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Renewed Shall Be Blade That Was Broken: Tolkien, Modernity and
Fascist Utopia

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Abstract

This thesis consists of a close reading and meta-analysis of themes and patterns in the works that comprise the fictional world of "Middle-Earth" created by J. R. R. Tokien, in specific relation to the culturally prevalent views of the decadence of modernity and the ideological dynamics of fascism. The scholarship on Tolkien and his texts mostly regards the interior features and trends of his narratives, ranging from his representation of specific concepts to his application of narrative devices. There are also many studies of his work that apply a particular approach, for example Marxist or Feminist readings, and much research has focused on delimited themes or concepts, such as religion, ecology or friendship. This thesis explores the ideological dynamics of the fictional world constructed by Tolkien's texts, and argues that his work contains demonstrable similarities to the ideological dynamics of fascism in its response to the existential challenges of modernity. To clarify, this thesis does not argue that Tolkien's fiction can be read as "fascist," *tout court*, but rather to give a comprehensive outline of how the fictional world created within his texts relate to discourses critical of modernisation and to what extent the aesthetic and ideological dynamics of this world present what I will call a fascist utopia. Tolkien's work will be approached using the arguments and theories from canonical texts and authors regarding discourses on modernity, including works from the fields of philosophy (Nietzsche), political economy (Marx and Engels), literary studies, sociology (Durkheim, Weber and Simmel) and psychology (Freud). Alongside this I will use relevant studies of fascism to analyse how Tolkien fits within and relates to the aforementioned discourses. I assert the findings that Tolkien creates a world which, in its attempts to renew the values of the past through the presentation of mythology, rootedness, community, agrarianism and hierarchy, demonstrates a semi-fascistic utopia. This is not to cast aspersions or make claims about Tolkien's creative intentions or personal ideology, rather an observation as to the content and themes of his fictional world. I will argue this fictional world aligns with fascist concepts of identity, nationhood, heritage, mythology and renewal; however, at the same time finding it non-aligned with the central thrust of fascism, in its overt condemnation of industrialism and technology. This contradictory combination produces a fictional world which presents the renewal of what Roger Griffin terms the "shields against ontological terror" (75) now lost or delegitimised in the modern age.

Through this study I hope to offer an alternative perspective on Tolkien's position within the canon of modernist writers, demonstrating the complex undercurrents of his work and their significance outside the functions of escapism and conservatism. By developing the understanding of the ideological dynamics within Tolkien's universe it will allow for a more nuanced perspective on existential implications and effects of this fictional world building, and the potential role of the fantasy genre within literature as a whole.

In the 20th century many new styles, genres and approaches emerge within the world of literature; one such emergence is that of the fantasy genre. Now, at the start of the 21st century, with the aid of modern media, especially film and television, the genre is far from losing momentum. As can be seen in the exceptionally widespread popularity of the *Game of Thrones* TV series and the books which it is based upon, the genre of fantasy seems more prevalent than ever. The origins of this modern genre can be found in the mid-20th century with the work of authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, whose texts, most notably *The Lord of the Rings*, ignited this movement and from the outset received avid popular receptions.

Since its arrival, the fantasy genre has often been overlooked as a serious literary movement, often deemed as regressive and escapist. This stance on fantasy still persists, despite the success and recognition the fantasy genre has experienced in recent decades, with articles still being written today asking whether or not fantasy is "just idle entertainment" (Walter). To regard these texts as escapism is to suggest they are merely abandoning reality, yet within Tolkien's work we find a meticulously created world containing as strict a reality as possible, one which contains nuanced reflections of elements within the real world. His works and the genre which they pioneered have received constant passionate reception across generations, suggesting they provide something of significant value, not mere entertainment.

This thesis shall argue that Tolkien's fictional world reasserts traditional ontological structures and concepts which are perceived as lost in the process of modernisation, structures that serve as, what Roger Griffin terms, "shields against ontological terror" (75).

What Tolkien's legendarium offers readers, as I will show, is a critical alternative to modernity and its putative state of decadence, whereby its alleged degeneracies are removed and the lost values and ontological shields of the past are renewed. In this act of renewal, I will argue, Tolkien's legendarium contains key ideological dynamics of fascism. Having established this fictional world's status as containing a modernism which asserts the renewed values of community, identity, heritage and a mythologised past, I will make an analytical comparison of these structures with fascist fantasies of modernity and utopia.

Three key concepts need to be clarified at the outset: modernity, modernism, and fascism. Modernity is a contested term that covers a wide range of possible definitions, but I will follow Roger Griffin in seeing it, broadly, as the result of the "multi-factorial process" of modernisation which includes but is not limited to: the rise of rationalism, liberalism, capitalism, secularism, individualism, concepts of progress, increase in social mobility and literacy, industrialisation, urbanisation, the middle-class, democracy, science and technology (Griffin 46). Secondly, modernism is then seen by Griffin as a response to the alleged decadence of modernity. This is not a reference to literary modernism, rather "the generic term for a wide variety of countervailing palingenetic reactions to the anarchy and cultural decay allegedly resulting from the radical transformation of traditional institutions, social structures, and belief systems under the impact of Western modernisation." (Griffin 54-55). Lastly, fascism will be approached, again following Griffin, as a form of programmatic modernism, which seeks social regeneration and the palingenesis (rebirth) of the nation, valuing mythologised concepts of the past, 'higher' communal values, rootedness, nature, heritage, leadership and ethnicity.

This study aims to contextualise Tolkien within the history of ideas, comparing and contrasting the philosophical dynamics expressed in his work to other theories of and engagements with modernity. Through the analysis of his legendarium, including *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, *The Lost Road* and *The Children of Húrin*, its ideological implications and the effects achieved by these may be further understood. Through the study of Tolkien's work and how it engages with concepts of modernity, it is

hoped that we may gain insight into the ideological dynamics of one of the pillars of the modern fantasy genre, and how the significance of its aesthetics relates to one of the most potent political ideologies of modern history. The connecting themes of decadence, renewal, nationhood, community, mythology and hierarchy shall be explored with the intention of illustrating the extent to which the aesthetics of these literary works reflect the key ideological features of fascism.

Mythology and Religion

In his pioneering work, *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger outlined a theory on the development of human culture and its existential functions which shall be key in this thesis. Berger conceived of man as fundamentally "out of balance" with himself, and suggests that communal symbolic structures were crucial to the completion of his existence (5). These structures, or nomoi, function as "a shield against terror" (22). Roger Griffin summarises Berger's concept of the function of these "sacred canopies" as "existential shelter from a cosmos devoid of intrinsic spiritual purpose" (75). The most potent of these canopies, when it comes to shielding against ontological terror, is religion. Religion differs from other nomoi, as it is a nomos which has been, in Griffin's words, "cosmicized" (75), becoming a collective projection of a now transcendent order onto the universe. Berger sees this as "the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (Berger 27-28). It is for this reason that religion is such a potent nomos and ontological shield, as the belief in a "sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality, thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy" (26).

Religion, if we accept Berger's argument then has been integral to the existential completion of humanity, and long stood as the first line of defence against the ontological assault of meaninglessness, and as such, human society has been built around this nomos. Religion has been used to support social institutions, as through an inclusion within the cosmic frame of reference, it "legitimates" them with a bestowal of "valid ontological status" (33). The relevance of this is that in the age of modernity, Berger claims, we are most likely seeing the first case of the widespread loss of religious plausibility throughout society (124).

In the process of modernisation, we have seen a transition into the secularisation of society. By moving into secularism societies lose the benefits of "a strictly mythological worldview, … in which sacred forces are continuously permeating human experience" (34). Modernisation can here be seen as the loss of sacred interaction, a loss of the mythical experience. This transformation sees both the loss of humanity's ultimate ontological shield and the legitimising force behind many of their social institutions. It leaves the modern world in both a social and spiritual crisis.

Berger goes on to give a disturbing depiction of the potential consequences of losing contact with such an integral nomos:

> The ultimate danger of such separation, however, is the danger of meaninglessness. This danger is the nightmare *par excellence*, in which the individual is submerged in a world of disorder, senselessness and madness. Reality and identity are malignantly transformed into meaningless figures of horror. To be in a society is to be "sane" precisely in the sense of being shielded from the ultimate "insanity" of such anomic terror. (22)

This is a capsule description of the existential crisis that permeates modernity. It is a dramatic shift in reality, a loss of identity, an undermining of purpose and the fall into isolated chaos. Here Berger is tying together some of the key themes for this thesis: nomoi, community, identity and order. If Berger's assertions are correct, these are integral to the maintenance of human wellbeing and, as such, the importance of protecting them from decay cannot be overstated.

Berger, moreover, touches on a topic which will be explored later, suggesting that it was Protestantism which began the secularising process, introducing materialist perspective to the world. He claims Protestantism, with its disenchanting approach to theology, "broke the continuity, cut the umbilical cord between heaven and earth, and thereby threw man back upon himself in a historically unprecedented manner" (112). This connection between Protestantism and rationalism is a point which Max Weber pioneered, asserting that modern, capitalist materialism is sourced from Protestant asceticism which was "carried out of monastic cells into everyday life" (Weber 123-24). For Berger, the rise of rationalism is inseparable from secularisation, in fact, he refers to rationalisation as "a secularization of consciousness" (107-08). This plunges people into a strictly empirical, disenchanted world, where the transcendent is lost and they are forced to perceive themselves and the world without a shield against anomy.

However, religion is only one branch of an older tree of ontological structures, this tree being that of mythology. Berger observes how religion and its traditions and rituals developed from mythology. At its heart, religion preserves the exact same "fundamental confrontation between light and darkness, nomic security and anomic abandonment" (Berger 40). If Berger's conclusions are correct, the reinstallation of mythological worldviews and cosmic structures would be key to constructing a utopia that could offer an effective shield against the existential threat of modernity.

Tolkien and Myth

Friedrich Nietzsche saw the rootlessness of modern man as connected to "the loss of myth, the loss of the mythic homeland, of the maternal womb" (*Tragedy* 122-23). Myth and home are interwoven and each is bolstered by the other. It is through mythology as a collective force that the "spiritual 'home' needed to make bearable the otherwise intolerable human condition" is formed (Griffin 78). This is what is recognised in Tolkien's work, in the frost and shadow of disorder, it is our roots that we need, and it is through this mythological world that Tolkien is attempting to renew his readers' connection with our "mythic homeland". Many have observed that throughout his work, there is an overt attempt by Tolkien to create an Anglo-Saxon collective mythology, to "bequeath to England a mythological treasury it lacked" (Wood 112).

Tolkien's texts are, to state the obvious, mythologies and the collection of his works is widely referred to as his "legendarium". The form and content of his works share clear affinities with folk tales and legends, specifically the folk epic (Spacks 82). It is hardly necessary to labour the obvious point that in its content and aesthetics, Middle-earth is a clearly mythically inspired space. The traditional creatures of myth, trolls, dragons, elves, dwarves, are all shamelessly used; however, Tolkien does employ some unique takes and alterations to these classic tropes. Furthermore, the events of these fictions play into archetypal action: the stealing of treasure from a dragon's lair, the brandishing of swords, blowing of horns and the epic battles.

In a 1953 lecture on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Tolkien posed the question, regarding folk tales: "what is this flavour, this atmosphere, this virtue that such rooted works have?" (qtd. in Shippey, *Pagan* 145) Tom Shippey, in his biography of Tolkien, argues that

this rootedness of mythology comes from a "coherent philosophy", which marks a "quite distinctive literary style" (*Tolkien* 153). Patricia Spacks observes how the value and effectiveness of Tolkien's legendarium comes from "its mythic scope" (96), and this is a notion echoed by Shippey. It is the way in which all the details and themes which "may seem accidental or minor qualities … are there because they fit an entire worldview and the mythology it generated, unless, indeed, the mythology generated the worldview" (Shippey, *Pagan* 154). It is through the immense breadth and depth of his legendarium, that Tolkien creates mythological rootedness in his work. By setting such a wide range of narratives in a consistent universe that has such scale, these stories are transformed from isolated fictions to interweaving reflections of a mythological worldview.

It is worth noting, however, that Middle-earth's mythological style does not have much in common with English literary tradition, Moorman observes how "its ultimate forebears must be sought elsewhere, in the forests and mountains of the Nordic" (201). This touches on an important point regarding the national character of this mythology. Tolkien was open about his intent when creating this fictional world, that it was ultimately meant as a "mythology for England", one which would, like the great mythologies of other countries, help establish a notion of national identity (Chance 1). The reason why Tolkien felt a need for this English mythology is due to the well-noted lack of such a heritage in English culture. This is a subject long lamented by English artists, that, in the words of John Milton, "nothing certain, either by tradition, history, or ancient fame, hath hitherto been left us" (Drout 240-41).

