tolkien's terms for sudden moments of fairy-tale salvation" (226). When Faramir and Éowyn sense the earthquake that causes the fall of Barad-dûr and Sauron, Faramir becomes filled with an irrational joy. Then an eagle-messenger sings:

*Sing now ye people of Minas Anor
for the realm of Sauron is ended for ever
and the Dark Tower is thrown down.*

*Sing and rejoice, ye people of the Tower of Guard
for your watch hath not been in vain,
and the Black Gate is broken,
and your King hath passed through,
and he is victorious.*

*Sing and be glad, all ye children of the West
for your King shall come again,
and he shall dwell among you,
all the days of your life. (Tolkien, *Rings* 1262, emphasis mine).*

Here, the use of "ye" (and "hath") signal to most of Tolkien's audience that Tolkien's stylistic model is again based on the Bible, and in particular the Psalms (Shippey, 227). The poem is particularly reminiscent of Psalm 24, which repeats twice: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, for the King of glory shall come in" (KJV, emphasis mine). The Christian interpretation is that this King of glory is Jesus, as seen, for example,

in the writings of Baptist preacher Charles H. Spurgeon, who writes: "He who, fresh from the cross and the tomb, now rides through the gates of the New Jerusalem is higher than the heavens; great and everlasting as they are, those gates of pearl are all unworthy of him before whom the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth his angels with folly. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*" (Spurgeon, 908-913). The *Song of the Eagle* is, of course, about Morannon ("the Black Gate"), and it is about Aragorn, the King. Yet, the text undoubtedly has a double meaning- Tolkien was clearly referencing another type of defeat over evil, where the gates mentioned are the Gates of Hell, and the King is Jesus, and the song as a whole references the triumph of Jesus on the cross over evil. In this scenario, the "people" the "ye" refers to is *us*, or the reader. These pronouns become a direct way for the song to speak to the reader, and in an almost proselytizing way, address them with the Good News. As Shippey describes it "Tolkien was presenting his 'eucatastrophe' as a forerunner or 'type' of the greater one of Christian myth" (227). The link between these two songs are highlighted by the use of ye: "ye people", "ye people of the Tower" and "ye children", paralleling the usage in the Psalms: "ye righteous" and "ye gates" (Irwin, 46). The only other moment in *Rings* that resembles eucatastrophe is when, after the fall of the Tower and being carried to safety by the Eagles, Sam, seeing the resurrected Gandalf before him, believes that he is in Heaven (Shippey, 198). This shows the significance of this moment, and explains why Tolkien uses a marked pronoun to highlight it. In this final scenario, Tolkien uses the "ye" pronoun to link the eucatastrophic type in *Rings* to its biblical equivalent, and (subtly) address the reader with the Resurrection. As discussed before, this link to the Resurrection, according to Tolkien, increases the realism and immersion of the story, as it is the "truest" story. Tolkien's world becomes imbued with spiritual depth.

Conclusion

This paper sought to demonstrate the connection between archaic pronouns and the realism of Tolkien's world. First, their use in character interactions are nuanced and intricate, and show much about the characters that is otherwise subtle at best, and non-existent at worst. This successfully creates a sense of emotional complexity that borders on realism, increasing the immersion of the reader in Tolkien's world and fulfilling the first criterion of Tolkien's literary theory of fantasy. Second, archaic pronouns are used to communicate one of the values the reader is supposed to take with them back to the "real world"- the importance of tradition and the power of language. The use of old songs and tales and their parallels in the present of the narrative show the cyclical nature of Tolkien's (and our) world. This meets the second criterion of Tolkien's literary theory. Finally archaic pronouns also facilitated the eucatastrophic purpose of *Rings* by pointing towards the Psalms celebrating the "king of Glory" and the victory over evil, and by extension making *Rings* a forerunner of its biblical equivalent. Thereby *Rings* briefly proselytizes the "ultimate truth" to its audience. Through these three factors, Tolkien meets the requirements of his literary theory for fantastical realism, and *also* creates a narrative that is immersive and rich in terms of its characters, its worldbuilding, and its eucatastrophic message- *Rings* has emotional, historical and spiritual depth. However, this study still falls victim to many limitations. Many instances of archaic pronoun usage were neglected due to the constraints of the study, and these undoubtedly offer fresh perspectives on the current discussion. Furthermore, this study has read the use of archaic pronouns in the context of Tolkien's own literary theory, but future studies would no doubt benefit from analyzing the subject from a different literary theory to offer a new perspective (one that is, perhaps, less biased towards the author).

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