Tolkien's project to create a national mythology has a strong precedent from the 18th and 19th centuries, where many attempts were made "to harness mythology to the emerging national ideologies of northern European nations" (Hunter 63). The likes of Sir Walter Scott and James MacPherson, with his infamous "Ossian" poems, make up a literary tradition, into which Tolkien seems to fit (63). In this context, Tolkien's legendarium can be seen as another clear attempt to "reanimate a lost past and claim a connection to present reality" (71). Tolkien, through the implementation of adapted mythological themes and tropes collected from across the traditions of northern Europe, attempted to forge a new mythology that could fill the cultural void in English heritage, and it would appear that in the eyes of many he succeeded in this (Drout 229). These attempts highlight a key point in the nuanced role of the mythological in this universe. Mythology here is grounded in nationhood and the concept of reanimation, it is through myth and heritage that a national identity can find renewal.

The Internal Mythologies of Middle-earth

Within this universe the role of the mythological is not limited to the themes, references and aesthetics of the texts. Mythologies exists within this universe and effect the cultures and narratives which are contained within it. Within this mythological world, the characters are themselves are aware of mythologies as well as sometimes even being aware that they themselves are taking part in events which will go on to be mythologised (Bolintineanu 267). Whilst climbing the stairs of Cirith Ungol, Frodo and Sam ponder "the brave things in the old tales and songs," and imagine how they themselves will be put into such stories (Tolkien, *LOTR* 711-12). The characters that inhabit Middle-earth are enacting legends, aware of both the mythology of the past and the present. Furthermore, in Middle-earth the internal mythologies and legends of the fictional past are legitimised. In chapter 2 of *The Two Towers* Éomer refers to Halflings, or hobbits, as "only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North" (434). By asserting what we know to be "real" within this fictional world as only myth, Tolkien is challenging our differentiation between the two, suggesting that myth and reality are not mutually exclusive things. This is clearly demonstrated when Éomer asks whether "we walk in legends or in the green earth in the daylight?" To which, Aragorn replies that a "man may do both … for not we but those who come after will make the legends of our time" (*LOTR* 434). There is a clear attempt in this fictional world to validate myth and legend, to demonstrate their connection to "truth" and "reality", the mythological past has relevancy to the "real" present.

Diana Wynne Jones observed how the use of "inset histories and narratives" can be traced back to the narrative techniques of *Beowulf*, where echoes of the tales of the past are used to reflect the present, only deepening further the mythological aura of Tolkien's world (qtd. in Bolintineanu 264). In both *Beowulf* and *The Lord of the Rings* legendary tales from the past are repeatedly resurfaced in the present and form parallels to the primary narratives. In *The Lord of the Rings* this is performed in mostly a positive sense, legend serving as "a model and a comforter" which wills the characters to action. The emotional relevancy of the legendary past means that, in their retelling of it, characters bring it into the present, attempting to re-enact it (Bolintineanu 264-8). The mythological past is being reborn into the present and is a tangible source of change.

By presenting a reality whereby the mythologies of the past are shown to have relevancy to the fictional present, we as readers are enticed to do the very same with the mythology we are currently reading. As a fantasy text, *The Lord of the Rings* is, in a sense, self-validating.

Religion in Arda

In a letter to W.H. Auden, Tolkien professed that he intended his legendarium not to "fit with formalized Christian theology" but rather to render it "consonant with Christian thought and belief" (Tolkien, *Letters* 355). Tolkien's overt Catholicism has made it very common for critics to interpret his work through the lens of Christianity, and conclude that it is a Christian world he is presenting; however, Tom Shippey makes an important point regarding the separation of what Tolkien says about his work and what is actually within it. Shippey believes that an area where "one may feel inclined to disagree with Tolkien's overt statements about his own work is that of religious meaning" (*Author* 174). Tolkien's presentation of religion is essential to understanding the use of the mythological. If this universe is simply reactionary and nostalgic, a reliance on the traditional sacred canopy of Christianity would be expected; however, if this is not the case, then the use of the mythological takes on a far more nuanced role.

Although the Christian connection has long been present, due to the mythological nature of his work, Tolkien has often been connected to paganism as well. However, Ralph C. Wood asserts that Tolkien merely uses pagan features and narratives "that serve his Christian project" (253). Slavoj Žižek, in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, echoes Wood's notion of a Christian implementation of paganism when stating, regarding Middle-earth, that "only a devout Christian could have imagined such a magnificent pagan universe" (48). The depiction of Tolkien's world as pagan or Christian, is, to a certain extent, misleading. It is tempting to conclude that if Middle-earth is not entirely Christian then it is therefore pagan; yet, paganism still suggests the presence of religious structures or belief systems, which is not reflective of the world in question. Despite the attempts to portray Tolkien's world as religious, it can be safely noted that throughout the enormous work of fiction which is *The Lord of the Rings* no character performs an act of worship, and although filled with the supernatural, no deity is present at any point. Patricia Spacks contends that "*The Lord of the*

Rings is by no means a Christian work". Despite the "force and complexity of its moral and theological scheme", this scheme contains "no explicit supernatural sanctions" (Spacks 82).

In *The Silmarillion* we are shown the creation myth of this universe which contains the depiction of a divine creator, Eru, along with a range of subsequent deities, and the process of divine creation. This illustrates that this is by no means a godless universe, but it is a dogmaless one. Religion remains absent despite this narrative and, for the most part, the peoples of Middle-earth have little to no knowledge of it. Even the High Elves, whose own history is most tightly bound to the deities in *The Silmarillion*, only sing songs of the beauty and stories of the divine, yet never overtly perform any act beyond this to display worship. There are no laws, beliefs, customs or mediums. Despite the presence of the divine, the ontological shield of religion is absent. The supernatural in this world is inseparable from the natural, there is no religion as the magical and cosmic are not transcendent features, rather, they are bound to and representative of an already mystical reality.

Ritual acts are the closest we get to the religiosity in this world. The Elves have songs of the stars, connecting the firmament with their own ancestors, singing "hail Eärendil, brightest of stars". Yet, Eärendil is himself the father of Elrond, a character who we see as real and present within *The Lord of the Rings*, this is by no means a removed, divine figure, the characters referencing him would have been his contemporaries whilst he was alive. In spite of their hymnal quality, elvish songs are still often in reference to historically "real", within the context of this fictional world, individuals, who are ancestrally connected to the very real characters of Middle-Earth.

Another ritual practice is the Gondorian's preservation of The White Tree in Minas Tirith. Along with the messianic tones of its story, it is clearly ritualistic and filled with reverence, but again, this is not based around metaphysical beliefs, rather a belief in the reinstatement of a real bloodline of their past. This theme is continued in dwarven culture, as the Dwarves have a somewhat religious reverence for their ancestor Durin, whom much of their cultures and civilisations are built around. Similar to the White Tree narrative, the Dwarves await the re-emergence of their legendary forefather, a "second coming" if you will. So we have examples of Elves, Dwarves and Men showing semi-religious language and practices, yet these examples amount to nothing beyond revering their own ancestors and bloodlines. They revere themselves, their culture and history, not any external power. There is still an attempt to ground these behaviours in the "real" world: there is no overt cosmic

belief system, act of worship, dogma or attempt to interact with the supernatural. The ontological shields of these cultures are sourced from reality and mythology, not religion.

In Tolkien's world, the portrayal of mortality has interesting theological and ontological implications, as it veers from traditional religious interpretations. Having a universe where immortality exists in the "here and now" of the world, not in an afterlife, the presentation of death becomes considerably more complicated. As much as death is portrayed as causing pain and anguish within certain narratives, within the wider conception of death in Middle-earth, it is ultimately presented as a positive. The mortality of Men is their "gift" and the immortality of the Elves is a burden. This inverts religious emphases on an eternal afterlife, as finite existence is shown to be a source of liberation, celebrating the earthly, temporal present rather than the cosmic infinite (Lasseter Freeh 73).

If the earthly present is being celebrated, there is a suggestion that this is a secular universe. If this is the case the transcendental would be lost. This is where the role of the mythological becomes so important. Regardless of the absence of religion and worship, Catherine Madsen argues that Middle-earth is "plainly religious in character, the plainer for not being specifically Christian". She believes that Tolkien presents "religious feeling, and even religious behaviour, without ritual, revelation, doctrine – indeed without God". Madsen describes Middle-earth as a "remotely" monotheistic world, one with "no theology, no covenant, and no religious instruction; it is full of beauty and wonder, even holiness, but not divinity". Madsen combines this notion with the adoration of nature to suggest this world presents a "Natural Religion", which evokes "religious feeling" without outright religion. Madsen believes this abstracted religiosity is "curiously compatible with a secular cosmology" (Madsen 35-40). It is arguable, then, that the mythological functions as a secular cosmology which answers the ontological issues of secularisation. Instead of simply resisting secularisation by presenting a palpably Christian universe that tries to uphold its dogmas and institutions, this approach combats the existential threat of secularism without merely denying the delegitimised state of religious nomoi. By portraying mythology rather than theology, this fictional world offers an ontological shield that can be affective in a secularised reality, not being reliant on the lost social legitimacy of religion.

In a sense, it could be argued that Tolkien improves on the Christianity of England as a sacred canopy. In Berger's view, Protestants live in a reality "polarized between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically "fallen" humanity that, *ipso facto*, is devoid of sacred

qualities", which "no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred beings and forces" (Berger 111-12). Tolkien's "areligious" world presents the opposite, a reality filled with earthly magic and individuals who are transcendent. Although Tolkien's creation may have been highly informed by Christian narratives and value systems, what is presented in Arda is decidedly not the sacred canopy of Christianity. The text does not present a response to modernity which is a return to Christianity, whereby we are protected from ontological terror by its dogmas and structures; it is a fundamentally different nomos. It is rather the mythological which does not require worship of a transcendent divinity as the supernatural fully permeates the experienced "reality".

Implications of Industrialisation

When defining the nature of modernism, Walter Adamson emphasises how science, commerce, and industry were the essential "modernizing forces" (Griffin 56). Industrialisation and technological advancement are perhaps the most overt and palpable examples of modernisation. Industrialisation meant a profound shift of both population and cultural focus, from the agrarian life of the countryside to the industrialised cities that would become the metropolises of the modern era. This transition is fundamental to this thesis' analysis of Tolkien's fictional world and how it relates to modernity, as the presentation of the agrarian and the industrial are a persistent theme throughout Tolkien's narratives. The implications of industrialisation arise from two main points: the direct effects of the industrial setting and the psychological dynamics of industrial capitalism.

Friedrich Engels, following a visit to London, England, detailed his impressions of the urban metropolis, and within his description can be found key aspects to the implications of theindustrial setting. Although portraying what may seem quaint by today's standards of urban sprawl, Engels' demonstrates how potent an effect the agrarian to urban transition produced. Firstly, he describes how being in a city "where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing" (Engels 23). "What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns" (24). It is telling that Engels begins his description of urbanity by highlighting the palpable absence of nature. In this description, Engels emphasises how complete the

transition to urbanity was for those who took part in it. This notion of nature and the countryside being out of reach is key to the implications of industrialisation and the boundary between urban and rural spaces. Dennis Hardy emphasises how the movement of labour from the land to the industrial city resulted in a "heightened sense of loss" as the people moved into spaces where nature was "banished in the cause if production." The disconnect from the earth is seen as having far reaching consequences, as contact with the soil is connected to notions of regeneration and life-affirmation (D. Hardy 20-26). Raymond Williams asserts that, in the case of England, despite this dramatic shift in experience, the ideas of the countryside and rural life "persisted with extraordinary power" (2). The level of industrialisation that was taking place during the last decades of the 19th century resulted in, what Roger Griffin calls, "seismic social and psychological upheavals" (57). Such upheavals had, and arguably continue to have, a considerable effect on society, and Ronald Schleifer asserts that from these upheavals a "crisis consciousness" arose (9).

William Everdell defines this crisis as the "collapse of ontological continuity" (qtd. in Schleifer 10). This collapse is indicative of the upheaval springing from "the logic of abundance" which industrialised society produces, as "new experiences and perspectives on the world that could not be accommodated by 'traditional' frames of reference" (Griffin 57). This damage to the ontological self-perception of humanity was by no means lost on Engels, who noted the immediate effects the industrial urban environment had on its inhabitants, how the "very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels" (24). This innate conflict between humanity and the urban environment Engels surmises is a product of the fact that "these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilisation which crowd their city" (23-24). Again, we see Engels emphasising the apparent unnatural nature of the industrialised world, he goes beyond his earlier comments on merely the absence of nature, going so far as to claim it is antithetical to human nature. The urban setting, sprung from the industrial revolution, extracts from its inhabitants something fundamental to their humanity, reducing and, in a sense, absorbing them.

It is important to make the distinction here between urbanism and industrialism, as modernity has by no means a monopoly on the prior. It is not merely the urban space that generates these issues, but the industrial urban space, built around the functions and values of

industrial capitalism. These are, in the words of Raymond Williams, "cities built as places of work: physically in their domination by the mills and engines, … socially in their organisation of homes – 'housing' – around the places of work" (220). In these settings, the psychology of production infiltrates every element of society. Georg Simmel believes that the industrial-capitalist city, as "the seat of the money economy", has an extensive effect on the society that inhabits it, arguing that it is intrinsically connected to "the dominance of the intellect". This brings us to the point of the psychological implications of industrialisation and the capitalist economy it is inseparable from.

Simmel argues that the cold rationalism of the money economy seeps into the social fabric as people begin to be dealt with in the same manner as objects, without feeling or empathy. In such a setting a form of apathetic rationalism dominates and people become "reckoned with like a number, like an element which is in itself indifferent" (*Metropolis* 49). David Harvey similarly states that communities of money and capital become places that are no more than "relative spaces to be built up, torn down, or abandoned as profitability dictates." He also notes how the objective, homogenous materialism of the economy becomes imposed on humanity and reduce all relations (253-55). From this perspective, it is the cold psychology of rational materialism that these spaces foster which has damaging consequences for society. The prevalence of this mentality stands as a direct antagonist to social well-being. This psychological dynamic can also be seen to be a direct existential threat. For Simmel, the rationalist, reductive attitude which the modern city forces upon life corresponds to an empirical, scientific interpretation of the world. It is a mind-set which promotes "the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses which aim at determining the mode of life from within" (*Metropolis* 49-51). Rationalism is bound to secularisation, which is, in the words of Berger, "the systematic, rational penetration, both in thought and in activity" (113). The reduction of the world to the empirical stands as a direct threat to many nomoi, and undermines the legitimacy of any sacred canopy.

This point regarding the effect of industrial capitalism on the spiritual should not be overlooked, as it has been argued that it is both a demystifying and secularising force. Berger notes that "the original "carrier" of secularization is the modern economic process, that is, the dynamic of industrial capitalism" (109). Weber, in his famous work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* observed how the "emancipation from economic traditionalism appears, no doubt, to be a factor which would greatly strengthen the tendency to doubt the sanctity of the religious tradition, as of all traditional authorities" (4). Weber goes on to

explain how the transition into capitalism was, for many, "a renunciation, a departure from an age of full and beautiful humanity" (123). Capitalism is repeatedly deemed to stand in direct conflict with the beautiful and transcendent, imposing a rationalising and materialistic vision of the world. Perhaps the most potent and destructive form this conflict takes is in capitalism's connection to secularization; however, some have gone as far as to say that capitalism does not simply undermine religion, but creates its own one. Durkheim viewed religion as "unadapted" to modernity's economic growth, being only able to offer "contempt for riches" as a means of regulation. This "passive resignation" is now incompatible and insufficient when facing the position that materialism has taken in modern existence. Religion now finds itself made irrelevant to society's key dynamic, that of "earthly interest," according to Durkheim (383). The sociological transformations resulting from the economics of industrial capitalism have far reaching consequences, and perhaps the most destructive is this eventual undermining of the most integral nomoi. The connection between industrial capitalism and the development of a rational, materialist perspective illustrates how industrialisation can be perceived as a disenchanting force. The rise of materialism creates a climate which undermines both religious and mythological worldviews, obstructing the preservation of such important ontological shields.

All these various depictions of the industrialised world are describing in various ways how industrialism, and the economic system bound to it, has the ability to, and often does, drastically effect continuity, connection and psychology. It not only estranges us from nature, but from ourselves, each other and our beliefs. All of these are the primary notions which repeatedly occur across the analyses of modernisation, and they make up the key foundational elements of the perceived existential crisis of modernity.

Tolkien and the Agrarian Idyll

Nature is an essential theme in *The Lord of the Rings* and plays an integral role throughout Tolkien's legendarium. The depiction of nature and the ways characters engagement with it are a fundamental aspect of the ideological dynamic of Middle-earth and the narratives which take place within it. The use of pastoral or wilderness settings is commonplace in folk tales and mythology, as well as Romantic literature; however, Tolkien's representations of the

agrarian, the wild and the industrial setting create a specific dynamic, one which directly addresses the modern issue of industrialisation.

Patricia Spacks correctly asserts that in *The Lord of the Rings* virtuousness "is partly equated with understanding of nature, closeness to the natural world" (84). An individual or groups' connection to nature is a clear indicator of their moral and spiritual status in Middle-earth. Although debatable, what would appear to be by far the two spiritually pure groups in Middle-earth are first the Elves, then the Hobbits. They represent two different types of purity: Elves, the immortals, demonstrating purity of spirit, culture and biology; the mortal Hobbits, on the other hand, present a purity of innocence, like eternal children who often struggle to even conceive of the powerful and corrupting forces of this fictional world. Regardless of how their purity is portrayed, in both cases they demonstrate a clear affinity with nature.

Elves are known as "The Firstborn", and within the creation myth of this universe, the world is made for them, and as such they demonstrate complete harmony and union with nature. They often build their civilisations amongst the trees and even, in the case of Lothlórien, build their houses up in the boughs of the trees. When not amongst the trees, they live not within castle walls but in the natural havens created by the world, either underground, like the great kingdom of Nargothrond, or protected by mountains, as is the case with Gondolin. They also revere the natural world, venerating types of trees, like the mallorn (Keenan 74-75), singing songs of the rivers, as Legolas does regarding the Nimrodel (*LOTR* 339-41), and giving their adulation to the stars, such as "Eärendil, the Evening Star, most beloved of the Elves" (365).

Their connection to nature, however, is not limited to a simple affinity or proximity to it; there are ways in which their harmony with the world takes "magical" forms. Elves are shown to not be subject to nature's wrath, traversing inhospitable climes with ease, as demonstrated by Legolas during the attempt to cross the Misty Mountains. In the face of a blizzard Legolas moves swiftly and with ease, leaving no mark in the snow and requiring no extra clothing to brave the conditions, whilst the rest of the Fellowship battle for survival (292). The Elves seamlessly interact with nature, unhindered by the obstacles which prove so arduous to the other races; moreover, Elves even communicate with and transform nature. When telling Merry and Pippin of the origins of the Ents, Treebeard explains how the "Elves

began it, of course, waking trees up and teaching them to speak and learning their tree-talk" (468). Nature is also shown to be at the beck and call of certain Elves, shown in the case of Elrond and the river Bruinen. He is able to summon a flood to protect Frodo from the Ringwraiths as the river "is under his power, and it will rise in great anger when he has great need to bar the Ford" (224).

Although lacking these magical elements, Hobbits similarly surround themselves with nature and have a society built upon their connection to it. In the Prologue to *The Lord of the Rings,* Tolkien describes Hobbits as a race which "love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and wellfarmed countryside was their favourite haunt" (1). They are immediately established as an entirely agrarian people who occupy a completely rural setting. Edmund Wilson rather delightfully describes Hobbits as a race which "combine the characteristics of certain English animals – they live in burrows like rabbits and badgers – with the traits of the English country-dwellers, ranging from rustic to tweedy" (qtd. in Keenan 66). In a similar vein, Rose Zimbardo observes how they are halfway "between kingly nature and animal nature" (102). This animal nature that is embedded within their character is reflective of their general organic status, they are part of the Shire, an extension of the countryside, in a sense. Furthermore, as a "race" their range of professions tend to emphasise their engagement and connection to the land. They are essentially a collection of farmers, gardeners and landed gentry, all passionately bound to their own patches of earth. Roundly put by Hugh Keenan, the hobbits "combine the strongest traditional symbols of life … They represent the earthly as opposed to the mechanic or scientific forces" (67).

Conversely, the evil creatures of Middle-earth are shown as both unnatural and innately antagonistic to nature. The species and varying forms which populate and spawn from the lands of Sauron are all unnatural forms of the "Free peoples", or rather those not under the dominion of Sauron. Orcs are corrupted and mutilated Elves; Trolls are mockeries of the Ents (*LOTR* 486); Nazgul, or Ringwraiths, the former kings of Men, enslaved by and bound to the will of the One Ring. And their unnatural form is reflected in their engagement with natural ones. They are repeatedly shown as deforesters, who dwell away from nature in barren wastelands and filthy underground pits. Even when they merely walk on grass, it is left "bruised and blackened" (424). Similarly, Gollum is shown to oppose nature, as it harms and frightens him. Sunlight burns him and pains his eyes (54), which leads him to avoid daylight at all costs, preferring darkness and cover where "the Yellow Face won't see [him]"

(621). His personification of the sun and moon puts himself in opposition or in conflict to them, shaking his fist at the Sun and cursing the sight of "the White Face" of the moon (630).

Embedded within the depiction of the landscapes of Middle-earth is, above all else, a respect for nature. There is, however, not a naive romanticising of nature as pure and innocent. Nature is not shown to be harmless and idyllic; rather, it is portrayed as powerful, autonomous and to be both feared and respected; it is anthropomorphised and given an agency and will. This autonomous nature is capable of its own emotions and opinions, including anger and wrath, in fact these are some of its most common features. In *The Fellowship of the Ring* the Mountain Caradhras is described as "cruel" and possessing an "ill will". The Fellowship hear cries and laughter from the mountain and believe it is deliberately dropping stones upon them; Gimli even goes so far as to address the mountain directly with "Enough, enough! … We are departing as quickly as we may!" (283-93). Yet this personification isn't restricted to the characters' perspectives; even the voice of the narrator suggests the mountain is animate and emoting, stating that "the malice of the mountain seemed to be expended, as if Caradhras was satisfied that the invaders had been beaten off and would not dare to return." The narrator also goes on to state that "Caradhras had defeated them" (291-93). This aggression and personality of the mountain is established as entirely of the mountain; magic and evil forces are dismissed when Gimli informs the company that it "was called the Cruel, and had an ill name … long years ago, when rumour of Sauron had not been heard in these lands" (289).

Another clear example of nature with will and agency is the character of Old Man Willow. During the Hobbits' journey through the Old Forest (in chapter 6 of Book 1) a willow tree traps Merry and Pippin within itself, and when Sam and Frodo try applying fire to the tree so as to force it to relinquish their companions. The tree tremors and its leaves "hiss above their heads with a sound of pain and anger." From inside the tree they hear Merry exclaim "Put it out! … He'll squeeze me in two, if you don't. He says so!" (117-18) Although we never hear the willow tree's voice, it is evident that it has one, along with sentience. Moreover, the willow tree is later referred to by Tom Bombadil as "Old Man Willow" or even "Old grey Willow-man!" (120). These names are overt cases of an anthropomorphism which goes beyond basic personification; the willow tree is shown to be essentially a "man", sentient and animate, in both name and nature. Tom also tells the hobbits

of how the willow tree's "heart was rotten, but his strength was green; and he was cunning, and a master of winds" (130). Again, as along with its personality and will, the agency of this piece of nature is emphasised, the tree being capable of action and trickery.

Yet, Old Man Willow is not a completely unique case. In fact, he reflects the nature of many trees in the novel. Tom Bombadil teaches the Hobbits of the hearts of trees, which are "often dark and strange, and filled with a hatred of things that go free upon the earth, gnawing, biting, breaking, hacking, burning: destroyers and usurpers" (130). This is later reflected in the trees, Ents and Huorns of Fangorn Forest that have developed a deep anger and resentment, especially towards Saruman and his orcs.

When creating fictional worlds, the absence of things is just as defining as what features are present and detailed within the texts (Doležel 173-74), and as such, the absence of industry or production in the infrastructures of Middle-earth is of high import when examining the fictional world Tolkien is portraying. We are treated to the great architectural feats of Númenor, the legendary armies of Elves, equipped with bows, arrows and swords; yet, there is never any hint as to how such things are produced. There are no Elven lumber yards where the wood for their bows and buildings is harvested, no great quarries scarring the landscape, whereby the walls of Minas Tirith were built, and no images of Elves working hunched down in iron mines, allowing for the manufacture of the steel which will become their famous swords and spears. These features are not absent through merely a lack of details in or depth of these fictional societies, as we are treated to an exceptional amount of information and carefully crafted background information to the various civilisations and communities which we encounter throughout Middle-earth. Moreover, there are several societies whose means of production we are treated to; by implication the absence of such features serves a function in the value-system of this fictional world. There is a deliberate and almost complete absence of such things as they would not only detract from the agrarian idylls, but also introduce the shadow of modern industrialisation into world of Middle-earth.

When industrial forms of production are present in Tolkien's fictional world, they indicate the corruption and malevolence of a place. Due to the complete absence of it in the vast majority of the text, when we are presented with industrial landscapes, they leap out and immediately establish the destructive and antagonistic state of the setting, as well as the internal decay of those perpetrating it.

The landscapes under control of "the Enemy" are defined by their industrialism and antagonism to nature. Patricia Spacks describes the territory of Sauron as "physically and morally a Wasteland", the absence of fertility reflecting the moral bankruptcy: the "barrenness of nature here is a direct result of the operations of evil" (84). Sauron is an abuser of nature, so much so that he "can torture and destroy the very hills" (*LOTR* 266). Spacks observes how the Evil factions of Middle-earth "depend upon machinery rather than natural forces" (85). In Saruman's domain his assault on nature is inseparable from proto-industrial production. The plains of Isengard are "bored and delved … Iron wheels revolved there endlessly, and hammers thudded … plumes of vapour steamed from the vents". Isengard has become "a graveyard of unquiet dead" (554), devoid of life and vibrancy. The moral bankruptcy of these places is demonstrated not just through the absence of nature, but through an active hostility towards nature; it is "the reverse of the natural" (85). In contrast, the Free Peoples of Middle-earth not only have an absence of industrialism but stand in clear opposition to it. The Hobbits "do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though they were skilful with tools" (*LOTR* 1).

A term used to describe Sauron's stronghold of Barad-dûr is the "furnace of great power" (*LOTR* 555). It is this link between machinery and power which makes it so destructive. It is, like all sources of power in Middle-earth, innately corrupting. Technology, especially in the case of Saruman's application, is shown as a source of considerable power which consumes, corrupts and destroys. The application of technology by Saruman is shown as evidence of his destructive capabilities, simultaneously demonstrating technology's potency and its inherent negativity. Saruman's character is defined by his technological mind-set, being described by Treebeard as having "a mind of metal and of wheels" (473). He represents, what Shippey calls, "a kind of mechanical ingenuity, smithcraft developed into engineering skills" (*Author* 170), and he is the best example of the application of machinery and technology in this fictional world. Saruman's forces are shown to use a form of gunpowder during the assault on Helm's Deep (*LOTR* 537) and the Ents are attacked by some incendiary weapon similar to napalm or a flamethrower at Isengard (Shippey, *Author* 170).

Minds of Metal and Wheels

What is somewhat unique about Saruman's malevolence is that we gain an insight into his reasoning behind it. Unlike Sauron, who is presented as pure evil, Saruman is shown as having arrived at his position of antagonism from, what he believes to be, a position of wisdom. Saruman's pragmatic mentality, his "mind of metal and of wheels" is at the heart of his character. Tom Shippey describes Saruman's development: it starts as "intellectual curiosity, develops as engineering skill, turns into greed and the desire to dominate, corrupts further into a hatred and contempt of the natural world which goes beyond any rational desire to use it" (171). It is his pragmatic, scientific mind-set, surveying the world as a means to an end, viewing nature as a resource and instability as opportunity, which sends him down the path of being corrupted by power and eventually being completely alienated from the world. Treebeard describes Saruman as having no care "for growing things, except as far as they serve him for the moment" (*LOTR* 473). Saruman is devoid of compassion and ethics, on a narrow-minded path to gaining power. He demonstrates the materialism and cold dominance of the intellect which Simmel and Harvey reflected on. It is in this sense that Shippey very accurately regards Saruman as representing "one of the characteristic vices of modernity" (*Author* 171). He encapsulates the "the utilitarian reduction" which Raymond Williams attaches to modern society (35). It is Saruman's "kind of restless ingenuity, skill without purpose, bulldozing for the sake of change" (171) which so captures industrialisation's role in modernity's existential crisis.

In the final chapters of *LOTR* we are shown the process of "utilitarian reduction" and industrialism destroying the innocence and purity of society. In the depiction of the Shire under Saruman, which essentially represents the modernisation of the Shire, it has become an industrialised, economically focused society. It is built around resource extraction. Essentially the entire society is steered towards production, generating beer, tobacco and metal for export. It has become like the industrial cities which Williams depicted, a space built and organised around labour and production, dominated by mills and engines (220). The formerly simplistic, rural infrastructure of the Shire is modernised, the old watermill being filled with "wheels and outlandish contraptions" (*LOTR* 1013). Once again, this industrialisation is shown to be an immediate detriment to nature, as it is percieved as a resource to be used and harnessed. The trees are being felled en masse, while the excretions from the mill "fouled all the lower Water" (1013). It is telling that to represent the devastation, or corruption, of the Shire, we are not shown its military defeat or the mass

slaughter of its populace, but instead the industrialisation of it. The value of the Shire is truly bound to its lack of industry, therefore the conversion of this society from an agricultural one to an industrial one, essentially its modernisation, is the far more tragic and evocative image. As we are shown Frodo and his companions' reclaiming and restoration of the Shire, we are thus presented with the final act of the book being principally one of the renewal of the agrarian idyll and the "scouring" of industrialism from the landscape. This is reflective of the key overarching themes of this universe: the rejection of modernising forces and the renewal of nature, community and the romanticised traditions of the past.

Individualism and Community

As touched upon when exploring the effects of capitalism, the dynamic between individualism and communality is a primary point of focus for many critiques of modernisation. Almost all of the modernising forces are most keenly felt in their impact on the communal. In the unpublished announcement of the Journal *Angelus Novus* in 1922 Walter Benjamin lamented the inability in the modern age "to create any unity, let alone a community." His best hope for the journal was that it "should proclaim through the mutual alienness of their contributions how impossible it is in our age to give a voice to any communality" (*Selected Writings* 296). As we have seen, Durkheim, among others, has identified how the disintegration of communities and isolation from one's community can cause exceptional existential damage. Therefore, it is worth taking some time to consider how specifically individualism functions in, and what consequences it has for, the modern world.

As mentioned earlier, regarding industrial settings, the permeation of the production mentality into society has considerable consequences. In Marxism we find a clear critique of how capitalism is detrimental to both the self and the communal. Karl Marx highlighted how socialisation becomes reflective of the labour conditions, the estrangement from labour leading to the "*estrangement of man* from *man*" (Marx 78-79, original emphasis). Marx argues that the culmination of this process is the estrangement of "the *species* from man … It changes for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life" (75-76, original emphasis). Similarly, F. Engels, in his analysis of industrialised London, highlights the correlation between urbanisation and individualism. Despite the proximity these vast

numbers of Londoners have to each other, they "crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common". Engels argues that the masses of people in industrialised settings are marked by "brutal indifference" and "unfeeling isolation", noting that the more densely crowded individuals become the more they find each other "repellent and offensive" (24). The scale and individualism of these settings stands as a direct threat to community and identity.

Raymond Williams argues that both of these become compromised by the density and enormous volume of city populations. This scale makes the establishment and maintenance of a whole and "wholly knowable" community considerably more difficult (165). As labour was moved into the cities and the urban populations grew exponentially, a simultaneous process of "social dissolution" could be perceived (216). Despite the rise in numbers, social isolation and individualism began to thrive. Thomas Hardy, with wonderful bleakness, illustrates this state of affairs, describing how "as the crowd grows denser it loses its character of an aggregate of countless units, and becomes an organic whole, a molluscous black creature having nothing in common with humanity" (F. Hardy 133). Hardy perceived the threat to community that the modern metropolis, noting how in London "[e]ach individual is conscious of *himself*, but nobody conscious of themselves collectively" (213). This setting stands in complete contrast to how rural life is perceived. Williams describes how it is often believed that small scale, rural communities are the "epitome of direct relationships". They possess an "immediate aspect", which is key to the difference in urban and rural social dynamics, it is "more visible"; however, the maintenance of a "knowable community" is still, as in urban settings, something that requires active pursuit (Williams 165-66).

Conversely, there are arguments to be made regarding the benefits of such spaces that are free from traditional relationships and lifestyles. Voltaire saw the urban lifestyle and pursuit of industry as marks of civilisation (Williams 144). Baudelaire saw in the isolation and instability opportunities for artistic expression and engagement with life (234), and the lack of knowable, traditional communality can be seen as allowing for multi-culturalism, diversity and alterity (Wirth 10), making the individualism and lack of homogeneity perhaps one of the modern city's great attributes.

Returning to Marxist critiques, György Lukács emphasises commodification and the belief that the individuals of capitalist become objectified. Lukács asserts that having been

removed from the "organic" community processes of the rural world, people have become "abstract members of a species identical by definition with its other members and, on the other hand, as isolated objects". The "natural laws" of capitalist society have led to the "atomisation of the individual" (91-92). What is being described here is the simultaneous assault on the collective and the subjective, resulting in the most poisonous form of individualism. Moreover, Georg Simmel argues that, regardless of the freedom which money is meant to endow, "from the standpoint of a free, independent and self-sufficient existence, the exchange of property and achievements for money depersonalizes life". Simmel goes on to explain how in the traditional economics of society a "tight network of transactions originally enclosed and intertwined people" (*Philosophy* 410-11). This interconnection has been lost in the now global and free-ranging economies of modernity. Simmel concludes that "the positive sense of individual independence", which is claimed by the capitalist system of free-enterprise, "is not awakened in the economic isolation of an unsocial existence" (303-304). It is the apparent positive elements of capitalism which most threatens community; through the empowerment, freedom and independence gained, the social and communal has been made more and more irrelevant. Capitalism is seen here in these critiques to be bound to individualism and stands as antagonist to the maintenance of traditional community dynamics.

The value of community to the existential state of human beings cannot be understated. Collectives are a constant throughout human history and make the foundation of the human experience. This is why, in the words of Peter Berger, man "loses his humanity when he is thrust into isolation from other men" (7). Berger strongly believes that isolation from the collective has dire existential consequences for the individual, a sentiment echoed by Emile Durkheim. The crisis of anomy, which is said to pervade modern society, is a notion built around the individual's separation from the community, it "springs from the lack of collective forces" and is bound to a "state of disaggregation" (Durkheim 382). Berger refers to society as "the formative agency for individual consciousness" as the individual's identity is "objectively real only insofar as it may be comprehended within the significant structures of the social world". Community is a means of establishing one's objective reality, making isolation a space incapable of producing any firm sense of reality or identity (13-15). To be part of a community requires socialisation, which is an ongoing process and if social interaction is disrupted "the world begins to totter, to lose its subjective plausibility. In other words, the subjective reality of the world hangs on the thin thread of conversation" (16-17).

Having been separated from the communal, the isolated individual loses their subjective reality and their nomos. Individualism is shown here to be, above all else, an assault on the individual; through the antagonism to communality, both the collective and the individual are lessened. What we see in the dissolution of community is a loss of the foundation for individual identity, a loss of the "symmetry between the objective world of society and the subjective world of the individual" (15). From this perspective we can see modernity as a space and time in which both collective and individual identities are severely undermined.

Modernity's antagonism to the communal is a key element in the existential threat it poses. Community is integral to nationalist, and especially fascist, responses to modernity, and its foundational value to the human psyche goes some part to explaining the potency such movements had in the 19th and 20th centuries. Communality is arguably crucial to any effective defence against existential threats, yet its value is not limited to its ability to prevent individualism and isolation, it can establish order and structure to human existence.

Hierarchy and Social Order

Modernisation, as well as propagating individualism, has drastically effected communal structures and traditional social hierarchies. Social hierarchies provide a significant contribution to the stability and regulation of communities, making any substantial challenge to them a source of great social disturbance. Emile Durkheim's notion of *anomie* as a result of significant upheaval in one's life was touched on earlier in relation to technological advancement and urbanisation; yet, the role of this effect in the context of social hierarchies is of even higher significance. The disruption of social hierarchies and the order they provided has had a profound effect on the nomic identifications of modern man. Peter Berger states that an individual's "continuing social existence depends upon the maintenance of specific cultural arrangements" (7), and a culture's social order and class structure is perhaps the most fundamental of these arrangements. Consequently, the disruption of this order is bound to have profound implications for the existential state of those experiencing it.

Durkheim highlighted how "in our modern societies when aristocratic prejudices began to lose their old ascendency" a "state of upheaval" was the result. Discipline and acceptance of position need to be maintained by more than "only custom and force". As appetites are no longer restrained, "the spirit of unrest and discontent" is ready to be activated

(252). The role of discipline and appetite is crucial in Durkheim's arguments regarding economic growth's disruption to social order, and links to Freud's point regarding "man's aggressive instincts". The issue with such exceptional economic transformation, as has been seen in the process of modernisation and continues to be seen, is that "as the conditions of life are changed, the standard according to which needs were regulated can no longer remain the same; … the scale is upset but a new scale cannot be immediately improvised" (Durkheim 252-53). The vast economic growth which has occurred in the modernising process has led to an increase in desire whilst the structures which would regulate them have been undermined. As put by Durkheim: at "the very moment when traditional rules have lost their authority, the richer prize offered these appetites stimulates them and makes them more exigent and impatient of control" (253).

This issue of appetites and desires introduces us to the notion of ambition. The desire for success and ascension stands at odds with fixed hierarchies and must be curtailed in order to maintain stability. Regardless of the ethical downsides of fixed social hierarchies, they produce a stability in desire and self-perception, as one is born aware of social expectations and limitations, only having a narrow band of possible outcomes regarding social mobility. This strict frame of expectation, distributed respectively throughout the levels of the social hierarchy allow for a social balance. This is the scale to which Durkheim is referring; however, with the disruption of the hierarchy and the allowance of social mobility, dissatisfaction and estrangement follows. A class favoured by this disruption is "no longer resigned to its former lot, and, on the other hand, the example of its greater good fortune arouses all sorts of jealousy below and about it" (253). Society now being an arena of competition and ambition, all individuals are now left to compare themselves to each other, resenting those above them and developing disdain for those beneath them.

Fellow sociologist Georg Simmel, similarly observed how the disintegration of the previous class structure breeds individualism, resentment and an "increase in antagonism" (*Philosophy* 411). Simmel details how the "more a lower and a higher element approach each other, the more vigorously will the latter emphasize the points of difference that still exist and the higher will it value them." The former, once legitimised, divisions now being supposedly dissolved are now required to be enforced socially through antagonism. Again, the role of fixed social hierarchies in producing contentment and stability is emphasised by Simmel, as "passionate and aggressive class hatred does not emerge where the classes are separated by an unbridgeable gulf, but rather at that moment at which the lower class has already begun to

rise, and when the upper class has lost some of its prestige and the levelling of both classes can be discussed" (411). This is not an entirely negative affair, in fact, it is seen as a vast improvement by the majority of people; however, the issue does not arise merely out of an inherent problem with equality, but, as mentioned earlier by Durkheim, the inability to provide "a new scale" which produces balance and stability in a society where the long held traditional sources have been undermined. With desires no longer curtailed but actively encouraged, the concept of limitation is abandoned and replaced by ambition. Although freedom from limitation and fixed social positions appear as very positive notions; the social consequences of such changes are not so simple. Despite the negative connotations control and hierarchy carry, their value in providing communal stability and limiting human desires should not be disregarded. In removing these sources of social order communality itself is at risk.

It is on this issue of unrestrained desire and unlimited aspiration that Durkheim eloquently summarises the issue at the heart of the modern, competitive, free-market society:

> one does not advance when one walks toward no goal, or – which is the same thing – when his goal is infinity. … To pursue a goal which is unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness. … Thus the more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs. … Our thread of life on these conditions is pretty thin, breakable at any instant. (248)

The absence of limitation and regulation has produced a state where individuals are in an endless pursuit of satisfaction, which can only be momentarily appeased, not achieved in finality. The existential implications of such a state are obvious, and it is clear why Durkheim directly connects it with unhappiness and disappointment.

Under these circumstances, the importance of hierarchy, in its means of producing limitation and thus order, is fully seen. It is in the face of the ontological chaos which rises out of social upheaval that Durkheim argues "the passions first must be limited. Only then can they be harmonized with the faculties and satisfied. But since the individual has no way of limiting them, this must be done by some force exterior to him" (248). Thus, with the individual incapable of self-limitation, social structures are more critical than ever to the creation of harmony and stability for the individual.

Marx argues that the transition into capitalism does not in actuality remove social hierarchies, proposing rather that it replaces them with a "more terrible" and deceptive version. It is this supposedly "free" competition which produces the same imbalance and hierarchy that preceded it (69). This new, terrible form is accused of beguiling society into thinking it has superseded the inequalities of the past, with Lukács contending that the conditions of production have merely obscured the maintained dynamic of "dominion and servitude" (86). Under these circumstances, Marx argues that a distinction between capitalist and "land-rentier" is a disingenuous one (69); however, it is worth noting that these new "land-rentiers" no longer have the legitimising social structures which provided a source of contentment and stability for themselves and those beneath them.

Despite its apparent similarities to traditional social structures, there are some new features of the capitalist system that deviate from the past. Lukács argues that capitalist society produces a specifically bureaucratic form of governance, which has considerable implications socially. For Lukács, bureaucracy furthers the alienation, initiated by capitalist economics, of individuals from society. He asserts that it embodies the same premises as the capitalist economy in its standardisation and reduction of all social functions. Lukács believes bureaucracy is "mechanical, 'mindless' work" which reflects the invasion of the industrial economic mentality into the very organisation and governance of society. This reduction and formalization fosters a disconnection between the individual's needs and their societal role, producing a sterile, uniform and, ultimately, inhuman mode of existence (Lukács 98-99).

Despite their range in perspectives, Simmel, Durkheim, Marx, Lukács and Berger all essentially observe that the rapid changes in traditional social structures that have taken place during the process of modernisation are highly disruptive and damaging to communities on a foundational level. These deeply entrenched structures, which have fundamental roles in how communities function and are maintained cannot be so drastically challenged without severe consequences. The decay of communal values presents arguably the most relevant point in the exploration of the decadence of modernity. If modernisation is truly such a damaging force, communal values are essential to effectively countering these changes. The denunciation of individualism, reinforcement of social hierarchies and celebration of communal wholeness are all integral points in understanding how Tolkien's universe connects to the ideology of nationalism.

The Communities of Middle-earth

A theme in Tolkien's world which is found throughout traditional European mythology and folklore, is one of the dangers of ambition. Be it the story of Beowulf, Icarus, Sisyphus, or Siegfried, man's ambition and aspirations toward the supernatural is depicted throughout the mythological world as having dire consequences, often incurring divine or magical wrath. Such a condemnation of ambition stands in clear contrast to modern individualism, and the revival of such traditional motifs in the 20th century should not be overlooked. The desire to go against social order, an unwillingness to conform, is the assertion of the individual over the communal; therefore, in Tolkien's narratives of dangerous ambition, we can find a consistent valuation of community above the individual.

In Tolkien's creation myth, laid out in *The Silmarillion*, we are shown that the source of evil within this universe begins with an act of individual rebellion. In this creation myth the initial divine creator, Ilúvatar, brings to life the Ainur, a group of deities charged with creating Ilúvatar's vision for the world together. Evil enters into this world, and all other evils follow subsequently from this point, when one of the Ainur, Melkor, deviates from this group. Melkor chose to "interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself." He then isolates himself from the other Ainur and in "being alone he had begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren" (*Silmarillion* 4). Individual aspirations are presented here as being grounded in egoism and the rejection of community, as Melkor goes against both brethren and parent, but above all it is shown as sacrilege, community and harmony being the will of God. The refusal to accept his position within the hierarchy and his role within the community began Melkor's descent into immorality and disconnection from the divine.

The importance of hierarchy is echoed in the narrative of Númenor, whose people's entire downfall is built around their Icarian attempts to ascend above the natural stations of Men. Their descent into self-destruction is first shown in their envy of the Elves, specifically their immortality. Initially they were blessed with a raising above the status of "lesser men": given long life, keener senses, higher wisdom and even an island homeland reflecting their

position, halfway between the lands of men and other races in Middle-earth to the East and the undying lands of the Eldar Elves to the West. Having such a raised status, they began to gaze even higher, the "more joyful was their life the more they began to long for the immortality of the Eldar" (*LOTR* 1036). They then take their first steps in defiance of the natural order of the world, seeking "to discover the secret of prolonging life and maybe the recalling of it. But it is said that the span of their lives … dwindled slowly" (*The Lost Road* 16-17). There is already a form of karmic punishment shown here, as with their attempts to prolong life they are ironically rewarded with a diminishing of it.

In this deterioration into ambition and pride, there is a link made to avarice and materialism, as we are told their Kings "became greedy of wealth and power" (*LOTR* 1036). This wealth and power is thusly tied to pride, which is integral to the fall of men. King Ar-Pharazôn, under whose reign Númenor would be destroyed, is described as "the proudest and most powerful of all the Kings, and no less than the kingship of the world was his desire" (1036). It is this pride which drives the entitlement and ambition of Númenor, and is reflected in their attempts to assert their equality to the Eldar. Firstly, this is shown in how the Kings "abandoned the use of the Eldarin tongues" and began to punish those who spoke it, in an attempt to establish their own language (1036). Secondly, in their own tongue, they began to adopt the titles of the Eldar, as the twentieth King took the Númenórean name "Ar-Andûnakhôr, 'Lord of the West'" a translation of the Eldarin title formerly reserved for one of the Valar (1036). These cultural changes reflect a refusal to accept any subsidiary role within the world, highlighting both their pride and disregard for this universe's innate hierarchy.

The Númenórean downfall culminates in their final attempt at ascension, as eventually King Ar-Pharazôn, under the counsel of Sauron, "broke the Ban of the Valar" and sailed west to the Undying Lands of the Eldar "to wrest everlasting life from the Lords of the West". Upon setting foot upon the shores of these lands "Numenor was thrown down and swallowed in the Sea, and the Undying Lands were removed for ever from the circles of the world (1037). This is an act of divine retribution which overtly demonstrates that Tolkien's universe itself stands in clear opposition to attempts to challenge the boundaries and hierarchies which are built into it. The entire narrative of Númenor is constructed around the dangers of ambition, its corrosive effect on the spiritual state of those who engage with it and the dire consequences it has on the order of the world. Ambition is ultimately shown as moral decay, leading only to self-destruction.

It is relevant then to ask how those who do achieve ascendency in Tolkien's universe are represented. There are characters who find themselves considerably raised up in the hierarchies of Middle-earth: Sam transitions from gardener to mayor of Michel Delving, Aragorn from ranger to King, and Frodo, essentially, from mortal to immortal. A question then arises as to how these ascensions avoid negative connotations. These alterations in the hierarchies are shown to be karmic by-products of their self-less acts of service. These characters are portrayed as motivated by altruism and moral responsibility, not by any concept of gain. Furthermore, they are all reticent in these pursuits: Aragorn constantly doubts his ability to take his mantel, yet does so out of obligation to his people. Frodo believes himself unfit for the task but takes responsibility nonetheless. Their climbing up the social ladders is in no way individualistic, but rather entrances into higher states of public service. Even putting aside the grander character story arcs, positive mobility is still depicted in the societies of Middle-earth. One example is in the case of Gondor, which, although arguably having the only "formal" political institution named in Tolkien's world, its subjects are shown to be able to achieve upwards mobility through valour (Nardi 110). This is illustrated in the character of Beregond, who begins as a "plain man of arms" of "neither rank nor lordship" (*LOTR* 767), yet is raised to "Captain of the White Company" following his rescue of Faramir. Social mobility here is shown as possible through heroism and, again, service. What is shunned is not ascension, but aspiration, which is connected to a disregard for the social order.

The vilification of aspiration is profoundly anti-capitalist. Such narratives promote the acceptance of hierarchy and fixed social status, standing in clear opposition to notions of competition and free enterprise. Tolkien's world presents an anti-American Dream of sorts, where those who wish to climb above the station of their birth are fiercely punished and those who are accepting of their position within the universe's hierarchy are rewarded.

In the world of Middle-Earth, the importance of hierarchy is repeatedly emphasised and, to a certain extent, the morality of individual characters is built around their respect for social and special hierarchy. The ambition of the Númenóreans is defined by their attempts to find equality with the Elves, believing themselves deserving of the gifts which the Firstborn are blessed with. Númenóreans did not respect their place in the species hierarchy, and in Tolkien's world, hierarchy is of the utmost import.

Dimitra Fimi asserts that "Tolkien's mythology was always hierarchical where the different beings of his invented world were concerned, … an allusion to the medieval 'Great

Chain of Being'" (141), and this claim certainly has a lot to support it. The characterisation of the Elves is probably the best example for the examination of racial, or special, hierarchy in Middle-earth. The separation of Elves from Men is overt and palpably unbridgeable. Fimi observes how "men are always defined in terms of their relation to Elves", and this is shown in how the Elves are referred to as the "Firstborn" whilst Men are merely the "Followers" (142).

In his personal letters, Tolkien elucidated the nature of spiritual hierarchy in Middle-earth. He explains how the stories of *The Silmarillion* portray how "High Elves" or the "*Eldar*" are those who responded to the summons of the divine Valar to journey over the Sea to the West, the "Lesser Elves" are those who failed to answer the call, and the "Grey Elves" or "*Sindar*" are those who answered the call but faltered along the way. The capabilities and fairness of these groups reflects their piety, those demonstrating the most being "immensely enhanced in powers and knowledge". Tolkien states how the lesser elves "made their irrecoverable choice, preferring Middle-earth to paradise", which ties hierarchy to both choice and purity of spirit (Fimi 143). Hierarchy, then, in Middle-earth is not an arbitrary or unjust system. Social, cultural and special hierarchy is reflective of a natural spiritual hierarchy. As such, the extoling of respect for hierarchical order and the vilification of dissent from it are shown to be morally justified.

In her examination of the ethos of the virtuous in *The Lord of the Rings*, Patricia Spacks emphasises how hobbits are defined as "unfailingly loyal, to companions and to principles." A key expression of this is in their being "humble in their devotion to those they consider greater than [themselves]" (Spacks 82-83). The moral integrity and spiritual purity of hobbits is bound to their respect for hierarchy and complete lack of egotism. Hobbits are shown to have an exemplary willingness to adhere to the wishes and needs of those above them, be it Sam's unwavering loyalty to Frodo or Pippin's pledge of fealty to Denethor. This loyalty is reflective of their general lack of individualism. They come from an entirely communal culture. The cultural hubs of Hobbiton are the Party Tree and The Green Dragon, an inn, areas of collective celebration and social activities. Even birthdays are shown to be about the collective rather than the individual whose birthday it is. They are a chance to give to others rather than receive from them, it being tradition for Hobbits to buy gifts for everyone on their birthday (*LOTR* 27). It is an opportunity for the individual to show their love of the community. Furthermore, in "The Scouring of the Shire" chapter, it is shown that

it requires the power of Saruman and his ruffian enforcers to "impose an economic system that does 'more gathering than sharing'" (Nardi 115).

Arguably the second most important storyline within *The Lord of the Rings* is Aragorn's journey from Strider, looks foul and feels fair (171), to Aragorn Elessar, King of Gondor and Arnor. Such is the importance of this narrative that the final book's title draws on it rather than Frodo and Sam's perilous final steps toward Mount Doom. It should be obvious enough from the title alone, *The Return of the King*, that the theme of renewal is paramount to this narrative; however, within this story of renewal, the importance of hierarchy and heritage receives equal emphasis.

The kingship of Gondor is presented not as a social station which merely represents an inherited position as dictatorial head of state, rather it is a title bound to possessors of a true regal qualities, bound to their bloodline. The distinction between "Steward" and "King" demonstrates the strictness of the Gondorian hierarchy. Despite Denethor and his predecessors' positions as heads of state, they are denied the title of "King", regardless of the long absence of a royal line. The line of the Stewards is prevented from ever ascending to a royal position, destined to occupy their fixed position in the hierarchy. Furthermore, Tolkien presents a reality whereby the truly regal qualities of a ruling bloodline have an undeniable effect on the world and are integral to a culture's survival and flourishment. The difference rightful leadership makes is shown to have immediate effect, as upon coming under the proper rule of King Elessar, the city of Minas Tirith "was made more fair than it had ever been…" (*LOTR* 968).

The Lord of the Rings consistently portrays those in inherited, rightful, positions within the ruling elite as worthy of their status. Frodo and Bilbo represent a vague form of landed gentry, whose position upon the top of the hill in Hobbiton reflects their social status. Frodo is "Master Frodo" and Bilbo "Master Bilbo", demonstrating that even in the agricultural simplicity of the Shire, social status and heritage are integral elements of society. An essential aspect of Frodo's character is his natural elegance and piety which naturally compels undying loyalty from his fellow Hobbits, who, under minimal understanding of the danger and duration of the journey ahead, pledge their unfaltering assistance to him. He is imbued with a cultural awareness and moral conviction which shows him as deserving of his importance. It is hard to imagine the same narrative functioning remotely as well if instead of

Frodo, Sam inherited the One Ring from his gardening father, old Gaffer Gamgee, and thusly Frodo, Merry and Pippin were blindly willing to follow him to the darkest ends of the earth.

The presentation of leadership figures also walks hand-in-hand with the presentation of those they lead, and in Tolkien's world the loyal and subservient are shown as morally pure, whilst the insubordinate, who disrupt or disregard hierarchy, are corrupted and misguided. The refusal to accept one's position within a hierarchy is always combined with moral decay and tends to meet swift punishment. Both Boromir and his father Denethor demonstrate this reality in their attempts to assert their own authorities and desires. Boromir, not accepting the will of the Fellowship and guidance of his "betters" attempts to assert his own will, seeking to take the One Ring for his own purposes. Denethor shows his absence of faith in the "Line of Kings", refusing to recognise the authority and heritage of Aragorn, exclaiming "I will not stand down to be the dotard chamberlain of an upstart. Even were his claim proved to me, … I will not bow to one, last of a ragged house long bereft of lordship and dignity" (*LOTR* 854). In both cases the actions are clear examples of a failure to recognise social hierarchy, and in both cases they are quickly followed a dramatic downfall: Boromir turning violently on Frodo, forsaking all morality, and Denethor falling into despair, simultaneously attempting to commit suicide and murder his son Faramir. Their disrespect of hierarchy reflects their selfishness and moral failure. When these examples are placed in contrast to the character of Sam, whose moral purity is only surpassed by his undying loyalty, it is evident that willing subservience to one's betters is a highly encouraged notion.

Fascist Utopia

Before exploring the dynamics of fascism, is it worthwhile to establish the definition of fascism which is going to be used as the basis of this examination. Although there are a wide range of interpretations regarding fascism, arguably one of the most comprehensive definitions of generic fascism comes from Roger Griffin, who defines it thusly:

> Fascism is a revolutionary species of political modernism originating in the early twentieth century whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a "new order" and a "new era") based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation. Fascists conceive the nation as an organism shaped by historical, cultural, and in some cases, ethnic and hereditary factors, a mythic construct incompatible with liberal, conservative, and communist theories of society. The health of the organism they see

> undermined as much by the principles of institutional and cultural pluralism, individualism, and globalized consumerism promoted by liberalism as by the global regime of social justice and human equality identified by socialism in theory as the ultimate goal of history, or by the conservative defence of 'tradition'. (181)

Michael Mann critiques this definition as being too reliant on "idealism", believing it lacks any sense of power and practicalities. Mann emphasises more the "power organizations" within fascism, to include the application of the fascist ideology and its growth, whilst Griffin focuses on the ideological dynamics of fascism (12). David Renton similarly believes that fascism cannot be understood "simply as an ideology", believing that the actions of fascist movements, not the ideas behind them, is what makes them so distinctive (27). Although this point may very well be a limitation to this definition when analysing political history, for the purposes of this thesis, this is still a relevant definition as this thesis is primarily interested in the ideological similarities between fascism and Tolkien's fictional universe.

Fascism is, first and foremost, an opposition to modernity. Peter Osborne classes it as a "form of political modernism", one which takes shape as "a particularly radical form of conservative revolution" (166). Fascism's perception of modernity as decadence is the reason for its relevancy to this study of Tolkien's work. This unique form of political modernism posing an interesting combination of "anti-modern" concepts that presents an ideological stance which, through comparison, help to understand the dynamics of Tolkien's legendarium.

Griffin describes fascism's nature as a modernism, emphasising its ultranationalism as the building of "the basis of a sacred canopy in order to transcend … a period of profound cultural and physical degeneracy and social disintegration." Although coming in a severely politicized form, fascism is part of "the modernist revolt against decadence", which focuses on "materialism, individualism, and the loss of higher values allegedly brought about by modernity" (Griffin 180-82).

This modernist revolt often placed a high emphasis on the role played by the "resurrection of myth" (Griffin 71-72). In his analysis of the rise of Italian fascism, Walter Adamson found that modernists in Europe stressed "the importance of recreating the mythic, legendary, and "primal" forces of cultural life" with a "messianic mood of frenzy, despair,

and apocalyptic hope". This hope was built around the belief that this would play a "central role … in the creation and organisation of a regenerated culture" (Adamson 7-9).

Peter Osbourne stresses how in their assault on modernity fascists tried to create a "horizon framed by myth" (166) from which, in the words of Griffin, a "comprehensive nomos" could be established (181). Griffin repeatedly emphasises that the fascist vision of a utopian homeland was "conceived in mythic terms". Not only was myth the key to combating modernity, but also the heart of what would ideally replace it (98).

German historian Ulrich Schmidt describes how fascism "went back to mythological roots and wanted to reinstate these cultural models" (139), demonstrating the key point that mythology is bound to the past and it is this which drew the attention of the fascist's desire for rootedness. Griffin stresses how ultranationalist modernists were "at pains precisely *not* 'to reinvent the world from scratch', but to build on what they saw as healthy elements of the past in order to construct their utopia" (68). The fascist dream of a reintegrated nation took place "within a new mazeway combining elements of the past and present into a composite myth which would enable the national communitas, purged of decadence, to make the transition to a new historical era" (181).

This desire for rootedness and the obsession with nationhood is reflected in the fascist approach to nature. Gerd Bergfleth connects the "metaphysically homeless" with a "craving for communion with nature", believing that an "earth-based" perspective enables a sense of "return to the source" (qtd. in Griffin 367). This is a trope which persist throughout the fascist ideology. Rootedness was a pervasive issue for political modernists, and arguably is even more so today, and the sense of homelessness on a metaphysical level can be found as a persistent theme throughout the literature of the period. Austrian novelist Hermann Broch portrays of those coming of age in the early 20th century as "sleepwalking", unable to gain insight into the "rootless roots, de-centred centre, mazeway-less maze, homeless home, and symbol-less symbolic world that determine their own lives" (qtd. in Griffin 120). This is reflective of the Nazi ideology, which demonstrates a "recurrent obsession" with the notion of "*Heimat*", meaning homeland or heartland (Griffin 276). Home and heart are connected in the fascist mind to the earth. Richard Etlin describes how at the heart of the Nazi mythology is the notion of "Blood and Soil", in which "the deep psychic appeal of blood is conjoined with the base metaphor of rootedness, whereby all that seems vital in life is considered as

growing from the ground" (Etlin 9). Nationalism connects identity to geography, making nature a primary source for developing a sense of rootedness and interconnectivity.

Fascism perceived modern decadence ultimately as having "destroyed a sense of communal belonging" (Griffin 181-82). Adolf Hitler, in *Mien Kampf*, stresses collective principles, or "higher ideals", that shall "become the banner of a fighting movement" which will eventually forge "the new state principles of a people's community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*" (98). This focus on the *Volksgemeinschaft* reflects fascism's ultranationalist values of anti-individualism and the fierce emphasis on the communal in its push for "the cleansing, regeneration, and sacralisation of the national community" (182).

The use of the term "regeneration" here by Griffin is just one of many references to, arguably, the most significant feature of the fascist ideology, that of *palingenesis*. The desire for rebirth is found throughout the fascist ideology, and has been well documented. Philip Morgan defines fascist movements as motivated by "the regeneration of their nations through the violent destruction of all political forms and forces which they held to be responsible for national disunity and divisiveness" (13-14). James Gregor sees fascism as "a tortured, enraged, and passionate demand for national renewal". It is "unqualifiedly nationalist, redemptive, renovative, and aggressive" (Gregor 162-66). Roger Eatwell asserts that the fascist ideology "is a form of thought that which preaches the need for social rebirth in a holistic-national radical Third-Way" (11).

By rejecting the present, fascism seeks to mythologise the past in the hope of bringing it forth into the present, thereby renewing its values and roots.

Returning to the critique of Griffin's definition, both Mann and Renton argue that the rebirth concept championed here is does not necessarily distinguish fascism from nationalism in general and is applicable to far less radical forms of it (Mann 13, Renton 26). Mann views rebirth and mythology as just tools used by nationalists to solve the issue of the nation-state being a modern concept, thus giving themselves a sense of tradition and legitimacy (13). However, it can be argued that mythology and rebirth in fascism is not merely a tool, but, in Griffin's definition, the "core" of the fascist identity, dominating their aesthetics and ideology. It is fundamental to the fascist perception of modern decadence, the need for new order, the fetishisation of futurism, and the need for cleansing, which Mann recognises as a key concept in fascism.

Arda and Fascism

The perspective of modernity as decadence can be found to have equivalency to the state of Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings*, where we are provided with a world which is, at the beginning of the text, in a deep state of decay. A theme which is repeated again and again in *The Lord of the Rings*, and which lies at the heart of many narratives in Middle-Earth, is the value of tradition and the loss of old values and culture. The motif of a lost golden age can be found throughout Tolkien's world, a theme prevalent throughout English literature since the Romantics (Sayre and Löwy 56); however, the connection to themes of renewal demonstrate how in Tolkien's universe, this romantic trope can be interwoven with fascist ideals.

Middle-Earth is littered with relics and ruins from the lost golden age of men. Throughout *The Fellowship of the Ring*, during our introduction to the landscape of Middle-Earth, we are repeatedly lead through the ruins of once great civilisations. First encountering the haunted hills of the Barrow Downs, where the tortured wights of the once high houses of Arnor linger in a cold and bitter existence. Quickly following this, Strider leads the Hobbits to the now the barely recognisable watchtower of Amon Sûl, now laid "burned and broken", known only by the name Weathertop. Strider tells the Hobbits of how this once "tall and fair" place was graced by the legendary Númenórean king Elendil in the age of alliance between Men and Elves (*LOTR* 185). Later on in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, we are given the culminating scenes of the book within the setting of Amon Hen, having just passed through the gates of the Argonath. Amon Hen is much like that of Amon Sûl, a ruined watchtower, which symbolises the power and reach of the former kingdoms of men.

Yet, the Argonath, or the Pillars of King, are perhaps the best example of the landscape of Middle-Earth and how it creates the setting in which Aragorn's narrative as a figure of renewal takes place. The Argonath is described as made up of two "great pinnacles or pillars of stone" of such proportions that to Frodo they seem like "Giants … vast grey figures". These figures are "two great kings of stone", built to stand ward over the old northern border of the ancient Gondorian kingdom. These are the figures of the past, monuments to the great power and ability of a now lost golden age. These kings of stone fantastically represent ancient strength as well as portraying the former heights of culture, knowledge and ability. They are immense feats, no longer attainable, "shaped and fashioned:

the craft and power of old had wrought upon them". Moreover, behind these symbols of former achievements is also the message of the enduring value and power of the past as "still they preserved through the suns and rains of forgotten years". They are "silent wardens of a long-vanished kingdom". Yet, within this last line an emphasis arises on the decay of this greatness. The kingdom which they guard is long-vanished and despite the preservation bestowed on these figures of old, "upon each head was a crumbling crown" (*LOTR* 392). Due to their nature as the wardens of a past boundary, the wilderness that follows them serves to further emphasise the loss of land and power.

Later on in the books, almost the entirety of Gondorian lands emphasise the shadow of former glories. The once great capital of these people, Osgiliath, is but an enormous ruin which has become a battle ground running with the blood of men and orcs. A former jewel of the kingdom, the city known as the Minas Ithil (Tower of the Rising Moon), has become Minas Morgul (Tower of Dark Sorcery), a stronghold of malevolence. Even the still stalwart city of Minas Tirith, the now capital of Gondor, is littered with a mournful awareness of its lost grace. In the Court of the Fountain stands the White Tree, drooping and dead, with "barren and broken branches" (753). This tree is of a species saved from the old lands of Numenor and its death in the year 2872 of the Third Age of Middle-Earth (LOTR 1088). It symbolises the failure of the royal bloodline, when "the line of Meneldil son of Anarion failed, and the Tree withered" (244).

Moreover, the architecture of Minas Tirith further develops this theme. The king's throne, waiting empty, has immense grandeur, sitting "under a canopy of marble shaped like a crowned helm" and in front of a wall decorated with a gem-ridden carving of a tree in bloom (754). Yet the ruler of Gondor, Denethor the Steward, sits instead at "the foot of the dais, upon the lowest step" in "a stone chair, black and unadorned" (754). The current leadership, under the line of the stewards, is but a pale imitation of the once great Númenórean line of kings. The House of the Stewards is situated on the street of *Rath Dínen* (Silent Street), which lies "between pale domes and empty halls and images of men long dead" (826). This pervasive decay that permeates every aspect of Gondor emphasises the need for renewal. Despite all its majesty and splendour, even the mightiest of the cities of men is sat in mourning for its former heights.

Similarly to the now ruined lands of the men of Númenor, when we arrive at the halls of Meduseld and are introduced to the lands of Rohan, we find a king from a noble and

famous lineage in a state of decay, slowly being weakened and corrupted by the magic of Saruman and his servant Grima Wormtongue. Theoden as a King whose heir and wife is dead, who deems himself a "lesser son of greater sires"

In Theoden's poem we get a wonderfully bleak depiction of the state of decay that all of Middle-earth is currently in:

> *Where is the hand on the harpstring, and the red fire glowing?*
> *Where is the spring and the harvest and the tall corn growing?*
> *They have passed like rain on the mountain, like a wind in the meadow;*
> *The days have gone down in the West behind the hills into shadow.* (508)

This is not restricted to the race of Men though, it is apparent for all creatures. In Moria we see how a once "great realm and city" which "was full of light and splendour" has been reduced to what Sam see as nothing but "Dark holes". Gimli tells the company of the Dwarven nostalgia for the glory their past, as it "is still remembered in our songs". Songs which sing of the "Elder days, before the fall" when the world was "fair in Durin's day", and mourn how "The forge's fire is ashen-cold". This state of decay is also accompanied by a hope of renewal, Gimli ending his song with "Till Durin wakes again from sleep" (315). The list of characters and places that portray decay is almost endless: Treebeard gloomily proclaims that "the withering of all woods may be drawing near" (473); the lands of Hollin are deserted, the stones lamenting their golden age under the Elves (283-284); Arwen, whilst hailed for her beauty, is called Evenstar, reflecting the fading light of the Elves.

It is made abundantly clear throughout the trilogy, but especially in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, that this is a Middle-Earth whose greatest days have long past. For a vision of beauty and greatness, one must look at what once was, not what now is. It is then fitting that our main narratives, especially Aragorn's, springs from this context. Aragorn is the greatness of the past, a preserved figure from the noble bloodlines of antiquity, here to bear the renewed blade of his ancestors and restore to Middle-Earth the kingdoms of Men.

This state of decay that Middle-earth lies in has a significant role in the narratives that take place in this setting, and it is worth examining the responses to this state. A question arises as to what extent Tolkien's world is founded on simply romantic nostalgia and nothing more; however, the theme of renewal is undeniable throughout this world and considerably changes the nature of this state of decay.

It is telling enough that the final instalment of Tolkien's trilogy is called *The Return of the King*. This title refers to Aragorn's narrative, which is built upon the notion of renewal and it is arguable that Aragorn's narrative is one of equal importance to, if not, only just behind that of, Frodo's. Aragorn's narrative contains fundamental themes which align with the fascist ideology. It is a narrative which, in its essential form, is one of renewal. Renewal of the old bloodline of Numenor; renewal of monarchy; renewal of order and strength to the now decaying civilisations of men. Aragorn is the "homeless" man in exile, who returns to his roots, renews the values of the old and brings in a new age of prosperity. Moreover, he embodies the fascist obsession with leadership. The emphasis on supreme leadership is the foundation of all totalitarianism (Pauley 1). During the 21st century the notion of a "leadership cult" is prevalent in totalitarian stares across the political spectrum (106), and this true of fascist states, as the willingness of the people to follow their dictator to glory helped form the bedrock of their ideologies (Bosworth 264). However, Robert Paxton highlighted the nuance of the fascist desire for singular, male authority, a natural national chieftain "who alone is capable of incarnating the group's historical destiny" (219). Peter Bosworth notes how in Fascist Italy, the *Duce* was, as dictator, a symbol of "the prime 'new man' in his country … the human epitome of the throbbing power of the machine." (Bosworth 264). Likewise, Ian Kershaw, stresses how the adulation for Adolf Hitler and the positon of the *Führer* "formed a crucial integratory force in the Nazi system of rule." (1). The masculine leader reflects the fascist ideology of destiny, strength, hierarchy and advancement. This ideal is exactly what Aragorn represents, in him we find the fulfilment of a yearning for, in the words of Hermann Broch, "the Leader who will rebuild the house" (647). Aragorn, due to his blood, is destined to become the leader of the race of Men, and in doing so he rebuilds the house of Númenor, renewing the kingdoms of Gondor and Arnor. This plays into the notions of hierarchy addressed earlier, the establishment of proper hierarchical leadership, founded on bloodlines, is built into the process of renewal.

The prophecy of Aragorn's future, which we hear in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, states that "*Renewed shall be blade that was broken, / The Crownless again shall be King*" (*LOTR* 170 original italics), a prophecy which is shown to be true. Aragorn, possessing the blood and symbols of Númenórean antiquity, renews the blade of his ancestors Narsil, making anew Anduril, the flame of the West, re-establishes the line of Kings, and brings about a new golden age for the race of Men. Upon Aragorn's return to his ancestral home of Gondor a great eagle, heralding the defeat of evil, sings to Minas Tirith "*your King has come*

again … the Tree that was withered shall be renewed" (963), which does come to pass, as Gandalf shows Aragorn new hidden seeds from the White Tree of Númenor (972). Following this renewal the City of Minas Tirith "was made more fair than it had ever been" (968). We see similar notions in Dwarven culture. The song of Gimli containing the lines such as: "*There lies his crown in water deep, / Till Durin wakes again from sleep*" (317), again containing themes of a lost golden age whose renewal they seek and attach to the return of a king.

As described in the Industrialism section of this thesis, the final events of this trilogy, in The Scouring of the Shire, are essentially the agrarian renewal of the Shire, as the machines of Sharky are destroyed and trees replanted. This is, as in the parallel case of Minas Tirith, demonstration of prosperity produced through renewal, as the Shire reaches new heights of happiness, where "no one was ill, and everyone was pleased, except those who had to mow the grass" (1023). Overall, the narratives of *The Lord of the Rings* culminate in a new age and new beginning defined by with renewal of the old. The characters of this trilogy are left with the one last objective: "The Third Age of the world is ended, and the new age is begun; and it is your task to order its beginning and to preserve what may be preserved." (971).

The significance of renewal changes how we perceive the valuation of the past in Tolkien's work. This is not simply nostalgia, but a summoning of the past into the present. In fact, arguably, nostalgia is actively discouraged. In the case of the Númenóreans, we find nostalgia presented as a poisonous mind-set. They develop a death culture, whereby "they built mightier houses for their dead than for their living, and endowed their buried kings with unavailing treasure … the kingdoms upon the west shores of the Old World became a place of tombs, and filled with ghosts" (*The Lost Road* 16-17). The decay following the obsession with the past demonstrates the dangers of nostalgia. Tolkien emphasises here that they prioritised the past over the present, neglecting it. This shows the programmatic side of Tolkien's world, as the values of the past are shown to have value only in so far as they are acted on and brought into the present.

Perhaps the clearest summation of where Tolkien fits within the 21st century responses to modernity is in the poem, written by Bilbo, prophesising the restoration of the Númenórean bloodline:

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes, a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king. (*LOTR* 170)

This poem would not be misplaced in a collection of fascist literature, as it is built around concepts of change which are emphatically tied to the renewal of the old and a present state of degeneration. The fire springs from the ashes of the past, the new blade forged from shards of the old, the king shall be crowned "again", all of these a symbols of regeneration. It is in the values of the past that the "new order" must be grounded, it is not change for change sake or a yearning for progression, but the "palingenesis" of the past. The past signifies strength, for "The old that is strong does not wither". The waking of a fire, the springing of a new light and the crowning of a new monarch are all fitting within the fascist emphasis on the creation of a new order. It is worth noting that these are all notions declared in the future tense, they are events which "shall" happen and, at the point in the narrative that we read this poem, have not yet occurred. This demonstrates a programmatic mentality, not a purely melancholic pining for the lost golden age. The current state is one of frost, in which the flames of the past have been reduced to ash, casting the world in shadow, but it is notably the "deep roots" that can survive this frost and are the source of our salvation. Roots symbolise both stability and connection, within which are intrinsically bound notions of home and family.

Modernity leads to a rootless existence, and many define the existential angst of modernity as a need for roots. Nietzsche sees the fate of modern man as to be "eternally starving", always "digging" and "rummaging" in "search of roots, even in the most remote of the most ancient worlds". He connected the rootlessness of modern man to "the loss of myth, the loss of the mythic homeland, of the maternal womb" (Nietzsche, *Tragedy* 122-23). Myth and home are interwoven and each is bolstered by the other. It is through "the power of

collective mythopoeia and ritual" that the "spiritual 'home' needed to make bearable the otherwise intolerable human condition" is formed (Griffin 78).

This is what is recognised in Tolkien's work, in the frost and shadow of modernity, it is our roots that we need, and it is through this mythological world that Tolkien is attempting renew our connection with our "mythic homeland", to create a "mythology for England". What better epitomises Nietzsche's concept of a rummaging for roots in ancient worlds than Tolkien's creation of a mythological universe to provide England with a legendary heritage?

What is more, the importance of homeland is emphasised throughout Tolkien's legendarium. The Elves are shaped and developed by the extent to which they reached their destined homeland in the West, Aragorn is the exile awaiting his return to Gondor, and the main plot of *The Hobbit* is built around Thorin and company's quest to reclaim their homeland of Erebor. In the context of this focus on homeland, the sense of palingenesis that can be found in Tolkien's world now takes on more fascistic tones. Within this sense of rootedness and the mythic "maternal womb", especially within the modern world, is fundamentally the significance of nationhood. Nationalism is one of the primary responses to, as Griffin terms it, "the existential 'homelessness' generated by the maelstrom of modernity" (69). National identity satisfies, what Anthony Smith noted as, people's need for "cultural fulfilment, rootedness, security and fraternity" (Smith 158-159). Roots and nationhood are intrinsically connected, and as such Tolkien's portrayal of a world full of deep roots and harmonisation with nature allows for the development of nationalist sentiments. Part of the mass emphasis on nature and the connection with the earth is as a means of creating rootedness, a connection of people with the land. Nature can definitely be placed within fascist motifs, a prime example being the concept of "Blood and Soil", clearly blending nationhood with a connection to nature.

In the context of fascism, this presentation of a world in which the frost of the present is survived through rootedness and lifted through the renewal of the glorious fires of the past certainly begins to sound utopian.

The portrayal of solid cultural and racial identities, clear boundaries between communities and intimate connections with nature demonstrate how Tolkien creates a world full of the valorisation of rootedness. One means by which he clearly establishes cultural and racial identities is through language. Tolkien has often been praised for his accomplishments

in the creation of fictional languages, which, especially in the cases of Sindarin and Quenya, are of considerable complexity and depth. These fictional languages, as well as being impressive in their very creation, play an integral role is establishing separate cultures. Although communication between groups is common and fluid in *The Lord of the Rings*, through the use of "The Common Tongue" or "Westron", languages are used to clearly differentiate between the various races and factions. The Rohirrim speak *Rohirric*, the Grey Elves speak *Sindarin*, High Elves use the language of *Quenya*, Dwarves *Khuzdul* and the servants of Mordor *Blackspeech*. National identity is often built upon the foundations of language identity, and it serves as one of the primary means by which those "inside" and "outside" of a culture are defined. These languages establish clear cultural borders and identities, the names of characters and places being clearly demarcated by their linguistic roots. By creating entirely separate language groups which define and reflect these separate cultures we can see the importance placed on unique cultural identity within this world. The use of completely separate language groups allows for singular cultural identities to be firmly established within this world, each group being clearly differentiated from the others and gaining some form of cultural autonomy.

Although demonstrating aspects of cultural pluralism, Tolkien does not present us with multiculturalism. The clear establishment of borders, geographically, culturally, linguistically and ethnically, emphasises the importance of autonomous identities. Whilst the free peoples can demonstrate harmony between their cultures, they are societally and culturally separate. We are given plenty of examples of characters of different cultures and races passing through "foreign" lands with positive interactions and relationships with the locals; however, in general they are all show to eventually return to their own homeland. Both The Fellowship and Thorin's Company are prime examples of a multicultural groups which travel together and receive hospitality in numerous lands and from numerous peoples, yet all their members do so under duress. It is, for the most part, an enforced nomadism which is performed with the hope of eventually returning home, with any positive interactions resulting more out of serendipity rather than as an expected outcome. Whilst individuals can temporarily transition between cultures, there are clear boundaries set up between the realms, each group clearly remaining within their own territories. Bree is the only example of a society built on multiculturalism; however, despite the fact that characters such as Barliman Butterbur and Nob are shown to be respectable and virtuous, this is a setting where Strider is treated with disdain and distrust, Barliman is extorted for his money

and men cooperate with the ringwraiths. It is far from a culture of high values and achievements, or as idyllic innocence.

Cultures and peoples in Tolkien's universe, despite the greatness they achieve through cooperation, are built on separatism. They are autonomous groups with clear identities, and exhibit little to no interest in multiculturalism, regardless of their respect for other cultures. This creation of strong identities built on clear linguistic, geographical, racial and cultural boundaries reflects the ideals of nationalism.

Returning to Griffin's definition of generic fascism, when broken down it is a proponent of rebirth, nationhood, mythology, historical and cultural heritage, whilst standing in opposition to individualism, consumerism, and modernity as decadence. All of these have hopefully been demonstrated to be fundamental features and themes of the fictional world presented by Tolkien. Tolkien's legendarium is the presentation of a mythological world, which demonstrates a glorification of tradition, community, history and heritage, as its narratives portray a renewal of past greatness as a means of countering the encroaching doom of evil, which is illustrated as individualistic, greed-ridden, industrialised materialism. Is then, Tolkien's world a fascist utopia?

There is one key issue which demonstrates an incompatibility between Tolkien's legendarium and fascist utopian ideals: futurism. This is of considerable importance, as it is a defining difference in how these two engagements with modernity respond to temporalisation and progress. Despite its obsession with the past, its traditions and its values, fascism is undeniably filled with notions of futurism. Griffin explains how "even the most 'pastist', anti-modernist manifestations of Nazi aesthetics on closer inspection reveal a futural, time-defying dynamic" (286). Fascist artist Martin-Amorbach's painting *The Sower* is a great example of how the fascist mentality towards the past is bound with an obsession with the future. It is possible to read the image as having "a longing to return to a pre-industrial world", with symbols of "cosmological renewal"; however, the sowing indicates future birth from these values. The subtext of this painting is not limited to "nostalgia for a mythicized past". It is bound with a "longing for the future Reich" (287). Richard Evans asserts that fascist "idyllic country scenes … spoke not of a return to a rural order mired in hierarchical and hidebound past, but rather a new order where the peasant would be independent, prosperous and proud, delivering the food that would sustain Germany in the conflicts to

come" (708). This conflicts with Tolkien's agrarian idyll, which has value in and of itself, not as a metaphor for future aspirations. The simplicity of rural life is something to be preserved and cherished in Middle-earth, not reinvented.

Similarly, in Italian fascism can be found clear connections to futurism. In Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's manifesto, endorsing the Italian Fascists' war in Ethiopia, he wrote that he stood in rebellion "against the idea that war is anti-aesthetic … War is beautiful because it creates new architectures, like those of armored tanks, geometric squadrons of aircraft, spirals of smoke from burning villages". War is beautiful because it inaugurates the dreamed-of metallization of the human body". We see here that the futurism of fascism is bound up with a propensity to fetishize technology and industrialism. They are means to power, they establish "man's dominion over the subjugated machine" (Benjamin *Technological* 41-42). Fascism glorifies the power of industry and technology, and desires to bind the mythologised past with the mechanised future. In the words of Guy Debord, "Fascism is *technically-equipped archaism*" (110). As shown earlier, the work of Tolkien stands in complete contrast to this. Tolkien does actually present a return to rural order and hierarchy in the agrarian idyll, and rejects technology and industrial methods precisely because they bestow such destructive power.

Even if a condemnation of the industrial does not align Tolkien's work with the fascist perspective regarding this, this does not entirely exculpate his anti-industrialism from containing fascistic dynamics. Dennis Hardy explains how many have long perceived industrial cities as standing in opposition to social wellbeing, stating that "in the language of the utopian, the new industrial cities were the Anti-Christ which has to be defeated in the name of human salvation" (56). Despite being clearly distinct from the fascist perception of industry and technological progression, here Hardy illustrates how anti-industrialism can still be founded on other key elements within the fascist ideology. In Tolkien's universe industrialism is a chosen feature of modern decadence, which must be cleansed so that a new utopian order, founded on communality, may be established. Nature here can symbolise both rootedness and the golden age before modernisation, supporting the ideals of renewal and nationhood, even if it does not endorse the ideals of futurism.

Regardless of its fascistic tones, the denunciation of the technological stands as an undeniable break from Griffin's definition of fascist ideals. Tolkien's world presents a

commitment to the agrarian idyll. Fascism, although using this romanticised ideal, is fully embracing of technological advancement and the power it bestows, both in a destructive and economic sense. The fascist commitment to the future demonstrates a fundamental point of divergence between Tolkien's world and fascist ideals. Fascism mythologises the past whilst dreaming of the future, whereas Tolkien's world is committed to the past and presents the full renewal of it in a purer form. If this world cannot be classified as fascist, how then should it be classified?

The critique of modernity present in Tolkien's world could perhaps be more accurately described as "Romantic Anti-Capitalism". Tolkien fits within this tradition of challenging modernisation through celebration of "pre-capitalist values" (Sayer and Löwy 46). Ernst Fischer describes romanticism as a movement of "passionate and contradictory protest against the bourgeois capitalist world, the world of 'lost illusions'" (52-55). Tolkien's universe captures, what Sayre and Löwy call, the "critical unrealism" of the Romantics, whereby the fantastical is used to oppose "the grey, prosaic and inhuman reality of industrial capitalist society" (Sayer and Löwy 49). However, a classification of this fictional world as a romantic utopia does not exclude the close ties to nationalism and fascism. Many scholars have interpreted, in retrospect, the romantics to be "forerunners of Nazism" (Sayre and Löwy 44-45), and there are noticeable parallels to support this stance. A.W. Schlegel, when defining romanticism, speaks of the soul "under the weeping willows of exile … now far from its true home and true fatherland (*Heimat*)". Similarly, Arnold Hauser explains how "the feeling of homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*) and isolation became the fundamental experience" of the Romantics. Walter Benjamin marked the theme in German Romanticism of the "road that returns to the soul's maternal home (*der Heimweg der Seele ins Mutterland*)" (qtd. in Sayre and Löwy 55-56). Here it is clear to see that romanticism can engage with the ultranationalist dynamics of the fascist ideology, especially on the subject of homeland.

Tolkien's purely aesthetic response to modernity as decadence can be labelled as reactionary or simply escapist, but this is rather dismissive and, ultimately, not entirely accurate. The stance against "progress" is a valid criticism. It is not simply a nostalgic longing for the lost past but a challenge to the consequences of the now failing myths of progress. By presenting an acutely "unmodern" world, Tolkien highlights the values lost in the process of modernisation. Tolkien's alternative world presents the reader with the renewal of the lost ontological shields of the past, whilst portraying the modernising forces which

threaten, and in some cases, destroyed these protective forces. The heavy emphasis on renewal further demonstrates a call to action, an active response to modernisation, far from a passive pining for what once was. As a "mythology for England", it is, in fact, a creative act. Far from nostalgic, it is even possible to argue that Tolkien fits more into Peter Fritzsche's definition of modernism, as it "breaks with the past, manufactures its own historical traditions, and imagines alternative futures" (12). By creating his own mythological heritage for England, Tolkien makes it hard to view him as simply nostalgic. If Tolkien were to create a purely escapist work of nostalgic fiction, he could have painted an idyllic vision of a Christian, pre-industrial England, filled with nothing but pious contentment. However, Tolkien emphatically does not do this. Whilst portraying aspects of the agrarian idyll, Tolkien in reality depicts an alternative reality riddled with decay, as the forces of individualism, materialism and industrialisation threaten to overrun the world. The idyllic elements stand as a contrast to the modern. This is not a denial of progress or the present, but a critique of it. Tolkien portrays the existential threats of modernity, the values of the past and why they need to be reinstated. Fundamentally, Tolkien's world is almost a fascist utopia, embodying the core ideological dynamics of the fascist response to modernity whilst remaining committed to pre-capitalist values. Where it differs from fascism is in the presentation of power, striking on the key point of deviation. As a political ideology, the notion of power, practicality and technology as an apparatus for the achievement of national renewal are entirely necessary; however, Tolkien's world, as an artistic creation, is not bound to practicalities, in fact, rejects them. As such, Tolkien's universe presents the utopia for a fascism free from consideration of application. It is a utopia of the renewal of a mythic past, reinstating order, community, leadership, nationhood and identity to replace the decadent state which modernisation has created.

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